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# DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN FOR PROMOTING AND ENHANCING SOCIAL COHESION IN GUYANA (2017-2021)

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MINISTRY OF SOCIAL COHESION OF GUYANA

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBO	Community-based Organization
CDC	Community Development Council
CRC	Constitution Reform Committee
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ERC	Ethnic Relations Commission
EU	European Union
GDF	Guyana Defence Force
GECOM	Guyana Elections Commission
GFC	Guyana Forestry Commission
GGB	Guyana Gold Board
GGMC	Guyana Geology and Mines Commission
GLSC	Guyana Lands and Survey Commission
GPF	Guyana Police Force
GOG	Government of Guyana
IMCSC	Inter-Ministry Committee for Social Cohesion
IPC	Indigenous Peoples Commission
JSC	Judicial Service Commission
LBGTQI	Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Gay, Transgender, Questioning, and Inter-sex
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOB	Ministry of Business
MOC	Ministry of Communities
MOECYS	Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sports
MOIPA	Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs
MOLA	Ministry of Legal Affairs
MONR	Ministry of Natural Resources
MOP	Ministry of the Presidency

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MOPH	Ministry of Public Health
MOPI	Ministry of Public Infrastructure
MOPS	Ministry of Public Security
MOSC	Ministry of Social Cohesion
MOSP	Ministry of Social Protection
NDC	Neighbourhood Democratic Council
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NIS	National Insurance Scheme
NTC	National Tochaous Council
PSAs	Public Service Announcements
PSC	Public Service Commission
RDC	Regional Democratic Council
REO	Regional Executive Officer
ROCC	Rights of the Child Commission
SCP	Social Cohesion Programme
SCPG	Social Cohesion Peer Group
SP	Strategic Plan
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WGEC	Women and Gender Equality Commission

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# PART 1

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

### 1.1 Background

There have been several programmatic efforts over the past two decades aimed at addressing the challenges to social cohesion in Guyana. Most notable are the peacebuilding activities under the **Multi-Donor Social Cohesion Programme (SCP)** implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) from 2003 to 2006, and a similar programme implemented by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) around that time. The SCP was devised and implemented as a response to the turbulence of the early 2000s when ethnic strife and violence were threatening to turn Guyana into a ‘failed state’. Thus, the SCP was conceived with the expressed objective of building capacities for managing conflicts in anticipation of the 2006 General and Regional elections. These elections were conducted in an atmosphere of general peace and tranquility, for which peacebuilding programmes such as the SCP have been credited with contributing to that positive outcome. However, there was not a systematic effort between 2007 and 2015 to build on that success and advance programming on a social cohesion agenda. The coalition Government that came to power as a result of the May 2015 elections established, for the first time in Guyana’s history, a Ministry of Social Cohesion, organizationally placed under the Ministry of the Presidency, with the explicit mandate of leading national effort to address the challenges and fault-lines negatively impacting social cohesion. From July 2016 to February 2017, the Ministry of Social Cohesion (MOSC), with support from UNDP, undertook the preparation of Guyana’s first **Five- (5) Year Strategic Plan for Promoting and Enhancing Social Cohesion in Guyana**.

The idea to formulate a Strategic Plan emerged during a multi-stakeholder roundtable on “**Social Cohesion for Lasting Peace and Unity**” organized by the Ministry of Social Cohesion on 3-4 September 2015. The Roundtable was intended to serve “... as a vital mechanism through which citizen perspectives, ideas and recommendations can be presented to support identification of key issues, opportunities and best practices in bringing an ethnically divided society together”. The purpose of the Roundtable was to “... engage and empower strategic role players who have the potential and capacity to positively influence relationships vertically (that is amongst their peers and communities). Participants included religious leaders, cultural leaders, trade union leaders, members of professional organizations, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) leaders, members of the business community, key public servants, Members of Parliament, and executive members of political parties. The **Opening Session** was addressed by His Excellency President David Granger, then Minister of Social Cohesion Honorable Amna Ally, then United Nations Resident Coordinator Ms. Khadija Musa, the British High Commissioner H.E. Mr. Greg Quinn, former Commonwealth Secretary General Sir Shridath S. Ramphal, and the Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Dr. Josephine Ojiambo.

The **Overall Objective of the Roundtable** was: “To develop a strategic framework for implementing Guyana’s social cohesion 5-year plan”. One of its **Specific Objectives** was: “To identify practical options, strategies and capacities for building social cohesion and addressing inequalities and monitoring mechanisms for evaluation”, with the key expected output being “A framework for planning the social cohesion agenda and roadmap for implementation. The Social Cohesion Roundtable was adjudged to have been a most useful event to begin a national conversation on practical programmes and actions to foster and promote a social cohesion agenda for Guyana. The second day of the Roundtable consisted of a number of working groups sessions during which participants made recommendations on a number of themes including, Ethnic Relations and Politics, Social Equality, Economic Equality, Community Safety, and Political Participation and Governance. These have all been appropriately recorded in the Report on the Roundtable, and a Summary Report was submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers. The Ministry of Social Cohesion is in the process of completing the work began at the Social Cohesion Roundtable towards preparing a **Draft Five- (5) Year Strategic Plan for Promoting and Enhancing Social Cohesion in Guyana**. To this end, it engaged stakeholders nationally during the latter half of 2016, in an inclusive and participatory process towards obtaining inputs for developing the draft Strategic Plan.

### **1.2 Purpose of the draft Strategic Plan**

The purpose of this **draft Strategic Plan** is to give effect to the desire on the part of national stakeholders to pursue a coherent and structured process for enhancing and promoting social cohesion in Guyana, including a well-articulated set of Implementation Areas, Objectives, and Actions, and appropriate benchmarks, timelines, and implementing partners to ensure their timely and successful implementation. The draft Strategic Plan also provides a clear description of the methodology used for advancing the process, including the various stakeholders involved in the planning process, and the consultation methodologies used in eliciting perspectives, inputs and suggested programmatic areas from participants in the consultation processes. Finally, it is envisaged that this will be a national plan that will guide the actions of the myriad of stakeholders at all levels and including the state, non-state, and civil society sectors. Enhancing and promoting social cohesion is a national endeavor and as such the draft Strategic Plan will suggest roles and provide indications of programmatic actions that can be undertaken by the various stakeholders towards the goal of a cohesive society, where all diversities are embraced and where all have an equal stake and share in the national patrimony.

### **1.3 Methodology for preparing the draft Strategic Plan**

This **Draft Strategic Plan** is the product of a widely inclusive and participatory approach in which a significant cross section of the Guyanese citizenry was consulted and multiple inputs were solicited on the policy and programmatic elements that should be included in the plan. A series of parallel but inter-related methods were employed to make the consultation process as comprehensive and rigorous as possible. A citizen consultation process was developed to guide

the articulation of the Strategic Plan. The consultation consisted of two complementary tracks: i) Face-to-face Municipal and Regional Consultation meetings in all Municipalities and the ten (10) Administrative Regions; and ii) Media Consultations conducted via Radio and Facebook. A literature review was also conducted to map existing academic and policy work on the topic of social cohesion in Guyana and, more broadly, in other countries. Finally, a national validation process was designed to ensure that the findings and strategic policy suggestions of the Strategic Plan were in line with the needs and views of the wider Guyanese population. The four methodological processes are described in the sections below.

**a) The Face-to-face Municipal and Regional Consultations**

This Municipal and Regional consultations, were designed to engage with citizens in their towns, regions, local democratic organs, Amerindian villages, and communities, listen to their concerns on a wide range of issues touching on their lived experiences, and to receive their inputs on how social cohesion can be enhanced and promoted at the local, regional, and national levels. Towards this end, thirty (30) well-structured and interactive consultations were held in all municipalities all ten administrative regions of Guyana, on a preliminary **Social Cohesion Framework Document** that was prepared for that purpose. This was a brief document defining the key concepts and the process for preparing the Strategic Plan, and proposing a preliminary set of broad **Outcomes** based on the five themes developed by the September 2015 Social Cohesion Roundtable, for comment and feedback, that would thereafter be refined and reworked in preparing the draft Strategic Plan. The five Outcomes used for the face-to-face consultations were:

1. Promoting economic equity and opportunities for all;
2. Enhancing citizen safety and security;
3. Promoting social inclusion and tolerance;
4. Strengthening inclusive and participatory governance; and
5. Promoting harmonious ethnic and race relations.

The objectives of the municipal and regional consultations were:

- i. To outline the background, history, and challenges to social cohesion in Guyana;
- ii. To share the broad objectives and obtain buy-in for preparing the Strategic Plan;
- iii. To introduce the draft Outcomes for promoting and enhancing social cohesion in Guyana developed at the Social Cohesion Roundtable held in September 2015; and
- iv. To obtain inputs and perspectives from participants, based on their local concerns, issues, and experiences, for inclusion in the Strategic Plan.

The geographic locations of the thirty (30) municipal and regional consultations were determined based on the objectives of ensuring coverage of all ten administrative regions, all nine municipalities; and ensuring that a representative sample of NDCs, CDCs, Hinterland, and Indigenous Villages was included in the communities where consultations were held. The lists



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of participants to be invited were determined by MOSC, with a view to ensuring representation from central, municipal and regional government officials; councilors from municipalities, NDCs, CDCs, Hinterland, and Indigenous Villages; functionaries from the teaching, medical and other service professions; representatives from law enforcement including, the police and fire services; representatives from religious organizations and persuasions, NGOs, CBOs, sports organizations, women's groups, youth groups, other civic groups; and residents of the community or locale in which the consultation was held. Students from Grades 10 and 11 were also invited to attend some consultations accompanied by teachers from their schools.

The targeted numbers for most consultations was between 50-75 participants; with larger numbers of between 75-100 participants targeted for locations covering large populations such as Georgetown, Beterverwagting, Diamond, Fort Wellington, Mahaicony, and New Amsterdam. The overall objective was not to attract excessively large numbers of participants at these consultations but rather to focus on a more manageable number of those in leadership positions in their respective local democratic organs, religious and cultural organizations, civic groups including women and youth groups, business and commercial interests, and high-profile community members, who could be expected to reflect and represent the views and perspectives of their peers.

The thirty (30) locations for the consultations were selected to broadly reflect population centers and densities, with special attention to representation from NDCs, CDCs, Hinterland, and Indigenous Villages. Table 1 below presents a listing of these consultations and the number of participants attending.

**Table 1: Participants at Regional and Municipal Consultations**

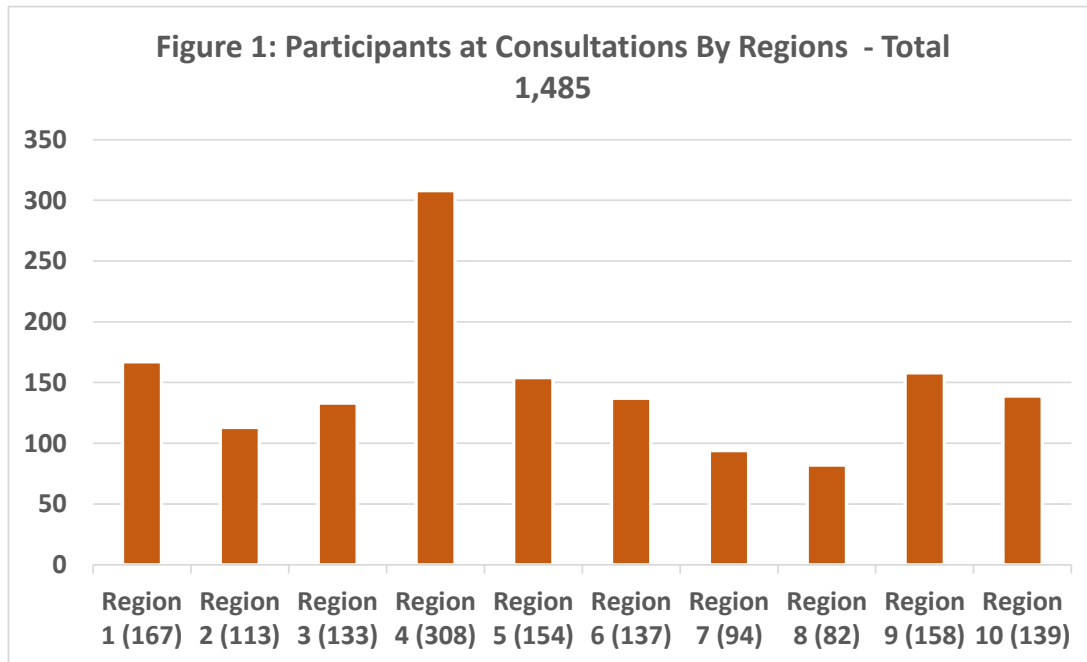
Region	Area	Numbers	Sub-total per Region	Total	
1	Mabaruma	46	167	1485	
	Port Kaituma	62			
	Moruca	59			
2	Charity	26	113		
	Cottonfield	32			
	Pomeroon	55			
3	Leguan	46	133		
	Uitvlugt	52			
	Wales	35			
4	Grove/Diamond	93	308		
	Georgetown	43			
	Beterverwagting/East Coast	98			
	Kuru-Kururu	27			
	Timehri	47			
5	Fort Wellington	52	154		

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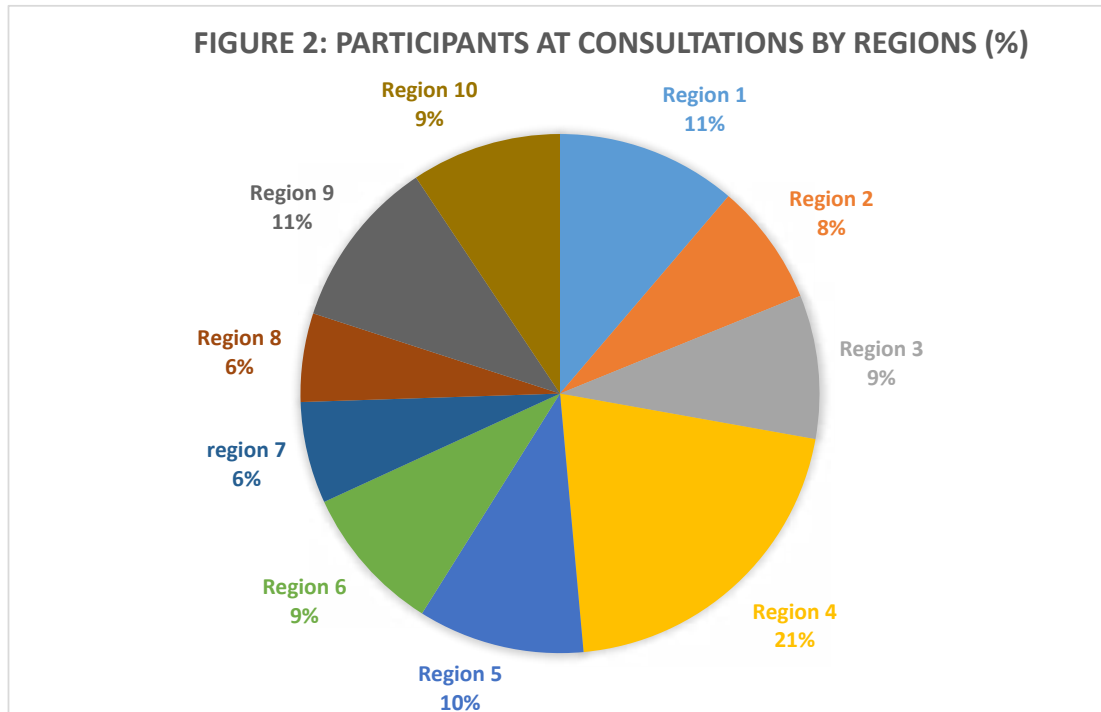
	<b>Mahaicony</b>	67		
	<b>Rosignol</b>	35		
6	<b>New Amsterdam</b>	33	137	
	<b>Rose Hall</b>	45		
	<b>Corriverton</b>	59		
7	<b>Bartica</b>	41	94	
	<b>Kamarang</b>	53		
8	<b>Mahdia</b>	34	82	
	<b>Paramakatoi</b>	48		
9	<b>Annai</b>	46	158	
	<b>Lethem</b>	53		
	<b>Aishalton</b>	59		
10	<b>Linden</b>	30	139	
	<b>Kwakwani</b>	77		
	<b>Rockstone</b>	32		

Region 1 hosted three consultations in Mabaruma, Port Kaituma and Moruca; Region 2 hosted three consultations in Cotton Field/Anna Regina, Charity and the Pomeroon River communities; Region 3 hosted three consultations in Uitvlugt, Patentia and Leguan; Region 4 hosted five consultations in Georgetown, Beterverwagting, Timehri, Diamond and Kuru Kururu; Region 5 hosted three consultations in Fort Wellington, Mahaicony and Rosignol; Region 6 hosted three consultations in Corriverton, Rosehall and New Amsterdam; Region 7 hosted two consultations in Bartica and Kamarang; Region 8 hosted two consultations in Mahdia and Paramakatoi; Region 9 hosted three consultations in Annai, Aishalton and Lethem; and Region 10 hosted three consultations in Linden, Rockstone and Kwakwani. A total of 1485 persons attended the thirty consultations. Figure 1 below presents the number of participants by regions, while Figure 2 presents the percentage distribution by regions. It is noteworthy that almost a quarter of all participants came from Region 4, which is the largest region by national population. As can be seen from the below footnote, the number of participants by region did not mirror the percentage composition of the population by region, as reported in the most recent national population census. Notwithstanding, except for Region 4, the spread among the other regions was between 6 and 11%, which meant that a substantial number of voices was heard from each region<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> According to the 2012 National Population and Housing Census, population distribution by regions was as follows: Region 1 – 3.60%; Region 2 – 6.30%; Region 3 – 14.40%; Region 4 – 41.90%; Region 5 – 6.60%; Region 6 – 14.60%; Region 7 – 2.70%; Region 8 – 1.40%; Region 9 – 3.20%; and Region 10 – 5.30%. The Coastal regions (2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10) comprised 89.10% of the national population; while the Hinterland regions (1, 7, 8, and 9) comprised 10.90% of the population. Guyana Population and Housing Census 2012 – Preliminary Report, APPENDIX A.2: REGIONAL POPULATION DISTRIBUTION, GUYANA: 1980 – 2012, Bureau of Statistics, Guyana.



The actual consultation was a one-day activity that followed a set pattern - a combination of a sensitization session on the mandate, vision, mission, and work of the Ministry of Social Cohesion by a MOSC staff member that lasted between 1 to 1 ½ hours; followed by the consultation exercise which was led by the Consultant. The sensitization session by the



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Ministry (in the form of a PowerPoint presentation that was also distributed in hard copy to all participants) was a most useful introduction to the day's activity since it served not only to introduce the Ministry to the participants who generally did not know much about the Ministry; but it also served to introduce and situate the objectives and process for preparing the Strategic Plan for Social Cohesion. For the most part, the sensitization session was preceded by an opening session that featured remarks by local dignitaries such as the Mayor, RDC Chair, Regional Executive Officer, NDC, CDC Chair or Toshaous, or such other local dignitary. The presentation by MOSC staff was well received and represented a valuable part of the day's activity.

The consultation session also followed a set pattern. This lasted for approximately 3 – 4 hours and consisted of the following segments:

- A PowerPoint presentation by the Consultant on the background and challenges to social cohesion in Guyana; the problem to be addressed; the five (5) draft Outcomes identified at the Social Cohesion Roundtable held in September 2015 – approximately 1 hour;
- The setting up of five (5) groups of roughly equal number based on the five Outcomes; instructions on the tasks to be performed including organization and duration of the group work; and distribution of the questions to be considered by each group – approximately 15 minutes;
- Discussion of the suggested questions provided under each of the 5 Outcomes, agreement on the group's responses, and preparation of the group's report for presentation back to plenary – approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours;
- Presentation of group work reports to plenary, questions and responses, and general comments from the floor on all of the presentations – approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours; and
- Concluding remarks by the Consultant and MOSC – approximately 15 minutes.

The group-work sessions were truly a unifying exercise in which participants in their communities worked together on an issue in which they each had a stake and a role to play. These were almost always very lively and participatory sessions that displayed remarkable energy, commitment to the task at hand, and creativity. Participants were given the option of indicating the Outcome they wished to work on in the groups, and while sometimes a disordered process, this at least allowed them an element of choice and spurred commitment to the task. They invariably worked well together and there were very few discernible instances or manifestations of conflicts, whether political, cultural, ethnic, or interpersonal. Indeed, in consultations where there was representation by the main political parties, such as in Mabaruma, Corriverton and Aishalton, it was very heartening to see participants from different political parties working harmoniously to identify the challenges as per the questions under each Outcome, and coming up with agreed suggestions and solutions on how they could be addressed. This was reflected in the quality of the discussion and the identification of solutions and actions that could be taken at local and other levels under each Outcome. High school students from Grade 10 were invited to some of the consultations, and generally contributed

heartily in the group work. This was particularly so at Beterverwagting, New Amsterdam, Mahaicony, Mahdia and Diamond.

The group work presentations were in general of a very high quality, with a few exceptions. Other participants were afforded the opportunity to ask questions or comment after each group work presentation and at the end of the session. These were invariably lively episodes and the more vocal and voluble participants seized the opportunity to launch into their pet peeves or favorite topics. This 'open forum' was conducted with a minimum of intrusion except where there was need for a clarification or the possibility that two or more participants could get into a personal exchange.

#### **b) Media Consultations conducted via Radio and Facebook**

During the pilot stage of the face-to-face consultations (Regions 2, 7 and 10), the participation of youth was modest and limited to those youth representatives who belonged to a well-informed and/or institutionally-affiliated minority. Given this reality, it was decided to develop a parallel consultation process administered via Facebook and radio.<sup>2</sup> The consolidated inputs of the media consultations have been incorporated into this draft Strategic Plan.

The strategy for youth engagement was designed to address the reality that one single consultative approach would not be able to reach the entire youth spectrum, which is made of three separate but at times overlapping sub-categories of males and females between 18 and 35 years of age:

- 1. Affiliated youth:** young people who are activists, political party affiliates, members of elected bodies, (e.g. NDCs and RDCs), social workers and representatives of civil society.
- 2. Informed youth:** young people who have received a formal education but have little interest in participating in public policy debates and governance forums.
- 3. Youth at risk:** school drop-outs, juvenile offenders, wanderers, victims of sexual and/or domestic violence, and members of criminal networks and street gangs.

While these three groups are to some extent artificial and their members often fall within more than one category, it is evident that there are different groups of youth holding very different needs and opinions. It was recognized that traditional strategies (public consultations, focus groups) are perhaps effective in mobilizing affiliated youth but are unable to engage the average young person and those at risk. Hence, the importance of aggregating inputs from both the face-to-face municipal and regional consultations, and the media consultations using radio and Facebook.

The **Final Report: Consultations using Media [Radio and Online]** describes the process and the results, which have been liberally reproduced in the following extracts taken directly from the Report.

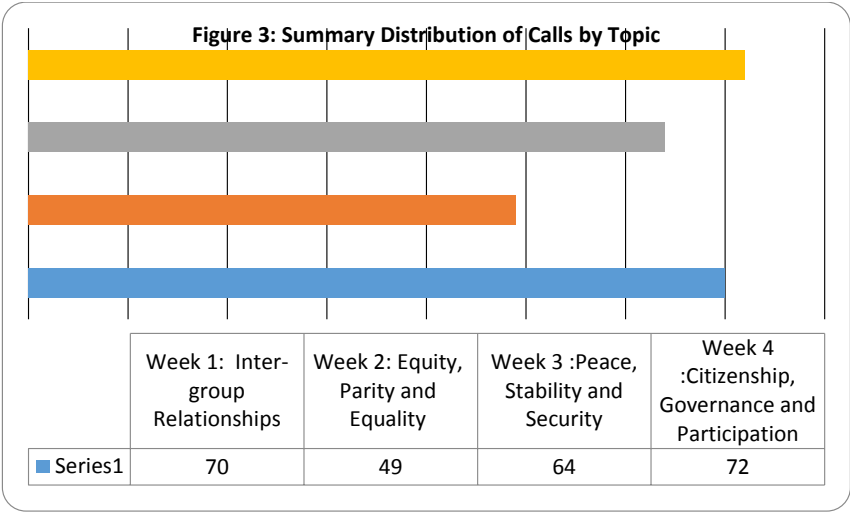
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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Paloma Mohamed Martin spearheaded a team of researchers who managed the media consultation during the period October-November 2016.

**Radio Call-in Programmes**

Six (6) radio programmes on four (4) stations were utilized to host half hour programmes for four (4) weeks. Following training with presenters and negotiations with radio stations as well as preparation of the Facebook page and online postcards, the project began on Wednesday October 26, 2016. Audio recordings were collected from each station for each programme. Additionally, each programme was monitored by a member of the project team, monitoring forms from each programme were created, and transcripts of each programme were created. Over 200 pages of transcripts were generated from the radio programmes.

As indicated in Figure 1 below, a total of 255 calls were received over the four-week period ranging from 49 calls on equity, parity, and equality to 72 calls on citizenship, governance, and participation. Despite the Radio stations’ initial inability to provide demographic data on reach and audience, the exercise was able to map these through careful listening and recording of caller’s disclosures of where they were calling from, and other personal information such as their names, race, religion, and employment status. From this information, it was possible project albeit with a high level of possible error, the distribution of calls as indicated in Figure 3 below.



The Final Report provides a cartographic representation of the geographic spread of the calls and notes that persons called in from a very wide geographic area spanning almost every region in Guyana. It must be noted however, that most of the calls came from the most populous regions of 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10, where radio stations are also conveniently located and accessible by land line and cellular telephones. It should also be noted that transcripts seem to suggest that there are different race-age demographics per station as was suspected when the choices of which stations to choose from were made. It would seem that NTN and Radio Guyana have more Indo-Guyanese callers than NCN, HJ and Paiwomack, but not exclusively so. Radio Paiwomack recorded the lowest number of calls from exclusively Indigenous persons, but

followed a long conversational format that somewhat differed from the style of the radio stations based in Georgetown. This did not allow for too many other callers on any single call-in programme on Paiwomack.

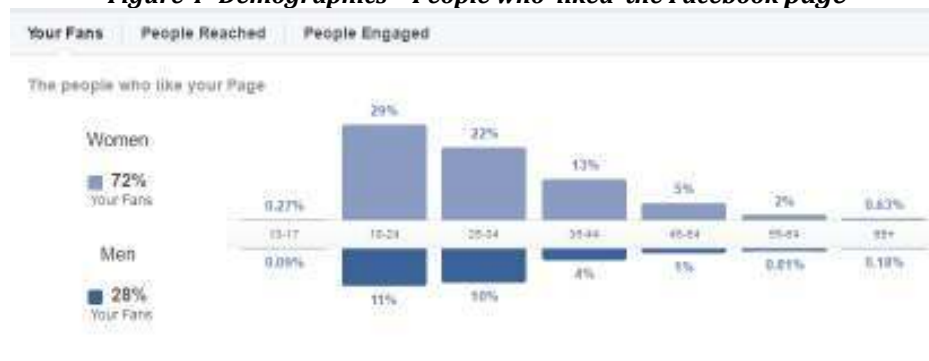
HJ Radio was chosen for its popularity among young vulnerable Guyanese; it recorded only 15 calls over the life of the project with 9 (60%) of those calls on the topic “Safety and Security” in week 3. The highest number of calls by far was recorded on NTN (67) and Radio Guyana (123), totaling 190 or 75% of all calls. Call quality was generally coherent and relevant with a few exceptions as could be expected. The major challenge in analyzing the calls was in the use of Guyanese Creole, slangs, and idiomatic expressions, which meant that much of the analysis had to be done manually since these items confound tools designed for standard English.

### Facebook Consultation

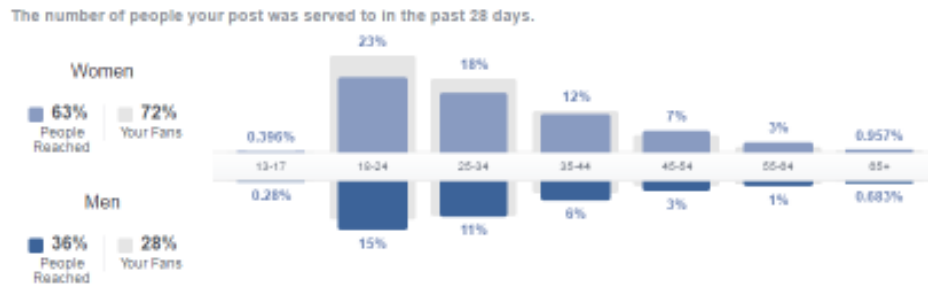
Facebook consultations followed a similar schedule as the Radio consultations. Each week a different theme was prompted for discussion on selected Facebook sites and on a dedicated Facebook page created for the project (i.e. <https://www.facebook.com/pg/theunityproject.gy/>). Initial feedback from users prompted revisions of the postcards, which were then broken down into smaller concepts and posted every 36 hours. Simultaneously, requests were made to a wide range of secondary schools, youth groups, religious groups, and other special interest groups in an attempt to garner responses from the hard-to-reach demographic of youth, shut-ins and women. Additionally, paid boosts were employed to reach Guyanese aged 14-65 living in Guyana.

Figures 4-5 illustrate the demographic data of persons involved in some way with the project either by reading the posts, sharing them, liking the page, or making comments and contributions to the discussions.

**Figure 4- Demographics – People who ‘liked’ the Facebook page**



**Figure 5: Demographics – People reached by Facebook page**



The Media Consultation process was intended to get to the hard-to-reach demographic, which included youth, certain ethnic and political groups as well as women. As figures 4 and 5 above indicate, women made up 72% of the sample while men made up 28 %. In terms of age, participants ranged from 13-44 years old (these were the parameters set by the project). Young adults 18-24 accounted for 38% of the sample, while those aged 25-34 accounted for 29% and those 35-44 accounted for 18%. A small number of respondents aged 13-17 accounted for less than 1%. More young women participated in the online component of the project as against the radio component where this trend was reversed, with over 85% of the calls coming from males. This suggests that public participation in terms of gender is still domain-specific, along the lines of the public and private domains occupied by men and women, respectively. In aggregate, 44 communities in Guyana participated in the online activity ranging from 74% from Georgetown to about 2% collectively in Cuyuni/Mazuruni and deep hinterland areas.

#### 1.4 Literature review: The Meaning of Social Cohesion as it Relates to Guyana

There are many excellent books, monographs, official documents and reports, and policy and empirical studies on social cohesion in the academic and policy literature. One of the most widely quoted is the excellent review by Jane Jenson titled **Defining and Measuring Social Cohesion**. Jenson focused on the evolution of the concept, its theoretical underpinnings, and its application to the experiences of the European Union (EU) as it grappled with the challenges to social inclusion and integration facing the diverse member countries of the EU; and more recently the internal and external migratory waves and population movements that have accompanied European integration and population movements, especially from formerly European colonies. Speaking to its theoretical and scientific credentials, Jenson writes that:

“Social cohesion is a concept with a history. It is not simply an academic concept or a catch-all word meaning many things. Rather, it is what is helpfully termed a ‘quasi-concept’ – a hybrid operating within policy communities’. (Jenson 2010, p. 3)

A quasi-concept is one that is based on an analysis of the data of a particular situation, which makes it relatively realistic and scientifically legitimate; and at the same time, it is sufficiently vague, which makes it adaptable to various situations and flexible enough to inform policy and political actions. She noted that the literature on social cohesion focuses on two dimensions: the inequality dimension that concerns the goal of promoting equal opportunities and reducing



disparities; and the social capital dimension that concerns the goal of strengthening social relations, interactions, and ties (p. 3). Jenson's review further explored the concepts of social inclusion, social exclusion, social capital, inequality, and diversity and their relationship to social cohesion. With respect to social capital, which she saw as a component of, but not synonymous with social cohesion, she noted that there are three forms of social capital: bonding, bridging and linking (p. 10). This is a useful typology since it refers to relations: a) within a group or community (*bonding*); b) between groups or communities (*bridging*); and c) across diverse communities and social groups (*linking*). These elements of social cohesion such as the inequality and social capital dimensions, and the different forms of social capital, are critical for the Guyana context since they can inform the types and modus operandi of various strategic actions intended to strengthen social cohesion within and across diverse groups and communities.

Christian Larsen dealt with the links between social integration and social cohesion in an article titled **Social cohesion: Definition, measurement, and developments**. He posited:

"Social integration and social cohesion are difficult terms to define. I simply suggest that we define social integration as the process that lead[s] to social cohesion. Thereby, we are left with the job of defining social cohesion, which ordinary citizens, policy makers and social scientists often just refer to as the "glue" or the "bonds" that keeps societies integrated. (...) I suggest that we define social cohesion as the belief held by citizens of a given nation state that they share a moral community, which enables them to trust each other" (p. 2).

Larsen's discussion of social cohesion and the importance of trust is particularly pertinent to the Guyana reality where ethnic insecurity and lack of trust comprise a major fault line in the social fabric. He argued that in the shift from a pre-modern to modern societies where traditional bonds became weakened:

"[T]rust becomes a fundamental precondition for the ontological safety for the individual. (...) One can argue that in a "risk society" many risks can only be overcome by placing trust in unknown fellow citizens and the roles they fulfill in the social system as policemen and women, social workers, bank advisors and countless others. Even more convincing is the argument that trust in unknown fellow citizens, besides individuals' ability to cope with modernity, is crucial for the functioning of modern institutions such as the market, democracy and the state" (p. 4).

In their monograph, titled **Measuring and validating social cohesion: a bottom-up approach**, Sylvain Acket et al. discussed the activity spheres and social relations underpinning various definitions of social cohesion. They discussed the seminal contributions of Jane Jenson and P. Bernard in this regard, and expressed a preference for the integrated scheme proposed by Bernard that focused on six components as follows: 1) insertion/exclusion; 2) legitimacy/illegitimacy; 3) recognition/rejection; 4) equality/inequality; 5) participation/passivity and 6) affiliation/isolation (Acket et al, p. 4). They then quoted the definition of social cohesion by Chan et al. 2006: 290, as follows:

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“Social cohesion is a state of affairs concerning both the vertical and horizontal interactions among members of a society, as characterized by a set of attitudes and norms that include trust, a sense of belonging, and the willingness to participate and help, as well as the behavioural manifestations”. (Acket et al. p. 4.)

This discussion of the six components of social cohesion a la Bernard, and the above definition that speaks of trust, a sense of belonging, and willingness to participate and help are critical in the Guyana context where both the theoretical and empirical literature as well as the Municipal and Regional Consultations undertaken to gather inputs for preparing the draft Strategic Plan, indicated major deficits in trust, sense of belonging, and willingness to participate and help.

William Easterly et al in a monograph titled **Social Cohesion, Institutions, and Growth**, explored the notion and the available evidence that indicators of lack of social cohesion, such as income inequality and ethnic fractionalization, in themselves determine institutional quality that in turn causally determines growth.

Thus, and for purposes of their paper, they defined social cohesion as:

“... the nature and extent of social and economic divisions within society. These divisions – whether by income, ethnicity, political party, caste, language, or other demographic variable – represent vectors around which politically salient societal cleavages can (though not inevitably or “naturally”) develop. As such, socially cohesive societies (as stressed above) are not demographically homogenous, but rather ones that have fewer potential and/or actual leverage points for individuals, groups, or events to expose and exacerbate social fault lines, and ones that find ways to harness the potential residing in their societal diversity (in terms of diversity of ideas, opinions, skills, etc.)” (p. 4-5).

Their empirical work focused on direct measures of social cohesion such as membership rates of organizations, civic participation, and measures of trust; and indirect measures such as income distribution, and ethnic heterogeneity (ethno-linguistic fractionalization).

Their argument that weak social cohesion may conduce to weak state institutions is an interesting one, in a context where competing socio-economic groups may adopt strategies to gain advantage over other groups that include capturing and thus weakening such state institutions through graft, corruption, nepotism etc. In this vein, they conclude that:

“Where such a common identity is lacking, opportunistic politicians can and do exploit differences to build up a power base. It only takes one such opportunistic politician to exacerbate division, because once such ethnic group is politically mobilized along ethnic lines, other groups will” (p. 14).

This has indeed been the reality in Guyana over the past decades since Independence. The relevant sections of this Draft Strategic Plan will propose policy and programmatic actions in the areas of governance, and ethnic and race relations, that will hopefully address this tendency to capture, pervert and thereby weaken state and other institutions.

Finally, borrowing from and in many ways ‘localizing’ some of the strands of the theoretical literature reviewed above, the Ministry of Social Cohesion has adopted the following definition of social cohesion to guide its work in enhancing and promoting social cohesion in Guyana:

“It is a progressive process of enhancing social interaction, integration and harmony within and across the various social groups in Guyana by forging and reinforcing strong families, community and national values, in order to enhance and sustain socio- economic, cultural and spiritual well-being and enriched livelihoods for all”.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.5 National Validation**

A national validation process has been conceptualized as a final methodological stage to confirm the inputs and strategic policy interventions of the Strategic Plan. A two-fold validation process was developed to solicit both the commitment and endorsement of a wider section of the Guyanese population than that mobilized during the consultation stages. The Draft Strategic Plan will be subject to a public review mechanism whereby all Guyanese will be allowed to comment on the document and suggest additional actions to be included in the final Strategic Plan. To allow that, the draft plan will be posted online for a one week period in the month of February.

In addition to the public review process, a validation workshop will be organized in Georgetown in early March 2017. Representatives of the communities in all ten regions who were involved in the face-to-face consultations will be invited to discuss the draft Strategic Plan and eventually endorse the document. Additional invitees will include members of the diplomatic community, UN agencies, civil society organizations, as well as governmental agencies and line ministries that will be directly involved in the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

### **1.6 Institutional arrangements**

The Ministry of Social Cohesion led and coordinated the entire process of formulation of the Strategic Plan. UNDP provided technical and financial support during the development process and recruited the additional human resources capacities (i.e. experts and consultants) required to ensure a qualitative process in articulating the Strategic Plan.

The entire process for preparing this Draft Strategic Plan received overall guidance and inputs from a Social Cohesion Peer Group (SCPG) established for that purpose by MOSC and UNDP. The SCPG consisted of some twenty-three persons, representing: a) national-level NGOs and CSOs such as youth and women’s groups, human rights organizations, Amerindian organizations, religious organizations, service organizations, the private sector, the labour movement, academia, professional organizations; b) Guyanese personalities who had been involved in previous social cohesion initiatives; and c) members of the Inter-Ministry

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<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Social Cohesion also has a shorter definition of social cohesion as “A process of nurturing individual and community relationships in building a unified Guyana”. This definition is used in the Ministry’s sensitization and outreach activities.

Committee for Social Cohesion, previously set up by MOSC to promote coordination, collaboration, and feedback across government Ministries and entities considered critical for policy, programming and advancing the social cohesion agenda.<sup>4</sup>

The SCPG was very instrumental, especially in the early stages, in guiding the articulation of the draft Outcomes and arrangements for the municipal and regional consultations; reviewing the results of the pilot phase and providing suggestions for improving the process; reviewing the draft proposal for the Media Consultations; and, providing feedback on the entire process for preparing the draft Strategic Plan. Members of the SCPG also actively participated in some of the face-to-face consultations, including assisting in organizing the Working Groups and, in some instances participating in the group discussions.

More importantly, the SCPG, with its diverse membership, was helpful in ensuring that all perspectives and views were acknowledged in the Strategic Plan development process. The presence of long-time social cohesion experts and activists was also critical to secure a level of continuity and make sure that accomplishments as well as lessons learned from previous social cohesion initiatives were incorporated and effectively utilized in formulating the Strategic Plan.

### **1.7 General Findings: The State of Social Cohesion in Guyana**

Summaries of the “Face-to-face municipal and regional consultations” and the “Media consultations – Radio and Facebook” are attached to this draft Strategic Plan as Annex 2 and Annex 3, respectively. They have been attached as separate appendixes, in as much as they covered similar themes and indeed generated broadly comparable responses. However, the differences in methodologies and in target respondents have produced some peculiar perspectives and proposals for policy and programmatic actions that not only confirmed the utility of the two separate tracks, but also threw up some specific findings that will be presented below in summary form.

#### **(a) The Municipal and Regional Consultations**

The thirty consultations undertaken to gather perspectives on what should be the focus of the Strategic Plan and the responses to the questions posed to participants under each of the five broad Outcomes, as summarized above, point to several findings that will be briefly outlined below:

- i. Citizens across Guyana, in their towns, regions, and communities, genuinely wish to see a reduction in the fault lines, tensions, and areas of conflict, and to live together harmoniously in a united Guyana. As such, the climate and terrain for pursuing a social cohesion agenda is a very fertile one, although one must bear in mind that persons often say what they think the listener wants to hear;

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<sup>4</sup> The full list of people invited to the Social Cohesion Peer Group is attached hereto as ANNEX 1

ii. Notwithstanding the above, the intense competition for power among the political elites and between the two main political parties poses a significant obstacle to developing a broad national consensus on the policy and programmatic actions to be included under the Strategic Plan, and indeed a challenge for the implementation of the Plan itself. A number of activists and supporters aligned with the Opposition participated in the consultation process, some enthusiastically, especially in the interior and rural coastal regions. Nonetheless, reinforced efforts need to be made to bring the main opposition political party on board. Failing this, much energy will need to be invested to maintain the level of commitment displayed by all, especially at the regional and community levels, irrespective of their assumed or expressed political affiliation, loyalties, or orientations;

iii. Citizens were highly appreciative of the opportunity to provide inputs via the regional consultation process, and are eager for such opportunities to express their views on national and local issues. Citizens also displayed civility to each other even when they did not agree with the views expressed, or were entrenched in a different social or political perspective, orientation, or affiliation. Thus, despite its many deficits, the spirit of inclusionary and participatory democracy is very much alive;

iv. The five themes agreed at the 2015 Social Cohesion Roundtable, and the Outcomes developed therefrom that were the focus of the consultations, were confirmed as relevant by respondents in the consultations, remain highly relevant, and, with appropriate modifications, can be used as the organizing themes for the Strategic Plan;

v. The Themes/Outcomes dealing with Economic Equity and Opportunities, and Citizen Safety and Security were the ones on which citizens expressed the most concerns and where they felt that the Central Government, particularly, public officials at the municipal, regional, and local levels, public sector institutions, the private sector, the labour unions, and other responsible parties need to take purposeful action. Thus, economic and livelihood issues, and safety and security concerns, seem to be determining more so than the other issues, the content and how the social cohesion agenda should be advanced under the Strategic Plan;

vi. Respondents generally saw the existent constellation of legal provisions, processes, institutions, and the way the marketplace functions, as largely to the advantage of the wealthy, those with property and assets, the better off elites, and commercial, mining, agricultural, logging, and service sector magnates at the national, regional and community levels. They saw this as a highly discriminatory system that is in some instances race-based, and biased against the poor, weak, socially, and economically vulnerable, and the ordinary wage and casual workers. More importantly, they saw these differences and inequalities as impacting the possibilities of enhancing and promoting social cohesion. There were palpable feelings of economic hurt and complaints of discriminatory practices recounted by a significant number of respondents who saw the economic order as buttressed by race, ethnicity, class, access to political power, and access to the ruling elite. Much would need to be done at the political and institutional levels to address these perceptions and challenges, whether real or imagined, if the Strategic Plan is to take root and achieve results in advancing the social cohesion agenda.

vii. With very few exceptions, participants across the consultations expressed negative, or at best, indifferent opinions on the functioning of the police in their various communities; on the professionalism of police ranks; on the level and quality of service and interaction between the police and the populace; and the commitment and capacity of the police to contribute to and ensure their safety and security. This was not all bad as there was some recognition of some of the capacity and material constraints faced by the police in executing their functions. Nevertheless, this is an area that will need to be addressed, in order to improve collaboration between citizens and the police for enhanced safety and security, which is one of the pillars of the social cohesion agenda;

viii. Citizens instinctively recognized the importance of inclusive and participatory governance institutions and processes, but seemed bewildered by the complexity of those institutions and processes. This is perhaps the result of a lack of knowledge of various legislative enactments governing such institutions and how they work. Thus, citizens saw the act of governing not as something to which they could easily relate or be involved in, but as an activity left to the elites and those elevated to leadership positions. This, of course, reflects the well-documented deficits in inclusive and participatory governance;

ix. Citizens fully recognized the heavy weight of ethnic and racial divisions in their everyday lives, and in general expressed views that indicate that they genuinely wish to see a more positive and harmonious future for race relations in Guyana. They invariably place the blame for poor ethnic and race relations on the actions of especially national level politicians and political parties. Memories of past hurt still held some in a defensive mode and impeded their ability to readily accept differences and diversity. This 'schizoid' posture is both a challenge and an opportunity for pursuing the social cohesion agenda, and it will take political will and commitment especially on the part of the political and civil society elites, and cultural and religious leaders to move on this agenda;

x. Citizens displayed a keen sense of the social issues and circumstances that left some groups and individuals in positions of vulnerability, discrimination, and exclusion. Differences in sexual orientation and the stigma and discrimination suffered by the LGBTQI community, were the subject of much passion at most consultations. The plight of the aged, infirm, homeless, differently abled, drug and alcohol abusers, in- and out of school and unemployed youth, and other vulnerable groups and individuals, was also raised and debated in most consultations. While these social issues may not have attracted the same level of attention as the issues dealing with economic equity, livelihoods, and safety and security, there was still the recognition that society in general needed to move to a higher level of understanding and acceptance if the social cohesion agenda based on inclusion, solidarity, and embracing of differences is to be advanced;

xi. Participants offered useful analyses and proposals for advancing social cohesion under the five broad outcomes. They focused, in particular, on what can be done by leadership at all levels of government, and what they can do individually and in their communities. Education and awareness; opportunities to work, play and share together; more purposeful action on the part of those central and local government officials responsible for protecting the poor, weak, and vulnerable; and more financial, training, and other support to communities to build their

capacities to address local level issues were some of the main recommendations across all five Outcomes;

xii. There was a significant focus on challenges facing in- and out- of school youth, young adults and others in that category, with respect to the quality and relevance of education they were receiving; the availability of jobs especially in interior and rural coastal regions and communities; access to technical and vocational, IT, and other relevant skills training to prepare them for the job market; discrimination on the basis of age and experience in the job market; incidences of exploitation and low wages by unscrupulous employers in commerce, mining, hospitality, logging, and other sectors; and in general, growing feelings of alienation among the youth as a result of the above and the seemingly inevitable tensions that seem to characterize relations between the young and the older age groups in most societies. This phenomenon clearly has negative impacts on social cohesion in most contemporary societies and Guyana is no exception. Specially-focused policy and programmatic actions, and appropriate intervention strategies will need to be developed to address the needs of the youth, as the adults of tomorrow, who will be relied upon to build on the gains and successes in enhancing and promoting the social cohesion agenda. And this will need to be a major focus and plank of the Social Cohesion Strategic Plan;

xiii. While participants generally recognized the role that religious leaders, civil society organizations, women's and youth groups, school principals and teachers, and others, can play at the community level to serve as organizers and leaders in advancing the social cohesion agenda, this recognition and role were not as fulsome as might have been expected. This was either a function of the weak capacities in those local level centers of leadership; based on the unvoiced view that these positions of leadership have little to contribute to advancing the social cohesion agenda; or perhaps an undervaluing of the vital role of local actions and initiatives in advancing the social cohesion agenda. Whatever the reasons, much advocacy and sensitization work will need to be pursued under the Strategic Plan to build local capacities and empower local-level agency in advancing the social cohesion agenda.

#### **(b) Media Consultations: Radio and Facebook**

##### **Theme 1: Living Together - Analysis**

- Ideas of racial, ethnic, and cultural difference are prevalent and highly salient to any work on cohesion. Programmes fostering respect, understanding, creating good opportunities of exposure and interaction at every level and opportunity are indicated.
- A high degree of intentional and structured diversity education in the context or platform of "good citizenship or civic education" is also indicated.
- Modeling as driver of ethnic division is also evident where young respondents indicate that the example set by those who are held in esteem or who are in leadership positions tends to drive cleavages especially in certain contexts.
- Political rhetoric perceived as divisive and destructive is also highly implicated as a challenge towards national unity.

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- A heightened and more dynamic role for such organizations and statutory bodies such as the Ethnic Relations Commission, Codes for persons in public office and other watchdog bodies as well as public education as to how to address such matters when they are observed is indicated.
- Allaying fear is indicated as central to any work on cohesion since fear seems to be a key challenge to cohesion. Several types of fear are spoken of such as fear of the “other” and being “othered”; fear of-unknown/uncertainty; fear of-being harmed in some way and not being protected; fears about not having enough; and fear of not being considered/being marginalized, not being respected, not being understood.

### Theme 2: Safety and Stability - Analysis

- Whereas the recurring theme of fear was generally indicated as a barrier to cohesion in discussions about unity, it has also been overtly expressed as a central and negative aspect of the lived experience of many Guyanese in terms of personal experiences of interpersonal violence, crime, and perceptions of some particularly weak systems of governance in some agencies which should be better equipped to protect citizens.
- The general response has been to call for tougher laws and sentences.
- However, a few discussants have been able to relate crime to joblessness, rise in substance use, and certain perceived policies which are seen to be aiding criminals at the expense of citizens.
- Emotionally this discussion was full of anger and fear mixed with sadness.
- The relationship between feeling personally secure and participation in community, civic or public life is a positive in that, the more one feels secure the more engaged they tend to be in public life. Feelings of security and stability are therefore fair indicators for levels of engagement and public participation. Civic engagement and public participation are often considered key variables in fostering social and national cohesion.

### Theme 3: Equal Rights and Justice - Analysis

- The general perception emerging from the discussions both on Facebook and on radio is that there is variable equality, equity or parity experienced in Guyana.
- This is driven by perceived inequalities in power, resource allocation, and access to opportunity. These perceptions pose fundamental challenges to cohesion since they undermine trust and tend to set groups competitively against each other over perceptually scarce resources. Who “gets” and who “does not get” is perceived to be related to alignment to largely political or other such power bases in the society. If these ideas and or lived experiences persist then the prognosis for cohesiveness in Guyana could be very poor.
- However, if efforts are made to undermine these persistent inequalities in an equitable and transparent manner coupled with efforts to control racially charged



rhetoric, fear mongering, and to foster respect amongst diverse groups in the country the outlook for Guyana would be positive in terms of cohesion.

- Gender relations and women's rights is also an emerging theme. Some young males seem to perceive that their rights are not being upheld (as well as those of women) through the judicial system, in domestic matters. This aligns to many general comments that point to lack of trust in the protective mechanisms that should bring wrongdoers to justice, but are now not expected to deal fairly with all cases. The effect of these perceptions is to undermine confidence and participation in those formal systems of justice which are in place and perhaps to seek other forms of redress such as vigilante justice.
- For those who may not wish to resort to other informal types of redress there could be a learned helplessness and hopelessness which creeps in affecting mental health and general feelings of well-being. These have an impact on both productivity and interpersonal as well as inter-group relations, especially if it is perceived that wrong doing is being perpetrated by members of one group against members of another with no justice and fairness of redress.
- If these perceptions persist in the context of governmental policy which appears to pardon even those who have been brought to justice without clear understanding of the rationale and perhaps demographic details of those pardoned, then this can serve to further undermine confidence in the formal system and will if left unaddressed likely help to sustain existing social tensions.

#### Theme 4: Governance and Participation - Analysis

- **Pride in Citizenship:** There is a general pride at being Guyanese juxtaposed with the tension sometimes felt of living in conditions which sometimes do not seem to support the best life that Guyanese could have. Questions arose in the discussions about how a poor person reconciles their lived experience of need with information about the wealth of Guyana? How do they know they will get some of this, how does this get communicated to them, and how are they to know what is in place to enable them to draw down?
- **Security, Protection, and Resources:** Interlinked with these ideas seem to be perceptions of a systematic break down of law and order and severely compromised protective mechanisms which seem taxed with providing this protection. This protection is not limited to the physical protection against criminal activity, which is the single most pervasive trope that cross cuts all 4 themes analyzed. Protection is expanded to include social protection, explicitly referred to in the transcripts as social security for old people and systems of discipline in schools for children to replace corporal punishment. In other words, for those expressing their views in this project "governance" means "governing for all and taking care of all", more of which, they think needs to happen.
- **Community:** Many people see the community as the site for local action in an environment enabled by the policy makers and government. They see the role of

the citizens as that of helping to keep the law and order of the country but that this must be enabled at the level of the communities through such mechanisms as a properly resourced and remunerated Police Force; interconnected community policing groups and outposts; army support for police; arming of selected persons in communities; and other vibrant community projects which are inclusive and encouraging to all.

- **Political Leadership:** The behavior of those who are managing the processes of government and leadership is seen as key to good governance and participation on two levels (1) they are expected to be the exemplars of good behavior which citizens can model; and (2) they are seen as important galvanizing agents of interest groups who are considered purveyors of legitimate information and controllers of scarce resources (jobs for instance).
- **Participation:** As this occurs as it will to varying degrees in any system, there must be mechanism for redress and for misconceptions to be addressed. These opportunities are too limited to present any countervailing/action opportunities. As such, citizens seem to get caught between competing representations of reality which in turn can undermine their sense of connectedness to one in favor of the other, but also can undermine their sense of safety, citizenship, and impede their own agency in seeking opportunities which could be present in country.
- **Fear at the centre:** The reasons for citizens curtailing their participation in public, community and national events have been many, but none is as pervasive as fear. This is another cross-cutting variable of concern which is at the core of any inhibition of cohesion in Guyana. Indeed, it may be the most pervasive one.

The above findings have been gleaned from the responses to the questions under the five Outcomes, and the freely expressed views and comments of participants during the group discussion, plenary sessions and media conversations on radio and Facebook. Many of them are in the realm of perceptions. But these often define the reality as citizens experience it and predispose actions and reactions. Social Cohesion is a process as well as a constantly evolving state of being that, by its very nature, is impacted by individual and group perceptions of how they are being treated by the rest of society, whether they are included or excluded, embraced, or discriminated against. Thus, the overarching goal, vision, objectives, underlying strategies, and the policy and programmatic actions that constitute the Social Cohesion Strategic Plan will need to:

- build upon the above findings;
- define broad strategic objectives and strategies to address them;
- determine appropriate policy and programmatic actions to achieve these strategic objectives; and
- identify specific entry points and tailored intervention strategies to guide implementation of the Strategic Plan.

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These guiding principles will be further elaborated in the following section that proposes some policy and programmatic actions for inclusion in the Strategic Plan, that are drawn from the broad array of comments, responses to the questions, and proposals under the five Outcomes, that were voiced by participants during the consultation process.

## PART 2

# THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL COHESION IN GUYANA

### 2.1. Vision, Objectives, and Theory of Change underpinning the Strategic Plan

President David Granger in his **Address** at the Opening Session of the Social Cohesion Roundtable held on 3 September 2015, posited the **goal of social cohesion** in Guyana as follows:

“Guyana, today, still needs to inhibit the sort of social erosion that degenerated into civil violence. We still need to exhibit the spirit of social cohesion which can assure effective representation and inclusion. Central to that concept is the **Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana**, which prescribes, at Article 13 «The principal objective of the political system of the State is to establish an inclusionary democracy by providing increasing opportunities for the participation of citizens and their organisations in the management and decision-making processes of the State, with particular emphasis on those areas of decision-making that directly affect their well-being». We feel that the constitutional ideal of ‘inclusionary democracy’ could best be achieved by strengthening social cohesion”.

It is clear from the above quotation that the Head of State sees the overall goal of pursuing a social cohesion agenda in Guyana as that of achieving the ideal of an inclusionary democracy. The Ministry of Social Cohesion has proposed the following as the **vision for social cohesion** in Guyana:

“A unified Guyana where diversities are embraced, conflicts resolved, networks and collaboration with stakeholders strengthened, equity promoted, and decision making processes result in equal opportunities and benefits to all”.

The above vision statement has captured the various principles, modalities, and conceptual underpinnings as outlined in the review of the concept of social cohesion under section 1.4 of this draft Strategic Plan. Respect for diversity, conflict transformation, collaborative modes of interaction, equity, democratic decision-making, inclusion, equal opportunities, and benefits for all.

In presenting his strategy for social cohesion, President Granger argued as follows:

“We have to repair that damage [Discord, arising out of ethnic, economic, political, religious, and other differences], restore trust and rebuild the bases of a ‘moral community’ which enables us to trust each other. We propose to do so by pursuing five

areas of public policy. First, we must do more to eliminate extreme poverty. Second, we must eradicate the worst forms of inequality, including gender and geographic inequality. Third, we need to ensure that there is greater inclusion. Fourth, we will work to implement fair employment laws which ensure the occupational health and safety of our working people and promote anti-discrimination practices. Fifth, there must be equal access to education for everyone". (Address, 2015, pp. 2-5).

While diverse strategies for enhancing and promoting social cohesion can be discerned in the extant literature, there are also some common threads that are also relevant to the Guyana situation – engendering trust; reducing inequalities and discrimination; fostering harmonious social relations; increasing participation in political processes; increasing access to social services, especially education; decreasing disparities such as income, access to resources and the impacts of geography; enhancing citizen safety and security; and adopting measures to manage diversities, such as race, ethnicity, class, age, culture, ability, sexual orientation etc.

The following broad **objectives will underpin this draft Strategic Plan towards promoting and enhancing social cohesion in Guyana:**

- a) Promoting inclusive growth and reducing socio-economic inequalities in terms of income, ethnicity, social class or group, gender, geography, and demography;
- b) Strengthening peoples' participation, integration and sustainable development through enhanced governance mechanisms, and policies that promote environmental sustainability and inter-generational equity;
- c) Promoting social inclusion and tolerance for diversity such as race, ethnicity, class, geography, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and culture;
- d) Enhancing citizen and community safety and security through reducing the incidence and impacts of crime and violence; and reducing the impacts of health, food and nutrition insecurity, occupational health and safety, and ethnic and group insecurities;
- e) Enhancing citizen participation in political processes and decision-making on matters that affect their lives and livelihoods through strengthening inclusionary governance, human rights, democracy, participatory processes, and the rule of law;
- f) Promoting inclusionary democracy, at the national, regional, and local levels, and strengthening the role of social partners in socio-economic processes, including the role of the private sector, the labor movement, the media, religious organizations, women's organizations, youth organizations, sports organizations, civic groups, and other non-governmental organizations; and
- g) Promoting a culture of peace, reconciliation, harmony, trust, inclusion, equality, respect for diversity, non-discrimination, understanding, sharing, caring and mutual support, towards inculcating social habits and behaviors that promote and enhance social cohesion.

The **Theory of Change** that informs this draft Strategic Plan holds that the overwhelming majority of Guyanese want to live in a socially-cohesive society, and will actively support and contribute their efforts to building such a society in which there is economic equity and

opportunity for all to earn a decent living; safety and security for all are advanced and protected; social inclusion and tolerance mark relations between and among individuals and groups; everyone participates in, and benefits from governance mechanisms and decisions taken at the various governmental levels; and harmony, peace, trust, and reconciliation take root uniting the various ethnic and race groups that comprise the population, irrespective of age, social and economic status, geography, ability, group identity, or political affiliation.

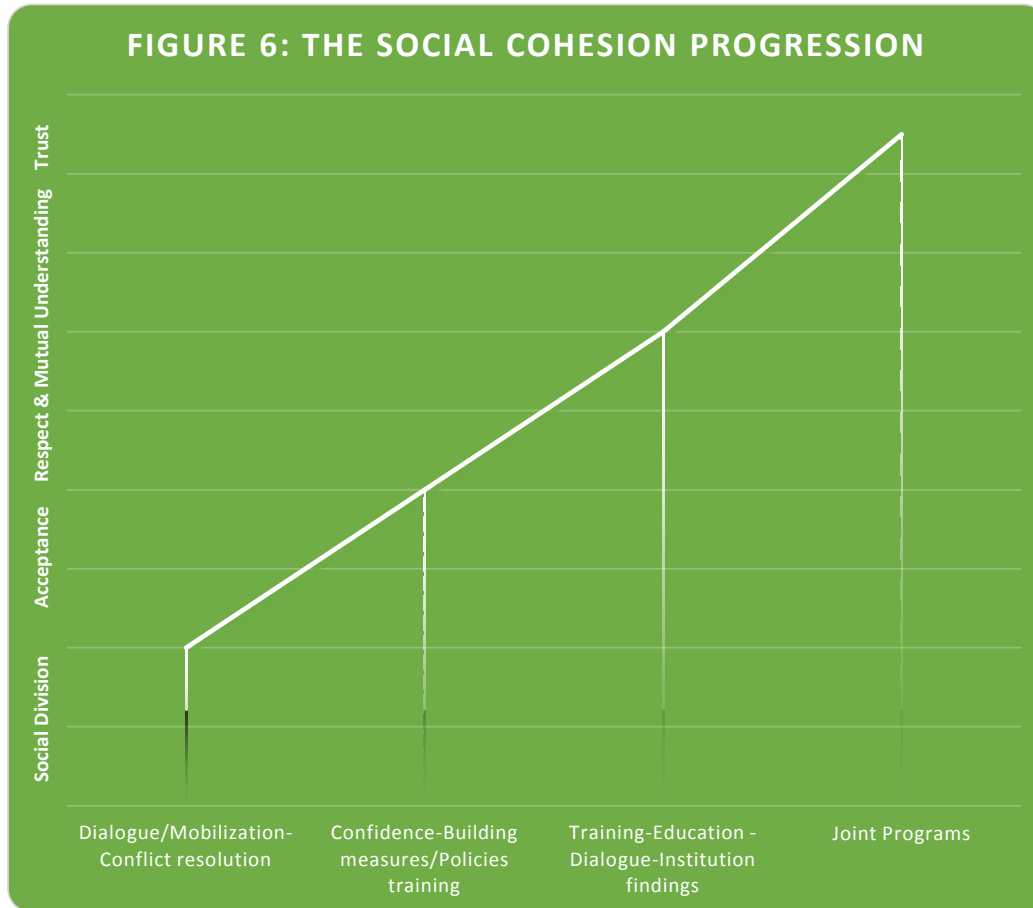
This **Theory of Change** is based on the following premises:

- i. That all Guyanese want to live in a socially-cohesive society and to see a reduction if not elimination of the various divisions and fault lines that act as obstacles towards that end. In this regard, the required policy and programmatic actions that can enhance and promote social cohesion can be pursued with guarded optimism, in the framework of this draft social cohesion Strategic Plan;
- ii. That this desire to live in peace, harmony, and unity, is more evident and actively lived by the mass of ordinary Guyanese citizens in the towns, villages, local communities, and neighborhoods where they carry out their daily activities, in relative peace, and guarded yet optimistic harmony. In this regard, the ordinary Guyanese citizen is a willing soldier in the crusade to pursue a national social cohesion agenda;
- iii. That political leaders in their competing political parties; and business, cultural, religious, and civic leaders, individually and in their business organizations, religious, cultural, and civil society groupings, all embrace the desideratum of a socially-cohesive and inclusive society, and are willing to pursue actions and engagements that enhance and promote social cohesion. This is a willingness that is contingent and tenuous, and is easily weakened by considerations of short-term interest, mutual distrust among the political elites, immediate economic and political gains, and the pursuit and retention of political power and perquisites;
- iv. That the burden of a history of inter-racial and ethnic conflicts, and political, social, and geographic differences and divisions, act as real obstacles and barriers in the short- to medium-term to unrelenting steps needed in promoting and pursuing the vision of a socially-cohesive society to which all aspire. Further, this a countervailing factor that should always be borne in mind, and its debilitating consequences need to be purposefully and constantly addressed if social cohesion actions at the people level are to be afforded the space and opportunity to bear fruit and flourish;
- v. That for purposes of programming, different types of interventions such as dialogues, mediation, and conflict resolution; confidence building measures; training, education, and institution-building; and joint programming, participation in community, regional and national events, and increased inter-group activities in sports, culture and recreation, will in turn lead to progressively deeper manifestations of social cohesion, from the level where inter-group and inter-personal interactions are characterized by social divisions; through acceptance of differences; through respect and mutual understanding; and finally, generalized

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trust, which is so lacking and which is an indispensable underpinning of a socially-cohesive society. (See below chart that graphically presents this progression).

Based on the above premises, the **Theory of Change** that underpins the Intervention Areas,



Objectives and Actions included in the draft Strategic Plan, is based on the following **guiding principles**:

- i. The draft Strategic Plan should be seen as a blueprint that provides strategic guidance on the range of policy and programmatic actions that can be taken, in aggregate, towards enhancing and promoting social cohesion in Guyana. Thus, if fully and sensitively implemented, the policy and programmatic actions proposed, should over time, lead to the overall objective of enhancing and promoting social cohesion;
- ii. The Intervention Areas, Objectives, and Actions proposed for the draft Strategic Plan, present a menu of options and approaches, to be utilized selectively and instrumentally, based on the short- to medium-term goals being pursued during any

- given planning period. In this regard, the annual Implementation Plan, based on the overall Strategic Plan, should identify short- to medium-term objectives and the actions that will be undertaken to achieve them;
- iii. Given the fluid, uncertain, ever-changing, and tenuous environment that defines the social cohesion landscape in Guyana, actions proposed in the Strategic Plan, and the annual Implementation Plans, need to be constantly reviewed, for their continuing relevance, applicability, potential results, and impact, and periodically adjusted as needed.
  - iv. Given the prevailing challenges at the political level and the current difficulty in reaching consensus among the leadership especially at the national level on any number of policy and programmatic actions, the overwhelming emphasis in the short- to medium-term should be on supporting and promoting actions at the village, community, and neighbourhood levels, and perhaps in some of the Regions and Municipalities, where habits of collaboration and cooperation have taken root and the climate for reaching consensus on such actions is more hospitable;
  - v. Given the tentativeness and historical curtailment of 'agency' at the people level in their communities, clubs, and associations, there is need for strong sponsorship, moral and material support, and sensitive guidance from the Ministry of Social Cohesion, other government ministries and agencies, and national level business, religious, cultural, and civic organizations, for empowering 'agency' at the people level. This should be seen as a short-term expediency to be attenuated as such people level efforts develop the confidence, expertise, and organizational structures to pursue such activities with a minimum of external support, guidance, or inputs;
  - vi. Given the prevailing challenges and peculiarities facing the youth, women, Amerindian communities, and those groups and individuals identified as suffering marginalization, discrimination, intolerance and victimization, there needs to be a specific focus on such groups and individuals at all levels, and cohesion-sensitive policy and programmatic actions need to be given priority both in the overall Strategic Plan, and in the annual Implementation Plans that will carry forward the work towards enhancing and promoting social cohesion;
  - vii. Notwithstanding the political challenges, every effort needs to be taken at the national political level, with support and active intervention from business, religious, cultural, civic leaders, and the international community through sensitive invocation of treaty obligations with due respect for national sovereignty, to incline the political elites to habits of cooperation and consensus building, towards advancing the national development agenda at the macro level, and the social cohesion agenda at the people level. Without the progressive development of habits of accommodation and consensus among the national and regional political elites, the climate, and prospects for advancing the social cohesion agenda, will remain at best uncertain.

The above **theory of change** has been formulated based on the **Literature Review** that explored experiences from other countries and regions in devising policies and actions to promote social cohesion; and the sentiments expressed by participants, and their level of commitment to embrace, support and advance a social cohesion agenda gleaned from both the municipal and



regional face-to-face consultations, and the media consultations on radio and Facebook. Similarly, the Implementation Areas, Objectives, and Actions under the draft Strategic Plan, are advanced based on careful listening, and sensitive distillation of the perspectives, fears, concerns, and the hopeful proposals advanced in the regional consultations and the media consultations. These have been fulsomely reflected in the **Consolidated Report on Municipal and the Regional Consultations**; and the **Final Report on the Media Consultations**, that constitute the evidentiary basis upon which this draft Strategic Plan has been formulated.

## **2.2 Intervention Areas, Objectives, and Actions under the Draft Strategic Plan**

The draft Strategic Plan focuses on **four (4) broad Intervention Areas**, as follows:

1. Developing and strengthening **capacities** at Central, Regional, and Local Government levels, Community structures, Private Sector, Organized Labour, Religious, Cultural, and Civil Society Organizations to undertake actions at all levels towards enhancing and promoting social Cohesion in Guyana;
2. Strengthening, empowering and connecting **institutions** at the Central and Regional Government levels, Municipalities, Statutory Commissions<sup>5</sup>, and others in the private sector and Organized Labour, to pursue and undertake cohesion-sensitive policies and actions that promote respect for and protection of the diversities that comprise Guyana based on race, ethnicity, age, culture, religion, economic and social status, geography and such other factors that may place individuals and groups in conditions of discrimination, exclusion, prejudice, and the unequal enjoyment of their rights as Guyanese;
3. Strengthening and enhancing the development of **policies** at all governmental levels, the private sector, labour organizations, civil society organizations, religious, cultural, and service organizations, academia, and institutions of higher learning so that they operate and carry out their mandates in ways that are cohesion-sensitive, and actively contribute to the achievement of national social cohesion goals;
4. Provide support, guidance, and enabling conditions for undertaking **programmatic actions** at central, regional and local government levels, in local communities, neighbourhoods and villages, and through private sector bodies, organized labour, religious, cultural, and civil society organizations, that individually and aggregately contribute to building trust, understanding, caring, sharing and support between and among individuals and communities, demolish barriers and strengthen solidarity, and bolster feelings of safety and security, towards enhancing and promoting social cohesion in Guyana.

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<sup>5</sup> Such as the constitutionally-mandated Ethnic Relations Commission, Human Rights Commission (yet to be established), Indigenous Peoples' Commission, Public Procurement Commission, Local Government Commission (yet to be established), Women and Gender Equality Commission, and Rights of the Child Commission, as well as the Public Service Commission, the Judicial Service Commission, Police Service Commission, and regulatory commissions such as the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission, the Guyana Forestry Commission, and the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission.

The findings of the different consultation processes (radio, online, face-to-face) have amply confirmed the areas where citizens in their municipalities, regions, communities, and villages feel that decisive action is needed to address a multiplicity of deficits that are negatively impacting enhancing and promoting social cohesion in Guyana. The above four Intervention Areas have been distilled from the findings of these consultative processes, and together constitute an analytically convenient and inclusive framework for articulating the social cohesion agenda for Guyana. The task of this draft 5-year Strategic Plan is to identify relevant and appropriate objectives and action areas under each of these broad Intervention Areas:

- that have the highest priority, in terms of their likely positive impact in advancing the social cohesion agenda in the short to medium term;
- that have broad-based buy-in and support from key national, civil society, regional and local constituencies;
- that are achievable during the five-year time span; and
- for which the requisite human and material resources can be mobilized to ensure successful implementation.

This section of the draft Strategic Plan will present these Intervention Areas, Objectives, and Actions to achieve the objectives. The Implementation Plan that accompanies this draft Strategic Plan will present these in a Logical Framework format, and that will provide full details on each Intervention area, including inputs, outputs, resource requirements, implementing parties, and means of verification. While the Ministry of Social Cohesion has a critical role to play in achieving these broad results and outcomes, it cannot by itself undertake the multiplicity of actions under the relevant objectives that will lead to successful implementation, since many of these are under the mandates of other ministries, statutory bodies and commissions, regional and local level governance institutions, the private sector, and individual economic actors and agents. This is where partnerships will be crucial for achieving success under the draft Strategic Plan. PART 3 below on Partnerships, Management and Implementation Arrangements will present some guiding principles, and approaches for a partnership strategy.

### **Intervention Area 1**

*Developing and strengthening **capacities** to undertake programmatic actions at all levels towards enhancing and promoting social cohesion in Guyana:*

#### **Objective 1.1:**

Advocate and support measures and mechanisms that build productive capacities, promote inclusion, and reduce marginalization and alienation targeting out of school youth, school drop-outs, women, girls, and the under- and unemployed in general<sup>6</sup>, through:

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<sup>6</sup> The Ministry of Business, and national and local private sector establishments will be critical in this endeavor. The Ministry of Business recently launched its Strategic Plan 2016-2020 that includes relevant actions to promote

- Advocacy and support for establishing or upgrading of facilities for technical and skills training with a focus on young un-skilled and low-skilled community members thereby preparing such persons for gainful employment;
- Providing targeted opportunities for learning a skill and income generation through apprenticeship placements;
- Mentoring schemes, appropriate training, and the provision of seed capital to start their own businesses; and
- Advocacy and support for setting up small grants programmes to encourage eco-friendly arts and crafts production targeting low-income and unemployed women and men.

**Objective 1.2:**

Promote and support capacity building for expanded economic opportunities and self-sustaining livelihoods at community and village levels targeting low-income and vulnerable women and men, through:

- Support for community-level economic activities focusing on self-employed women and men;
- Organizing skills training targeting women and girls – food preparation, cake and pastry making, sewing/dressmaking, skills training for the tourism and hospitality sectors, basic budgeting and book-keeping for self-employed women and girls; and
- Advice and support for setting up production and marketing cooperatives or similar entities in fishing, farming, and logging, especially in rural and hinterland communities where such forms of cooperative business activities might be useful and culturally acceptable.

**Objective 1.3:**

Strengthen capacities at the local level through which citizens can detect and address developments that impact safety and security, and other community level social issues, such as:

- Inter-faith counselling, and ‘go to’ and safe spaces to respond to the growing incidence of suicides, and victims of child and domestic abuse;
- Training of grief counsellors to cater to the needs of families impacted by suicide, and community leaders in counselling and mentoring community members in need; counseling and rehabilitation programmes for alcohol and drug abusers;
- Strengthening of community health centers, schools, and such decentralized services to support community efforts, through appropriate training and placement of support personnel; and
- Creating coalitions and empowering religious organizations, community-based organizations, sports clubs, women’s groups, youth groups and others within communities, to develop and implement programmes that cater for the destitute and

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small business development, and partnerships with established private sector bodies that can usefully include actions to support small business development especially in rural and hinterland communities.

needy, persons in conflict with the law, juvenile delinquents, school drop outs, and wandering children.

**Objective 1.4:**

Strengthen local capacities to undertake joint green development activities designed and managed at the inter-ethnic level, and to detect and respond to environmental threats to safety and security at the community level, through:

- Developing and implementing Regional and Municipal Green Development strategies promoting renewable energy solutions, organic farming, environmentally-friendly mining, and forestry activities; and improved water, sanitation, and solid waste management solutions for urban and built-up areas;
- Developing and implementing eco-friendly farming, fishing, and commercial activities in NDCs, CDCs, Hinterland, and Indigenous Villages based on appropriate, scale-level technologies, training, and incentive systems to adopt such technologies, with due attention to race, ethnicity, age, ableness, and inclusion of vulnerable and discriminated groups in such activities;
- Developing and implementing environmental security measures at the community level such as clearing of bushes/overgrowth, clean up campaigns, garbage collection and sanitation, street lighting, etc.;
- Training and empowerment of community/neighbourhood environmental monitors to detect and report environmental threats such as floods, air and water pollution, food safety, garbage buildup, and sanitation issues; and
- Training of occupational health and safety assistants as monitors and first responders to deal with accidents and other threats to safety and security in mining, logging, and agricultural operations, and riverain travel, in especially hinterland communities.

**Objective 1.5:**

Support capacity building programmes, advocacy and strategic communications to sensitize citizens and institutional actors of the importance of enhancing and promoting social inclusion and acceptance for building harmonious communities, to build local capacities to mediate differences and conflicts based on race and ethnicity between neighbouring villages and communities, and to deal with stigma and discrimination, social exclusion, and intolerance, and accepting and valuing diversity such as:

- Train the trainers programmes for community and village leaders and activists in diversity education, cultural diversity, counselling and mentoring, techniques for mediation, conflict management, and managing diversity, and to facilitate processes for managing conflicts between members within their villages organized by the Ministry of Social Cohesion with support from other governmental and social partners;
- Training for religious leaders, village and community elders, leaders in women and youth groups, coaches and sports organizers, sports trainers, cultural events organizers,

and others able to reach the youth, on techniques for mediation, conflict management, and managing diversity, and to facilitate processes for managing conflicts between members within their villages and communities, and between members of their respective villages and communities, to work with excluded individuals and groups;

- Diversity training programmes for village and community members (including clusters of communities) on various forms of diversity such as age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, culture, religion etc., and on acceptance and tolerance of such diversities;
- Partner with the University of Guyana to establish a graduate course on social cohesion, and promote staff (sabbatical) and student exchanges with international universities in countries with multi-ethnic societies;
- Meetings and experience sharing between the leaderships in neighbouring villages and communities to become more familiar with each other and to develop communication channels for managing and mediating conflicts between members of their respective villages and communities;
- Strengthened and empowered community mediation boards or similar informal mechanisms made up of civil society representatives, religious leaders, and other respected personalities within the community;
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs), booklets, posters, fliers etc., carrying messages on the negative impacts of stigma and discrimination, social exclusion, and intolerance, and on the positive results and impacts of social inclusion and tolerance for building harmonious communities and a united Guyana;

**Objective 1.6:**

Implement and/or support measures to build national and local capacities to enhance social cohesion through improved governance at the national, regional, and local/community/Amerindian Village levels:

- A training-of-trainers programme on best practices in enhancing social cohesion through inclusive and participatory governance;
- Training programmes for political parties, municipal officials, RDC, NDC, CDC and Amerindian Village councilors on best practices in enhancing social cohesion through inclusive and participatory governance, including formulating and implementing development works and programmes that are inclusionary and provide benefits for all;
- Sensitization and outreach sessions for Indigenous Village Toshauos and Councilors, NDC and CDC Chairs and Councilors, out-posted central government officials from Ministries of Public Health, and Education, Youth, Culture and Sports, the GGMC, the GFC, and the Police Service, on relevant legislation such as the Indigenous Peoples Act, the Forestry Act, the Mining Act, the Representation of the People Act and Amendments, the Local Government Act, Labour legislation, legislation governing the Police and other legal provisions, towards building capacity to interpret such legislation, and to know their rights<sup>7</sup>; and

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<sup>7</sup> Such capacity building could be organized by the Ministry of Social Cohesion and conducted jointly by the Ministries of Communities, Indigenous Peoples Affairs, Social Protection, Natural Resources, and Public Security.

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- Training programmes for leaders of religious organizations, private sector organizations, labour unions, NGOs, women's groups, youth groups, sports groups, and other service organizations on skills for political participation, interest group representation, negotiations, and coalition building, at national, regional and community levels.

### **Objective 1.7:**

Support measures and activities to enhance knowledge of the local government system, the rights and obligations of community members, relevant legislative enactments that relate to Indigenous Villages and hinterland communities, and to build local capacities to manage their local authority areas, such as:

- Public education and sensitization programmes for community/village leaders, councilors, and community members on the Local Government Act, the local government system, and roles and responsibilities of leaders, organized by the Ministry of Social Cohesion, the Ministry of Communities, and the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs, in collaboration with other relevant government ministries and RDCs;
- Opening of a campus of the University of Guyana in Region 9 (Lethem?) or deliver such training through distance education, to build and improve knowledge and management of public affairs by current inhabitants and coming generations of Indigenous persons;
- Capacity building sessions for Toshias and councilors in Indigenous Villages on their rights in the Constitution as it is set out in 154A and 140G, the Indigenous Peoples Act, and related legislative enactments, and processes for land titling, organized by the Ministry of Social Cohesion, the Ministry of Communities, and the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs, in collaboration with other relevant government ministries and RDCs;
- Dedicated training and capacity building sessions for NDC and CDC chairs, and Indigenous Village Council Toshias, and councilors, on the Environmental Protection Act (EPA), Mining Act, Forestry Act, Fisheries Act, and State Lands Act, and on the roles and responsibilities of statutory bodies such as the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC), and the Guyana Gold Board (GGB);
- Dedicated training and capacity building sessions for NDC and CDC chairs, and Indigenous Village Council Toshias, and all councilors, in planning, budgeting, accounting, project management, managing meetings, and presentation and communications skills relating to their functions as village and community leaders.

### **Intervention Area 2:**

*Strengthening and empowering **institutions** to undertake cohesion-sensitive actions, that promote respect, safety and security, valuing, and equal protection for the diverse groups and communities that comprise Guyana irrespective of race, ethnicity, age, culture, religion, economic and social status, geography, and such other factors that may place individuals and*

*groups in conditions of discrimination, exclusion, prejudice, and the unequal enjoyment of their rights as Guyanese.*

**Objective 2.1:**

Support and advocate for proactive measures and actions to reduce employment and wage discrimination, exploitative contract arrangements, and enhance protections for low-skilled and unskilled workers, casual workers, mining, and agricultural workers, (in rural, urban, hinterland, mining, agricultural and other communities) through:

- Sensitization sessions for workers on their rights under the law, and mechanisms available to them including labour organizations and the Ministry of Social Protection, to protect such rights, organized by local, regional, and national government functionaries;
- Active monitoring by mandated bodies such as labour welfare boards, the Ministry of Social Protection, the GGMC and GFC, towards the enforcement of labor laws especially for workers in vulnerable situations in interior Regions;
- Advocacy for and strengthening of workers' organizations, the right to unionization, and other forms of workers' self-protection;
- Advocacy and support for the out-posting of Social Protection officers and NIS officers in un-served rural and interior locations;
- Periodic monitoring visits by Central Government ministries, statutory bodies such as the GGMC and GFC, and local authority bodies such as RDCs, NDCs, and Indigenous Village Councils, to major mining, forestry, and agricultural locations, especially in hinterland Regions; and
- Engagements with national and local private sector and commercial bodies on the challenges facing the above categories of workers and advocate for measures that can be taken by private sector as good corporate citizens, to address such issues.<sup>8</sup>

**Objective 2.2:**

Support the adoption of measures and mechanisms through which citizens in their communities can participate in improving community safety and security such as:

- Establishment and strengthening of multi-ethnic Neighbourhood Policing Groups (NPG) and Community Policing Groups (CPG);
- Provision of requisite training for community members in community policing techniques, and periodic upgrading as needed;
- Provision of requisite equipment and facilities, such as transportation, security vests, radio sets, basic instruments for protection, in a collaborative effort between the various levels of government and the community;

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<sup>8</sup> This is the space for a leading role for the Ministries of Social Cohesion, Social Protection, Business, Natural Resources, and Public Security, in engaging with national and local level private sector bodies and operations towards reducing some of the discriminatory employment and remuneration practices that vulnerable workers in the mining, forestry, hospitality, and commercial sectors often face.

- Establishment of community/neighbourhood telephone trees, WhatsApp groups, and similar communications and early warning systems as supports to community crime prevention and policing efforts; and
- Improved modalities for communication, coordination, and collaboration, between the Guyana Police Force, relevant ministries, and agencies responsible for providing safety and security services, the various levels of government, and community leaders and members;
- Inter-faith citizen observatories to monitor threats to community safety and security, with specific focus on youth at risk.

**Objective 2.3:**

Undertake advocacy and programmatic measures, in collaboration with other government ministries and national stakeholders, for strengthened Constitutional Commissions, in particular the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), the Indigenous Peoples' Commission (IPC), the Rights of the Child Commission (ROCC), and the Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC), and Statutory bodies, and to improve inclusive and participatory governance, and enjoyment of rights, at the national and local levels:

- Advocate for and support the efficient functioning of Constitutional Commissions and Statutory Bodies with mandates to promote and protect citizens' rights and entrench democratic and participatory modes of interaction at the national and local levels;<sup>9</sup>
- Organize a series of focus group encounters to obtain inputs on constitutional changes needed to improve inclusive and participatory governance;
- Disseminate fliers and pamphlets on proposed changes as per inputs received from the focus group encounters;
- Advocate for, and play a leading role in, promoting constitutional changes as per the inputs received from the focus group encounters;
- Provide inputs to the Constitutional Reform Committee (and the Constitutional Reform Commission when it is established) on specific constitutional changes and provisions that would enhance and promote social cohesion through improvements in inclusive and participatory governance, and strengthening provisions dealing with rights for all irrespective of race, ethnicity, age, ability, social and economic status.

**Objective 2.4:**

Organize and/or support measures and activities to improve institutional effectiveness, and collaboration and coordination among officials from government ministries, regional administrations, NDCs, CDCs, Hinterland, and Indigenous Villages, in undertaking programmes and actions to enhance social cohesion through improved governance, at all levels, such as:

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<sup>9</sup> These would include the Ethnic Relations Commission, the Rights of the Child Commission, Women and Gender Equality Commission, the Constitutional Reform Committee (and a Constitutional Reform Commission when established), the Guyana Elections Commission, etc.



- Targeted sensitization programmes for public officials on the concepts, modalities, and menu of programmatic actions for enhancing and promoting social cohesion in Guyana, including the Social Cohesion Strategic Plan;
- Targeted training programmes for Government Ministries and Agencies, Municipalities, RDCs, NDCs, CDCs, and Village Councils on how to design and implement social and development programmes that specifically recognize diversity, cater to the needs of such diversities and excluded individuals and communities, and on appropriate policies and modalities, to manage, mediate, and resolve such cohesion-threatening conflicts at those levels;
- Promoting and supporting municipal, regional, and local level mediation, and dispute resolution mechanisms as instruments to receive complaints and manage conflicts at those levels, especially where such conflicts threaten or undermine social cohesion in the communities they serve;
- Regular quarterly meetings of representatives from constituent ministries comprising the Inter-Ministry Committee for Social Cohesion;
- Annual coordination meetings between the Ministry of Social Cohesion and the municipalities and RDCs on steps being taken and support required to enhance social cohesion through improved governance practices; and
- Meetings between the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Indigenous Village leaders at the annual National Toshious Conference (NTC), on steps being taken and support required to enhance social cohesion through improved governance practices at the village level.

**Objective 2.5:**

Implement special measures and programmes to reach in- and out- of school youth, and to provide age-appropriate information and sensitization on the Guyana Constitution, the system of government at national and local levels, the roles and functions of the Executive, Parliament, and the Judiciary, national symbols, observances and celebrations, and information on the rights and obligations of citizens<sup>10</sup>, such as:

- Dedicated training and sensitization sessions for school teachers, religious leaders, civic leaders, sports and cultural leaders, radio and television personnel, and others better positioned to reach the youth, at the village and community levels, to equip them to transmit accurate and relevant messages, civic knowledge, and inculcate feelings of attachment to, and pride in country and community;
- Integration of civic education into the primary and secondary education curriculum, and delivery of regular and age-appropriate content on civics to in-school students

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<sup>10</sup> This set of activities, which is intended to enhance understanding and build capacities at primary and secondary school levels on political and governance issues, requires institutional interventions including changes in the school curricula and programming of extra-curricular activities involving the youth, as the modalities for delivering the content and basic understanding of the political and governance systems. As such it is placed under the 'Institutions' rather than under the 'Capacities' Intervention Area.

based on the Handbook on Civics prepared by the Ministry of Social Cohesion, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sports;

- Annual Schools Debating Competitions at the Regional and Sub-regional levels for secondary level (Grades 10 and 11) students focusing, inter alia, on national and local political, socio-economic, and cultural topics, that serve to build knowledge of Region and Country, and interaction and integration into the national community; and
- Transmission of appropriate messages and content on the Guyana Constitution, the system of government at national and local levels, the roles and functions of the Executive, Parliament, and the Judiciary, national symbols, observances and celebrations, and information on the rights and obligations of citizens, to in- and out- of school youth, and young adults via radio, television, print, and social media using delivery modalities such as talk shows, call-in programmes, PSAs, fliers, etc.

### **Intervention Area 3:**

*Strengthening and enhancing the development and implementation of **policies** at the governmental, non-government and civil society levels, so that they are cohesion-sensitive, non-discriminatory, and inclusive with respect to the diverse groups and communities in Guyana, actively contribute to the achievement of national social cohesion goals, and advance the objectives of the National Social Cohesion Strategic Plan.*

#### **Objective 3.1:**

Support for the development and/or revision of national policies such as the Green Development Strategy, Area and Regional Development Strategies, National Youth Policy, gender policy, national oil and gas policy, land use policy, health and education policies, and such others that have can significant impacts on the constituent groups and interests in Guyana, based on the principles of inclusion, voluntary participation, joint ownership, and benefits for all, that lead to enhanced social cohesion based on shared and equitable benefits for all, through:

- Adoption and use of participatory methodologies in the formulation of such policies, strategies, and plans, including town hall and focus groups meetings, social media, and traditional media in areas of limited internet and radio penetration, with due regard to race, ethnicity, culture, religion, age, ability, geography, and social and economic status, to ensure that the voices of all groups and citizens are heard;
- Formulation and implementing of such policies, strategies and plans using a cohesion-sensitive lens and good practices drawn from other country experiences, stressing participation, solidarity, inclusion, trust, shared and equitable benefits, accountability, and ensuring that these values are mainstreamed and permeate such policies, strategies, and plans;
- Specific attention and inclusion of policy measures to benefit marginalized and excluded groups and individuals, whether based on age, disability, poverty, lack of voice, or other negatively-impacting circumstances, in the formulation and implementation of such policies, strategies, and plans;

- Special attention to the needs of interior regions and their populations who have historically not benefited from national-level developments as the coastal regions, because of geography, logistics, and a coastal bias in the allocation of resources and consequent benefits;
- Participatory monitoring and evaluation of such policies, strategies, and plans, to include all constituent groups based on race, ethnicity, culture, religion, age, ability, geography, and social and economic status, so as to ensure that the perspectives of all groups and citizens are heard on implementation issues and concerns; and
- Periodic revisions and course corrections made to such policies, strategies and plans based on results of the participatory monitoring and evaluation, to ensure that the anticipated social cohesion and developmental benefits are being realized and equitably shared.

**Objective 3.2:**

Support and advocate for new or revised policies and legislation, revised public sector rules and regulations, updated business practices, updated workplace practices, and appropriate social and cultural norms that can strengthen respect for diversity, and confront social exclusion and intolerance, such as:

- Enactment of sexual orientation legislation, that removes the stigma, discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization that are experienced by many in the LGBTQI community;
- Promulgation of revised public service rules and regulations, and updated, cohesion-sensitive provisions for employment and treatment of persons with disabilities, pregnant women, dress codes, etc.;
- Advocacy and encouragement of reformed business practices that deal with persons with disabilities, employment of youth and the aged, employment of persons affected by HIV/AIDS, pregnant women, etc., to remove discriminatory practices and foster social cohesion; and
- Periodic engagements with the private sector and business organizations, to brainstorm on current business practices, rules, and regulations that may negatively impact particular groups and individuals, and how to create and nurture a cohesion-friendly environment in their establishments that is inclusionary, non-discriminatory, and welcoming to all.

**Objective 3.3:**

Support and advocate for measures that will enhance economic opportunities and income earning capacities for small business contractors thereby engendering feelings of fairness and trust in the economic system to provide benefits for all, that are important building blocks of a socially-cohesive society, through:

- Promoting greater access to contracts and opportunities such as relaxing of bidding requirements;

- Devising mechanisms for equipping small business operators to compete in the market such as implementing cooperative equipment pools and similar support mechanisms;
- Developing national standards and encouraging commercial banks and lending institutions to open small business financing windows in un-served and ethnically-diverse communities;
- Working with the business and manufacturing sectors to establish ethnically-balanced business incubators, and devising and implementing modalities to ensure their effective, cohesion-sensitive functioning; and
- Devising appropriate standards and curricula and support for local level institutions to provide training in management, marketing, and accounting skills for small contractors, with particular attention to the selection of language and trainers.

**Objective 3.4:**

Advocate for, and actively support the strengthening of national legislation, where needed, to enhance alignment with international legal instruments and treaties on discrimination based on race and ethnicity, xenophobia, and other intolerances, and advocate for the adherence to and enforcement of domestic legislation based on such international precepts and instruments, through:

- Agreement on code of conduct for political leaders, activists, party agents during and between elections, and rejection of ethnic-driven politics;
- Advocacy for strengthening provisions and prohibitions against discrimination based on of race and ethnicity as part of the Constitutional Reform process, including insertion of relevant provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on Racial Discrimination, the Latin American Human Rights Declaration, and relevant CARICOM Instruments and provisions, in the revised Constitution;
- Advocacy for review and strengthening of the Racial Discrimination Act and similar legislation, the prohibitions therein against discrimination based on of race and ethnicity, hate speech, and similar infractions, and for strengthening penalties for persons found guilty of such infractions; and
- Establishing an Observatory on instances of discrimination based on race and ethnicity brought before the competent legal bodies, and a database on how they are resolved.

**Intervention Area 4**

*Provide support, guidance, and enabling conditions for undertaking **programmatic actions** that individually and in the aggregate, contribute to building trust, understanding, caring, sharing and support between and among individuals and communities, demolish barriers and strengthen solidarity, and bolster feelings of safety and security, towards enhancing and promoting social cohesion in Guyana.*

**Objective 4.1:**

Promote and support expanded economic opportunities and self-sustaining livelihoods at community and village levels for low-income and vulnerable women and men, through:

- Support for community-level economic activities focusing on self-employed women and men, youth, and persons with special needs;
- Organizing skills training targeting women and girls – food preparation, cake and pastry making, sewing/dressmaking, skills training for the tourism and hospitality sectors, basic budgeting and book-keeping for self-employed women and girls; and
- Support for setting up production and marketing cooperatives or similar entities in fishing, farming, and logging, especially in rural and hinterland communities where such forms of cooperative business activities might be useful and culturally acceptable.

**Objective 4.2:**

Plan, organize, and/or support national events, celebrations, and observances, and ensure or provide inputs towards ensuring, that the social cohesion agenda informs all such activities and that messages of social inclusion and tolerance infuse the programmes for such events, including:

- Strengthened and joint planning for the annual Social Cohesion Day organized by the Ministry of Social Cohesion with participation and inputs from all major sectors and national actors;
- Strengthened and joint planning for the annual Republic and Independence Observances, with representation from all religious, race, ethnic and cultural strands, and geographic regions in Guyana;
- Broad-based, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and equitable participation in major sporting events including, national, regional, and international cricket, football, basketball, rugby, swimming, cycling, athletics, and other competitions, with underlying themes and targeted messages reinforcing the importance of social inclusion and tolerance, valuing and acceptance of diversities, including the differently able;
- Broad-based, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and equitable participation in national observances celebrating the various races, ethnicities, religions, and cultures that make up the Guyana mosaic, with underlying themes and targeted messages and inputs focusing on mutual acceptance and respect among all groups, respect for diversity, celebration of the achievements of each group, and the importance of unity in diversity; and
- Study visits and exchanges with other Caribbean Countries to observe and celebrate social cohesion.

**Objective 4.3:**

Organize learning and sensitization programmes and activities towards understanding the origins and manifestations of social exclusion within their communities such as:

- Community mapping of who is excluded from the mainstream of community life and activities such as the aged and infirm, homeless, LGBTQI, physically and mentally disabled, alcohol and drug abusers and addicts, etc.;
- Neighbourhood and community sensitization meetings to discuss who are the excluded persons and groups and how this affects both the community and those persons;
- Sensitization interventions carried out by religious organizations, schools and learning institutions, women, and youth groups, NDC and Village Councils on stigma and discrimination, social exclusion, and accepting and valuing diversity; and
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs), fliers, pamphlets, and other appropriate methods for sensitizing community members of the need and campaign to address social exclusion and intolerance.

**Objective 4.4:**

Develop and implement neighbourhood and community-level activities to support excluded and disadvantaged community members, and to reinforce messaging and demonstrate the values of caring, sharing, support, and community cohesion, such as;

- Drop-in and counselling centers for individuals and groups needing counselling or support services, organized with support from the NDC, Village Council, RDC, Municipality, Central Government, the private sector, and others;
- Daily or weekly food drives, soup kitchens, visits to 'shut-ins', contributions by businesses, churches etc., to provide care and material support for the aged, infirm, homeless, persons with disabilities, and persons in difficult circumstances; and
- Annual clothing drives, Christmas/Eid/Diwali hampers, cash grants to needy school-aged community members, etc. to support poor, vulnerable, and deserving community members; and
- Skills training activities such as construction skills, craft-making, sewing, cooking, pastry making etc., organized by schools, religious organizations, businesses for persons who are differently able.

**Objective 4.5:**

Organize sports, indoor games, and other social activities taking advantage of major social and cultural events in the life of the community such as Village Days, to enhance feelings of attachment to the community, and the levels of understanding, trust, caring, sharing, and mutual support among community members, that include and give visibility to excluded individuals and groups, such as:

- Village and community 'Para-Olympics' games for the physically and mentally disabled;
- Cricket, football, circle tennis, basketball and other competitions that include excluded individuals such as disabled, recovering addicts, homeless persons, LGBTQI, and others;

- Periodic village and community talent shows that include a segment to allow excluded persons such as disabled, recovering addicts, homeless persons, LGBTQI, and others to highlight their talents in dance, song, mime, comedy etc.;
- Broad-based, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and equitable participation in annual Community or Village Days that bring citizens and community members together in a non-political environment, to engage in sports, educational, and cultural activities, and develop a sense of belonging, pride, and empathy;
- Annual observance of major cultural, religious, and national celebrations (Phagwah, Christmas, Eid, Easter, Diwali, Youman Nabi, Mashramani, Indigenous Peoples Heritage Month, Independence Anniversary, etc.) at the community or village level, under the leadership of NDC, CDC and Village leaders and councilors, and with support from the RDC, Central Government, and religious, cultural, and civic organizations;
- Daily or weekly food drives, soup kitchens, visits to ‘shut-ins’, contributions by businesses, churches etc., to provide care and material support to the aged, infirm, homeless, persons with disabilities, and persons in difficult circumstances; and
- Annual clothing drives, Christmas/Eid/Divali hampers, cash grants to the needy school-aged community members, etc., to support poor, needy, and deserving community members.

**Objective 4.6:**

Implement measures to spread and improve citizens’ understanding of the Guyana Constitution, the governance system at all levels, the roles of the Executive, Parliament and the Judiciary, law enforcement agencies, national symbols and observances, and the rights and obligations of citizens, giving life to the national motto of One People, One Nation, One Destiny:

- On-going public education and awareness programme, via Public Service Announcements (PSAs), fliers, pamphlets, multi-media products etc., disseminated and accessible country-wide, popularizing various key aspects and provisions of the Constitution, the system of government, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens;
- A series of public discussion forums on various aspects of the Constitution, the system of government, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens, implemented in all towns and Regions (and possibly a country-wide public awareness campaign for constitutional reform);
- Targeted sensitization programmes for in-school youth, integrated into the school curriculum, through a ‘Civics for Schools’ programme focusing on knowledge about the Constitution, the levels of government, the Presidency, the Parliament, the Judiciary, law enforcement agencies, and their rights and obligations as citizens, and;
- Periodic outreach programmes organized and led by the Ministry of Social Cohesion, comprising visits to towns and regions by Members of Parliament, presentations on the work of Parliament and important recent legislative enactments, and sensitization on building a cohesive society through political action.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Such national level programmes and initiatives, which should also be rolled out in the regions, villages, and communities, would need to be organized jointly by the responsible Central Government ministries such as

**Objective 4.7:**

Implement measures and actions to strengthen citizen's participation in community activities and in influencing decisions that affect their interests and well-being as community members, thereby reinforcing the principles of participation and inclusion that are critical for enhancing social cohesion, such as:

- Regular updates through appropriate community-level media e.g. radio, fliers, announcements on the work of the NDC, CDC, Hinterland, and Indigenous Village, and on plans for upcoming events and activities;
- Regular 'walk-about' and face-the-community meetings by Toshaous, Chairpersons, and Councilors to listen to concerns of community members and strengthen the relationship and communication between leaders and community members;
- Regular and well-publicized Open Days on which community members can visit their community or village office, meet leaders and councilors, and seek to have their concerns addressed;
- Presentations on the annual NDC, CDC, Hinterland, and Indigenous Village plans and budgets to community members, for comments and inputs, and regular feedback on implementation during the financial year; and
- Plebiscites on major issues or decisions in which all eligible adult community members are entitled to vote.

**Objective 4.8:**

Organize national, municipal, and regional conversations on race and ethnicity, how poor race and ethnic relations impact social cohesion, and what can be done to promote harmonious race and ethnic relations at all levels,<sup>12</sup> such as:

- Sensitization and awareness events on the dynamics of race and ethnicity, at national and community levels, and on techniques to facilitate national and local conversations on race and ethnicity;
- Organizing open conversations and appreciative enquiry sessions, at national, municipal, regional, village, and community levels, to bring citizens together to co-create responses to the challenges of race and ethnicity at national, municipal, regional, village, and community levels;
- Providing safe spaces, organizing forums and inter-party encounters, focusing on the leaderships and the political parties' youth wings, to create a deeper understanding of

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Education, Culture, Youth, and Sports; Legal Affairs; Public Security; Social Protection, and other agencies and entities, under leadership of the Ministry of Social Cohesion, thereby ensuring that a social cohesion lens permeates all such initiatives and programmes.

<sup>12</sup> This presents an opportunity for the Ministry of Social Cohesion to work collaboratively with the Ethnic Relations Commission, the Women and Gender Equality Commission, the Indigenous Peoples' Commission, other Rights Commissions, the National Toshaous Council, other relevant Government Ministries, the private and publicly-owned media, the Private Sector, organized labour, NGOs, and Academia to jointly organize and facilitate such conversations, in an inclusionary and cohesion-sensitive way.



the dynamics of race and ethnicity, at national, regional, and community levels, and on the role political parties and their leaderships can play in educating and sensitizing their constituencies on the negative impacts of resorts to race and ethnicity in relations among citizens; and

- Talk Shows and Call-In Programmes via radio and television, facilitated by trained radio, television and other communications workers, on messages and topics touching on race and ethnicity, and on enhancing and promoting social cohesion through harmonious race and ethnic relations, at the regional and community levels.

**Objective 4.9:**

Facilitate dissemination of messages, information, and sensitization materials to citizens at the national level, in municipalities and regions, on the results and messages from the national, municipal and regional conversations, the negative impacts of discrimination and prejudice based on race, ethnicity, racial stereotyping; and facilitate the crafting and dissemination of positive messages on accepting and valuing diversity, through:

- Training and sensitization sessions bringing together cultural workers, radio, television, and other media workers, and those able to reach the youth, from national and regional media establishments, on the results and outputs from the national, municipal, and regional conversations, racial and cultural diversity, appreciative enquiry, and techniques for messaging on race and ethnicity via different media;
- Dissemination of materials and messages from various sources such as the Ministry of Social Cohesion, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sports, the Ministry of Communities, the Ethnic Relations Commission, and other producers of such content, via national and regional radio, television, print, and other media; and
- PSAs, Talk Shows and Call-In Programmes via radio and television, facilitated by trained radio, television, and other communications workers, on messages and topics touching on race and ethnicity, and on enhancing and promoting social cohesion through harmonious race and ethnic relations, at the national and regional levels.

**Objective 4.10:**

Institute and promote mechanisms, processes, events, and structured interactions at national, regional, municipal, village, and local community levels, that provide safe spaces and opportunities for national healing, address memories of hurt and discrimination, and actively encourage and support reconciliation among ethnic and race groups<sup>13</sup>, such as:

- Film festivals, documentaries, oral histories highlighting positive experiences from other ethnically and racially-divided societies globally (including from Guyana), in towns, regions, villages, and communities across Guyana that carry the messages of embracing diversities, healing, and reconciliation;

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<sup>13</sup> This is again an excellent opportunity for the various stakeholders mentioned in Footnote 7 above to jointly organize, support, and facilitate, such actions to promote national reconciliation.

- Periodic and on-going public discussion sessions, lecture series by Social Cohesion Ambassadors, presentations in schools and higher learning institutions on events such as Social Cohesion Day, and forums organized jointly by the Ministry of Social Cohesion, the Ethnic Relations Commission, Political Parties, and Civil Society Organizations, on the themes of national healing and reconciliation;
- Annual visual arts, short stories, and poetry competitions for students and young adults at primary, secondary, and tertiary education levels, to promote cultural productions on the themes of national healing and reconciliation, and to disseminate such cultural productions to the widest audiences at national, regional, and local levels; and
- The award of special prizes and accolades to artistic productions using calypso and other musical genres, on the themes of national healing, unity, and reconciliation, at cultural events such as the annual Mashramani celebrations, Arrival Day, Emancipation Day, Indigenous Heritage Month celebrations, and other cultural/ethnic/religious observances, ensuring participation by women and youth, and national, regional, village, and community coverage and out-reach.

**Objective 4.11:**

Implement measures and activities that bring village and community members together to experience and celebrate each other's cultures, including foods, modes of dress, music, dance etc., and that build respect and acceptance of differences based on race, ethnicity, religion, and culture, such as:

- Town, Community, and Village Days at which the culture, music, foods, religions, and other attributes of the different constituent races are displayed and citizens can appreciate and celebrate each other;
- Sponsoring of racially- and culturally-mixed dance troops, musical bands, sports teams and other purveyors of the different races and ethnicities, and providing spaces for performances at national, municipal, regional, and local observances and festivals, including Town, Community, and Village Days;
- Support for racially- and culturally-mixed dance troops, musical bands, sports teams, and other purveyors of the different races and ethnicities, in schools and educational institutions, and organizing Culture Days in schools at which each constituent race and ethnicity is show-cased; and
- Organizing inter-regional exchanges comprising the constituent races and ethnicities from each region are show-cased, thereby providing opportunities for cross-fertilization, mutual learning, and appreciation of each other, and building bonds across regions and communities.

## PART 3

# MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

It cannot be overemphasized that promoting and enhancing social cohesion is not exclusively the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Cohesion. It will require purposeful policy and programmatic actions by all three branches of the state (the National Assembly, the Executive, and the Judiciary), governmental agencies and bodies, and regional and local government institutions. It will also require deliberate and cohesion-sensitive actions by civil society organizations, the private sector, the labour movement, professional bodies, academia, service organizations, and the citizenry, in all their activities and interactions as social partners in the grand quest of enhancing and promoting social cohesion in Guyana. Again, social cohesion is everyone's business and there is a critical role that must be played by citizens, both individually and collectively, in their communities, organizations, and associations. Their involvement can take different forms, sometimes even at the most informal level; this primary role of ordinary citizens should be supported and facilitated by governmental institutions, above all the Ministry of Social Cohesion. Development cooperation agencies, including UNDP, other UN agencies, and the Bretton Woods Institutions, CARICOM and other Regional Institutions, like-minded international foundations, organizations and members of the Guyana Diaspora, and others who share the goal and wish to contribute towards enhancing and promoting social cohesion in Guyana, also have a supporting and advocacy role to play in this process. This is not only in terms of financial and technical resources, but in serving as sources of good practices and encouragement to local partners.

### **3.1 Partnership Arrangements**

The multiplicity of state and non-state actors, including ordinary citizens, who will be involved in advancing the social cohesion agenda requires that all act in concert, and work towards clearly-defined goals and objectives, agreed and embraced by all. This is nothing short of a 'grand coalition' of disparate actors from all strata of national life. Towards this end, it requires active partnerships if the goals of purposeful, collaborative, well-coordinated, and results-oriented actions are to be attained. This requires a partnership strategy that can be embraced and pursued by all. The **Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness** adopted in 2005, (see **ANNEX 4** hereto attached), advanced five principles that were designed for application in the development cooperation arena. However, they are equally applicable, with modest adjustments in the definitions and language used, to a domestic agenda such as is outlined in this draft Strategic Plan. These five principle can be re-worked as follows:

- i. **Local Ownership** - where all national stakeholders and actors equally own the draft Strategic Plan and the social cohesion agenda that it promotes;
- ii. **Alignment** – where all actions are aligned with those outlined in the draft Strategic Plan;
- iii. **Harmonization** - where cooperation and coordination among actors improve the efficiency of delivery and the outcomes of actions taken;
- iv. **Managing for results** – where national stakeholders use information about results systematically to improve decision-making, and strengthen performance, towards ensuring that all cohesion-related actions achieve the desired results as per the draft Strategic Plan; and
- v. **Mutual accountability** – where all national stakeholders recognize and accept they are all part of the ‘grand coalition’ and are accountable to each other for taking actions that contribute to the achievement of the national goal of enhancing and promoting social cohesion, under the guidance of the draft Strategic Plan.

Thus, the **Partnership Strategy** that will guide all national stakeholders must be soundly grounded in the above five principles, that not only establish the basis for mutual respect, mutual accountability, and combined efforts towards achieving mutually-agreed social cohesion goals; but also, reflect evolving best practices in partnership building and the linkage between individual action and broad social outcomes.

The stakeholders who can be considered as partners in implementing the social cohesion agenda and the draft strategic plan are already involved in such work at the national, regional and community levels. While, in some instances, their direct involvement in cohesion-related activities may be limited, there attendance and spirited participation in the regional consultations would seem to indicate significant interest. This needs to be nurtured and enhanced so that they can play meaningful roles in partnerships with others. The list of stakeholders includes the following:

- Central Government ministries, with leadership roles for the Ministries of Social Cohesion; Education, Culture, Youth, and Sports; Social Protection; Public Health; Public Security; Justice; Business; Agriculture; Public Infrastructure; Ministry of the Presidency; and the Office of the Prime Minister;
- The National Assembly; Office of the Speaker; Parliamentary Sectoral Committees; Office of the Leader of the Opposition;
- The Ethnic Relations Commission; Women and Gender Equality Commission; Indigenous Peoples Commission, and other Rights Commissions;
- The Guyana Police Force; the Guyana Defense Force; the Guyana Prison Service; the Guyana Fire Service, and their constituent Divisions, outposts, and encampments distributed in the various coastal and interior regions of Guyana;
- The Guyana Geology and Mines Commission; the Guyana Forestry Commission; the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission; the Public Service Commission; the Teachers Service Commission; and other statutory commissions;

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- Parliamentary and non-Parliamentary political parties; women and youth arms of political parties;
- The Trade Union Council, the Federation of Free Trade Unions of Guyana, and member unions falling under these two bodies;
- The Private Sector Commission; the Small Business Bureau; Chambers of Commerce; the Guyana Gold and Miners Association; the Guyana Women Miners Organization;
- The Guyana Bar Association; the Guyana Women Lawyers Association;
- National Level NGOs such as the Guyana Human Rights Association; Red Thread; Women and Youth organizations;
- Religious groupings such as the Inter-Religious Organization of Guyana, and constituent members from the Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Rastafarian, Baha'i, and other faiths;
- Tertiary level and vocational education and training institutions such as the University of Guyana; the teachers' colleges; technical institutes; and other private tertiary level institutions;
- Village and community based organizations such as women and youth groups; religious organizations; culture and sports groups;
- Other professional and service organizations.

The above list is not exhaustive nor in any order of priority. It is intended to be illustrative of the range of stakeholders who may voluntarily develop partnerships or be encouraged to enter partnerships, for implementing specific actions and initiatives as proposed in the draft strategic plan, based on their interests, resources, and competencies.

The Partnership Strategy should also recognize the importance of not only deepening the interactions among existing social partners but also widening the range of new partnerships in pursuing the Guyana social cohesion agenda. This is also applicable in partnerships with external development cooperation partners, like-minded international foundations, organizations and members of the Guyana Diaspora, and others who share the goal and wish to contribute towards enhancing and promoting social cohesion in Guyana.

Following from the above, the following guidelines are proposed to guide the relations and interactions among all actors and stakeholders in implementing the draft Strategic Plan:

- i. Cooperation not competition in implementing social cohesion actions and activities;
- ii. Information sharing including relevant experiences, to avoid duplication of efforts, and consequent wastage of scarce resources;
- iii. Alignment to the extent possible with the Intervention Areas, Objectives, and Actions as outlined in the draft Strategic Plan;
- iv. Willingness to participate in national coordination mechanisms towards ensuring adherence to the five principles outlined above;
- v. Willingness to participate in regional and local level coordination mechanisms established by competent authorities towards adherence to the five principles outlined above;
- vi. Joint periodic and annual reviews of actions and activities undertaken, through the coordination mechanisms outlined in (iv) and (v) above; and

- vii. Commitment to adjust policy and programmatic actions, as needed, based on decisions democratically arrived at during the joint periodic and annual reviews.

### **3.2 Management and Implementation Arrangements**

The Management Arrangements follow from the above explication of the partnership strategy that will be pursued in implementing the draft Strategic Plan. While the process of developing the draft Strategic Plan was led by the Ministry of Social Cohesion, it is clearly recognized, based on the principle of **Local Ownership**, that this must be a **National Strategic Plan** in which all national stakeholders are equally invested, and in which all will contribute towards its implementation. Based on this approach, it can be advanced that the 'institutional home' of the draft Strategic Plan is the Ministry of Social Cohesion. This does not imply exclusive ownership, but stewardship and custodianship.

Towards this end, the Ministry of Social Cohesion will use existing coordination mechanisms ensuring inclusion of a broad cross section of state institutions - including in particular the existing **Inter-Ministerial Committee for Social Cohesion** - the Ethnic Relations Commission, the Women and Gender Equality Commission, and other Rights Commissions. The Ministry will also engage key non-governmental organizations including the Private Sector Commission, organized labour and professional bodies, human rights organizations, and other civil society stakeholders. The use of existing coordination mechanisms is intended to ensure that there is no additional financial burden or imposition on the busy schedules of stakeholders. This coordination mechanism will:

- i. Act as the coordinating and oversight body for monitoring the implementation of the draft Strategic Plan;
- ii. Review the annual Implementation Plan prepared by the Ministry of Social Cohesion, and propose changes and adjustments based on consensus among its members;
- iii. Review the annual Monitoring and Evaluation Plan prepared by the Ministry of Social Cohesion and propose changes and adjustments based on consensus among its members;
- iv. Receive and review implementation and monitoring reports on performance of the draft Strategic Plan, and adjust as needed, based on consensus among its members; and
- v. Take all steps necessary in its considered judgement to address conflicts, disagreements, and coordination challenges among stakeholders, towards ensuring smooth and effective implementation of the draft Strategic Plan based on the Partnership Strategy outlined above.

The Ministry of Social Cohesion will have the following direct areas of responsibility with respect to implementing the plan:

- i. Preparation of the annual Implementation Plan proposing policy and programmatic actions to be undertaken in any calendar year, for consideration and approval by consensus, of the coordination mechanism;

- ii. Managing specific programmes and activities that fall under its mandate or for which it is assigned responsibility;
- iii. On-going coordination of the programmatic actions and activities of diverse institutional and non-state actors, as contained in the approved Implementation Plan, to ensure alignment based on the guidelines outlined in section 3.2 above;
- iv. Leadership of the mechanisms established for period and annual monitoring; the mid-term and final evaluation of the draft Strategic Plan; and submission of Monitoring and Evaluation Reports for consideration by the coordination mechanism; and
- v. Ensuring following up on decisions taken, and proposed adjustments to the draft Strategic Plan and the annual Implementation Plan as agreed during meetings of the coordination mechanism.

It is envisaged that the Ministry of Social Cohesion might need to appoint a **Strategic Plan Coordinator** who would be a dedicated person in charge of liaising with the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Social Cohesion on operational matters, and advising the Minister in cases of institutional bottlenecks or issues at the strategic level. Further details on the annual actions and targets, lead and collaborating agencies/bodies, timelines, implementation and coordination arrangements, and resource requirements, will be contained in the Implementation Plan for the draft Strategic Plan, and subsequent annual implementation plans for individual years under the plan.

### **3.3 Resource Requirements**

Resource requirements for the draft Strategic Plan will be costed in the Budget that will accompany the final draft plan. This can only be indicative, since actual budgets will be determined on an annual or recurrent basis, congruent with financial resources available or mobilized in/for any financial year. Given its role as lead governmental agency, and steward and custodian of the draft Strategic Plan, the Ministry of Social Cohesion will prepare an annual budget, based on agreed activities that it will be directly responsible for implementing in any given financial year. As determined on a case-by-case basis and by its available financial envelope for any given year, the Ministry of Social Cohesion will provide modest financial support for identified national and community-based actions that contribute to enhancing and promoting social cohesion at that level.

Resource requirements for other state and non-state actors will be determined based on annual commitments for implementing various components and actions under the plan, congruent with their specific mandates, areas of competence, and work programmes. To this end, the role and functioning of the coordination will be critical since this will be the mechanism for agreeing on annual targets and for confirming implementation arrangements, including lead and cooperating agencies and entities, and the financial outlays needed. This is a highly voluntary process, with state and non-state actors voluntarily committing to undertake agreed actions, and will need to be completed very early in the annual national budget cycle to ensure that required resources are included in individual ministry/agency budgets, and that

non-state actors similarly include allocations for social cohesion-related activities based on the draft Strategic Plan and annual Implementation Plans.

### **3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategic Plan**

As lead Government agency, steward, and custodian of the draft Strategic Plan, the Ministry of Social Cohesion will play a lead role in developing the annual Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan for presentation to the coordination mechanism. Monitoring and evaluation are critical activities in any planning exercise. Monitoring and evaluation help to track progress, identify early signs of problems, facilitate decision-making to address such problems, and ensure that targets are achieved. Periodic and annual monitoring exercises provide information on whether, and how well, planned actions are meeting anticipated targets and results. Monitoring will be conducted through review meetings on the draft Strategic Plan and the annual Implementation Plans; and progress reports, including financial reports on actions undertaken and resources expended. Financial monitoring will likely be a sensitive aspect of overall monitoring and provision of such information will likely depend on the level of comfort of lead and cooperating agencies and entities. Thus, it is perhaps more important to focus on performance monitoring and on taking timely decisions on corrective actions to address implementation problems and bottlenecks.

The Ministry of Social Cohesion will also take the lead in periodically evaluating, particularly during the mid-term period, the efficiency and effectiveness of the draft Social Cohesion Strategic Plan, in the context of its stated objectives, results, and outcomes. There will also be an evaluation in the fourth year of the plan to feed into preparation, as needed, of a follow-up five- year draft Strategic Plan. These evaluations will be undertaken not only in terms of results achieved, but also in relation to how well, and to what extent the activities undertaken have succeeded in raising awareness of the social cohesion agenda, and building broad ownership of, and consensus on the actions under the draft Strategic Plan. Such evaluations, through analysis of monitoring data and feedback from state and non-state actors, and ordinary citizens in their towns, regions, communities, and villages, will help the coordination mechanism to incorporate lessons learned into any follow-up actions or adjustments that may be required. Continuous learning and flexibility will undoubtedly contribute to improvement in results. In due course the coordination mechanism should also consider commissioning large scale mapping surveys on citizens' perceptions on progress in advancing social cohesion in Guyana, as recently undertaken in New Zealand and published in **Mapping Social Cohesion, The Scanlon Foundation Surveys 2016**, Andrew Markus, November 2016.



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# ANNEXES

## ANNEX 1: Social Cohesion Peer Group - Invited Members

	Name	Role/Organization
1	Trevor Benn	Lands and Surveys Commission
2	Norwell Hinds	Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association
3	Paloma Mohamed	Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Guyana
4	Vidyaratha Kissoon	Independent analyst
5	Lawrence Lachmansingh	Dialogue Facilitator
6	Eric Phillips	African Cultural Development Association
7	Alicia Roopnarine	Independent analyst
8	Vanda Radzik	Indigenous rights activist
9	Kala Seegopaul	Independent consultant/trainer CIDA Program
10	David Singh	Conservation International
11	Ramesh Persaud	Private sector representative
12	Leslie Gonsalves	Guyana Trade Union Congress
13	Indra Chanderpal	Women and Gender Equality Commission
14	Neil Marks	Guyana Press Association, President
15	Michael Scott	Inter-ministry Committee on Social Cohesion
16	Sheik Moen ul-Hack	Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana
17	Vindhya Persaud	Guyana Hindu Dharma Sahba
18	Rafael Massiah	Religious leader
19	Jean La Rose	Amerindian Peoples Association
20	Ryhaan Shah	Guyanese Indian Heritage Association
21	Joel Fredericks	National Toshious Council, Chair
22	Rawle Small	Habitat Guyana
23	Jairo Rodrigues	SASOD
24	Urica Primus	Guyana Women Miners Organization
25	Sara Bharrat	Guyana National Youth Council

**ANNEX 2: Results of the Face-to-Face Municipal and Regional Consultations**

The thirty Municipal and Regional Consultation in aggregate revealed the following trends on the state of social cohesion in Guyana based on the five Outcomes that participants considered during each consultation.

**Outcome 1 - Economic Equity and Opportunities:**

Various forms of economic inequalities and lack of sufficient viable opportunities for earning a decent living negatively impact social cohesion by engendering feelings of discrimination, exclusion, and unequal access to what the community or wider national society can offer. This is clearly contrary to the foundational principles of economic equity, economic rights and benefits, and equality of opportunities for all citizens, irrespective of sex, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age, or geography, that define a cohesive society. While there were similarities, there were some discernible differences in their listing of individuals and social groups most likely to be treated unequally, depending on the geographic region or socio-economic circumstances in which the consultations were held.

Respondents in hinterland consultations identified Indigenous persons; farmers; casual workers in the mining and logging sectors; low/un-skilled out of school youth; and casual/daily paid workers such as waitresses, handymen, cleaners, and other domestic workers. Respondents in the municipal/urban consultations identified domestic workers – cleaners, cooks, handymen; government workers – teachers, nurses, police; low-skilled craftsmen – carpenters, mechanics, construction workers; low-skilled self-employed – seamstresses, hairdressers, barbers, food producers and sellers, and crafts producers; and young educated school graduates. Respondents in rural coastal and intermediate savannah consultations identified farm laborers; fishermen and women; teachers; NDC overseers; low-skilled persons working in commercial entities – salespersons, handymen, packers, and loaders etc.; and low/unskilled out of school youth. Respondents in consultations that took place in the bauxite producing belt, identified bauxite/mine workers; semi-skilled technicians; nurses; teachers; policemen and women; and low/unskilled out of school youth.

Most consultations identified the requirements placed on small-scale contractors as overly onerous such NIS compliance, GRA certificate; years of experience or track-record; capital and construction equipment as significant barriers to small-scale, local contractors enjoying greater access to central and local government contracts. Some responses indicated that although the small local contractor may be qualified s/he is often bypassed in favor of larger, more-established and politically-connected contractors (Mahdia, Lethem); or local contractors are overlooked and contracts awarded to persons outside of the community or region (Kuru Kururu, Linden).

Quite a few consultations also identified challenges to accessing loans and concessionary financing as seed capital for small scale contractors. This related both to the absence of banks, and financing mechanisms in particularly rural and interior regions to cater to the financing needs of such small operators. Others pointed to the challenge to small operators of being able

to provide appropriate collateral, loan guarantees etc., as required by banks and financial institutions. The issue of collateral for persons in Indigenous Villages, in a context where land titling is communal rather than individual, was raised in many of consultations (Paramakatoi, Aishalton) as a significant impediment to accessing bank and other financing, since such institutions do not accept communal titles for purposes of granting loans to individuals who may share communal title to Indigenous lands. This was also raised in mixed Indigenous communities where access to communal land titling has not included such mixed-race persons with consequences for their ability to produce title to lands as collateral for bank and other financing (Mahdia).

Consultations identified casual or daily-paid workers in the gold mines and logging concessions (Mahdia, Aishalton, Mabaruma, Port Kaituma); low/uneducated out of school youth (most interior and rural coastal consultations); domestic workers and unskilled workers in the hospitality sector (Lethem, Mahdia, Port Kaituma, Bartica) as the groups or workers who suffer inadequate access to jobs, are not adequately paid for work done, and experience discrimination in the workplace. Consultations in the interior regions identified Indigenous persons as experiencing discrimination in the workplace such as those in mining, logging, the hospitality sector, farm hands (Pomeroon, Charity, Leguan, Corriverton).

Enhancing and promoting social cohesion in the above context where there are deficits in economic equity and opportunities as outlined above, and where some individuals and groups see themselves as economically disadvantaged and lacking in opportunities for earning a decent living, would require policy and programmatic interventions that would at least level the proverbial playing field, if not eliminate the sources of such disadvantages. Many of the policy and legislative measures identified by respondents are under the purview and mandate of government ministries and agencies, and should be a normal part of their functioning. These constitute the enabling policy and legislative environment that facilitates and regulates economic activities; and that should protect, proscribe, enable, or sanction economic behaviors, as appropriate, towards providing a level playing field for all.

While all of this impacts social cohesion, much of it is not directly the preserve of the Ministry of Social Cohesion, it can indirectly impact the architecture of that enabling environment and relations in the marketplace. The Ministry of Social Cohesion has a role in advocating for and monitoring the implementation of appropriate legislation, business and economic policies, programmatic actions, and more responsive labour and social protection agencies and mechanisms. It also has a role in ensuring, in partnership and collaboration with relevant ministries and agencies, that inequality-sensitive economic policies, financing mechanisms, and enabling business infrastructure are designed and implemented to ensure that groups and individuals who suffer unequal treatment in the market place benefit from appropriately targeted interventions that improve economic equity and opportunities and contribute to promoting and enhancing social cohesion.

## **Outcome 2 - Citizen Safety and Security:**

With respect to citizen safety and security, most consultations shared a common set of responses to the question of the major incidents, factors or developments that made their

communities feel less safe and secure. Interior communities also highlighted access and availability of services such as health, water, and sanitation as significant factors causing them to feel less secure. The riverain interior communities highlighted the issue of river accidents and lack of adequately qualified boat captains as a significant source of safety and security concerns. Urban communities whether coastal or interior, and rural coastal communities identified incidences of crime, break and entry, robbery from the person and other such property crimes as major factors and developments that make them feel less safe and secure. Urban and coastal communities also experience threats to safety and security that arise from other and different environmental deficits such as water quality, air pollution, mosquito infestations with attendant health impacts, road accidents, and the growing incidences of murder/suicides.

The feedback on recent examples where the police have responded promptly and dealt with criminal activity in the neighborhood or community can only be described as deeply troubling. In most of the consultations, irrespective of whether they were in urban, coastal, rural, or interior communities, participants reflected deep disappointment with the lack of, or limited response of the police to criminal activity in their neighborhoods or communities. This characterization of the performance of the police is worrying not only from a law enforcement perspective. Perhaps more importantly, it is troubling as an indication of a serious area of deficit in promoting the social cohesion agenda in Guyana, and that is the significant role that law enforcement should play in fostering feelings of safety and security that are so critical in enhancing social cohesion both at the community, and the national level. Many participants lamented what they referred to as unprofessional conduct of police officers in how they interacted with residents (Moruca, Port Kaituma, Leguan, Rosignol), and in some instances related how in their actions and activities, some police officers were not upholding the law as they should (Lethem). Some consultations spoke about slow response to reports of the ordinary citizens, and poor communication between police and village leaders (Mabaruma).

Citizens were generally more positive on the functioning of neighbourhood and community policing groups (CPG), and reported genuine efforts by some communities whether by themselves or in collaboration with the Guyana Police Force, to contribute to enhancing their safety and security. Some participants explained that they previously may have had a functioning CPG, but it had not been functioning for the past year or so. Others recognized the need for such groups and indicated that they were in process of forming or resuscitating a CPG (Mabaruma, Aishalton). Others indicated that they would appreciate support from the police in training their CPG members (Diamond, Bartica). This again points to the importance participants attached to the role of safety and security in enhancing and promoting social cohesion; and their willingness as community members to play an active role in securing and enhancing their own safety and security.

While addressing the above challenges to safety and security is important for enhancing and promoting social cohesion, many of the above threats to safety and security are properly the concern of law enforcement, health, environment, natural resources, and allied agencies, and are already placed under their respective mandates. Representative bodies at the national, municipal, regional, and local levels also contribute to this effort. There is, of course, the

requirement of inter-ministerial collaboration and coordination for greater coverage and effectiveness, in which the Ministry of Social Cohesion must play an integral role. There is much work to be done in advocacy for legislation and action to address some of the more concerning deficits in the ways citizens experience safety and security, such as the way Law Enforcement officers are, allegedly, not responding appropriately to the rights and expectations of citizens; and the functioning of the courts with respect to the, perceived, lack of severity of custodial sentences to deter offenders. The Ministry of Social Cohesion may also have a role in advocating for better equipment, provisioning, and training of police officers in human rights, interpersonal relations, and cultural sensitivity, especially for such officers posted to interior regions and communities with Amerindian populations. However, there is also a role to be played by individuals in their communities and nationally, in response to some of the above threats to their safety and security. This is the space where individuals and communities can play an important role in co-creating and buttressing the conditions for increased safety and security, and as agents for enhancing and promoting social cohesion. This is the space that is properly the concern, and the focus of a social cohesion agenda.

**Outcome 3 - Social Inclusion and Tolerance:**

Communities identified different groups and individuals among those treated as socially unequal, which was a function of the specific realities in each community. Most of the consultations (sixteen out of thirty) identified the elderly or senior citizens as a group of persons who are treated as socially unequal and different from the rest of the community. The Annai consultation gave some reasons as follows: “unable to contribute, assumption of being of no value”. Despite this harsh characterization, the level of prejudice that came out in the discussions and reports back to plenary on the elderly or senior citizens was moderate or perhaps downplayed, and was not as strong as the feelings expressed when speaking about the LGBTQI community. Fifteen of the thirty consultations identified LGBTQI as being treated as socially unequal and subject to discrimination and exclusion. The reasons why LGBTQI are treated as socially unequal were expressed in the following quotation from the Paramakatoi consultation: “inacceptable behavior in the community, fear of family/friends being negatively influenced or molested, religious beliefs, dress code/behaviour, not accepted traditionally or religiously”. Seven of the consultations identified homeless and indigent persons as a group that is treated as socially unequal. Four of the consultations identified mentally ill persons as a group that is treated as socially unequal.

The Moruca consultation gave reasons why the rest of the community treat such groups and persons as socially unequal, as follows: “lack of understanding, self-centered and can only look at ourselves as superior or better”; “being perfect syndrome”; and “blame persons for their life situation”. Two communities identified Indigenous persons as a group that is treated as socially unequal to others. Cottonfield, which is close to the Pomeroon river where many Indigenous communities reside, gave reasons as follows: “they are excluded from mainstream social and economic life mainly because of economic constraints and improper indigenous development – their agriculture and traditional way of life”.

Some respondents identified stigma and discrimination against LGBTQI, religious intolerance, and lack of education as reasons why there is a lack of tolerance among the majority in society



for elderly, homeless, disabled persons, drug and alcohol users and abusers, and LGBTQI (Port Kaituma, Moruca). Other participants identified lack of education in parenting and lack of exposure to modern technology as some of the reasons (Kamarang). Others identified lack of knowledge, and persons are not aware of laws governing persons with disabilities (Corriverton). This would seem to indicate that respondents see such intolerance as the product of poor socialization, and prevailing norms and attitudes with respect to such diversities. In similar vein, most respondents saw education and awareness to promote understanding of diversity, and socialization in appropriate ways of treating such diversities, as means of addressing such intolerance. Again, when asked why it was not acceptable to treat such persons as socially unequal or different, most consultations provided responses that recognized each person's innate human rights and equal rights as citizens, and equal treatment based on religion. Thus, Aishalton and Rosignol asserted that "They are human beings just like us, they would have contributed their service to the community, they have the same human rights like everyone else". New Amsterdam, posited on religious grounds that "We were all created by God as equal human beings, we have no control over our genetic makeup". And Rosignol recognized the duty of care that all need to exercise as citizens: "We are supposed to see ourselves as Guyanese having one common goal respecting our motto, we must look out for each other; be our brothers' and sisters' keeper". This is indeed promising ground for programmatic interventions, especially at the community level, in diversity education and awareness, adoption of appropriate norms and attitudes, and socialization programmes that seek to inculcate attitudes of respect and acceptance of diversity, through early childhood education.

#### **Outcome 4 – Inclusive and Participatory Governance:**

The Literature Review that preceded preparation of this draft Strategic Plan dealt more incisively with the current governance context and in this regard quoted extensively from the **Governance Assessment** published by USAID in mid-2016. The highly-centralized governance modalities under the Constitution; the conflictual and partisan functioning of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches; the political capture and weaknesses in governance mechanisms such as the public service; and the fragility and dependence of civil society institutions, the private sector and the labour movement on the political establishment, all characterize these rather uncertain foundations for inclusionary democracy in Guyana and the challenges to greater citizen participation. The literature on social cohesion is replete with references to the role of governance mechanisms in fostering inclusion/exclusion, participation/non-participation, integration/non-integration and in providing the enabling environment for individuals and groups to develop habits of trust and mutual respect that are critical for promoting and enhancing social cohesion.

The responses from participants in the face-to-face consultations reflect some significant deficits in inclusive and participatory governance in Guyana. All consultations lamented that there is inadequate knowledge and understanding of the Guyana Constitution, and the system of government at national, regional, and local levels. Indigenous Villages lamented inadequate knowledge and application of the Indigenous Persons Act and other provisions to protect the rights of Indigenous persons and communities. Most consultations laid blame for such deficiencies on the education system that does not teach enough about the Constitution and

governmental system, at the primary and secondary school levels. Respondents in many consultations also noted that there was not enough effort through public education and sensitization to spread that knowledge widely among the citizenry.

Participants identified many deficits in the way the current system of representation is functioning such as insufficient visits to their communities by the heads of political parties (Port Kaituma); the need for transparent reporting on decisions made in Parliament on national issues (Moruca); better working relationships should be fostered between political parties to achieve developmental goals (Moruca, Annai); the need for more youth participation in government decisions and processes (Corriverton, Rosehall); the need for integrity, transparency, and accountability (Bartica, Rockstone); leaders from political parties, NGOs, stakeholders should partner together and be more public about cohesion (Rosehall, Pomeroun); decentralization of government offices and services e.g. Passport office (Linden, Fort Wellington, Rosehall); constitutional reform in the interests of the country as a whole and not political parties, and more bottom house meetings and man in the street participation (Linden); allegedly, practicing racial incitement among ethnic groups (Fort Wellington). While seemingly a hodge-podge of issues, the above point to deficits in leadership and partnerships; the dysfunctionality of current political culture based on divisiveness; inadequate provision and spread of governmental services; and the need to address constitutional reform.

The consultations also revealed a worrying trend where respondents across communities seemingly recognized that there were deficits in feelings of pride and attachment to community and country. When prompted on what developments or initiatives would help to increase their feelings of pride and attachment to their communities and to Guyana, some responses indicated the importance of consultation at community levels by elected representatives, and the use of public/community libraries and other mechanisms to disseminate information to community members (New Amsterdam); more showcasing of their local produce, craft, culture, and cuisine throughout the year (Port Kaituma, Mabaruma, Bartica); preparation and implementation of strategic plans for the different regions; general enhancement of all communities; establishment of job opportunities such as projects involving the youth, and development projects to be executed in a timely manner in the communities (Lethem); more recreational activities promoting cohesion (Port Kaituma, Bartica, New Amsterdam); and more social activities for youth, e.g. summer camps, youth forum, National Service. The above responses point to the need for more inclusion and engagement with the youth, more structured development planning and outlets for the cultural and other products of communities, and more opportunities to work and play together as community members thereby building a sense of belonging and solidarity.

In similar vein, participants made several proposals on what changes would motivate them to be more active in regional and national political processes such as elections, national events, and national celebrations. Some respondents advocated that Political Leaders need to be more respectful, accountable and hold high moral values (Rosehall); more voters education (Mabaruma); special emphasis should be placed on national events and celebrations at the local level (Port Kaituma, Bartica, Mahaicony); less political interference with national events and celebrations, and events should be kept at neutral places and venues (Diamond); more

inter-faith and community exchange activities (Cottonfield); more self-help activities for poor and needy (Cottonfield); creation of community-based micro projects (Cottonfield); development of community self-help groups, such as craft groups and youth groups; and community centers for school drop-outs, disabled persons and others (Rosignol);

In an overall sense, the deficits, dysfunctions, and fault lines in this area of inclusive and participatory governance, are more pronounced at the national or central government level, where political competition is more widespread among the main political parties leading to severe and continuing fractures in the political and institutional environment. Happily, this high level of political dysfunction is not as pronounced at the RDC level, (with a few exceptions as in Region 5), and a lot less immediately evident at the NDC, CDC, and village levels. This provides grounds for optimism and some space where a social cohesion agenda can more readily find fertile ground, and specific actions can be included in the draft Strategic Plan to this end.

This said, there are some policy and programmatic actions that need to be implemented at the National level, where political contestation is most intense, and some of these will be included in the draft Strategic Plan. These will require advocacy, leadership, and development of partnerships by the Ministry of Social Cohesion, with key government ministries, municipal and regional administrations, the private sector, the labour movement, religious organizations, academia, the professions, thought leaders, social and political activists, and others, in taking bold steps in addressing some of the deficits that negatively impact inclusive and participatory governance, and the broader social cohesion agenda. In similar vein, there is a palpable need for civic education and awareness programmes on the Guyana Constitution, the legal system and critical legislative enactments that impact the daily lives of citizens, the systems of government at all levels; and sensitization and awareness programmes on the rights and obligations of citizens, and the inculcation of appropriate attitudes of solidarity, and habits of understanding, sharing, caring, and support among citizens, locally and nationally. Again, there are many programmatic actions that will need to be taken at the regional, and especially at the community and village levels, to promote habits of inclusion, consultation, participation, and collective decision-making in impelling citizens to develop those bonding, bridging, and linking modes of interaction that are needed to enhance and promote social cohesion, locally and nationally.

#### **Outcome 5 – Harmonious Race and Ethnic Relations:**

As noted in the **Literature Review** undertaken as part of the process for preparing the Strategic Plan, scholarly work on race, ethnicity and conflict in Guyana is a rich one, although it must be noted with some regret that proposals and prescriptions for addressing ethnic and race conflicts and insecurities have not borne much fruit, as witnessed by the continued domination of this problematique in Guyana's political, socio-cultural, and economic life. There have been many 'explanations' for this continued situation where the two major race groups – African and Indian Guyanese – and other minority groups including Indigenous persons, Portuguese, Chinese and the growing portion of people of mixed heritage have found it difficult to see beyond race especially at elections periods and in terms of the cultural differences that define each group. Some have blamed this enduring resort to race as a product of the plantation economy of the 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that pitted each race against the other. (Griffith, 2011).

Others, have concluded that the immediate pre- and post-independence competition for political power among the two major races' elites along with the privileging of that competition over all other forms of interaction among the races has tended to reinforce these race and ethnic divisions. (Mars, 2001). Others have also pointed to the unfortunate history of contacts among the coastlanders (in particular, African Guyanese and Europeans, and to a lesser extent Indian Guyanese) that introduced tensions with the Indigenous tribes that in some instances have endured into the present day.

There is a wide spread in terms of how race and ethnicity are experienced in various communities. Some see improvements, as a result of education and socialization (Paramakatoi health, sports, and agriculture (Kamarang, Leguan, Timehri, Rosehall). Other participants report that the relationship is united, cooperative, and harmonious (Bartica, Leguan, Kwakwani, Mahaicony, Rosignol). Some conclude that there has been deterioration in relations between and among race groups, and there have also been differences because of political, cultural, and religious beliefs (Lethem); and that racial discrimination is still present in their community and other communities (Paramakatoi, Corriverton). Some communities report a more textured and situational characterization of race relations as in few unfriendly, other racial, yet others are more friendly (Mabaruma). We are connected socially; we are divided politically; there is an acceptance for each other's religion and individual beliefs (Cottonfield, Kuru Kururu). There is a fair relationship between coastlanders and Indigenous persons in the Upper Mazaruni (Kamarang). Some race groups are getting along fairly well depending on their behavior/attitude. Conflict arises whenever there is disrespect towards individuals, groups, and organizations (Annai). In one instance, there was the comment that the people respect each other's race and culture, but there is not a full appreciation for the respective religious practices due to the lack of knowledge (Pomeroon). Some respondents reported a 'seasonal' fluctuation in race relations and that in some communities, the relationship is fairly harmonious. On the other hand, there is tension based on race and ethnicity, which becomes more pronounced at election time (Beterverwagting, Georgetown, Timehri, Mahaicony, Rosehall, Cottonfield); and that there is mistrust in relations with the other communities and even members of the same race (Beterverwagting). Finally, there is a cynical view of race relations as in the statement that inter-racial relationships are not permitted by people of various races. Interaction is limited; persons tend to interact only when they can gain a greater amount. When items are stolen, it is assumed that it must be by the other races of the community (New Amsterdam). Some Indigenous communities note issues of disrespect and continuing issues over land titling. What is clear from the above is that a significant amount of misconceptions and stereotyping persist based on lack of familiarity and perhaps living separate lives, culturally and geographically. This may not be as pessimistic as it sounds and can perhaps be addressed by greater efforts at 'social engineering'.

There was also a wide spread among communities regarding the level of understanding, trust, caring, sharing, and support that they experienced. At one end of the spectrum, some communities report that understanding is very poor, also trust and support, within their village because of lack of communication (Rockstone, Rosehall, New Amsterdam, Grove, Agricola). In one community, this was attributed to past unfavourable decision-making that resulted in the

distrust and unhealthy relationships within the community and amongst its external neighbours (Kwakwani). Other communities reported that there was not enough trust among groups, that the level of understanding was limited, and they needed more awareness of other cultures and groups (Kuru Kururu, Beterverwagting, Mahaicony, Corriverton, Diamond). At the other end of the spectrum, some communities reported that there is always a high level of understanding, trust, caring, sharing and support given (Leguan); and that neighbours look out for each other's children. Individuals usually share items from religious functions or events, and financial and other assistance where necessary (Georgetown, Mocha, New Amsterdam, Rosignol, Mahdia). A significant number of communities fell somewhere in the middle of the spectrum, and reported a more textured manifestation of these markers of social cohesion. Some reported an unbalanced understanding and lack of trust within groups because of the lack of educated leaders in the community (Kamarang); that there is still trust, but caring and sharing are slowly dying, and everyone looks forward to money (Lethem); and that the level of understanding and trust varies within communities is based on individual predispositions; and that the level of caring, sharing and support is mutual and dependent on how persons treat each other (Bartica, Fort Wellington, Mahaicony, Rosignol). Finally, one community related the level of trust as an issue of governance and reported that villagers do not trust village councils, government, and churches because of lack of transparency and accountability (Moruca). Again, this mixed bag of perspectives, while sobering, provides some opportunities for purposeful and appropriately targeted programmatic interventions at the community and village levels to bring citizens closer together, to share with each other, and to learn habits of understanding, trust, caring, and support for each other.

There was a multiplicity of views on the factors and issues that prevent improving race relations. The consultations in Hinterland and Indigenous communities highlighted issues of respect for their cultures and traditions, issues of land rights, stereotyping, and conflicts among religious (largely Christian) bodies as some of the major factors (Pomeroon, Kamarang, Annai, Lethem, Kwakwani). Consultations in urban and rural coastal communities stressed conflicts based on race and ethnicity, culture, and political affiliation as the major factors (Lethem, Kwakwani, Mahaicony). Some responses held that the situation is improving as education and socialization lead to changes in attitudes and the way different groups view each other. Others have a more negative view due to lack of professionalism e.g. state agents; structural oppression characterized by lack of inclusion in national and important events, and a superiority complex based on ignorance between ethnic groups; and race politics (Linden). Others see discrimination, the lack of communication between race and ethnic groups, and stereotyping as the major factors preventing improving race relations (Beterverwagting, Diamond, Georgetown). Clearly, there is much that needs to be done to remove or reduce the factors that prevent improving race relations, including through (re)education, sensitization, and awareness campaigns; and sports and other cultural events at community, village, regional, and municipal levels to bring citizens together and to dispel negative perceptions and stereotypes. This will need to be a major plank of the Strategic Plan.

Despite the seemingly intractable nature of the divide based on race and ethnicity, there is much goodwill and willingness to interact and collaborate among persons of different races and

ethnicities. Indeed, a constant refrain from most of the consultations is that for the most part, the various races and ethnicities live peacefully, side by side in their villages and communities, and the lamentation that divisions based on race and ethnicity, largely surface in the periods leading up to and immediately after Presidential and Regional Elections. Of course, there is more than a residue of suspicion, mistrust, and ill feelings among the various races and ethnicities that clearly must be addressed in seeking to enhance and promote social cohesion. While challenging, there is still the hope and tentative confidence voiced at some of the consultations that political maturity, a recognition of what binds rather than what separates the races, and enlightened self-interest might well provide fertile ground for purposeful policy and programmatic actions. Thus, policy and programmatic interventions to address the challenges to harmonious ethnic and race relations, need to be implemented both at the national level where the political and other elites compete for power and organize their respective race and ethnic groups as the 'foot soldiers'; and in the regions, communities and villages, where the ordinary citizens, willingly or unwillingly, are made to participate in this 'devilish dance' thereby allowing race and ethnicity to determine social interactions and relations, between individuals, villages, and communities.



### **ANNEX 3: Results of the Media Consultations**

As previously indicated, there was a parallel track 2 media consultation process using radio and Facebook that sought to solicit inputs from difficult-to-reach youth and other demographics. Results and information obtained from the **Final Report: Media Consultations** reproduced hereunder, and complement the above information obtained from the face-to-face municipal and regional consultations.

#### ***THEME BY THEME ANALYSIS***

About 255 calls from the radio and 270 Face book posts and were analyzed and thematized as follows:

- Living together /Peaceful Existence
- Safety and Security
- Equal Rights and Justice
- Governance and Participation

Several proxies (related concepts that were simpler to understand) were developed in response to feedback that the larger themes may have been too complex for persons targeted to grasp. The project responded by breaking the big ideas into much smaller pieces which have then been reassembled back up to the larger concepts for analysis. Further, each Face book post connected to each proxy/keyword in a thematic area was analyzed for textual and emotional content. This process

generated over 190 pages of text which will be available for future researchers to analyze along with the transcripts from the radio segment of the project. However, for ethical reasons, only the posts and no identifying information can be shared.

#### **Box 1: Indicative Quote - Living Together**

*"Truth be told, like I've always said, Guyana don't have a race problem.... What we have is a political problem, and until we, as individuals, start refusing to be used as pawns by our politicians in their quest for political power, we can NEVER have unity! Politicians in Guyana benefit from keeping the two major races apart, hence the "We versus Them" campaign speeches at election time. If it was indeed a race problem, Indo people wouldn't live side by side peacefully in a predominantly black neighborhood or community, and vice-versa; we wouldn't buy from each other; in an emergency we would refuse to render our assistance; a black nurse would refuse to care for an Indo patient, ditto an Indo doctor. Indian people and black people know how to live in unity. It's our politicians who are the ones keeping us divided, and regardless of which "side" you're from, we have to attain a level of maturity where we start supporting our politicians based on policies that put our country first, not our race or selective development. That's my opinion, and contribution to the discussion [FB #137:110]*

#### **Theme 1: Living Together**

The theme focused on the ideational and relational domains. It looked at ideas about unity, cohesion, community relations and regulations, race relations, family and institutional relations, political relations, as evidenced by this small sample of posts in Appendix 3. It should be noted that we have presented the posts verbatim and not edited for language. However, for ethical reasons, to protect the participants' identities we have given each participant in the study a



unique numerical tag. Also for each post sentiment mapping was performed<sup>14</sup> to try to assess the prevailing emotion attached to the message. For both radio and internet for the theme concerned with living cohesively persons' views tended towards fear, sadness, and regret that Guyanese cannot live together. This, while painful to analyze, does speak to a great opportunity and willingness of young people across the country and across racial and political fault lines to work towards a cohesive nation.

Theme 1: Summary Findings

- *High awareness and salience of differences*
- *Political motivation of racial tension*
- *High levels of a number of different fears*
- *Wish to live in peace*
- *Importance of leadership in modeling unity*

Recommendations

Ideas of racial, ethnic, and cultural difference are prevalent and highly salient to any work on cohesion. Programmes fostering respect, understanding, creating good opportunities of exposure and interaction at every level and opportunity are recommended.

level	<div>Box 2: Indicative Quote - Living Together - Role of Leadership ...If the political leaders of this country...sit down and set an example in parliament they can show an example to the nation...that look and discuss things... [t</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A high degree of intentional and structured diversity education in the context or platform of “good</li></ul>
C i t i	<div>Box 3: Indicative Quote - Living Together - Different or Diverse? Stop trying to tell us...that...we are one...we are not one we have our differences because if you keep telling us that we are one...how...has that worked? Are there any cases where that has worked? We have differences, we just can't ignore it....[ Radio NTW1C11]</div>	
z e n s h i p o r c i v i c e d u c a t i o n ” i s a l s o s u g g e s t e d.	<div>Box 3: Indicative Quote - Living Together - Racism .... it's a hard, hard life to be an Amerindian in Guyana... in this country. From Kinder Garden, I had to defend meh self because I was the only Amerindian in a school in Georgetown. Every school I went to... every class I been in I had to... I was the one being picked on and I could tell you, I learn to fight. I also learn to represent myself verbally because if... if an Indian open his mouth... ‘yuh is ah buck man’. If an African open his mouth... ‘yuh is ah buck man’ [ Radio NC:W1P21]</div>	

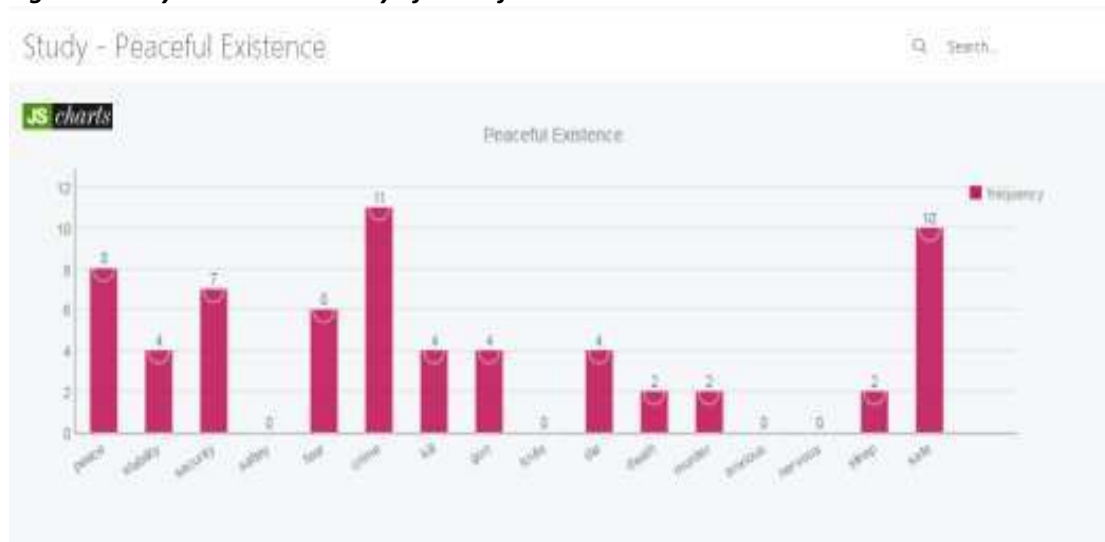
<sup>14</sup> Sentiment mapping was conducted by an algorithm encoded in the software used to develop using semantic and emotional analysis. There were problems associated with generating sentiment in this context, each analysis had to be manually checked. The structure of the posts was mis-read by the

those who are held in esteem or who are in leadership positions tends to drive cleavages especially in certain contexts.

- Political rhetoric perceived as divisive and destructive is also highly implicated as a challenge towards national unity.
- The consultation suggested a heightened and more dynamic role for organizations such as the Ethnic Relations Commission and other watchdog bodies, the introduction of Codes of Conduct for persons in public office, as well as public education.
- Allaying fear was indicated as central to any work on cohesion since fear seems to be a key challenge to cohesion. Several types of fear are spoken of such as: fear of the “other” and being “othered”; fear of unknown/uncertainty; fear of being harmed in some way and not being protected; fear about not having enough; fear of not being considered/being marginalized; fear of not being respected and not being understood.

## ***Theme 2: Safety and Stability***

**Figure 15: Key Ideas in The Study of Peaceful Existence**



Several ideas centered around peace, stability, personal security, crime, and safety emerged. These are indicated in figure 16 above.

## **Theme 2: Safety and Stability - Analysis**

**Box 4: Indicative Quote - Safety, Security and Mental Health**

*...why don't I feel safe to wear a gold necklace around GT? Why when at home we're always grilled in? Why am I on the edge that our Government would make decisions to hinder our Country/people? ... So, on a scale of 1-10 I'd say my stability level is 6 1/2 living in Guyana [Fb #144:110]*

should be better equipped to protect citizens. There has been a general call for tougher laws and sentences.

- 2) However, a few discussants have been able to relate crime to joblessness, rise in substance use, and certain policies, which are seen to be aiding criminals at the expense of citizens.
- 3) Emotionally, this discussion was full of anger and fear mixed with sadness.
- 4) The relationship between feeling personally secure and participation in community, civic or public life is positive: the more people feel secure the more engaged they tend to be in public life. Feelings of security and stability are therefore fair indicators for levels of engagement and public participation. Civic engagement and public participation are often considered key variables in fostering social and national cohesion.

**Indications for Action and Recommendations**

Suggested actions are:

- 1) Stronger policing mechanisms
- 2) Stronger community presence for security

- 1) Whereas the trope of fear was generally indicated as a barrier to cohesion in discussions about unity, it has also been overtly expressed as a central and negative aspect of the lives of many Guyanese in terms of personal experiences of interpersonal violence, crime and perceptions of some particularly weak systems of governance in some agencies which

**Box 5: Indicative Quote - Safety and Security - Family Violence**

*...mih daughter in de theatre right now at the last hospital she husband stab she*

**Box 6: Indicative Quote - Safety and Security - Relationship Between Crime and Economic Inequality**

*last and now, Hmm crime in Guyana spiral out of control due to unemployment ppl dont have spending power & criminal are set free with serious crime by the court. Which they find is weak. Creation of jobs is the key to keep a nation moving forward in a positive direction [NCNW2C10]*

**Box 7: Indicative Quote - Safety and Security - Corruption ?**

*...You might go to the station, okay this is the guy I saw in my house. ...And the next thing you know that person is acquainted with the police so I don't know how you gon approach situations of that nature. Because a lot of the police know these criminals, they know them...[Radio N1W3C8]*

- 3) Stronger sentences especially for repeat offenders
- 4) Extensive attention to recidivism and offender tracking systems.
- 5) Strong anti-crime signals coming from government and all leadership levels
- 6) Extensive social programmes for unemployed

### Theme 3: Equal Rights and Justice

The main ideas evolving from the discussion on equity, parity and equality hinged around fair application of the law, fair distribution of resources, and inclusion at all levels as indicated in figure 16 below. Six main dimensions for action were identified.

- a) Social and Political Inequalities
- b) Economic and Material Inequalities - allocation of resources
- c) Gender Related Inequalities
- d) Lack of Trust
- e) Individual Health and Well being
- f) Perceived Governmental Actions

Figure 16: Key Ideas in The Study of Equal Rights and Justice.



- 1) **Inequalities:** The general perception emerging from the discussions both on Face book and on radio is that there is variable equality, equity or parity experienced in Guyana. This is driven by perceived inequalities in power, resource allocation and access to opportunity. These perceptions pose fundamental challenges to cohesion since they undermine trust and tend to set groups competitively against each other over perceptually scarce resources.

#### Box 8: Equal Rights and Justice Social and Economic Disparities

*Equity!!!! What? Not in Guyana  
Equality is what goes for one should go for everyone not the rich and famous can do as they please and you pressure the poor and needy. I know for a fact I don't c equality here where I'm living coz is only the rich and famous people are looked in the offices and I wonder y? I wish someone in authority can explain that [ FB#145:109]*

1. **Perceived Inequitable Allocation of Resources:** Who “gets” and who “does not get” is perceived to be related to alignment to political or other power bases in the society. If these ideas and or lived experiences persist then the prognosis for cohesiveness in Guyana could be very poor. However, if efforts are made to undermine these persistent inequalities in an equitable and transparent manner - coupled with efforts to control racially charged rhetoric, fear mongering, and to foster respect amongst diverse

**Box 9: Equal Rights and Justice - Gender**

*we need to look at the rights of people. In generally speaking we have been seeing every day that only women have rights in this country... it means in other words when you have a family and court story, division of property and law of man is making decision for the woman alone and the man becomes a murderer... [ RadioRGYW3C16]*

groups in the country - the outlook for would be positive in terms of cohesion.

2.

3. **Gender Related Perceptions of Inequality:** Gender relations/women’s rights is also an emerging theme. Where some young males seem to perceive that their rights are not being upheld as well as those of women in the Guyana judicial system especially in domestic matters.

3. **Lack of Trust:** This aligns to many general comments that point to lack of trust in governmental organizations which are expected to provide protection. These include those which should bring wrongdoers to justice by dealing fairly with all cases of wrongdoing. The effect of these negative perceptions is to undermine confidence and participation in those formal systems of justice which are in place and perhaps to induce people to seek other forms of redress such as vigilante justice. The literature on

cohesion suggests that social cohesion is not possible without trust between individuals and between individuals and institutions<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, trust is viewed as

**Box 11: Indicative Quote - Safety, Security, Justice and Psychological States**

*I don't think safety as if I wondering what's gonna happen next. No.... If I focus on all that's happening around surely I'd loose my sanity; my security is to guard my mind vigilantly. What is security; anything could happen any time, predictably no one know what's going to happen the next minute. I try to live now. Present. Sanity and insanity are just two letters apart [FB#154:107]*

<sup>15</sup> See for in framework validation a Uslaner, E. I Cambridge

cohesion: Developing a definition and analytical ...; Dicks, P., Valentova, M., & Borsenberger, M. (2010). Construct European countries. Social Indicators Research, 98(3), 451–473.; I cohesion. Cambridge:



positive predictability of intention and action is a core ingredient of solidarity<sup>16</sup>. Trust is believed to enhance economic exchange, efficient of public institutions, provide ground for collective action while fostering economic activity by lowering transaction costs and providing for pooling and maximization of collective resources.<sup>17</sup>

4. **Possible Effects on Psychological Health and Well Being:** For those who may not wish to resort to other informal types of redress there could be a learned helplessness and hopelessness, which creeps in affecting mental health and general feelings of wellbeing. Compromised health has an impact on productivity, interpersonal as well as inter-group relations. It's especially problematic if it is perceived that wrongdoing is being perpetrated by members of one group against members of another with no avenues for justice and fairness of redress.

**Box 11: Equal Rights and Justice - Importance of Leadership**  
*"justiceness" have to come from the top level of government[Radio NPW3C8 ]*

6. **Care in Explaining Governmental Policies on Prisoner Management and Gun Control:** It is perceived by a large number of respondents that the government has a policy of letting prisoners go while disarming businessmen, thereby leaving helpless citizens exposed. Consequently, if these perceptions persist in the context of governmental policy which is perceived to pardon even those who have been brought to justice without clear explanation of the rationale behind these actions, this can serve to further undermine confidence in the formal system and will - if left unaddressed - help to sustain existing social tensions as well as undermine confidence in the government.

**Areas for Action and Recommendations:**

1. Social and economic support systems for those most in need with a clear focus on communities;
2. Clear and consistent distribution of wealth and opportunity with an emphasis on community equity;
3. Public Education on opportunities available to citizens and means of accessing these in a timely manner with support for navigating sometimes complex or unfamiliar process and systems;
4. Continuous dialogue to ventilate, assess and address matters affecting the population with a clearcut mechanism for problem solving.
5. Continuous gender work especially with younger and older men;
6. Extensive diffusion communication efforts needed to ensure that policies and government actions are understood by all, everywhere.

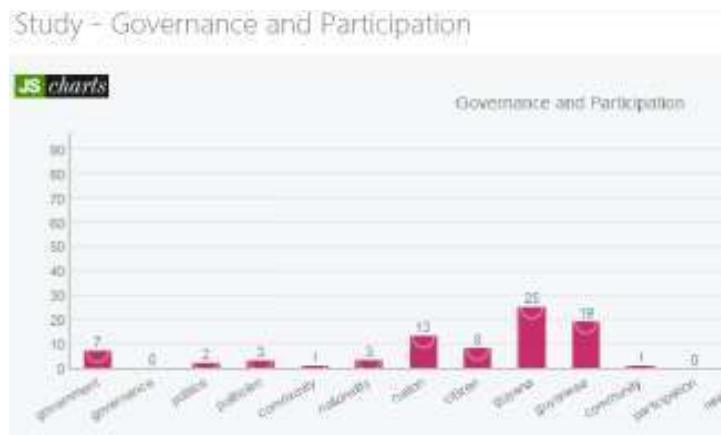
**Theme 4: Governance and Participation**

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> See Larsen, C. A. (2013). The rise and fall of social cohesion: The construction and de-construction of social trust in the US, UK, Sweden and Denmark. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press; and, Fukuyama, F. (1995). Trust. The social virtues and the creation of prosperity. New York: Free Press. Giardiello, M. (2014). The generative theory of social cohesion and civic integration. European Scientific Journal, Special Edition, 2, 80–89.

As figure 17 (below) and the texts of the submissions made on radio and the internet were analyzed 7 major sub-themes emerged. These were:

- a) *Pride at being Guyanese*
- b) *Fair, exemplary political leadership*
- c) *Law, order and security*
- d) *Social protection and social welfare*
- e) *Economics, compensation and the distribution of resources*
- f) *Communication and information channels*
- g) *Perceived rural-urban disparities*



**Figure 17: Ideas Emerging on Governance and Participation**

**Pride in Citizenship:** There is a general pride at being Guyanese juxtaposed with the tension sometimes felt of living in conditions which do not seem to support the best life that Guyanese could have. Questions arose in the discussions about how poor people reconcile their lived experience of need with formal and informal information about the amount of wealth Guyana has. They are concerned about how their portions will be allotted and the mechanisms for how this will be achieved.

**Security, Protection and Resources:** There seem to be strong perceptions of a systematic break down of law and order and severely compromised protective mechanisms in Guyana. This protection is not limited to the physical security against criminal activity, which

**Box 12: Indicative Quote - Governance and Participation : Proud Guyanese**

*I am so proud and happy for Guyana that I don't even want to leave Guyana but, with the crime rate that is going on in this country right now I bet you almost 70% of the Guyanese are willing to get out of this country because there is no trust, no faith, and no confidentiality in the police force. The police force needs to regroup themselves, they need to trust themselves before people can trust them. People lost a lot of faith in them [ Radio NGRW4C13]*

**Box 13: Indicative Quote - Governance and Participation : People Focused Governance**

*... I think true governance is a government that looks out for the people, the citizens and tries to make their lives better. To be honest, Guyana is like the total opposite....I really believe that our government can do a whole lot better if they really open their eyes and focus on the people and the people needs....[Radio NGRW4C7]*

is the single most pervasive trope that cross cuts all of the 4 themes analyzed. Protection is expanded to take in social protection explicitly referred to in the transcripts as social security for old people and systems of discipline in schools for children to replace corporal punishment. In many cases “youth” were referred to as “disruptive” forces whose energies needed to be “properly channeled” for their own good and for the good of the communities and country. In other words, for those expressing their views in this project, “governance” means “governing for all and taking care of all”, more of which, they suggest needs to happen.

- a. **Community** - Ideations of “community” emerge most frequently in this context. Many people see the community as the site for local action in an environment enabled by the policy makers and government. They see the role of the citizens as that of helping to keep the law and order of the country. However, this must be enabled at the level of the communities though such mechanisms as a properly resourced and waged Police Force. Strengthened interconnected community policing groups, with Police outposts coupled with army support for police and arming of selected persons in communities are suggested. Other vibrant communities’ projects which are inclusive and encouraging to all are also recommended.

**Box 14: Governance and Participation: Community**

*My contribution is citizens of communities needs to get involved in securing their communities because in communities where there are citizen policing groups there are lesser incidences of crime and violence. Compared to communities where everybody is just selfish and everybody is just looking for somebody else to lookout for them and it does not work like that....” [Radio NGRW4C10 ]*

- b. **Political Leadership** - The behavior of those who are in government and other leadership positions is seen as key to good governance and participation on two levels. (1) Leaders are expected to be the exemplars of good behavior, which citizens can model from; (2) they are seen as important galvanizing agents of interest groups who are considered purveyors of legitimate information and controllers of scarce resources (jobs for instance). When these functions appear compromised in the minds of citizens then at the simplest level feelings of disorder and lack of moral and political authority over them is conveyed. This can exacerbate fissures in the social fabric and undermine confidence in leadership and systems of governance.

**Box 15: Governance and Participation: Governing by Example**

*... let’s say in governance we gotta follow the principle of the people that make the law or who govern the country and am they are the ones if you notice, they breech the law and within themselves so the citizens now when they look at it they tell themselves man if they can do I, we can do it. And you have, you have a conflict of interest between the people in the top bracket and the people below because if we check in parliament what’s going on, is a lot of squabble...[Radio NTN895W4C3]*



- c. **Participation:** While the degree of public and civic participation varies in any system, the underlying reasons for why people participate or not should always be assessed. According to (Berger-Schmitt 2000; European Commission 2001). Participation in public life is a good measure for a sense of connectedness, belonging, solidarity and readiness for achieving mutual goals. Participants in this exercise seem to suggest that there is need for more opportunities for addressing problems in the system. As such in this highly competitive and complex political context citizens seem to get caught between competing representations of reality which in turn can undermine their sense of connectedness to the country and to one system in favor of the other. This also can

**Box 16: Governance and Participation: Opting Out**

*I am proud to be a Guyanese, trust me. Guyanese are wonderful people. We need leaders that can tell the people we are one... the situation in the country. Nobody is going forward to do stuff, everybody just giving up like. Most of them just migrating, I don't know man. I don't know what to say is going on....[Radio NCN981W4C7]*

undermine their sense of safety, citizenship, and can impede their own opportunity-seeking efforts, which cuts them off from resources that may be available to them in the country.

**Theme 4- Areas for Action and Recommendations:**

a) **Pride at being Guyanese:** support every opportunity to use education, national events, speeches, cultural exchanges, media and inter-community engagement, as proven in psychological studies which recommend a high degree of contact and education<sup>18</sup>. This

calls for a systematic and across the board programme at the inter-governmental (Inter Ministerial Committee on Social Cohesion for instance), NGO, religious and community levels. The Ministries of Social Cohesion, Education, Youth and Culture, Social Protection and Public Security should be involved in supporting policy-making, programmes and budgeting resources to this effort.

- b) **Fair, exemplary political leadership:** This is an area which is to be guided by implementation and enforcement of the codes of conduct for public figures and the support to all the national commissions which were developed to monitor and implement them. The roles of the Commissions on Women and Gender Equality, Children's Rights, Ethnic Relations, Indigenous Peoples and Inter-religious bodies are clearly defined in law. These should be given effect in action and their roles and responsibilities made publicly known to all citizens. As such, public education programmes along with funding and less political steering for the above-mentioned commissions as well as other bodies who do this work is recommended. This should also include strong but fair redress to wrong doing by public figures. In this regard the

<sup>18</sup> Contact Theory indicates that for groups in which there is a high degree of diversity and ignorance of each other a common possibly national super ordinate goal – a goal that transcends personal or group interests helps along with continuous exposure and education about the perceived other.

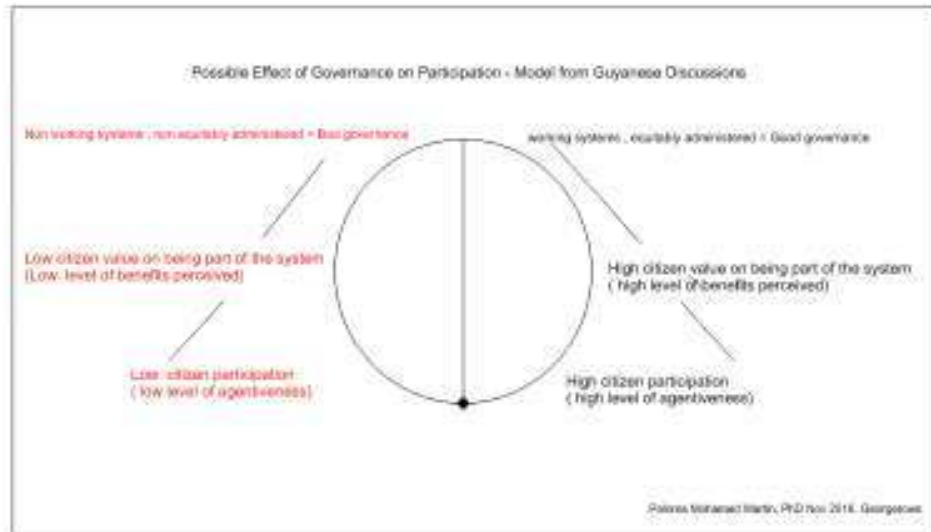
work of new agencies like SOCU and SARU are seen as important as well as the response of the judicial system.

- c) **Economics, Law, Order, Security and Social Protection:** This is a complex set of variables as expressed before, but the bolstering of security systems and institutions as well as public confidence is recommended. This means that action is especially required in the Police Force, Judicial System, Community and Local Government, Finance, Health, Social Protection and Public Security Sectors. There is also need for social protection and welfare programmes at the community level targeted at vulnerable populations as identified by community. These can help secure citizens' livelihoods and access to essential services which should in turn support more secure communities and produce a more cohesive nation.
- d) **Communication and Information Channels:** it is clear from comments shared in this exercise that channels need to be created and maintained where citizens' feedback can be taken and acted upon. Useful systematic community forums, including the use of media and face to face mechanisms are recommended. Traditional comments boxes, office hours, citizen representatives, letters, emails can all be employed in this process but these means need to be systematized with action and follow up.
- e) **Participation:** Where lack of participation is based on lack of trust, fear or misconceptions, these misconceptions must be addressed by transparent and well distributed communications. Where perceptions are based on real problems in the system there must be mechanisms for reporting and redressing these problems. Moreover, there should be a sensitivity to areas of historical mistrust and fear which may cause specific groups to withdraw from public participation. There should be specific efforts made at ensuring ease of participation. There should also be extra effort spent in reaching out to these groups in their places of comfort first to encourage trust, contact and connectedness which are essential for public participation. Technology can be a great asset in reaching safely into difficult private – public spaces in such efforts.

**Cross Cutting Observations:**

- a. It should be noted that many participants continuously related the sub-themes in their discussions. In doing so, it seems they were clear about the inter-relatedness of all the variables in achieving social cohesion. With regard to governance for instance, the public's perception seems to be widely understood as the sum total of how the country works. This includes the systems that support policies that should protect and provide for citizens as well as those people who manage them. Whether these systems work or not seem to directly impact on people's perceptions as to how they are valued as Guyanese and this in turn affects their feelings of connectedness on two dimensions (1) general feelings of citizenship (2) participation in community and national matters.

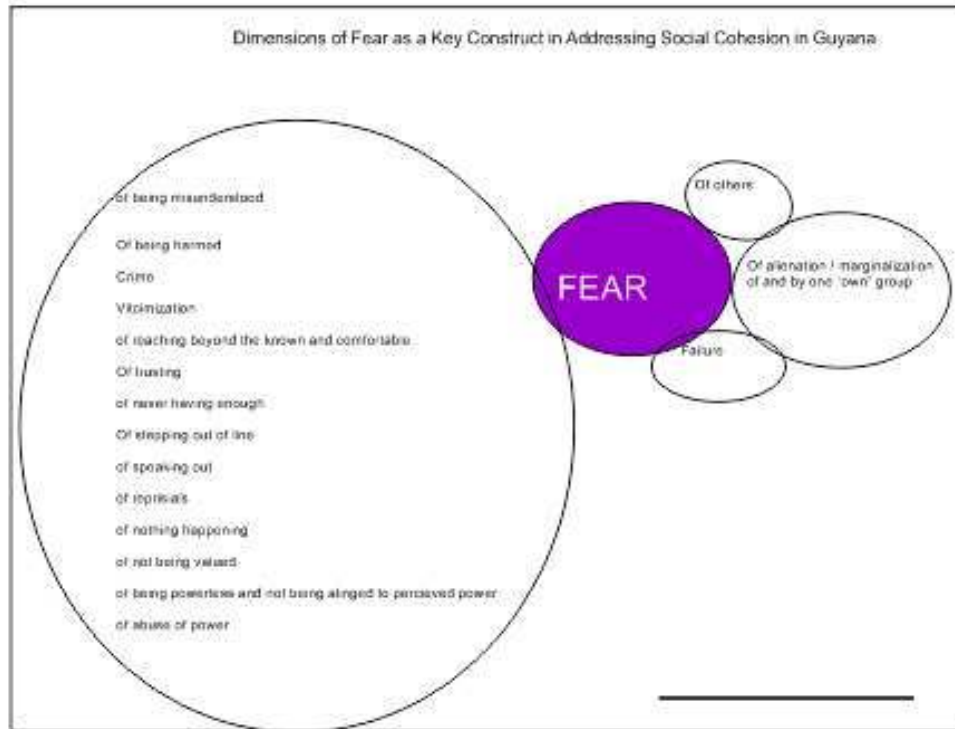
Generally, these correlations may be simplified as follows: working system/good governance = high value on being part of the system = high community and public participation and vice versa. This is modeled in Figure 18 below.



**Figure 18: Guyana Model: Possible Effects of Governance on Public Participation**

- b. **Fear at The Centre-** The reasons for citizens curtailing their participation in public, community and national events have been many, but none is as pervasive as *fear*. This is another cross-cutting variable of concern which is at the core of cohesion in Guyana. Indeed, it may be the most pervasive one. Figure 19 below maps the types of fear underlying many attitudes and behaviors expressed amongst those who participated in this qualitative study.

**Figure 19: Dimensions of Fear in Addressing Social Cohesion in Guyana**



At least 17 types of admissions of fear were identified, in this study. These were classified along affective, perceptive and systemic levels. These are: fear of the other, fear of being alienated by one's own group if one steps out, or fear of failure in fostering relationships with those perceived as different in the face of relative ignorance of how others live and who they really are; fear of being misunderstood by others; of being harmed in various ways other than hard criminal activity, such as being charged different rates for the same goods; fear of crime; victimization; fear of reaching beyond the known and comfortable; fear of trusting; fear of never having enough materially; fear of stepping out of line; fear of speaking out; fear of reprisals; fear of nothing happening; fear of not being valued; fear of being powerless and maligned aligned to perceived power; fear of abuse of power.

Though fear may arise out of actual or vicarious experiences or it may be completely imaginary what is important is that it is experienced as real and affects behavior in important ways. It is important to understand how this affects cohesion since it is so pervasive. Fear is an inhibitor, it stops people from acting in social, public and professional situations and it undermines trust and confidence. Since robust inter-group, inter-personal relations and civic participation are integral to cohesion, then the importance of addressing all of these fears is clear.



**ANNEX 4: The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness**

The **Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005)**, agreed upon by the international community, identified specific, concrete actions to promote the effective delivery and management of aid for results. The Declaration is grounded on the following five fundamental, mutually reinforcing principles for making development assistance more effective:

- **Ownership:** Developing countries must set their own policies and strategies for poverty reduction, improving their institutions, and tackling corruption;
- **Alignment:** Donor countries should base their overall support on recipient countries' national development strategies, objectives, and procedures;
- **Harmonization:** Donor countries should coordinate their actions, simplify procedures, and share information to avoid duplication;
- **Managing for Results:** Donors and developing country partners should focus on managing resources and improving decision making for development results that must be measured; and
- **Mutual Accountability:** Donors and developing country partners are accountable for development results.