

**NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
(2001-2010)**

A POLICY FRAMEWORK

ERADICATING POVERTY AND UNIFYING GUYANA

A CIVIL SOCIETY DOCUMENT

ANNEX 25

GENDER ISSUES

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The Annexes to the National Development Strategy: An Explanatory Note

In June 2000, the National Development Strategy (NDS) of Guyana was formally presented to the President of Guyana and the Leader of the Opposition in the form of a core document, a 348 page distillation of the main elements of the analysis of the Guyana situation and the resulting strategy for action drawn from material prepared by 24 sectoral committees of the National Development Strategy Committee (NDSC). While Chapter 1 of the core document provides an outline of the origins of the NDS and the methodology of its preparation, the purpose of the present note is to explain the Annexes to the core document.

The Annexes are edited versions of the original drafts that the sectoral committees prepared, using a format that facilitated systematic thinking, though at the cost of some repetition. They are therefore longer than the corresponding Chapters of the core document, and also differ from them in other ways:

1. While the Annexes were individually edited in terms of their content, in the core document, disagreements or dissonances between Chapters were removed; for example, if the Chapter on the Private Sector proposed a strategy for Education that was in contradiction with a strategy proposed in the Chapter on Education, the two were rationalised.
2. While the core document was updated with the most recent data where possible, the Annexes generally retain their original data; for recent economic and social statistics, the attention of readers is particularly drawn to the recently completed *1999 Guyana Survey of Living Conditions*. In addition, again because of differences in when they were prepared, what was a Bill at the time of the original draft may have become an Act by the time the core document was being edited. This type of difference may be footnoted in the Annexes.
3. The treatment of the Annexes as historical documents occasionally produced another kind of difference, the main example of which is the Annex on Energy which was written before the privatisation of the Guyana Electricity Corporation, and whose strategy was largely preempted by that privatisation; while the edited Annex deliberately relied on the original material, new material was developed for the core document. These differences may also be footnoted.

It is worth noting that the updates found in the core document usually demonstrate the soundness and continued applicability of assessments made on the basis of earlier data or other information.

There are fewer Annexes than there are Chapters in the core document. For various reasons, some sectoral committee drafts were finalised in the same format as the Chapters of the core document, and there would therefore be little difference between the Chapter and the corresponding Annex. (Examples of this are the Macro-Economic Strategies and the Management of the economy; Sugar; Urban Development; Land; Housing; and The Family). The core document also includes Chapters for which there were no corresponding sectoral committee drafts; the first three Chapters of the core document (Origins and Methodology, National Objectives and Governance) are examples.

For those sectors where there are both separate Annexes and core document Chapters, the titles and numbering of the two correspond except in two cases: one, the corresponding Annex for the Chapter on Manufacturing is titled Manufacturing and Technology and includes material on Science and Technology that the core document had placed elsewhere; and two, the corresponding Annex for Chapter 4, Macro-Economic Policy, is Annex 4, Financial Sector Policy, because the material prepared for the Financial Sector Policy Annex was incorporated into the Chapter on Macro-Economic Policy.

The National Development Strategy was published in summarised form (the core document) for the practical reason that few people would have the time to read the over 700 pages represented by the Annexes. Yet the Annexes have a clear value. They include background information and assessments that were too detailed for inclusion in the core document, but which trace the process that shaped the strategy. Above all, they preserve for us and for posterity the earlier thinking, and the full range of thinking, of the women and men whose work provided the foundation of the NDS. In doing so, they honour the labour which the sectoral committees put into distilling their own work and life experience and the views of the public they consulted in the process. It is this foundational material that is now being published, making the National Development Strategy of Guyana available in both summary and extended forms.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CEDAW	Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CXC	Caribbean Examination Council
GAHEF	Guyana Agency for Health Sciences, Environmental Health and Food Policy
GWLI	Guyana Women's Leadership Institute
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPED	Institute of Private Enterprise Development
MCH	Mother and Child Health
NDS	National Development Strategy
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NRDC	National Resource and Documentation Centre for Gender and Development
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SIMAP	Social Impact Amelioration Programme
UG	University of Guyana
UN	United Nations
WAB	Women Affairs Bureau

ANNEX 25

GENDER ISSUES

I. Basic Features of the Sector

Gender issues should not be examined as a separate topic. Indeed, when the subject is treated in isolation, it is often marginalised. It is discussed here in a single Annex merely for convenience, and it is urged that when reading the Annex, its wide-ranging significance and pervasive influence be borne in mind.

Above all, what must be understood is the centrality of gender issues to the key economic strategy of the NDS, which places emphasis on the private sector as the engine of growth: as a document, “Mainstreaming Gender in the National Development Strategy” which was published in 1997 states, the NDS must recognise that “the model for a gender equitable society has to be one that is built on the understanding that women, because of their gendered roles, have multiple responsibilities and as a group, are impoverished, lacking the power and capacity to compete with the strength and tenacity of the market.” That document also urges that the State play a strong role in favour of the disempowered of the society, including women, and points out that targeted action is key for equitable and sustainable development.

A definition of “gender” is necessary to avoid misunderstanding. The word “gender”, unlike the word “sex”, speaks to roles and relationships that are defined by societal norms and practices, and supported by societal attitudes. Thus, while this Annex usually speaks of “women” and “men”, it is really discussing the roles and relationships that are ascribed to females (women and/or girls) and males (men and/or boys).

The structure of gender relations is skewed against women: for example, in the world of work, it is women who are overwhelmingly responsible for the unwaged and unvalued work of family care and family subsistence, and it is women who are allocated most low-waged and low-valued caring and service work outside the home. Though the experiences of individual women vary widely, women as a group fare worse than men on a number of fronts, ranging from the incidence of poverty to protection under the law, and from access to health care to decision-making power. This understanding of gender relations does not negate the fact that men can also find themselves in a position of subordination; it merely recognises that women are more often and more systemically subordinated.

It is because women are subordinated within gender relations and because their practical and strategic needs (see below) are usually excluded from development policy and planning, that gender mainstreaming, and therefore this present Annex, focus on the issues and constraints for women, and on recommendations for transforming their situation.

A. Analytical Framework

Given the marginality of gender in policy-making, it is especially important that policy recommendations be based on a clear and rigorous analytical framework. One such framework - and the one used in this Annex - is that which distinguishes between "gender roles" and "gender needs" (Moser, 1989). As the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development recognises, "Because men and women have different roles and responsibilities, they also have different gender needs. . . . If gender roles and gender needs are understood, planning is more effective. Policies are more clearly defined and programmes and projects are designed with the different needs of the people who are supposed to benefit explicitly taken into account" (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1995: 15).

1. Gender Roles

Moser (1989) also outlines a useful framework for understanding the different roles women (and men) have to fulfil in society: the Triple Roles Framework. In most societies, women must fulfil three main roles:

a. ***Reproductive***: This refers not only to women's childbearing role, but also their child-rearing role. As mentioned above, women have the main responsibility for the household work which ensures the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force.

b. ***Productive***: This refers to the women's role as income earners. Though they are sometimes secondary income earners, there are many cases when they are the sole income earners. (such as in female-headed households). In most societies, there also exists a sexual division of labour within production (especially in agriculture) and employment, with regard to the tasks and jobs women and men do and are expected to do.

c. ***Community***: This refers to women's collective work at the community level.

2. Gender Needs

It is the fulfilment of these "gender roles" that determines people's "gender needs". Such needs can be further broken down into "practical gender needs" and "strategic gender needs" (Moser, 1989).

a. Practical Gender Needs

Practical gender needs refer to the needs men and women have as a result of their existing engendered roles within society. Practical needs and practical policies are concerned with the effective fulfilment of these socially-defined roles; that is, they do not seek to change the status quo. "Practical gender needs are to do with what people need to perform their current roles more easily, effectively and efficiently...(Projects can be designed to meet the practical gender needs of both men and women without necessarily changing their relative positions in society" (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1995: 15).

Examples of policies that address women's practical gender needs are:

- (i) the provision of conveniently located stand-pipes and the development of fuel-efficient stoves, both of which will reduce their workload;
- (ii) training in traditional productive activities (such as crafts) to increase their income;
- (iii) the provision of child health education for women as a support to their child rearing role;
- (iv) the provision of crèches so that mothers can bring their children to work.

b. Strategic Gender Needs

Strategic gender policies are policies directly concerned with changing the status quo: challenging socially-defined roles and tackling gender subordination in society.

Examples of policies that address women's strategic gender needs are:

- (i) the provision of training in non-traditional productive activities, (such as building or plumbing) which are often better paid;
- (ii) legislation to ensure that women receive equal pay for work of equal value;
- (iii) legislation to deal with imbalances of power in the family such as domestic violence and unequal divorce settlements;
- (iv) the encouragement of female membership of Parliament, local committees, and other political bodies, so as to enhance women's participation in decision-making.

The distinction between practical and strategic gender needs is useful when specifying goals, objectives, policies and programmes; it is important to be clear about whether the objective of a particular policy is practical or strategic.¹ However, since the experiences of women vary with respect to their class, race, and religion, among other factors, women have different needs, and some may express only practical needs, while others may be more concerned with strategic issues. A top-down approach that imputes generalised needs on women as a group must be avoided.

¹Obviously, a practical programme may have a strategic impact (and vice-versa). For example, a traditional income generation scheme for women may increase her power within the household.

II. Policies on Gender Equality

A. Changes in the Legal Status of Women

Especially since 1976, when a State Paper on the Equality of Women was introduced one year after the launch of the UN Decade for Women, successive governments have placed strong emphasis on inscribing gender equality at the levels of the law and constitution. This section of the Annex outlines these developments in detail, with brief analyses, where appropriate, of limitations in the legislation and/or its implementation.

At the turn of the 20th century women in Guyana, and particularly married women, were effectively barred from participation in almost every area of life by virtue of legal disabilities. During the first two-thirds of the century, a number of these disabilities were removed, but the legal position of women was still inferior to that of men in many respects.

Since 1976, considerable changes have taken place. The result is that both the Constitution and legislation now explicitly state that women have the same legal rights and status as men and that discrimination against women on the basis of gender is illegal.

Clearly, provision of equal rights and statutory protection against gender discrimination are not sufficient to redress the disadvantages from which women have traditionally suffered in the family, employment, asset ownership, access to credit, reproductive health and decision-making. However, some progress has been made towards redressing the imbalances with the enactment of legislation dealing with maintenance, domestic violence, property, termination of pregnancy, and employment; and recommendations for further reform have been accepted, if not yet implemented.

1. Landmarks Towards Gender Equality: Advances and Weaknesses

What follows is a chronological table of important developments which have related to the aim of gender equality under the law and/or that of satisfying practical gender needs.

- 1904 The Married Women's (Property) Act gave married women the right to own property in their own names.
- 1928 Women property owners were given the right to vote.
- 1952 The Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act gave married women full contractual capacity and the capacity to sue and be sued.
- 1953 All women over 21 were given the right to vote.
- 1961 Women became eligible for jury service.
- 1969 The National Insurance and Social Security Act included provision for maternity benefit.

- 1976 A State Paper on Equality for Women was presented to the National Assembly.
- 1977 a. A Bill was drafted to give effect to the recommendations contained in the State Paper. Although it was never passed, it was used by the first Bernard Committee;² and a number of its provisions have since been enacted in separate pieces of legislation.
- b. The Pensions Act was amended to repeal the provision that the Public Service Commission could require a female public servant to retire upon marriage.
- 1980 a. Guyana became a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- b. In the most recent (1980) Constitution:
- (i) Article 29 (1) provides that women and men have equal rights and the same legal status in all spheres of political, economic and social life, and states that discrimination against women on the basis of their sex is illegal.
 - (ii) Article 29 (2) states that the exercise of women's rights is ensured by according women equal access to academic, vocational and professional training, equal opportunities in employment, remuneration and promotion and in social, political and economic activity; and by special labour and health protection measures for women, providing conditions enabling mothers to work, and legal protection and support for mothers and children, including paid leave and other benefits for mothers and expectant mothers.
 - (iii) Article 30 provides that children born out of wedlock have equal rights and the same legal status as children born in wedlock, and that discrimination against children born out of wedlock is illegal.
 - (iv) The Constitution provides that any person married to a Guyanese citizen can apply for citizenship, and that a child born out of Guyana is entitled to Guyanese citizenship if either parent is Guyanese.

However, the Constitution (Amendment) Act of 1988 made Articles 29 and 30 (*inter alia*) unenforceable except by separate legislation.

² This was a committee chaired by Justice Desiree Bernarad, now Chief Justice. See also under 1981.

- 1981 A committee chaired by Justice Desiree P. Bernard made recommendations to give effect to Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution.

However, the only major recommendations to be given legal effect within a reasonable time after the committee submitted its report were those relating to Article 30 (see 1983).

- 1983 a. The Children Born Out of Wedlock (Removal of Discrimination) Act amended existing legislation to:
- (i) give children born out of wedlock the right to inherit on the intestacy of their fathers.
 - (ii) give both parents the right to custody of their children.
 - (iii) abolish affiliation proceedings (brought by mothers of children born out of wedlock for maintenance orders to be made against the fathers) and enable all applications for child maintenance to be brought under the Maintenance Act.
 - (iv) expunge "bastard/illegitimate child" from the statute books.
 - (v) set the minimum age for marriage at 16 for both girls and boys.

There were several weaknesses in this area. The removal of the language of "bastard/illegitimate child" was not entirely successful. The Act does not specifically provide that children born out of wedlock have equal rights and the same legal status as children born in wedlock, and that discrimination against children born out of wedlock is illegal. Not only does the legal definition of a child remain that under common (non-statute) law, namely a child born in wedlock, but until 1977, a child born out of wedlock who was discriminated against had no recourse - see the Prevention of Discrimination Act, page 10).

Finally, in the amendments to the Maintenance Act, the children born out of Wedlock Act did not include a procedure for the determination of paternity in disputed cases.

- b. The Employment of Young Persons and Children (Amendment) Act and the Factories (Amendment) Act removed over-protective restrictions on the hours of work and overtime of women employees.
- 1987 a. The Fiscal Enactments (Amendment) Act enabled married women to file separate tax returns.
- b. Amendments to Minimum Wages Orders provided for unskilled women to receive the same minimum wages as unskilled men.

- 1988 The Domestic Reform Act abolished the domicile of dependency of a wife and provided that every woman is capable of having an independent domicile.
- 1990 a. The Equal Rights Act restated Article 29(1) of the Constitution with the addition of protection against discrimination on the ground of marital status. In addition, the Act:
- (i) provided for equal pay for same work or work of the same nature.
 - (ii) outlawed discrimination against women in employment.
 - (iii) by amendment, made various pieces of legislation gender-neutral.

However, the discrimination provisions did not cover dismissal and the equal pay provision failed to follow the internationally accepted formula of equal pay for work of equal value. Secondly, there was no definition of discrimination to include both direct and indirect discrimination (victimisation). And thirdly, given that the power to imprison would be very sparingly imposed, the maximum fine was too small to amount to any deterrent.

- b. The Married Persons (Property) (Amendment) Act, recognising the contribution that a non-income earning/property-owing spouse makes to the welfare of a family:
- (i) gave a non-owing spouse (legal or common-law, but to qualify as common law both parties must be single) the right to claim a share in property owned by the other (the size of the share dependent on the length of the relationship and whether the claimant worked).
 - (ii) provided that money and/or property derived from housekeeping shall belong to both parties in equal shares (in the absence of an agreement to the contrary).

The 5 weaknesses in this Act are as follows:

- (i) The requirement for both parties to be single for the purposes of recognition of a common law union can result in hardship: a woman who has lived for years with a man who happens to be married (a fact of which she may even be ignorant) is no less deserving or in need by right than one who has lived with a single man.
- (ii) The Act is unclear as to the meaning of "working", but it is generally interpreted as meaning "working outside the home", which perpetuates the unequal treatment of (unwaged) housewives.

- (iii) The property in question has to be acquired during the marriage. This can result in hardship: a woman who contributes to the welfare of the family should not be automatically shut out because her partner already had property when the relationship began.
 - (iv) The Act is unclear as to the time limit for making an application under the Act. The assumption is that in the case of a legal marriage, the application should be made before the divorce is finalised; however, this is inequitable given that there is no equivalent marking of the end of a common-law union.
 - (v) The recognition of common-law unions was not extended to the Married Persons (Property) Act as a whole.
- c. The Family and Dependents Act, recognising the hardship that can be caused to dependent family members on the death of a property owner, enabled claims to be made by such persons for provision out of the estate. Common-law unions are recognised for the purposes of the Act once the parties have been living together for at least 7 years and are both single.

Again, there are important weaknesses in this legislation:

- (i) The requirement for both parties to be single can, as in the case of the Married Persons (Property) (Amendment) Act, result in hardship.
- (ii) The requirement for a common-law union to have lasted 7 years is somewhat excessive, particularly compared with the 5 year requirement under the Married Persons (Property) (Amendment) Act.
- (iii) The absence of a definition of marriage to include a common-law union of required length means that step-children of a deceased common-law partner do not enjoy the same rights of application as step-children of a deceased legal spouse.

1991 The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act amended the Criminal Law (Offences) Act to:

- (i) provide that all proceedings in some sexual offences cases, including rape and attempted rape, should be heard *in camera*.
- (ii) provide for the protection of the anonymity of the complainant in rape cases.

Unfortunately, the *in camera* provision is only sporadically applied in the magistrates' courts and there is a misconception that even if a matter is heard *in camera* the press should be excluded. As a result, the press quite frequently publishes information which permits identification of the complainant.

A limitation of the Act itself is that it does nothing to address the unjustifiable hurdles in the way of the successful prosecution of a rape case (e.g. the requirement of corroboration of the complainant's evidence and the lack of restrictions on cross-examining a complainant on her sexual history).

- 1995 a. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act legalised abortions.
- b. Recommendations contained in the Report of the Family Maintenance and Related Matters Committee chaired by Chief Justice Desiree P. Bernard were accepted. These recommendations were for amendments to legislation relating to: adoption; maintenance; children including their education, training and employment; marriage; divorce; matrimonial property; family and dependents' provisions; equal rights; sexual offences; juvenile offenders; corporal punishment; and sexual harassment.

The Committee also recommended the establishment of a family court.

- 1997 a. The Maintenance (Amendment) Act substantially increased the amounts of maintenance that may be awarded to children and spouses.
- However, while the Act made it worthwhile to apply for a maintenance order, none of the recommendations for improved enforcement mechanisms made by the Family Maintenance and Related Matters Committee have been introduced.
- b. The Adoption of Children (Amendment) Act:
- (i) made it possible for non-residents who are or have been Guyanese nationals to adopt in Guyana, thus removing potential hardship when a child in Guyana is orphaned and the only relatives live abroad.
 - (ii) recognised common-law relationships of at least 7 years for the purposes of joint adoptions.
- c. The Termination of Employment and Severance Pay Act provided that none of the following (*inter alia*) constituted a good cause for dismissal or the imposition of a disciplinary penalty: an employee's sex; an employee's

family responsibility; an employee's marital status; or a female employee's pregnancy or a reason connected with her pregnancy.

- d. The Prevention of Discrimination Act provided protection against discrimination on the grounds of (*inter alia*): sex, family responsibilities, pregnancy, and marital status. This applies in the areas of employment, professional partnerships, professional and trade organisations, qualifying bodies, vocational training bodies, employment agencies, the provisions of goods, services and facilities, and advertisements.

There is also specific provision for equal pay for work of equal value, and sexual harassment committed by an employer, managerial employee or co-worker constitutes unlawful discrimination.

- e. The Domestic Violence Act enabled victims of domestic violence (which is widely defined) to apply for and obtain enforcement of protection and other orders. Weaknesses include the following:
 - (i) The Act does not contain one clear definition of what constitutes domestic violence.
 - (ii) It does not provide guidelines for the assessment of maintenance which may be awarded as part of a protection order, or appropriate mechanisms for the enforcement of custody and maintenance orders, nor does it specifically make provision for a respondent to be ordered to contribute to mortgage payments where an occupation order is made.
 - (iii) The provision as to undertakings are insufficiently comprehensive.
 - (iv) The Act contains some drafting errors which can lead to confusion in application.
 - (v) The Act does not require the magistrate to apply a subjective test in determining whether to grant a protection order.

2. Practical Problems on the Implementation of the Legislation

The changes in the law have been largely untranslated into changes in the actual situation of women. Among the reasons for this are the following:

- a. A low level of awareness of the laws: many women are still unaware of their legal rights despite initiatives by organisations such as the Association of Women Lawyers. ("The Law and You" leaflets and booklets); the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (which created videos based on the 'The Law and You'); Help and Shelter (which issued

leaflets, posters and radio messages), and Red Thread (which developed a Household Guide to the Domestic Violence Act).

b. Implementation problems: there is insufficient capacity to enforce the law and the enforcement mechanisms are still largely dominated by men. Even where women are in positions of authority, there is no guarantee that they will be gender-sensitive. In addition, the police remain inadequately trained to deal with issues such as domestic violence and sexual offences, although some training has been designed and implemented by NGOs.

B. Policies Outside of the Legal Sphere

This section briefly examines major policies in four key areas outside the legal sphere, making a distinction, where appropriate, between those relevant to women's practical gender needs and those relevant to their strategic ones. The four areas are the economy, health, education and leadership.

1. The Economy

a. Policies Addressing Practical Needs

Since the introduction of the first Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the late 1980s, the short-term approach to poverty alleviation among women has been to target especially vulnerable sub-groupings of women for support from the Social Impact Amelioration Programme (SIMAP). These interventions primarily dealt with women's practical needs. SIMAP has provided nutritional supplements, maternal and child care, shelter, education, and infrastructure (water, sanitation, schools, recreational facilities, roads, drainage, and irrigation). In addition, there are general policies of poverty alleviation from which women benefit, such as improvements in the social infrastructure. However, many of the poorest women are difficult to reach, and many remain outside the policy net.

Both government and non-government agencies organise income-generating and training projects for women, which are usually based on traditional, under-valued skills. Under the auspices of the Women's Affairs Bureau, a credit scheme (revolving loan) was established which has assisted women in traditional businesses (such as food preservation and processing and greens' vending). However, the scheme has a low coverage and a poor repayment rate. Nevertheless, the small-scale credit schemes of Scotia Bank and IPED have given considerable assistance to low-income female entrepreneurs.

b. Strategic

At the level of policy, there has been an attempt to address power and equality issues, which under a broad definition of poverty, should be considered here. A significant development in 1995 was the formulation of broad policy guidelines regarding the principle of equality for women. The National Policy for Women emphasises, *inter alia*, the need for gender mainstreaming in all development planning; the measurement and valuation of women's

unwaged work (and the revaluation of their waged work); the sharing of family responsibilities by men; and the recognition by the society that childcare is a social responsibility.

2. Health

The focus of health policy in this country is to assist women in their reproductive role; that is, mother and child health (MCH). In terms of health care for mothers, the MCH Unit in the Ministry of Health aims to provide health education and nutritional advice, and to operate programmes in the areas of prenatal, intra-natal, and postnatal health and child spacing. The Unit operates programmes through 116 health centres, 42 satellite health centres and 19 health posts, in addition to district, regional and national (referral) hospitals.

In addition, a national plan of action for nutrition is being developed, as well as a policy on breast-feeding under the direction of GAHEF. The Government's policy is also to provide supplements to pregnant and lactating women and vitamin and iron tablets.

3. Education

In 1975, Guyana committed itself to progressive educational reform, exemplified by the extension of co-educational schooling in all secondary schools.

The following year, the 1976 State Paper on the Equality of Women had as one of its key aims, to provide women with equal access to education as the basis for improving their economic status. These initiatives have contributed to increased participation of girls and women in education at all levels. Indeed, it is now argued that they have acted against the interests of boys and men. It is noteworthy, however, that the advancement of women and girls in education is not reflected in a change in their location in the unwaged and low-waged sectors and levels of the economy.

Newer reform initiatives specifically attempt to correct the present gender imbalances in the science and technology fields of study, and others are aimed at the educational system in general. However, as ambitious as these aims are, uncertainty still exists as to how to actually achieve them. In other words the destination is known; the problem lies in charting a successful route that ensures a safe passage. For that to happen, it will be necessary to adopt, and then adapt, effective strategies to realise the gender-sensitive policy goals.

4. Leadership

In 1997, Government established the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute (GWLI) and the National Resource and Documentation Centre for Gender and Development (NRDC). These related agencies have the following aims:

a. GWLI

The mission of GWLI is to develop, promote and support women and girls as leaders and decision-makers through education and training, in order to facilitate their equal access to and full participation in leadership and decision-making processes throughout the society. This

mission is based on an understanding that gender equity is basic to human-centered, sustainable development.

b. NRDC

NRDC's mission is:

- (i) to develop the capacity of women and to empower them to participate more fully in the decision-making process and in all aspects of development, by providing appropriate information resources and an environment conducive to the effective use of such resources; and
- (ii) to support gender equity and the work of planners and decision-makers, by ensuring access to the relevant data and information.

In addition to these Government initiatives, a few NGOs have introduced training in self esteem, gender issues, and leadership skills for girls and women.

III. Issues and Constraints

A. Issues

An accurate analysis of the current situation is inhibited by the paucity and unreliability of statistical data on gender matters. However, there is broad agreement on the following description of women's status.

1. Poverty

Under a number of indicators, the incidence of poverty is higher among women than men, though higher among some women such as female heads of household than others. In particular, women are paid lower wages and salaries, face greater difficulties in accessing credit, and own less property. Further, because of their very limited occupation of decision-making posts in both the public and private sectors, women are often not in positions to make or influence policies on salaries, credit, and other avenues of economic empowerment. In Guyana as in other countries, gender stereotyping in the home, gender bias in education, and gender segmentation in the labour market combine to keep the majority of women at the base of the economy. It is also important to note that a great deal of poverty among women remains unperceived.

Weaknesses in the physical and social infrastructure have a disproportionate impact on women and are an important factor in their poverty; they increase the time and energy needed to perform daily tasks of family care and, therefore, reduce the time and energy women have available for paid work and other activities.

The poorest women in Guyana – Amerindian women - are the most geographically difficult to access. Indeed, by definition, their poverty is produced by their lower access to education and health services and to economic opportunities.

2. Employment

Women's apparently low participation in the workforce can be explained by their substantial participation in unwaged work. Increased participation in paid employment may mean an increase in the hours they have to work each day, unless there are corresponding changes to reduce their unpaid work in the home. In addition, women often work as unpaid labour in agriculture and in family businesses. Neither this, nor most of their substantial involvement in the informal sector, is reflected in the employment data.

In general, not only are women paid significantly less than men for similar work, but they are far less represented in higher-paying occupations and higher positions in occupational hierarchies. Women continue to predominate as low-paid domestic workers, and in many jobs which are non-unionised, unregulated and not subject to a minimum wage. As has been found in many Export Processing Zones established in the developing world, women are often exploited as a source of cheap labour.

This last point relates to a broader issue in women's employment and in women's poverty. The situation of women in Guyana is shaped by national and global economic factors which have contributed to negating the impact of positive changes in their legal and educational status. To take three examples: (a) the process of structural adjustment has been found to impact negatively and disproportionately on women; (b) as the public sector is miniaturised and the private sector becomes central to economic growth and employment, women are disproportionately affected because of the size of their presence in the public sector, and because the real growth areas of the Guyanese economy are not the areas in which they are concentrated; and (c) given the emphasis on the private sector as the engine of growth, the need to attract foreign investment, and the competition between countries for foreign investment, there is a strong temptation on the part of any government to informalise its labour market (in terms of employment law, health and safety, and wages), and as might be expected, women suffer more in these circumstances.

3. Health

The principal concerns in the health of women and girls centre on reproductive health, including maternal mortality, anaemia during pregnancy, teenage pregnancies, the prevalence of abortion, and complications arising during abortion. There are regional imbalances in the reproductive health situations of women, for example, the highest incidence of low birth weight babies, indicating inadequate maternal nutrition, is found in Regions 7, 8 and 9.

But women's health issues are not limited to their reproductive role; they include other issues deriving from sexuality and gender relations. One critical issue of gender relations is domestic violence, briefly discussed under "The Household". Another is the spread of HIV/AIDS among women; while the incidence is lower than for men, the rate of increase for

women is higher. In addition, while Guyana has only just begun to establish a cancer registry (from which reliable statistics can be collected), the Guyana Cancer Society reports what appears to be a level of cervical and breast cancer, especially among women of reproductive age, which is cause for concern. Women's health issues also include other chronic illnesses, e.g., women have a higher incidence of diabetes and hypertensive diseases than men.

Other issues which arise from women's role in healthcare include:

a. The increasing burdens of providing and accessing health care, whether in homes, clinics or hospitals, which fall hardest on women as a result of their socially ascribed responsibility for health in both their reproductive and productive roles.

b. Empirical evidence that providing assistance to women has a more beneficial effect on the well-being of children, than when the assistance is channelled through men. In general, women tend to spend a higher proportion of their take-home pay on children's nutrition. Indeed, the economic returns on investment are generally comparable to those for men, but the social returns in health and fertility regulation by far exceed what is achieved by educating men.

4. Education

Education has a critical role to play in tackling gender inequality in society, and is vital for the personal growth and self-realisation of all people. In Guyana, though both males and females enjoy equal access to education, this does not necessarily translate into equal outcomes in terms of societal opportunities, a deep-seated problem obscured by legitimate concern over recent female "outperformance" of males in education, and the relative lack of male role models for boys in the education system: it remains true that as a result of gender stereotyping in fields of study, females and males are still largely concentrated in traditional subject areas. For example, females are under-represented in Science and Technology (despite the fact that boys and girls receive a common curriculum up to Form 3) and in non-traditional vocational and technical education. This ensures that women remain in the low-wage segments of the domestic job market which they have been traditionally filled.

Gender stereotyping in education, then, can be rightfully interpreted as reinforcing and rationalising the pervasive structural imbalances in society. The effects of this are compounded by a number of factors including the sharp systemic decline in educational quality in Guyana, gender stereotyping in the classroom (such as in the areas of teaching style and text books used), the absence of gender-sensitive career guidance programmes, and the lack of female and male role models in occupations which are not gender-stereotyped. In addition, there is an under-representation of women in senior administrative positions within individual schools and the educational system as a whole.

Another major area of concern is that the system does not cater for adolescent girls whose education is interrupted due to pregnancy; this is a form of discrimination because there is clearly no prohibition against teenage fathers remaining in school. It also contributes to continuing the cycle of poverty for adolescent girls who give birth, and for their children.

5. The Household

A high proportion of households in Guyana do not conform to the model used in much development policy and statistical data collection. The prevalence of female-headed households and visiting relationships in Guyana puts into question the stereotype of the “ideal” or “typical” nuclear family headed by a male breadwinner, with a wife focused on domestic duties and child rearing.

Household income is a poor measure of the welfare of individuals within the household, given that the distribution of income within the household can be very unequal. It would follow that increases in household income do not necessarily imply the improvement in the welfare of women and children. Studies that have been done elsewhere on intra-household resource allocation, but which can be extrapolated to Guyana, have found that women fare worse in the areas of nutrition, medical care, education, and inheritance.

Two other major household issues are levels of female responsibility for unwaged work, referred to earlier; and levels of household/family violence, directed by men against women, adults against children, the able-bodied against the disabled, and offspring against elderly parents. There is also an alarming increase in suicide whose immediate cause is often reported as family disputes. Issues of power are clearly at work in domestic violence. In addition, alcohol and other substance abuse, overcrowded housing, and general frustration contribute to the violence, although it is important to bear in mind that it is not a feature in poor households only. In relation to children, there is a generalised acceptance of beating as necessary discipline. In relation to women and girls, both in the household and in the wider society, they are far more likely than males to be victims of sexual violence throughout their life cycle.

6. Institutional Framework

The major government institution for addressing women’s issues is the Women’s Affairs Bureau (WAB), whose objectives are made difficult to achieve by its weak institutional capacity. The effectiveness of the WAB is undermined by two main factors:

(a) Inadequate staffing; the Bureau is staffed with an administrator and two officers. Given the importance and scale of its task, this, together with budget allocations far below requested amounts, severely limits what it can achieve.

(b) Its structural location within Government; during the first 10 years (1981-1991) of its existence, it functioned under six different Ministries and Government offices. Its current location within the Ministry for Human Services and Social Security inhibits its ability to participate in central decision-making and to impact upon policy formulation. Its ability to function is further hampered by the paucity of inter-Ministry linkages and focal points in technical Ministries.

In relation to the non-government sector, while there are some individually vibrant women’s organisations, their efforts have not been coordinated, largely because of political polarisation and racial disunity, coupled with resource constraints within the organisations.

7. Legislation

The current legal situation of Guyanese women reflects a gap between *de jure* and *de facto* equality. Reasons for this include the existence of remaining loopholes in the law, inadequate awareness of women's rights (including by women themselves), and implementation problems.

Despite considerable legal reform, a number of weaknesses remain, including the following:

a. The law does not adequately recognise the value of women's reproductive role; thus, as mentioned earlier, the Married Persons (Property) Act discriminates against a claimant who does not work outside the home.

b. The law does not recognise common-law unions for the purposes of maintenance or rights of intestacy, and such recognition of common-law unions as there is, is too restrictive.

c. There is no legislation dealing comprehensively with sexual harassment and stalking.

d. Sexual offences legislation reflects a concern with preserving the chastity of women rather than protecting the vulnerable from abuse.

e. Although it is arguable that under the Prevention of Discrimination Act, a pregnant employee is entitled to paid time-off for ante-natal care and maternity leave, there are no specific provisions according these rights.

f. Penalties for infringement of anti-discrimination and domestic violence legislation are not heavy enough.

g. Family law as a whole is not only too fragmented, but in need of comprehensive reform.

On the practical side, there is a lack of sensitivity on the part of police, court authorities at all levels, medical workers, the media and the general public towards victims of abuse.

8. Language and Culture

Language undeniably is a powerful tool in terms of acculturation and influence. The aim must therefore be to replace language which promotes concepts of male superiority in public documents with inclusive gender-neutral language. Without attacking free speech, every effort must also be made to discourage public airing of items of popular culture (for example, song lyrics) which both reflect and foster endemic sexual violence against women and girls.

B. Constraints

The following are constraints to the task of transforming gender relations.

1. Beliefs about the “proper” role of women and men which are ingrained in the society, including in policy-makers and planners, often make the task of confronting women’s subordination and marginalisation an exercise in futility. Such beliefs are associated with perceptions about the “natural” traits of women, and often serve to maintain their inferior economic, political and social status, both within the household and within the wider community. The constraints that the belief structure imposes are exacerbated by inadequate awareness and knowledge of gender issues throughout society, from government officials to media executives, from education practitioners to health workers.

2. There is inadequate understanding of the concept of gender and therefore, of the value of gender mainstreaming policies and plans. For example, it is not appreciated that gender analysis would illuminate how what are considered “normal” working hours and conditions act as a brake on women’s advancement and a threat to their health, and often result in either the neglect of children, inadequate performance on the job, or both. Gender is mistakenly seen as a peripheral subject and as a consideration which simply increases the financial cost of, and time required in, economic and political transactions. This perception, apparently held by a majority of those in decision-making positions, makes it more difficult to gather the necessary resources and commitment. It must be emphasised that this commitment is obligatory, since Guyana has ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other related international instruments.

3. The centrality of women to national development is not recognised. Much of women’s work is invisible and taken for granted. Yet as outlined in an earlier section, women contribute to development in three spheres: (a) in their reproductive role, where their care of the family in fact ensures the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force; (b) in their community role, where they are often the main toilers in social, religious, and other bodies; and (c) in their productive role, where they are sometimes secondary income earners, but often primary income earners.

4. The cost of programmes designed as a result of gender mainstreaming is often cited as a reason why such programmes should be afforded low priority. However, no work has been done to examine the cost-effectiveness of these programmes, for example, of making breastfeeding facilities in public places available to mothers or daycare services available to parents and guardians, or the cost of failure to introduce such programmes. It is important for those who see gender issues as nuisances to understand not only the moral imperative for eliminating gender discrimination, but also the rational economic arguments. Investing in women’s capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself, but is the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development. This is not only because women represent over one half of the country’s population, but also because the educational attainment and future financial status of children are much more likely to reflect those of the mother than those of the father. Thus the benefits of current investments in human capital are more likely to be passed on to future generations if gender considerations are brought

into the mainstream, and women are successfully integrated into the growth process. It pays to invest in women, not just for women, but for their families and ultimately the society.

5. The fact that women have limited access to economic and political decision-making power acts as a further constraint on the work of changing gender relations. However, having women in such positions would not by itself be enough. Instead, the task requires a critical mass of women in positions of power, working in alliance with men, with both groups aware of and committed to the need for change, and willing to place this above their usual divisions and traditional ways of doing things.

6. The institutional capacity of both the Government (specifically the WAB) and the non-government sector is weak, in terms of both human and financial resources, while the private sector does not address the issue of gender. The weaknesses of the WAB have been discussed above. In relation to the NGOs, there are three other major weaknesses: (a) there is poor coordination among them across regions; (b) they are not attracting a body of younger women; and (c) they are little oriented towards research, advocacy, or monitoring and evaluation, but largely towards income-generation. However, the major weakness in the capacity of women's agencies and organisations is their continued inability to work together in a sustained way across political party and race differences, referred to earlier.

7. A significant obstacle to analysis and advocacy on behalf of women is the insufficient level and quality of the data required. Indeed, data are often not broken down by sex/gender. Income, for example, is recorded for the household, and not for the individual. This lack of data hampers efforts to improve our understanding of women's economic position in society.

IV. Sectoral Objectives

A. General

1. To achieve sustainable growth and development based on equity for women and broadly, on social justice.

2. To bring gender considerations into the mainstream of development policy; that is, to promote a pattern of development based on gender-sensitive policies that are designed, implemented and monitored with women's full and equal participation.

3. To improve our understanding and increase our awareness of the situation of women, and develop sensitivity towards gender issues, not only within Government but within society as a whole.

4. To work against economic, social and cultural disparities not only between men and women, but between groups of women.

5. To transform the culture that is produced by, and produces, attitudes to violence and other forms of abuse of power.

B. Poverty

1. To reduce poverty among women, with emphasis on the poorest and most vulnerable groups. Policies should have an immediate impact on their lives and the lives of their families and communities, while establishing the groundwork for lasting change. The aim should be that women participate in designing and monitoring an integrated programme.
2. To ensure that the gender-specific impacts on women are taken into account when designing macroeconomic policy.
3. To improve women's access to economic, political, and social power (in society and in the household), given that their relative lack of power is a key element in their poverty.
4. To improve our understanding of the nature and extent of women's unwaged work, with the ultimate aim of bringing about greater recognition of their contribution to the household in both quantitative and qualitative terms, and the re-valuing of both their unwaged and low-waged work.

C. Employment

1. To increase the opportunities for employment and self-employment among women, especially in non-traditional areas, and to encourage their entrepreneurial potential.
2. To give practical support (e.g., through credit and training) to women's work within the informal sector.
3. To create a "family-friendly" employment environment, so that women can effectively balance their reproductive and productive roles. The aim will be to make it easier for women and men to combine family responsibilities with work outside the home.
4. To ensure that those areas of employment in which women are concentrated conform to acceptable levels of occupational health and safety, terms of employment and remuneration. The aim will be to ensure that women are not exploited as cheap or informalised labour.

D. Health

1. To alleviate health problems facing women, such as low nutrition, maternal morbidity and mortality, and the rapid rise in the incidence of AIDS.
2. To support women in their child-bearing and child-rearing roles, by providing better access to maternal and child health services.
3. To improve women's access to health services in general, as well as to potable water supplies.

4. To increase women's control over fertility decisions, including improving access to contraceptive advice and technology, and ensuring that medical terminations are conducted under medically safe conditions, at reasonable cost and in compliance with the law.

E. Education

1. To improve women's level of educational attainment.
2. To provide second-chance educational opportunities for girls who leave the system early, whether due to pregnancy or otherwise, as well as for young adult females who wish to continue their education.
3. To improve access to education, such as through distance learning and the promotion of non-formal education, so as to take into account the multiple demands on women's time.
4. To increase the number of females and males in non-traditional subjects, such as in Science and Technology courses after Form 3.
5. To encourage females and males to pursue non-traditional careers.
6. To ensure that educational materials, teaching methodologies and classroom management reflect gender considerations.
7. To sensitise and heighten the awareness of teachers, school administrators and education officials, as well as those involved in non-formal education, to gender issues.
8. To facilitate the participation of more women in decision-making positions within the education system.

F. The Household

1. To improve our understanding of the nature and extent of women's unwaged work, with the aim of valuing this for statistical purposes and for policy and programme formulation.
2. To improve our understanding of the internal workings of the household, not only in relation to the sexual division of labour, but also in relation to the internal distribution of resources and patterns of decision making.
3. To develop effective societal mechanisms to protect women against domestic violence, which is an infringement of their human rights.

G. Institutional Framework

1. To ensure that the WAB has the capacity to carry out its functions with the greatest possible efficiency and effectiveness. The mainstreaming of issues that concern women's position and condition must be accompanied by effective mechanisms for the review and monitoring of sectoral policies.

2. To improve co-ordination within the NGO sector and between this sector and the WAB as the focal point in Government. The ultimate aim will be to encourage the emergence of a women's movement, comprising a network of women's organisations and individuals, regardless of class, race, religious persuasion, age, disability and political party affiliation.

3. To promote and maintain an awareness of key gender issues and develop skills in gender analysis, among policy-makers and planners.

H. Legislation

1. To address the weaknesses in the content of the law through reform.

2. To improve implementation of the law through increased public awareness and more effective use of enforcement mechanisms.

V. The Strategy

A. General

1. "Focal points" will be established within all Ministries and agencies, to ensure the inclusion of gender considerations in policy making, and to act as a source of training in gender planning for all policy-makers. Under the WAB, these focal points will be charged with identifying gender needs as they relate to their Ministry's area of activity, and ensuring that these needs are considered in policy design and implementation, as well as in the distribution of annual budget allocations. The monitoring of outcomes will need to be conducted against detailed objectives, indicators and targets. In addition, the focal points will be charged with the gender sensitisation of government personnel at all levels.

2. Private firms and government agencies will be ranked by performance on various gender indicators. Government will indirectly encourage both sectors to move towards gender equality by annually publishing a performance table which ranks firms and agencies by gender achievement. Indicators will include, for example, the percentage of female staff, as well as the proportion of women at senior levels. Consumers will then be able to take their business to those firms of which they most approve, allowing the desire to maximise profits to drive reform.

3. Public campaigns will be conducted to raise public awareness of gender issues.

4. Budgetary support will be provided to women's groups at the community level so that they may establish shelters for women and children affected by domestic violence, undertake

community sensitisation programmes on that subject, and provide support groups and counselling for women and children.

5. Linkages will be developed with regional and international efforts on gender, so as to take advantage of support networks, information, and possibly, funding.

6. There will be regular Human Development Reports on Guyana, and these will include measurements of the country's performance based on the UN Gender Empowerment Measure and Gender Development Index, or any other more appropriate indicators developed in the Caribbean.

B. Poverty

1. Remunerative employment opportunities for women will be increased through a combination of policies to promote economic growth, investment in women's "human capital" such as relevant training and improved health, and facilitation of women's entry into the labour market by the introduction of flexible work conditions, day care facilities, and facilities for breastfeeding. Since most remunerative employment opportunities may not be in the formal sector, strategies will be formulated to support viable self-employment and microenterprise development. The context will be a policy environment supportive to the informal sector.

2. Women's access to credit will be enhanced by supporting grass-roots credit schemes, and by encouraging the establishment of a national women's credit institution which will meet the credit needs of low-income women, who often still find themselves excluded from formal credit due to collateral requirements. The institution will be a joint project between NGOs, the private sector and the donor community. The Government will have a minority stake in its capitalisation.

3. Investments will be made in basic social services, with an emphasis on the poorest groups of women. Among other measures, there will be improvements in the social infrastructure and service delivery mechanisms, increased access to productive resources, including training and credit, increased access to education and primary health care, and increased access to safe drinking water. Investment in social infrastructure will disproportionately benefit women, given their need to balance different roles. The aim will be to earmark at least 25 percent of the national budget for basic social services.

4. Special funds for supplementing poor families' mortgage payments and housing rent payments that are called for elsewhere in this National Development Strategy will be established.

5. Women will be trained in non-traditional and more highly paid trades. Apart from direct provision, financial inducements such as career developmental loans will be offered for women to attend non-traditional vocational training institutions (such as sponsorships or career development loans).

6. An oversight Government agency to look into the case for affirmative action or to ensure non-discrimination, as put forward in the Annex on Governance in this National Development Strategy, will be established. Affirmative action in the form of quota systems is used to overcome historical imbalances in many countries around the world as diverse as Norway, Argentina, Pakistan and Tanzania.

7. Studies will be conducted into time use, in an attempt to estimate the economic value of women's unwaged contribution to the national economy.

C. Employment

1. The policies outlined throughout the National Development Strategy to boost employment opportunities will be implemented.

2. Policies to create "family friendly" working environments and employment conditions will be introduced. Such policies will include some combination of one or more of the following: (a) the introduction of crèches at work; (b) the provision of more child/family-care facilities; (c) the introduction of "flexitime" systems; (d) the introduction of the option for workers with very young children or other dependent relatives to work at home; (e) the introduction of the option to shorten the working day for mothers while their children are very young; (f) the introduction of the option for mothers to switch to part-time work while a child is very young; and (g) the introduction of parental leave for females and males (that is, both maternity and paternity leave).

3. The compliance of corporations, local and foreign, with national laws and codes governing the rights and benefits of women workers will be ensured. This will require addressing not only weaknesses in the law but also issues of legal awareness and enforcement. The WAB will be strengthened to allow it to monitor compliance with laws effectively.

4. The CARICOM model laws on Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value and on Equal Opportunity in Employment will be adopted, as well as ILO Convention Number 156 relating to the rights of workers with family responsibilities. Legal protection will be extended to domestic workers and other workers not presently covered by such legislation.

D. Health

1. Improved levels of primary health care and reproductive health care, with a special emphasis on female malnutrition and maternal mortality levels, will be provided. An integrated programme will include, among other things, nutrition programmes, health education, improved access to safe drinking water, improved access to health care, improvements in the quality of health care, and the overcoming of resource constraints in the MCH Unit in the Ministry of Health (in terms of staffing shortages and financial resources).

2. The rapid rise of AIDS among women will be tackled through a concerted health education programme using available medical facilities and supplies.

3. Contraceptives will be made available, in order to enhance women's control over fertility decisions. This will be accompanied by a wider availability of family planning advice.

4. Health institutions that carry out medical terminations will be monitored to ensure that minimum health and safety requirements are adhered to. In addition, counselling will be provided for those women who have had or wish to have a medical termination and that counselling, as required by law, will be done routinely.

E. Education

1. Women will be trained in non-traditional and more highly paid trades.

2. The broader approach to technical and vocational education outlined in the Annex on Education, will be implemented.

3. Career advice services and systems of industrial placements in non-traditional firms for female students will be established.

4. The level and quality of education, particularly at the primary level and up to the 3rd Form level, will be enhanced through improvements in (a) teacher quality (which includes an increase in salaries and an improvement in access to teacher training colleges) and (b) the quality and quantity of schools, which includes the provision of up-to-date teaching and learning equipment and materials.

5. Programmes to promote the inculcation of desirable social skills and an acceptance of a value system as a sound base for quality citizenship will be introduced.

6. Parenting skills will be imparted through the curricula of both formal and non-formal institutions.

7. Women (including teenage mothers) returning to the educational system after pregnancy or child raising will be assisted by the provision of grants or loans, as well as formal and informal back-to-school and job training programmes.

8. Day-care facilities will be provided at secondary and post-secondary academic and vocational institutions, so as to help women students with children to balance the different demands on their time.

9. National distance learning schemes will be strengthened. This will enable those women who do not have access to schools or training centres, to gain an education.

10. Career guidance programmes at the secondary and tertiary levels will be introduced to emphasise an expanded set of career choices for women. Placements and work-study programmes will be arranged post-CXC, post-A-Level, or as a part of a "sandwich course" at UG. These programmes will be financed by Government and the private sector firms involved.

11. Guidelines for classroom management and educational materials (such as textbooks and audio visual materials) will be provided. Educational materials that are sensitive to gender issues will be encouraged, while those which are not, will be modified or actively discouraged. In addition, it will be ensured that the curriculum at all levels avoids gender stereotyping and, indeed, that gender sensitivity is included as a topic.

12. Gender training courses for teachers and educational administrators will be conducted. Trainee teachers will be equipped with the requisite skills and techniques for gender-sensitive teaching and learning, as well as for managing mixed classes.

13. The employment of female lecturers at tertiary institutions and in management positions will be encouraged, primarily by the removal of discriminatory barriers and by persuading females to apply for jobs.

14. A “Task Force on Gender Issues in Education” will be established, to act as the “focal point” in the Ministry of Education. Members will be drawn from the Ministry of Education, teachers' unions, the Women's Affairs Bureau, the Women's Studies Unit at the University of Guyana, and school administrators, counsellors and teachers. The Task Force will address the re-design of overall curricula, the standardisation of the secondary school/post Form 3 curriculum, with slots for electives, and gender sensitivity training for counsellors, administrators and teachers. The conclusions of the Task Force will be made public and its recommendations will be implemented, in stages, upon review by the Ministry of Education and the Women's Affairs Bureau. It will remain active after presenting its findings as a monitoring and assessment unit, with continued support from government for its administration.

F. The Household

1. Adequate institutional capacity will be provided to monitor and enforce the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act. This will require institutional strengthening of the WAB, a national campaign to bring about public awareness, and training of those directly involved in enforcing the existing law (particularly the police). Counselling facilities will also need to be developed.

2. In order to gain deeper insights into the situation and position of women, the household and its significance for improving the status of women will be assessed through a series of studies on income distribution within the household, patterns of decision making in the household, and quantification of unwaged work in the household.

G. Institutional Framework

1. The institutional capacity of the WAB will be strengthened so that it may perform its key functions (including training and monitoring) more effectively. Specifically, the inter-ministry committee will be strengthened to provide competent technical expertise in the framing of policy and programme initiatives.

2. The National Commission on Women will be strengthened by the reorganisation of its membership to include not more than ten persons, female and male, representing sectoral areas of Government as well as relevant social partners, such as the trade union movement and the private sector. Members should be persons recognised for their work at community, national or sectoral level. The Commission will have an independent moderator, and the WAB will be its secretariat. The Commission, which should be non-partisan, will continue in its responsibility for recommending policy and programme directions in regard to gender to the relevant Minister; promoting a lobby for the policies and programmes of the WAB; stimulating a broad national debate on issues of gender equity; and undertaking, or assisting the undertaking by others, of appropriate research and educational activities in this area.

3. The WAB will be headed by an officer of appropriate status for liaising with the Permanent Secretaries of Ministries relevant to the formulation and implementation of its policies and programmes. Competent professionals will be appointed to staff the Bureau in areas such as policy analysis, research, and data gathering and dissemination. In support of the accepted strategy of mainstreaming the issues, the WAB will be located within the Ministry which has responsibility for national development planning. The WAB will also be provided with required technical and financial support for its national programmes, as well as for meaningful participation in regional and international organisations. In addition, there will be full recognition at the national level of the linkages between the WAB, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other national, regional and international agencies mandated to address issues that concern the condition and position of women.

4. Project implementation will be the responsibility of the line ministries, supported by competent NGOs. The role of the WAB will be to formulate policies and programmes, based on careful research, to monitor programme and project implementation, and to coordinate the support of international donors and regional agencies.

5. Coordination between the various non-governmental women's organisations and other gender groups will be improved by strengthening information networks to disseminate relevant information and communicate ideas. The aim will be to establish a forum, bringing together all groups concerned with gender issues, regardless of race, class, religion, geographic location or party political affiliation. Government will be committed to the provision of technical and financial support for these initiatives.

6. Women's focal points will be established within Ministries and agencies, and will be staffed by trained, gender-sensitive officials.

7. In order to fulfil its mandate of promoting the status of all Guyanese women, across all differences of race, class, disability, religion, culture, political persuasion and geographical location, the national machinery, i.e., the WAB, will be given semi-autonomous status. It will have the capacity for policy formulation in all areas relevant to the needs and concerns of women, as well as for on-going programme implementation, thus ensuring continuity across changing administrations. Its operations will be supported by realistic budgetary provisions, in spite of the constraint of an inadequately functioning economy.

H. Legislation

1. A national legal literacy campaign will be conducted to enhance awareness and understanding of women's legal rights among both men and women, and to mobilise public opinion in favour of their enforcement.
2. Gender training for law enforcement officials will be provided so that they may better understand and respond to complaints of abuse and discrimination.
3. The law will be reformed (by amendment or repeal and re-enactment, as necessary) in those areas where weaknesses exist. Relatedly, all language which excludes women will be removed and replaced by appropriate, inclusive language.