



Rights of the  
Child Commission

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**JANUARY - DECEMBER**  
**2015**

## LIST OF ACRONYMNS

<b>AA</b>	-	Administrative Assistant
<b>ERC</b>	-	Ethnic Relations Commission
<b>IO</b>	-	Investigative Officer
<b>IPC</b>	-	Indigenous Peoples' Commission
<b>MHSS</b>	-	Ministry of Human Services and Social Security
<b>RCC</b>	-	Rights of the Child Commission
<b>UNICEF</b>	-	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UN</b>	-	United Nations
<b>W&amp;GEC</b>	-	Women & Gender Equality Commission

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## INTRODUCTION

### Chairperson's Remarks

The year 2015 was a very productive year for the RCC. This was so because it facilitated the sustaining of the work programme of the Commission.

Of particular noteworthiness were the initiatives early in the year to consolidate and strengthen the investigative purview of the Commission. Such endeavor commenced with a multi stakeholder conference to establish channels of communication and working relationships.

The investigative mandate of the Commission is an important constitutional obligation intended to provide a measure of justice and redress for children subjected to abuse and neglect.

In 2015, the RCC commenced its engagement of and partnership with the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic intended to provide legal representation for Guyana's children in contact with the law.

Such engagement and partnership is premised on the diagnosis of the Commission working with Guyana's children in contact with the law. Such work has uncovered a denial of the right to legal representation. The RCC views such departure from the spirit and intent of the CRC as particularly egregious.

The RCC will continue to advocate for a permanent, structured and workable solution to this breach.

In 2015 also, the RCC has continued its work in support of the ungrade and humanization of the New Opportunity Corps. The RCC remains committed to ensuring that Guyana's children in juvenile detention are availed the full gamut of their human rights.

I call on all Guyanese to support the work of the RCC in securing, promoting and advancing the rights and interests of Guyana's children.

Aleema Nasir

Chairperson

Rights of the Child Commission

The following persons served on the Rights of the Child Commission for 2015.

**Representatives of Religion**



**Aleema Nasir– Chairperson, RCC**

Ms. Nasir is a formally qualified and trained counselor and social worker of many years’ experience. She is the current President of the women’s Organisation of the Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana (C.I.O.G.), (NACOSA) and a member of the Central Executive of the Central Islamic organization (CIOG). She serves as the main counselor for CIOG.

(Rev) Colleen Clarke-Anthony, Deputy Superintendent and Pastor of the Guyana Missionary Baptist Church, currently employed as Senior Probation and Social Services Officer at the Ministry of Labour Human Services and Social Security, License Marriage Officer.

Rev Clarke-Anthony is a graduate of the Wesleyan Bible College (Bachelors Degree in Christian Ministry), graduate of the University of Guyana (B.Sc.SocialWork)



**Sarojanie Rambaran – Member**

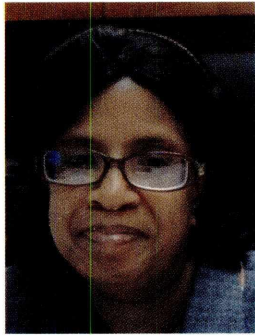
Mrs. Rambaran represents the Hindu religion. She is a counselor and educator of many years’ experience. She is also a member of the Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha and has served for many years as a member of Mahela Mandele, its women’s arm.



**Colleen Anthony – Member**



Representatives of women



**Rosemary Benjamin-Noble – Deputy Chairperson**

Mrs. Benjamin – Noble is a West – Indian trained Attorney – at – Law and has worked for many years on women’s and children’s issues primarily through her membership of the Guyana Association of Women Lawyers and association with other women’s organisations. She holds a Master’s Degree in International Education. She also served several years ago as the co – ordinator of the Children’s Bills Project (in collaboration with MLHSSS) which resulted in five new pieces of children’s legislation.



**Sandra Hooper – Member**

Mrs. Hooper is a formally qualified social worker of over forty years’ experience. She worked as a Government Youth

Officer for sixteen years, followed by seventeen years as Director of the Municipal Daycare Service. She has held principal positions in various social organizations and in the Anglican community serves on the Diocesan Council and chairs the Family Life Commission. Mrs. Hooper was also a member for several years of the precursor to the RCC i.e. the National Commission on the Rights of the Child - Presidential commission (now defunct).

Representatives of service



**Yvonne Fox - Member**

Mrs. Fox is a trained educator, having been a teacher and later principal for many years. A graduate of the George Meany Labour College, USA, Mrs. Fox also has given yeoman service representing the Guyana Teacher’s Union (GTU) including as President of its women’s arm. Throughout the years Mrs. Fox served as Co – ordinator of the Teachers upgrading classes in the Georgetown District for years, and is a former Vice – Chairperson of the Legal Aid Clinic of Guyana. She is a member of the Education sub – committee of the Rights of the Child Commission and was honored by the Women and Gender Equality Commission in August, 2011.

Ms. Yvonne Fox received the Guyana Teacher’s Union “Jean Persico Award” in 1990 and the “Presidential Award” in 1992.



**Kaloutie (Pamela)Nauth – Member**

Ms. Nauth is a professional social worker and court – appointed mediator. She is the current President of the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA) and Director of Help and Shelter Inc.

Pamela Nauth is a Professional Social Worker /Counsellor and Consultant.

Ms. Nauth is one of the founding members of the Mediation Institute of Guyana and served in the capacity as Company Secretary and Vice – President for the past three terms.

Commissioner of the National Commission of the Family and Past Secretary of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Advisory Board.

Rich in her experience she has been devoting her time in promoting the development and capacity

Representatives of youth



**Marissa Massiah– member**

Ms. Massiah is an undergraduate in International Relations, and is currently reading for a Masters Degree in Project Management. She is a certified Community Facilitator. Her work experience includes servicing as Volunteer Relations Co – ordinator with Habitat for Humanity in Guyana (Poverty Housing Reduction).

Marissa Massiah has worked and volunteered with various youth groups and initiatives nationally and regionally.

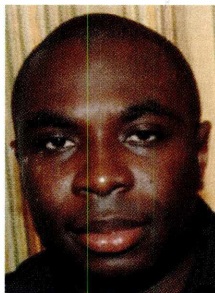




**Suelle Findlay – Williams – Member**

Suelle Findlay-Williams is the Youth Representative on the Rights of the Child Commission. She enjoys working with young people and believes that every child and youth deserves to be loved, respected and accepted. At every opportunity, Mrs. Williams encourages young people to adopt principles that will help them to live a pure, loving and industrious life. Suelle Williams holds a Bachelors of Science Degree in Public Communication from the University of Guyana and is currently reading for a Master Degree in Public Administration. She has also had training in Cognitive Behavioural Intervention for Trauma in Schools, Suicide Prevention, and School Health Programmes.

Representatives of Human services



**Kwame McCoy – Member**

Mr. McCoy is one of two nominated representatives of the Ministry of

Human Services and Social Security. He is formally trained in public communications and has served in several capacities related to public relations within the state and government structure within the past fifteen years.

Representatives of other (related) interests



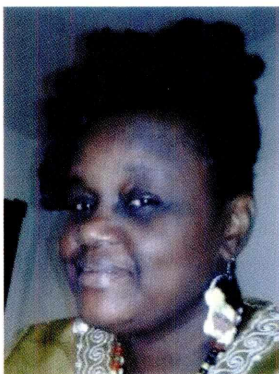
**Hyacinth (Cynthia) Massay - Member**

Ms Massay has worked in the area of disability for almost four decades and as former Director of Rehabilitation Services in the Ministry of Health was responsible for the development of Guyana's first National Policy for Persons with Disability which was laid in Parliament in 1997.

She is a member of the Board of the Step by Step model school for children with autism and the board of the recently formed Guyana Epilepsy Foundation



Ex – officio Commissioners



**Nicole Cole – Rep. of the Women & Gender Equality Commission (WG&EC)**

I am a graduate of the University of Guyana-Class of 2007 (BSc Credit) I am a clinically trained Social Work Practitioner who is officially gazetted; Ms. Cole is currently enrolled @ Stanford University completing a Course in International Women's Health and Human Rights, she is also a student of the Confucius Institute-University of Guyana and the Venezuelan Institute of Culture and Cooperation.



**Marco De Souza – Rep. of the Indigenous Peoples' Commission (IPA)**

Mr. DeSouza is an active leader and counselor in the Moruca community. He has served for several years as toshau (leader) of the Moruca Amerindian Village Council.



**Mr. Amarnauth Panday BA,MA  
Chief Executive Officer/Secretary**

Amarnauth Panday, CEO of the Rights of the Child Commission, has a Bachelors Degree in History and English from the University of Guyana, a Masters Degree in Human Resource Management from the University of the West Indies and has also served in the Guyana Defence Force

## **Multi Stakeholder Consultation aimed at strengthening the RCC Investigative department and function**

During the first quarter of 2015, the RCC engaged in a Multi Stakeholder Consultation pursuant to the strengthening of the RCC's investigative role. The RCC's investigative mechanism was established to provide redress for children whose protection and other rights were violated in breach of the UNCRC.

The consultation featured the participation of a number of key stakeholders such as the Guyana Police Force, the Child Care and Protection Agency, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, UNICEF and the Presidential Advisor on Youth Empowerment.

The Consultation saw stakeholders committing themselves to establishing viable protocols of partnership aimed at enabling effective cooperation in relation to the handling of cases involving child abuse and neglect.

The RCC viewed such consultation as pivotal to the establishment of protocols and channels of communication that would serve in the interest of Guyana's Children.

## **Capacity Building Training with the Comforting Hearts NGO in New Amsterdam**

The RCC in the first quarter of 2015, provided a capacity building training and orientation for the administration and staff of the Comforting Hearts NGO based in New Amsterdam.

The Comforting Hearts NGO does work primarily in the diagnosis, treatment and counselling for victims of HIV/AIDS. This service is availed by the NGO to communities in Regions 5 & 6.

The objectives of the capacity building engagement was : 1. To significantly bolster the work of Comforting Hearts, and 2. To cultivate a lasting and meaningful partnership that would lead to a number of other joint ventures in Region 5 and 6 aimed at the empowerment, education and protection of Guyana's children and youth.



### **Capacity Building Training with the Red Cross Convalescent Home**

In the first quarter of 2015, the RCC conducted a capacity building workshop with the Staffers of the Red Cross Convalescent Home. This Home is managed Red Cross Guyana and is an alternative care centre for children under five years in need of such care.

The capacity building engagement focused on lifting and augmenting the professionalism of the staff corps to avail to the children a service and care in keeping with the spirit and intendment of the UNCRC and Guyana's policy for children in alternative care.

The RCC has endeavored to establish a viable channel of communication with this Home pursuant to maintaining the best interest of the child.

### **Engagement with the NOC**

In the first quarter of 2015, RCC conducted a leadership and capacity building engagement with the staff and students of the New Opportunity Corps (NOC)

The session with the staff centered on professionalism and conflict management and was conducted by the CEO. The session with the students focused on the UNCRC and leadership development and was also conducted by the CEO.

The RCC has endeavored to maintain a viable relationship and channel of communication with the New Opportunity Corps

### **Partnership with the Parliament office in the hosting of the Children's Parliament Initiative**

In the first quarter of 2016, the RCC partnered with the Parliament Office in the hosting of a Youth Parliament in commemoration of Commonwealth Day.

The Youth Parliament initiative brought together school children from all ten administrative regions, to debate a theme centering on child and youth participation in the governance process of the country.



The RCC provided the Leadership and Child Rights training to the Youth Parliamentarians in preparation for their parliamentary deliberation.

RCC's Chairperson, Ms. Nasir, served as the Chief judge on a panel of judges inclusive of the Speaker of the National Assembly Mr. Raphael Trotman and the Minister of Education and Dr. Rupert Roopnarine.

### **Engagement with the Project Hope Initiative in Region 6.**

In the first quarter of 2015, the RCC provided a capacity building training and orientation to the newly formed NGO Project Hope in Region 6.

The Project Hope Initiative is a grouping of university students, civil servants and other professionals doing substantial volunteer work in the children homes of Region 6. Specifically, they assist children with homework as well as provide mentoring and psycho- social counseling and support.

The objective of the day's training was to: 1. establish a viable partnership with the group; 2. build their capacity to better discharge their mandate; and 3. to consult with them on the crafting of the RCC's monitoring tool, to be applied in the various Homes in Guyana with a view towards preserving best practices and minimum standards.

Moreover, the Project Hope group will serve as the RCC's ambassadors in the Region 6 Homes and will be the instrument for the application of the monitoring tool in Berbice.

## **RCC's Suicide Prevention Deliberation**

The RCC in the first quarter of 2015, the RCC conducted a multi stakeholder consultation on suicide prevention in Guyana.

The meeting had featured the participation of a number of stakeholders involved in the national fight against suicide. Such stakeholders included the Pesticide Board, the Ministry of Health, NGOs etc. The deliberation focused on striving for a level of collaboration and coordination among the various stakeholders.

Prominent among the issues discussed at the above meeting was the relatively easy accessibility of pesticides and herbicides to prospective suicide victims inclusive of children. The RCC committed to making certain recommendations for amendments to the Pesticide and Toxic Control Act that would seek to curtail such accessibility once enforced.

The meeting also featured the participation of Mr. Harrinarine Persaud, a complainant to the RCC. Mr. Persaud's son committed suicide by ingesting a poisonous substance that he acquired easily.

This initiative was inspired by the 2015 investigative agenda of the Commission as it was premised on an actual and formal complaint to the Commission. The deliberation reflected an attempt to use the cases under review by the Commission to craft an evidence - based policy direction and work programme

## **Report on Study Visit to Belize**

In the second quarter of 2015, the RCC conducted a study visit to Belize pursuant to the strengthening of the Commission. The objectives of this engagement included:

1. To conduct extensive discussion on the structure, powers and working of the NCFC (National Committee for families and Children of Belize).
2. To observe and review the methodology used by the NCFC in its engagement with agencies and
3. To share knowledge and establish partnership for future collaboration.



This engagement moreover included a review of paradigms, best practices, initiatives and protocols observed by the Commission’s counterpart in Belize and then examining their applicability to the Guyana scenario.

The RCC did also make a presentation to the NCFC detailing the work of the Commission over the years.

### **Engagement with the Suddie Regional Hospital**

In the third quarter of the 2015, the RCC conducted a capacity building and orientation training with the doctors and nurses of Suddie Regional Hospital, Region 2.

The objectives of this engagement involved:

1. Apprising medical professions on their responsibility under the UNCRC
2. Apprising medical professionals of the general philosophy of the UNCRC
3. Reviewing and refining protocols for cooperation with medical professionals vis-a vis the reporting of child abuse and neglect
4. Establishing a viable channel of communication with medical professions

This engagement, the RCC intends to replicate with the other Regional and District hospitals across Guyana.

### **Meetings with Speaker and Ministers.**

Commissioners, during the last quarter of 2015 met with the following state officials: The Speaker of the National Assembly, Dr. Barton Scotland, Minister of Education, Dr. Rupert Roopnarine, Minister of Public Security, Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan and Minister of Governance, Mr. Rapheal Trotman.

These discussions with the State Officials allowed for the Commission to re-establish, and in some cases, establish viable channels of communication between the Commission and the respective ministries. They also served as



effective briefing sessions for both parties (Ministries and Commission), wherein, meaningful dialogue and discussion took place on a range of issues pertinent to the rights, interests and well being of Guyana’s children.

**Meeting with Ms. Whitehead and  
Mr. Aston Chase of Guyana Legal Aid Clinic.**

In the last quarter of 2016 , the RCC met with Ms. Josephine Whitehead and Mr. Aston Chase of the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic. This was pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding between the Commission and the Clinic that would effectuate legal representation for the children held at the Sophia Juvenile Holding Centre and the New Opportunity Corps.

The necessity of securing legal representation for children, in contact with the law, was accentuated when the Commission discovered in its engagement of the Holding Centre, that more than 90% of the children engaged, did not have access to legal representation. This scenario, it should be underscored, is certainly ultra vires and abrasive to article 40 of the CRC.

At this meeting, a terms of agreement was arrived at which the CEO committed to craft into a more elaborate Memorandum of Understanding. Effectively, such MOU would fill the above cited void, by availing to the children in contact with the law, their right to legal representation.

**RCC’s participation in training for the staff at the Sophia Juvenile Holding Centre.**

In the last quarter of 2015, the RCC participated and made a presentation at a training, supported by UNICEF, and inclusive of a number of other critical stakeholders involved in the thrust of child protection. **This training was significantly advocated for by the Commission. This took the form of the CEO usually accentuating its importance with the Minister of Public Security, who subsequently instructed the Head of the Centre to fast track and prioritize the issue of training for the staff at the Centre.**

The Commission made specific suggestions to the staff corps with regard to the treatment of the children held there. Specifically, such centred on the resort to placing children in solitary confinement. The RCC had submitted the view that a review of this practice may be necessary positing that suitable alternatives should be explored.

The RCC's engagement of the Sophia Holding Centre has allowed the Commission to contemplate a myriad of ways, other than its personal development workshops, to alleviate and ameliorate the condition of the children held at the Centre. The Commission has further brought the situation of the children at the Centre to the attention of 1. The Minister of Public Security, 2. The Minister of Education, 3. The Presidential Advisor on Youth Empowerment who committed to briefing the 4. The President of the Cooperative Republic.

### **Engaging the children coming into contact with the Sophia Holding Centre**

Throughout the duration of 2015, the RCC conducted with the children resident at the Centre regular leadership and personal development sessions aimed at sharing and discussing concepts and models of personal development that may be relevant and salutary to their successful reintegration into their respective communities.

This endeavour by the RCC represented the first manifestation of such an initiative with Guyana's children in contact with the law.

### **Engagement with the Ministry of Education**

Throughout the duration of 2015, the RCC engaged various schools of the Ministry of Education with a Child Rights and Leadership programme engaging both students and teachers. Schools engaged include:

1. Saint Stanislaus College – Georgetown
2. Queens College – Georgetown
3. Richard Ishmael Secondary – Georgetown
4. Stewartville Secondary - Region 3
5. St. Johns College – Region 3
6. Meter meer Zorg Islamic College – Region 3
7. JC Chandisingh Secondary – Region 6

