

INTRODUCTION

Guyana is home to more than 50,000 indigenous people settled in more than 120 communities and belonging to nine different tribes. The indigenous peoples account for more than 5% of the country's population and also represent the fastest growing group in Guyana. The majority of indigenous peoples inhabit the interior parts of Guyana with individual community populations ranging from 80 to more than 8,000 people.

The remoteness of the communities, the dispersed settlement patterns and the difficult terrain occupied, high administrative costs to deliver social services and lack of human resource skills in the communities seek to inhibit development initiatives. These factors and historical neglect during the years of the People's National Congress (PNC) rule has led to Amerindians being classified as the poorest section of the population of Guyana.

The Government of Guyana believes in equal opportunities for all the people of Guyana and is committed to the development of our indigenous peoples. We recognize that they have contributed and continue to contribute to national development. Upon accession to office in 1992, the PPPCivic Government made a resolution to not only ensure that Amerindians are included in the national programs but to implement special programs where those are needed so as to lessen the gap between these communities and those on the coast. To this end an Amerindian Development Fund was established, a Minister of Amerindian Affairs has been appointed and a Ministry has been established to collaborate with other Ministries and agencies in ensuring that Amerindians are included as far as possible.

The Government of Guyana has just completed an "Area Development Strategy for Amerindian Communities".

This Booklet highlights some of the Programs and Projects that are either completed, under implementation or are expected to be implemented in the near future.

THE AMERINDIAN ACT

The Amerindian Act has its origin as far back as 1951 and needs to be modernized. In 2002, the Government started the process of revising the Act. While the revision of legislation does not require country-wide consultation, in this case the Government recognized that it was important to consult with Amerindians so as to accommodate their recommendations as far as possible. A Technical Team comprising lawyers in private practice and from the Attorney General's Office, NGO's, representatives from Amerindian communities and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs was established.

To date, training of facilitators and consultations involving 111 communities have been completed. A summary of the recommendations have been sent to the communities for their comments. These responses have been received and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs is presently summarizing the recommendations for presentation to Cabinet after which drafting will commence. The new Act should be laid in Parliament in 2004.



President Bharrat Jagdeo (extreme left) addressing Village Toshaos at the National Meeting of Toshaos. Sitting from the President's left are P.S. of the Amerindian Affairs Ministry, Reginald Brotherson, Minister Carolyn Rodrigues, Dr. Desiree Fox and Lawrence Anselmo.

THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES COMMISSION

Recognising the need to pay special attention to Indigenous peoples, the Government supported constitutional changes which resulted in the establishment of the Indigenous Peoples Commission. The establishment of this Commission will see Amerindian issues being represented, discussed and recommendations produced at the highest level. The Commission will comprise of representatives from NGO's, the Toshaos Council and other Commissions and entities.

The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs will work closely with the Commission in addressing the various Amerindian issues.

AMERINDIAN LANDS

The Amerindian Land Issue is considered a top priority by both communities and Government. In its 2001 Manifesto, the Government renewed its commitment by stating that the process for resolving the land issue will be accelerated. There exist approximately 120 Amerindian communities - Seventy-six (76) of these communities have legal ownership of the lands they use and occupy. Some of these communities are requesting extensions to their existing lands. Additionally, those communities who do not have legal ownership are requesting to have title to these lands.

What Is The Government's Policy?

In 1995, the Government of Guyana in an attempt to address the Amerindian Land Issue formulated a Policy after consultation with the Amerindian Captains at a meeting held at Paramakatoi, Region 8. A two-phased approach was designed as follows:

(1) Recognizing that the 76 titled Amerindian communities were never surveyed and the fact that some of the descriptions of the communities in the Amerindian Act are different to what exists on the ground, a decision was made to have the communities surveyed and demarcated. This will serve several purposes. Firstly, it will provide the communities with a Map of their Village along with clearly marked boundaries. This will aid in dealing with encroachment issues by outsiders as many communities complain of such encroachment mostly by miners and loggers. In the absence of a clear map, it is



Minister Rodrigues with residents of 4-mile Village, Port Kaituma after a community meeting.

difficult to have these issues resolved. Secondly, the surveys will aid in identifying the anomalies between the description in the Amerindian Act and that on the ground. In this way the necessary corrections can be made.

(2) Following demarcation, the second phase will deal with the issue of extensions to existing titled communities and the titling of untitled communities.

What Has Happened Since The Policy Was Formulated

In 1996, the demarcation process commenced. However, this encountered some difficulties as some communities started to renege on their decision to demarcate. Several inaccuracies were also peddled by persons with political and selfish motives resulting in communities agreeing and then later disagreeing. In some communities, the surveyors arrived without prior notice resulting in some confusion.

For those communities who had agreed to demarcations and then later changed their minds, this resulted in wastage of scarce financial resources as the surveys had to be aborted. But more importantly the process was almost halted, as Government required all titled communities to be demarcated before moving to the next phase.

Modification Of The Policy In 2002

Recognizing that some administrative regions had completed the demarcation exercise, Government decided that it was unfair for communities who had completed their demarcations to wait on those who did not. In 2002, the Government altered the Policy to move to Phase 2, which is addressing extensions and titling of new communities, once all of the titled communities in a particular administrative region are demarcated.

To date, 39 communities have been demarcated with Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10 being completed. There remain 37 communities to be demarcated of which five have indicated their agreement to do so. These will be demarcated in 2004.

As a result of a Land Use Study conducted in seven untitled communities in Region 10, Government approved the titling of four of these communities. Negotiations will commence with the remaining three communities in February 2004. Three of these communities possessed Forest Concessions and since the process for titling is ongoing, Government has waived the fees associated with these Concessions.

Five of the nine communities in Region 2 have made their submissions for extensions and the Ministry is awaiting the submissions of the remaining four before proceeding further.

It is hoped that once the titling of the Region 10 communities are completed and the process to address the extensions in Region 2 commences, the other communities will be motivated to have their communities demarcated. This will clear the way for addressing extensions and untitled communities.

Classification of Konashen and Baramita as Districts in line with other Districts

The Amerindian Districts of Konashen and Baramita which were declared districts in 1977 but to which Section 20 (a) 1 of the Amerindian Act did not apply, are now brought in line with the other titled communities and districts. The Government has cleared the way for the demarcation process to commence and the preparation of the relevant titles to land. Section 20 (a) 1 transfers the rights, titles and interests of the State in and over the lands situated within the boundaries of the District, area or village, to the Village Council for the benefit of the Amerindian community.

Individual Land Titling

While Village Councils of Amerindian communities with communal titles are responsible for the distribution and management of the land in these communities, there are other areas that are not Amerindian communities but have a large Amerindian population. The Ministry of Housing and Water is presently processing the individual titles for Amerindian residents of Lethem, Bartica and Mabaruma. Except for the conveyancing fees, these persons will not have to pay for the land as normally done in other parts of Guyana. These Land Titles will enhance the chances of residents obtaining loans from the banking system.

VILLAGE DEMOCRACY

Village Captains and Councillors are elected through a democratic process. Amerindians directly elect their Village Captains and Councillors.

Prior to 1992, the PNC neglected Amerindian communities. The Councils are now given full recognition and all Amerindians are treated with dignity and respect.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR VILLAGE COUNCILS

Village Captains by virtue of their office are also Rural Constables and Justices of Peace. While the necessary legislations were in place since 1951 and 1990 respectively, the required swearing-in and training in these areas were not provided and therefore many Captains were not fully knowledgeable of their roles and



Students from Region One visiting Minister of Amerindian Affairs, Carolyn Rodrigues during Amerindian Heritage Month, 2003.

responsibilities. In 2002 and 2003 several Captains were sworn in as Justices of Peace but training is still required. The Toshaos Meeting of February 2004 will involve training in these areas and manuals will be provided to the captains. The remaining captains will also be sworn-in as Justices of Peace.

Additional training with Village Councils in other areas such as Finance and Accountability, Leadership Skills and other relevant areas will be conducted as of April 2004.

EDUCATION

Over the last decade significant sums of money were spent on improving, reconstructing or establishing schools in hinterland areas. Several secondary schools were established in areas where children often left school at a tender age. While the programs of the Ministry of Education cater for the entire Guyana, there are some specific programs that were developed particularly to cater for the needs of the hinterland communities of which Amerindian communities represent the majority.

Guyana Basic Education Training Project (GBET)

Over the past 75 years the Cyril Potter College of Education has been training teachers. Even though the efforts of the College have been significant, there is still recognition that a significant number of hinterland and deep riverain teachers are unqualified and untrained. In 1996, the late President Cheddi Jagan requested international assistance for basic education teacher training systems. The Guyana Basic Education Training Project (GBET) benefits teachers in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 through teacher training which is provided by a distance education program. It is designed to enable untrained teachers to become qualified. Many teachers in Amerindian communities were not properly qualified because opportunities to

upgrade their education were almost non-existent under the PNC Government. Some 1200 teachers and about 400 school principals will benefit from upgraded education and training. GBET has already commenced its first Distance Education Teacher Certificate Programme in Region 1. It is expected, that based on the success of this pilot, the program will be repeated in other regions.

In addition, the Government continues to train Amerindian teachers at CPCE. Unlike their coastal counterparts, hinterland teachers receive their salaries while in training. Increasing the number of trained and qualified teachers in Amerindian communities has already started to yield positive results.

Guyana In-Service Distance Education Programme (GUIDE)

The Government of Guyana, through the Ministry of Education initiated this project which is aimed at upgrading acting teachers in the hinterland areas so that they can gain the entry requirements to attend Cyril Potter College of Education. Orealla Mission is one of the beneficiaries of this initiative.

Escuela Nueva

This project was designed to introduce a new model of teaching to the hinterland communities which is compatible with their way of life. Teaching modules were designed, which seeks to address and incorporate the activities in Amerindian communities. The teaching is based on a child-centred approach wherein community support to education is essential. This model was successfully used in Colombian Amerindian communities. Schools that benefited included Aishalton and Santa Rosa Primary.



Hinterland teachers graduating from the Cyril Potter College of Education.

Secondary Schools Reform Project (SSRP)

This project is aimed at significantly upgrading education in the first three grades of secondary schools. It was piloted in 12 schools of which some Amerindian communities such as Port Kaituma Community School, Parmakatoi Secondary School and St. Ignatius Secondary School, benefited.

Basic Education Access And Management Project (BEAMS)

This project has national coverage, hence Amerindian communities are also included. The main aim is to contribute to sustainable socio-economic development and poverty reduction.

The objectives include:

- (1) sustained, improved literacy and numeracy attainment through the primary cycle
- (2) expanded secondary access in underserved areas and poverty zones.

The Civil works component of BEAMS would help the Amerindian communities by renovating some of the old schools and building new ones. Housing/accommodation would also be provided for teachers in the hinterland.

Through the Innovative Technology Initiative, schools in Amerindian communities would benefit from computers and other modern technologies which will be introduced to the schools.

Community based programs which are geared to raise attendance, enhance equity and restore literacy and numeracy to acceptable levels in low-performing schools will also be conducted.

The Education for All Fast Track Initiative

The project focuses on major initiatives and focuses heavily on the hinterland regions which comprise mainly Amerindian communities. The project is aimed at:

- Improving the quality of the teaching force in the hinterland.
- Train qualified teachers using the Guyana Basic Education Teacher Training (GBET) distance education approach and continuous professional development for all trained teachers.
- Establishing satellite learning centers for teachers within a cluster of communities.

- Improving the conditions of service for teachers in the hinterland by helping to provide decent accommodation.
- Enhancing the learning/teaching environment in primary schools.
- Accelerating the Escuela Nueva learning model, which is used to improve education in Amerindian communities.
- Provision of text books
- Accelerating the establishment of School Improvement Plans
- Upgrading the present school feeding program in the hinterland.

Cuban Scholarships

In order to ensure that Amerindians are an integral part of the Cuban Scholarship Program, Government made a policy decision to include at least ten (10) Amerindian Students in each batch of Cuban Scholars. To date twelve students have departed for Cuba to study in areas such as engineering, medicine, physiotherapy and agriculture among others.



President Bharrat Jagdeo and Minister Carolyn Rodrigues assisting a student to cut the ribbon to commission the new library for students at the Amerindian Hostel in Georgetown.



One of the new dormitories for students under construction at Waramadong, Region Seven.

Public Service Scholarships

Even though the Public Service Scholarship Program was established many years ago, historically Amerindians have found it difficult to be included. Today there are sixty hinterland students, with the majority being Amerindians, attending the University of Guyana, Guyana School of Agriculture and the Government Technical Institute, under the PSM Scholarship Program.

In addition, the Government through the Public Service Ministry has announced that University students who are willing to serve in Hinterland communities for a designated period will not have to repay their student loans. Once more, this is an effort to ensure that areas and specifically schools in the hinterland benefit from the knowledge of qualified persons.

Hinterland Scholarship Program

The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs Hinterland Scholarship Program caters for students from hinterland communities who have been successful at obtaining in excess of 470 marks at the Common Entrance Examinations. In addition, students who may not have obtained a secondary education or because of their location may not have acquired the desired number of CXC subjects, are given an opportunity to attend technical institutions such as Guyana Technical Institute, Guyana Industrial Training College, Carnegie School of Home Economics and Guyana School of Agriculture. At present there are 225 students on the Program with an annual intake of approximately 60 students.

In order to improve the grades acquired by the hinterland scholarship students, a library was established in 2002 at the Amerindian Hostel. The establishment of the library complete with books cost more than \$6 M. The investment has had a positive impact on the CXC results.



Graduating Community Health Workers (CHW's) in Region One.

HEALTH

The Government continues to work on the improvement of health services in the regions. While there is still a lot to be done, significant strides have been made in this area. Several Community Health Worker Programs have been conducted over the last four years and a number of Health Posts were established in communities. Recently, the construction of the Kamarang Hospital was completed and plans are afoot for the reconstruction of the Lethem Hospital.



One of the many new Health huts in Region Nine.

Cancer Research Project

Recognizing the increase in the number of women seeking medical treatment in Georgetown for Cervical Cancer, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and CIDA has commenced a Cancer Research Project to determine the prevalence of Cervical Cancer in Amerindian women. To date, approximately 1100 Pap smears were conducted in Regions 1 and 9 and the samples are being analysed. The women will have the results before the end of February.

Medex Program

Several Amerindian Medexes have been trained but there is still a shortage of Medexes. The Ministry of Health is working towards commencing another Medex Training Program.

Free transportation, accommodation and meals

Persons who are referred to Georgetown from the various health clinics in the interior are usually accommodated free of cost at the Amerindian Hostel. In addition, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs pays the return transportation costs for the referred patients to the communities.

Medical Outreach Programs

While it sometimes proves difficult to provide resident doctors or Medexes in the communities, the Ministry of Health has been conducting medical outreach programs. Government has also approved for several other institutions such as the Remote Area Medical (RAM) to provide medical services. Government will intensify these outreach Programs.

WATER

While some water systems have been installed and are working, providing potable water to Amerindian communities has not achieved the desired results so far. Amongst the targets defined in the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI) Operating License, is a requirement "to ensure that safe water is available to or supplied to 80% of all settlements in the Hinterland, through sustainable and cost effective locally appropriate means by 2007." In keeping with this ambitious requirement, the Ministry of Housing and Water together with the Guyana Water Incorporated and other agencies have just completed a Hinterland Water Strategy which will determine the way forward. Physical work will start in 2004. The Government will insist that GWI treat the provision of water in the Amerindian communities in a



One of the wells providing pure water in a village in Region One.

different way with greater community involvement in the design, management and maintenance of the systems.

FORESTRY

The Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) is the Government agency that is responsible for the management of the State Forests. The Forest Resources of Guyana are used for multiple purposes including the harvesting of forest produce and wildlife, agriculture, eco-tourism, research, conservation and protected areas and biodiversity reserves.

Forests are an integral part of Amerindian culture, and communities utilize the forest resources for food, building materials, fibres for textiles and weaving, medicine and dyes. Several communities are involved in commercial harvesting of forest resources. It should be noted that titled Amerindian communities own the forests within their titled area.

GFC therefore encourages communities that are commercially harvesting forest resources, to follow the guidelines that have been established for sustainable use of these resources. These guidelines include the conducting of forest inventories to establish scientifically the type, quantity and quality of commercial stems present. The results of the inventory and the available markets then inform the preparation of a simple forest management plan which, if properly implemented, will allow for the harvesting of forest produce on a commercial long term basis.

The GFC recognizes that it is important that all stakeholders have access to the guidelines and be provided with the relevant training to enable them to follow the guidelines.

Several programs have been developed and are made available to Amerindian communities. These include:

- 1) Extension services (training in the preparation and conducting of forest inventories; and subsequent data analysis; training in directional felling; training in reduced impact logging; training in forest management planning.
- 2) The social development program – this is an inter-agency initiative which is coordinated by GFC and addresses the social forestry and other related issues that are specific to hinterland communities.
- 3) The GFC Hinterland Scholarship Program – 5 scholarships are offered each year to students from hinterland communities who meet the Guyana School of Agriculture requirements to do the 1 year certificate in Forestry. These scholarships are awarded in collaboration with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs.

Communities are encouraged to make use of the services provided by the GFC and can do so by submitting a written request to the GFC.

Recognising that some communities have encountered difficulties in negotiating Agreements, the GFC is also willing to assist Amerindian communities in negotiations of Agreements with those interested in logging in Amerindian titled areas.

MINING

While Mining makes an important contribution to the country's economy, communities have expressed concerns about the environmental and social impacts of the activity. Some Amerindian communities are also involved in mining that may be considered non-traditional. The Geology and Mines Commission is presently preparing a training package whereby residents of the Amerindian communities will be trained as Wardens. In this way the monitoring will be done by the residents themselves and the GGMC will be less constrained in finding persons from Georgetown to be stationed in the mining areas. This training should commence in 2004.

PROTECTED AREAS

More often than not, indigenous communities live in or around areas that may be designated Protected Areas. Government, recognizing the importance of sustainable use and in some cases preservation, has begun a series of consultations with communities and other stakeholders with the intention of establishing a

Protected Area System. As usual, introducing new concepts will always have its challenges but this is one way that indigenous peoples and Guyanese as a whole can be assured of the protection of the environment. The Government will respect the traditional sustainable use of resources by the communities and will not grant Protected Areas on titled lands unless the communities request it. The Government also intends to provide the relevant training to local people, not only as rangers or wardens, but also as administrators so that they can manage the Protected Areas. In areas where legitimate land claims may exist, efforts would be made to reach amicable solutions.

Government will seek to promote and support economic activities in Protected Areas.

The community of Konashen has also requested that its land be declared a Protected Area. Government has responded favourably to this request and the necessary processes are being put in place which will eventually lead to the declaration of the community as a Protected Area.

AMERINDANS BENEFITING FROM TOURISM DEVELOPMENTS

As part of its efforts to diversify the economy and to improve income levels, the Government has identified tourism as a priority sector.

The PPP/Civic's 2001 manifesto said that *it would promote formal and informal partnerships with Amerindian Communities and that it would develop tourism in regions and communities across Guyana including Amerindian Areas*. The National Development Strategy, with respect to Eco-tourism, outlines that *priority must be given to Amerindian involvement and precautions taken not to overwhelm local capacity and impact negatively on the indigenous way of life and that the indigenous craft industry would be developed*.

Government has worked assiduously during the past few years to realize these objectives. The following are some of the tangible things that have been done to fulfil these promises.

TOURISM TAKES HOLD IN AMERINDIAN AREAS

Tourism projects by and among Amerindians have developed in Surama, Annai, Sanata Mission and Shell Beach. These communities are benefiting from the Government's efforts at improving the livelihood of Amerindians by bringing them into the main-stream of the economy through the tourism industry. Santa Mission is nestled between two of our main nature tourism entities and was the recipient of international support coordinated by the Government of Guyana to develop a visitors' center and its capacity to host tourists. Surama and Annai have developed tourism links with Iwokrama and the many tour operators who bring visitors to Guyana and these villages. The Mainstay Wyaka Village has benefited from the

exposure that Lake Mainstay Resort has provided and has developed its own facilities aimed at day-trippers and other tourists.

Tourism projects are being planned by Chenapau. They are preparing to host stay over visitors who would have been to Kaieteur and want to spend time in an Amerindian village. Nappi, in Region 9, is also building accommodation and are developing nature trails and places of interest, recreation and enjoyment for domestic and international tourists. Malalli, in Region 10, Orealla, Region 6, and some communities in Regions One, Seven and Eight have shown keen interest in tourism development.

RUPUNUNI RODEO SITE

Recognizing the importance of the Lethem Rodeo to our indigenous people, the Government of Guyana invested heavily in building a modern rodeo site. Guyana is unique in that the cowboys are indigenous people. This fenced site has a pavilion, permanent exhibition booths, arena, running water and electricity.



His Excellency, President Bharrat Jagdeo and Minister Carolyn Rodrigues with Amerindians during Heritage Day 2003 celebrations in St. Ignatius, Region Nine.



A group of tourists pose at a site in an Amerindian community.

RUPUNUNIEXPO

Conceived four years ago, the Rupununi Expo, held annually on the third weekend of November at the Rodeo Site, is now a fixture on the domestic and regional tourism calendar.

PARTNERING WITH THE AMERINDIAN PEOPLE

Guyana's tourism product, being nature based, cannot be disjointed from the Amerindian people. Where tourists go, is where Amerindians live.

Government has been very concerned that partnerships develop with our indigenous people.

When training programmes are organized, efforts are made to ensure that Amerindians are included. Many of these persons find employment opportunities in the industry.

Awareness and Education programmes that are conducted by the Minister and tourism staff, reach out to Amerindian communities. Visits have been made to Amerindian communities in Regions One, Two, Seven, Eight and Nine.

TOURISM CHARETTE

Last March, Government reached out across the entire Rupununi and Kaieteur seeking the inputs of the Amerindian people in developing the tourism plans for these areas. This report is due shortly.

BAMBOO CRAFT

Our project with international help to produce small craft items and bamboo furniture, has begun. A determined effort was made to have Amerindians involved in the first course. Persons from Nappi, Orealla, St. Cuthbert's and Moruka are all included in this training. We are committed to including Amerindians in every batch to be trained.

These great strides have been made in the few short years because of Government's recognition of the interdependence between tourism development and our Amerindian people.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

One of the biggest challenges for the Government of Guyana and for the communities themselves is making the communities viable. Because of the remote locations, it is almost impossible in many cases to implement economic projects. Transportation costs compromise the feasibility of these projects. However, the need to earn an income is relentlessly sounded in Amerindian communities. Subsistence activities are therefore recognized as being inadequate to cater for everyday needs.



Minister Rodrigues examines pieces of Amerindian craft displayed by the Local Tourism Authority in Bon Fin.

In Orealla, Region Six, one of the income-generating activities is making fruit cheese.



The Government will facilitate as far as possible the encouragement of economic activities in areas where it is feasible. Already collaboration with a private company has seen the commencement of the manicole project. The Mainstay Pineapple project is also another example.

In the North Rupununi, a Credit Scheme has been established and to date has been fairly successful. It is envisaged that with the improvement of the road from Georgetown to Lethem, economic activities will increase. The Government is exploring other mechanisms to promote, support and facilitate the implementation of economic projects in Amerindian communities.

Rice hullers, tractors, outboard engines, agricultural tools and seeds have been given to communities to accelerate economic activities.



Some villages are provided with tractors and trailers to assist villagers in Farming and forestry activities.

Acoushi Ants Control

The Government has over the last two years provided chemicals and equipment to control the acoushi-ants which destroy the farms and result in low yields. More than \$10 M has been spent in this area. This year (2004) additional chemicals will be provided for those areas that have not benefited previously. A significant number of communities have reported that with the assistance of the chemicals they have managed to control the ants. However, they must now maintain control.

The National Agricultural Research Institute has now developed a chemical to treat the acoushi ants and is collaborating with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs to make the chemical available to communities.

The Government of Guyana has also waived the consumption tax on peanuts for farmers in the Rupununi.

The Government is working towards improving the agricultural extension services to Amerindian communities.

CULTURE

The Government's record in terms of highlighting and encouraging the preservation of Amerindian culture is unmatched. It was the late President Cheddi Jagan who in 1995 designated September as Amerindian Heritage Month. Ever since its designation the month of Celebrations has grown tremendously. Apart from the national Program, which includes events such as the Hinterland Student Forum, Cultural Extravaganza, Amerindian Heritage Village Celebrations and the Amerindian Heritage Pageant, communities throughout Guyana celebrate in September and there has been renewed pride in our Indigenous people. The Celebrations now attracts Guyanese, especially Guyanese of Amerindian descent, from abroad. Of course it is part of Guyana's Calendar of national events.

**Amerindian Heritage
Queen 2003, Rufina
Allicock and runners-up
at the National Cultural
Centre.**



Carifesta

The Caribbean Festival of Arts (CARIFESTA) which was held in Suriname, saw the participation of the Sand Creek Dance Group. Led by Mrs. Dorothy Farria, this group was a main focus for Carifesta. This was the first time that an Indigenous dance groups participated in the event.

Several Indigenous persons have also participated in other cultural activities in Guyana and also overseas.

SPECIAL GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA PROJECTS

The Social Impact Amelioration Program, which is a social investment fund and an execution agency of the Government of Guyana, is the first social investment fund to include a component specifically designed to meet the needs of Amerindian communities. The Government recognized that Amerindians may sometimes manage their affairs in ways that are different to the coastal communities, hence the inclusion of a specific component with procedures and characteristics developed with the communities. The Amerindian projects component started in 1994 with a total of US\$100,000 and thereafter had several increases.

As at December 2000, 77 Amerindian projects were either completed or in execution with a total disbursement of US\$1,060,638. The projects include nursery, primary and secondary schools, farm to market roads, boats and engines to transport



The Kamwatta Health Centre in Region One.(Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Harripersaud Nokta is at left).



The newly extended Santa Rosa Secondary School and dormitory in Region One

school children or sick persons, school dormitories, community centers and productive projects. It should also be noted that Amerindian communities can also benefit from SIMAP's regular program and have actually done so. The Paramakatoi, Santa Rosa, North West and St. Ignatius Secondary schools and Phillipai Primary School among others, were all completed under SIMAP's regular projects program.

The proposed program's impact on Amerindian communities will be increased through targeted promotion in communities that have never received SIMAP support and a significant reduction in the required community contribution from 10% to 5% of total project cost, identical to that required for SIMAP's regular projects. Amerindian projects have a maximum cost of US\$50,000 inclusive of the community contribution and transportation costs, and will require preparation in two areas: (a) community capacity building and training, and (b) civil works.

Also, under this phase of SIMAP, the menu of eligible projects is broader, designed to address the remoteness of Amerindian villages, among other special characteristics. The expanded menu includes teachers' houses, dormitory facilities for secondary students, solar panels or other alternative energy sources to power health centers and health posts, transportation for school children (footpaths, school boats), and river, creek or ravine crossings. Additional types of projects designed to increase local consumption and alleviate heavy work burdens on women and children will be developed during loan execution. Amerindian communities are also once again eligible for the larger regular projects.

A consultancy is currently being financed to address expanding the menu of additional Amerindian projects designed to increase the quality of life in these communities and alleviate work burdens of women and children. The results of

this consultancy, once discussed and agreed by the Government of Guyana, will be incorporated.

SIMAP expects to execute approximately 72 projects starting in 2004 with an approximate cost of US\$50,000 or G\$10 M per project. Based on the cost per project, this amount may increase. In addition, this amount does not include other projects that may be executed under the regular SIMAP Program.

BASIC NEEDS TRUST FUND

Amerindian communities also benefited, and continue to benefit, from the Basic Needs Trust Fund Program. Communities in Santa Cruz, Karasabai and Baitoon, among others, benefited from the construction of schools. It is clear that it is the Government which is responsible for the materialisation of these projects and programmes.

We are aware that there is a campaign to distort Government's policy. For example, SIMAP is frequently referred to as an NGO when in fact it is an executing agency of the Government. In addition, in some regions even before Government projects commence, some persons claim these have nothing to do with the Government. These individuals and groups seek to claim credit for these projects. Further projects executed by various Government agencies including SIMAP and the RDCs are funded by Central Government.



A new library for students was opened at the Amerindian Hostel in Princes Street Georgetown .

CONCLUSION

The foregoing was a brief summary of the PPP/C Government programmes and projects, which are contributing greatly to the improvement in the lives of Amerindians. The booklet does not capture all the developmental interventions of this Government during the past decade. Many villages can point to projects, which were not featured in this presentation. It will take several publications to review all of the developments.

Additionally, the reader might wonder why there is little information about the future plans of Government in this publication. The focus on achievements is deliberate. Another publication would be required to fully outline and explain the Government's current and future programmes and projects for Amerindian communities.

The PPP-CIVIC Government is seriously fulfilling the pledge it made prior to it ascending to office in 1992 by ending the discrimination and neglect against Ameridians. Government is also working steadfastly to accelerate development for Amerindians throughout Guyana.

The late President Cheddi Jagan in 1992 declared: *"Today, after years of PNC oppression, the conditions of Amerindians have been reduced to below subsistence levels. The new PPP/CIVIC Government vows to put an end to the plight and sufferings of our Amerindian people. Our policy is to provide accelerated development for Amerindians."*

More recently at the 2003 Amerindian Heritage Village celebration, President Bharrat Jagdeo observed: *"At the Government level, what we are trying to do is create opportunities so that our Amerindian people could become anything they want in this society."*

A glance by any fair-minded reader of the material in this book can only conclude that the neglect of Amerindian communities ended with the advent of the PPP/C administration. Development now abounds in all communities. Successive PPP/C Governments have addressed the needs and concerns of Amerindians in a deliberate and rapid way. Much more work remain to be done and the Government will continue its programme to accelerate development.

The '**Hinterland Highlights**' supplement the information in this booklet as well as provide regular updates on the developments in Amerindian communities across Guyana.

Hinterland Highlights

Hinterland Highlights, a GINA publication, tells all about developments affecting Amerindians and their communities.

In stories and pictures, Hinterland Highlights is also a worthwhile record of achievements among Amerindians and measures taken by the Central Government to ensure a greater integration of our indigenous people into the mainstream of life in Guyana.

Be sure you read Hinterland Highlights and keep abreast of information so crucial to your well-being and to the pride you must feel in being who you are.

Carolyn Rodrigues

Portfolio: Minister of Amerindian Affairs

Minister Carolyn Rodrigues was appointed Minister of Amerindian Affairs in April 2001. Prior to this she worked 7 years with the Government's Social Impact Amelioration Programme (SIMAP) as Coordinator - Amerindian Projects.

The Minister received her basic education in Santa Rosa and due to the lack of



Secondary Education facilities in the Region at that time; she furthered her education in Georgetown.

She pursued Secretarial Courses at the Business Training Centre. She received a Diploma in Business Administration from the Saskatchewan, Indian Federated College, Regina, Canada.

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