

**Venezuelan Migrant Women:**  
A Macro-level Analysis of Gender-Based Violence in Guyana  
Capstone Policy Paper

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## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Glossary of Terms.....                                   | iv |
| I. Executive Summary.....                                | 1  |
| II. Background.....                                      | 2  |
| Statement of Purpose.....                                | 2  |
| Venezuelan Migrants in Guyana.....                       | 2  |
| Forms of Gender-Based Violence.....                      | 3  |
| Root Causes of Violence.....                             | 5  |
| Barriers to Services and Rights.....                     | 7  |
| Review of the Current Policy Environment.....            | 9  |
| Necessity of Change.....                                 | 12 |
| III. Methodology.....                                    | 13 |
| IV. Key Research Findings.....                           | 14 |
| V. Policy Options.....                                   | 21 |
| Civil Society Organizations.....                         | 21 |
| Guyana Police Force.....                                 | 23 |
| Government of Guyana.....                                | 24 |
| VI. Policy Recommendations and Implementation Plans..... | 26 |
| Civil Society Organizations.....                         | 26 |
| Guyana Police Force.....                                 | 27 |
| Government of Guyana.....                                | 27 |
| Appendix.....  | 29 |
| Bibliography.....  | 40 |

## List of Tables

|   |    |
|---|----|
| TABLE 1: POLICIES AND ACTS PASSED BY THE GUYANESE GOVERNMENT.....           | 10 |
| TABLE 2: GROUPS ORGANIZED TO COMBAT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN<br>GUYANA..... | 10 |
| TABLE 3: INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS RATIFIED BY GUYANA.....                  | 12 |
| TABLE 4: FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.....                                | 15 |
| TABLE 5: ROOT CAUSES OF VIOLENCE.....                                       | 17 |
| TABLE 6: TYPE OF SERVICE WANTED.....  | 19 |

## **Glossary of Terms**

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>CSO</b>        | Civil Society Organization                     |
| <b>GBV</b>        | Gender-Based Violence                          |
| <b>GDP</b>        | Gross-Domestic Product                         |
| <b>GOG</b>        | Government of Guyana                           |
| <b>GPF</b>        | Guyana Police Force                            |
| <b>IPV</b>        | Intimate Partner Violence                      |
| <b>MHSSS</b>      | Ministry of Human Services and Social Security |
| <b>NCC Guyana</b> | National Coordinating Coalition Guyana         |
| <b>TIP</b>        | Trafficking in Persons                         |
| <b>UNHCR</b>      | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  |
| <b>VMW</b>        | Venezuelan Migrant Women                       |

## I. Executive Summary

More than 6.1 million people have fled Venezuela since 2015, making it the largest external displacement of persons in Western hemisphere history.<sup>1</sup> This is largely attributed to the political turmoil, socio-economic instability, and ongoing humanitarian crisis in the country. This mass migration from Venezuela will continue to increase due to the mismanagement of the country by Nicolas Maduro's administration, and the growing rates of poverty, which stood at an alarming 95% in 2020.<sup>2</sup> Approximately 24,500 Venezuelans have migrated to Guyana in search of better living conditions and economic opportunities. Although migrants are allowed temporary stay permits in Guyana, they lack proper protection mechanisms for their basic human rights. Therefore, female migrants are subjected to various forms of gender-based violence (GBV) including intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual violence, harassment, abuse by authorities, and human trafficking.

The GBV situation for migrants in Guyana is quite complex because of the various root causes of violence. Some of these root causes are cultural, others are systemic; therefore, addressing these root causes can be quite difficult. Currently, despite decades of gender-responsive commitments and policies to address the GBV situation, efforts to decrease incidences of GBV in Guyana are insufficient. Thus, change is urgently needed as GBV rates in Guyana stand at 38% and are above the global average—26%.<sup>3</sup> We assert that change can happen now thanks to the recent efforts and data collection from civil society organizations (CSOs) which have shed light on the barriers and challenges that women in Guyana face regarding GBV and accessing services.

This research paper provides a macro-level analysis on Guyana's social, political, and cultural norms that contribute to and perpetuate violence against Venezuelan migrant women (VMW), evaluates the forms of GBV perpetuated against VMW and the root causes of GBV in Guyana, and provides a review of the current policy framework. In collaboration with our client, the National Coordinating Coalition (NCC) Inc. Guyana, we implemented a mixed-methods approach which included desk research, focus groups with migrants from Regions 2, 5, and 6, and semi-structured oral interviews, both virtually and in-person, with various stakeholders, including government and embassy officials, UN agencies, CSOs, and a professor at a Guyanese university.

Following our macro-level analysis, we propose various policy options to address the current policy gaps in preventing and responding to GBV and the root causes of violence. These policy options are directed to key stakeholders including Civil Society Organizations the Guyana Police Force (GPF), and the Government of Guyana (GOG). After evaluating the strengths and shortcomings of each policy option, we recommend that CSOs implement a one-month program for newly arrived migrants on living in Guyana, the GPF establishes clear accountability mechanisms and disciplinary procedures, and the GOG both strengthens immigration regulations and procedures and implements watchdog and accountability mechanisms. The determination of these policy recommendations was influenced by our evaluation of the key gaps in the current policy response, focus group discussions with migrants, and stakeholder interviews. If these policy recommendations are taken into consideration and implemented according to the steps provided in the implementation plans, Guyana will greatly strengthen its prevention and response to GBV perpetrated against VMW, ultimately decreasing instances of violence perpetrated against this population.

## II. Background

### Statement of Purpose

In Guyana, the current rate of gender-based violence (GBV) is 38%, which is above the global average (26%). Due to the current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and the increased economic opportunities in Guyana, it is expected that the number of Venezuelans entering Guyana will only increase. However, violence perpetuated against Venezuelan migrant women (VMW) is common due to harmful stereotypes and clashes with Guyanese cultural values; and, current efforts to combat GBV in Guyana are insufficient.

Our client, the National Coordinating Coalition (NCC) Inc Guyana, is an umbrella organization that supports and coordinates the work of nonprofit and civil society organizations. They specifically focus on advocacy for marginalized groups, support for victims and survivors of GBV, and providing services for vulnerable groups to further empower them. In collaboration with NCC Guyana, this project analyzes the current macro-level GBV situation as it relates to VMW—forms of violence, root causes, barriers to services and rights, and the current policy framework. This macro-level analysis complements recent micro-level analyses conducted by NCC Guyana, to address any gaps that exist due to prevailing Guyanese social, political, and cultural norms and frameworks that prevent VMW from receiving the critical services and support they need and inhibit them from fully assimilating in Guyana.

This report also provides policy options to address gaps, specifically with recommendations directed to key stakeholders, including Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the Guyana Police Force (GPF), and the Government of Guyana (GOG), on how to improve the prevention and response to GBV perpetrated against VMW.

### Venezuelan Migrants in Guyana

More than 6.1 million people have fled Venezuela since 2015, making it the largest external displacement of persons in Western hemisphere history.<sup>4</sup> Despite being a natural, resource rich country, Venezuela has descended into economic and humanitarian crises largely due to years of government-linked corruption and mismanagement.<sup>5</sup> In 2018, the presidential election of Nicolas Maduro was widely condemned by the international community. The Maduro regime is known for concentrating public resources into the capital, Caracas, leaving citizens in remaining states to face severe water shortages, frequent electricity outages, deteriorating infrastructure, limited supplies of food and medicine, and other collapsing public services—leading to high malnutrition rates and water-borne diseases.<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, the political instability and economic crisis have largely increased poverty and worsened living conditions. The humanitarian, political, and economic crisis started in 2014. At that time, the overall poverty rate was at 48.4%; however, it rose to 91% in 2017.<sup>7</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic compounded Venezuela's situation—in 2020, more than 95% of Venezuelans were living below the poverty line.<sup>8</sup> Despite these alarming statistics, Maduro's regime has denied that there is a crisis in Venezuela, denounces any reporting of the situation as part of an “imperialist” plot, and refuses any foreign humanitarian support or aid.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, many Venezuelans cite the

economic crisis in the country, the scarcity of food and medicines, the limited accessibility and availability of medical treatments for chronic diseases, insufficient income, little economic opportunity, insecurity, corruption, individual threats, kidnapping, extortion, and robberies as primary reasons for leaving Venezuela.<sup>10</sup>

With Venezuela's economy in freefall, hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans are fleeing poverty, hunger, and deadly disease epidemics in search of better living conditions and economic opportunities.<sup>11</sup> These massive migration flows have forced many Latin American and Caribbean countries to host incoming migrants. Guyana in particular, is home to an estimated 24,500 Venezuelan migrants, totaling approximately 3% of the country's overall population.<sup>12</sup> This estimation may be a low, inaccurate estimate due to the lack of data collection on the movement of Venezuelans. According to data from 2019 by the Migration Policy Institute, nearly 60% of Venezuelan migrants in Guyana are women, and over 80% of these women are under the age of 35.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, a study conducted by Inter-Action, explains that a significant pull factor to migrate to Guyana has been the comparative ease of entry into the country in terms of immigration requirements and the proximity to their places of origin in Venezuela.<sup>14</sup>

While Guyana has seen a consistent influx of Venezuelans, the number of incoming migrants is expected to continue to increase. In 2015, ExxonMobil discovered oil in Guyana's territorial waters. By the end of 2022, Guyana was pumping an average of 360,000 barrels per day, and ranked 17th globally by oil reserves; the government estimates that the territorial waters contain over 25 billion barrels of oil resources.<sup>15</sup> This hydrocarbon endowment will allow Guyana to emerge as a major regional oil producer and put the country on track to become a top-tier global petroleum exporter. IOM's Labour Migration Study from 2020 predicts that the booming oil economy will translate into increased migration to Guyana, especially as neighboring countries, including Venezuela, struggle with stagnant or negative economic growth.<sup>16</sup>

In response to the influx of migrants, the Government has issued temporary, three-month "transit visas/landing permits" for Venezuelans, allowing them to regularize their presence in the country; however, they are unable to legally work under these permits. These measures have provided temporary protection for Venezuelans in Guyana through pathways other than seeking asylum.

### **Forms of Gender-Based Violence**

Although migrants are granted temporary protection in Guyana, this does not exclude them from experiencing various forms of GBV, including intimate partner violence, violence in the context of the sale and exchange of sex, bullying and harassment, abuse by state authorities, and human and labor trafficking.

#### **Intimate Partner Violence**

Many VMW find themselves in intimate partner relationships with Guyanese men, frequently as a means of economic survival. These are often controlling and abusive relationships that involve various forms of intimate partner violence (IPV), including physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence.

Migrant women who are in relationships with Guyanese men may experience brutal physical violence. For example, a local news station released a story about a Guyanese man who “burnt his

*“It takes 11 attempts before a victim of IPV decides to fully leave.”*

Venezuelan lover to the face with a cigarette, beat her with a cutlass and chopped her to the head.”<sup>17</sup> Patriarchal gender norms and derogatory stereotypes about migrant women also leads to sexual violence between migrant women and their Guyanese partners. Guyanese men demand sex from their migrant partners; when they refuse, they are raped and often murdered. In fact, one migrant

woman’s body was found in a mining pit—she had been strangled to death and submerged under water because she refused to have sex with her partner.<sup>18</sup>

Forms of economic violence consist of men using “finances, child custody, and threats of taking away women’s documents to control them.”<sup>19</sup> Additionally, when women do not have enough money to pay for basic essentials like food and rent, it can cause frustrations that lead to violence in the home. Furthermore, in these relationships, Guyanese men often control women’s access to money and resources, which means that their capacity to leave these violent relationships is severely constrained.

### **Sale and Exchange of Sex**

Many women are unable to find jobs in the formal sector; therefore, they are forced into prostitution and survival sex in order to pay for food, rent, and shelter in Guyana. For women involved in the sale and exchange of sex, they are exposed to brutal physical violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, exploitation, rape, and robbery. When these women are sexually abused and coerced, it increases their risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease, including HIV. For women in remote areas, they have little access to HIV testing and other services.

Furthermore, reports indicate that Guyanese men have started to lie in police reports, saying that the sex worker robbed them. This is a new tactic that Guyanese men are using to not pay the sex workers for the exchange of sex. The police then charge the sex worker instead and they are forced to repay the men what they claim they lost.<sup>20</sup>

### **Bullying and Harassment**

Hyper-sexualized stereotypes about VMW generates sexual harassment since they are seen as sexual objects. These stereotypes often lead to VMW receiving unwanted attention from Guyanese men, ranging from open displays of catcalling to physical groping and public solicitation for sex. In Guyana, catcalling and “casual” harassment are expected to be tolerated by women; and generally, men expect women to see these acts of harassment as complementary. According to a 2019 rapid assessment conducted by R4V, VMW are primarily harassed by Guyanese men in the streets and by Guyanese taxi drivers.<sup>21</sup>

Negative stereotypes also engender harassment from Guyanese women, as they see VMW as “whores” and “homewreckers”; therefore, they believe that VMW are stealing their husbands. These sentiments also contribute to bullying against Venezuelan migrants once they settle in Guyanese communities. In turn, Venezuelans do not feel welcomed by Guyanese and some harbor feelings of resentment.



Venezuelan migrant girls and women are also subjected to harassment, sexualization, and bullying in schools because of their nationality. Due to the normalization of harassing women in Guyana, young boys and men bully, harass, and even rape Venezuelan girls and women within school boundaries.

The bullying and harassment against Venezuelan migrants have negatively affected them as they do not feel safe in Guyana, and they are emotionally affected by stigma, discrimination, and xenophobic sentiments directed towards them.<sup>22</sup>

### **Abuse by State Authorities**

Many VMW suffer abuse from police officers, the army, and immigration officials, including requests for sexual favors in exchange for providing help such as the renewal of their documents. VMW tend to not report incidents of violence or other acts of crime, due to their lack of trust, language barriers, and perception that members of the GFP will ask for bribes of approximately 20,000 GYD.<sup>23</sup> VMW also do not report to the police as there is an overall sentiment that the police fail to conduct proper, impartial criminal investigations concerning Venezuelan migrants.

Furthermore, some police officers abuse their power to side with perpetrators of violence—ensuring they walk free, and victims are left with no legal avenues to escape violent situations. According to one woman’s story that was highlighted in a local news source, when she was being physically and sexually abused by a Guyanese man, she called out for help. However, the officer simply tossed her clothes at her and released the perpetrator, laughing at her.<sup>24</sup>

### **Human and Labor Trafficking**

Human and labor traffickers exploit foreign victims, such as VMW, in Guyana. In fact, 53% of Venezuelan migrants are single, dependent women—this puts them at high risk of being trafficked for sex and labor.<sup>25</sup> This is particularly the case for women in remote mining regions. VMW are recruited through deceptive means and are promised employment opportunities in mining sites. Once lured, economically vulnerable VMW and girls are enslaved by criminal groups who steal their documents and threaten them with violence, rape, or public shaming. However, since there is limited government presence in these regions, the full extent of human trafficking is unknown.<sup>26</sup> This lack of government presence also leads law enforcement actors to be complicit and thus ignore human and sex trafficking.

While many cases of trafficking occur in Guyana’s interior region, particularly close to mining hubs, many Venezuelan women are also trafficked to work in bars, brothels, and other entertainment clubs throughout Guyana. Labor traffickers also exploit VMW in mining, agriculture, forestry, domestic service, and shops.

### **Root Causes of Violence**

The GBV situation for migrants in Guyana is quite complex because of the various root causes of violence. Some of these root causes are deeply cultural, others are systemic. It is essential to understand these root causes of violence in order to provide effective policy options that will mitigate instances of violence perpetrated against migrant women.

### **Patriarchal Gender Norms**

The colonial nature of Guyanese social-cultural norms has contributed to deep-seated, harmful patriarchal beliefs, attitudes, and practices about gender and gender roles. In Guyana, many women are expected to fulfill traditional caregiving and domestic roles—this can put women at risk of economic control and abuse. Furthermore, it is widely accepted in Guyanese culture for a man to hit a woman. Overall, there is a sense of male privilege that leads to toxic masculinities. These deep-seated gender norms are perpetrated in popular culture, media, and music. These norms are exacerbated in the perpetration of violence against Venezuelan women. This is a particular challenge for Venezuelan women who are used to a more liberal society and culture.

### **Culture of Normalized Violence**

The culture of Guyana is embedded in the history of colonization, slavery, and indentured servitude, which has given rise to power dynamics and the use of violence. This has contributed to an overall normalization of violence, which is a core driver of GBV. For example, corporal punishment is still permitted by law; this justifies violence and physical discipline. Furthermore, many Guyanese boys and girls witness or experience violence during childhood, which perpetuates these practices and norms, and the acceptance of them, into their adulthood. Additionally, acts of violence often stem from the culture of drinking, which can lead to increased instances of impulsive behaviors such as inappropriate aggression.

### **Xenophobia**

Guyanese citizens demonstrate harmful stereotypes toward Venezuelans. There is a general sense that migrants are causing too many problems in Guyana, which contributes to overall xenophobia against the migrant population. Furthermore, Guyanese culture is more conservative, particularly in the way women dress. Venezuelan women dress less conservatively, as they come from a more liberal culture. Therefore, Venezuelans are hyper-sexualized which leads to widespread derogatory stereotypes and sexual harassment. In fact, there is a widespread view among Guyanese women that Venezuelan women are in Guyana to steal their men away from them.

Furthermore, acts of xenophobia and discrimination are manifested in medical facilities. Many migrants believe, rightfully so, that they will be discriminated against if they attempt to access medical services. Xenophobia is also present in the police force. When women do report instances of violence, the police do not take them seriously, as there is an overall belief that these women are Spanish and therefore wrong.<sup>27</sup>

### **Impunity**

In Guyana, government and other public officials experience impunity from their actions. Public authorities are aware that VMW are not well informed about local laws and their rights, and do not speak English, so it is easy for them to take advantage of these women and act with impunity. Most women do not report these crimes because they are afraid that they will be questioned, detained, and deported; and, they have a fear of authorities in general. When women do report instances of violence, police often ignore reports because they themselves are the perpetrators.

There is also an overall sense of impunity for everyday perpetrators of violence. Successful prosecutions of IPV, rape, and other instances of violence are rare. There are also very few protection mechanisms in place for victims and survivors of violence. This contributes to the low

reporting rate—many women do not file a report due to fear of retaliation from the perpetrator of GBV. Additionally, as Guyana is a small country where “everyone knows everybody,” many Guyanese men have friends or family members in the police force. This prohibits women’s ability to trust the police and file reports against perpetrators. High impunity in Guyana has created an environment where perpetrators have license to commit violence against migrant women without consequence.

### **Difficult to Obtain Legal Status**

Most Venezuelan migrants, 95%, enter Guyana with only a national ID card, not a passport.<sup>28</sup> When migrants are registered with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, they apply for a free and renewable 90-day temporary stay permit. However, the process to renew this permit is challenging and can take up to three months, which therefore results in a significant number of migrants losing their legal status.<sup>29</sup> This leads to exploitation, abuse, and human trafficking. Even with this temporary permit, migrants cannot enter the formal economy, as they do not have work authorization. This causes them to look for jobs in the informal sector, including prostitution, where they are not paid fairly. According to the Migration Policy Institutes Regional Profile in 2019, 75% of migrants report being employed in the informal economy.<sup>30</sup>

### **Poverty**

The main reason why individuals are leaving Venezuela is due to poverty and a lack of economic opportunity. Therefore, migrants seek to secure jobs in Guyana to support themselves and their families, but also to send remittances to family members that are still in Venezuela. However, because VMW mainly enter the informal economy in Guyana, they are still subject to continual poverty. Reports from the local news mention that migrants are often seen searching through dumpsters in attempts to find food.<sup>31</sup> It is quite difficult for them to make enough money to send back home to Venezuela, in addition to paying for their basic needs. Thus, many migrant women find themselves in abusive relationships with Guyanese men to ensure their economic survival.

### **Barriers to Services and Rights**

These root causes of violence also contribute to the barriers that migrants face in accessing services and basic rights in Guyana. In previous assessments conducted by NCC Guyana that contributed to our desk research, they identified the following barriers to services and rights for VMW.

#### **Lack of Legal Status**

Because migrants do not have legal status outside of temporary stay permits that are difficult to renew, they face many obstacles in accessing the services they need, and they are deprived of their basic human rights. This affects migrants in several ways. First, it prohibits migrants from entering the formal economy, which forces them into poor working conditions where they are not treated or paid fairly, and they are often subjected to various forms of violence. This is a clear deprivation of their human rights. Second, because migrants do not have formal legal status, they believe they will be turned away or punished if they attempt to access basic services such as healthcare, education, and filing police reports. Lastly, the 2019 Inter-Agency R-GBV-A mentions that “there is no legal route for regularization of undocumented migrants who have been the victims of trafficking. If victims do engage with legal authorities, they are either repatriated or must find another way to regularize their migration status.”<sup>32</sup>

### **Lack of Awareness about Services and Rights**

One of the main factors that leads to migrants' unawareness of their rights and the services that exist, is the overall lack of information, particularly in Spanish, about the local laws, their rights as a migrant, and available GBV services. Because VMW are not familiar with this information, they feel unable to leave violent situations, since they do not know where to turn for help.

Even though CSOs and the GOG provide some services to help Venezuelan migrants, it is evident that there is a lack of awareness on the availability of these services. For example, GOG provides free access to healthcare, but most Venezuelan migrants are not aware that they have the right to healthcare. Therefore, it is evident that CSOs and the GOG need to undertake public awareness campaigns for Venezuelan migrants to become aware of services that are available to them.

### **Lack of Services in Remote Areas**

The majority of migrants live in regions outside of Georgetown; and, a large portion of these migrants live in hinterland and remote areas. In these remote regions, GBV services are scarce and uneven.<sup>33</sup> Access to sexual and reproductive health services and safe shelters are particularly scarce for migrant women in remote areas; and, there are a limited number of social workers and psychologists available to support victims and survivors of GBV. In fact, "for the most part, services that prevent and respond to GBV are centralized in the capital city of Georgetown."<sup>34</sup> This greatly impacts VMW's ability to access services that prevent and respond to GBV in remote areas. Furthermore, women are unable to travel to Georgetown to access the services there, because it is expensive and there are limitations on migrants' movement between regions, which further limits the options available to them. Overall, although there are some services available to VMW, both inside and outside Georgetown, they are often of poor quality due to gaps in donor funding and short-term program cycles.

### **Language Barriers**

Migrants face various challenges in Guyana due to the Spanish-English language barrier. This is a particular hurdle for VMW who need to access services that prevent and respond to GBV. This is because GBV service providers often do not speak Spanish and do not provide Spanish-speaking services. This is also a challenge in healthcare facilities, as many doctors, nurses, and other staff members do not speak Spanish. Therefore, migrants are unable to communicate their needs and are often not attended to properly as a result. Furthermore, because VMW do not understand English, they are often tricked into sex trafficking and sexual exploitation since they do not know what they are getting themselves into. This further deprives them of basic human rights in Guyana.

### **Discrimination against Migrants**

Discrimination and xenophobia against Venezuelans cause many difficulties for migrants, as mentioned above. Additionally, discrimination is a large barrier in migrants' ability to access the services they require. For example, many Venezuelan migrants are denied access to social protection services, health care, education, etc. In health facilities, discrimination leads service providers to attend to migrants slowly; they often will make migrants wait until everyone else is attended.<sup>35</sup> For VMW who are sex workers or who have previously engaged in survival sex, they tend to not access medical services because social workers in health facilities treat them as criminals and tend to discriminate against them for their occupation.

In addition to the aforementioned, discrimination and xenophobia contributes to the decreased social and economic opportunities for migrants, implicit bias towards migrants, hate crimes, and their irregular migration status. The impact of discrimination breeds an atmosphere of hostility and distrust in the Guyanese society.

### **Fear of Authorities or Deportation**

As mentioned previously, VMW have a general fear of local authorities. They are concerned about abuse, harassment, stigmatizing attitudes, deportation, or discriminatory treatment from police officers and immigration officials. This prevents them from reporting and accessing the proper GBV legal routes and services that they need. This is particularly the case for women who participate in prostitution or survival sex—they fear they will not be taken seriously if they try to interact with state authorities. In fact, according to the UN Women’s 2019 Guyana Women’s Health and Life Experience Survey Report, “only 12% of victims/survivors reported their cases to the police...For those who did report abuse, fewer than 50% had a case that was opened for them, while 20% did not have a report taken.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Review of the Current Policy Environment**

In order to create policy options that are viable and feasible, it is critical to understand the policy environment as it currently exists and the prevailing gaps. First, Guyana is committed to gender equality in its constitutional law and several acts of Parliament, which guarantees gender equality in all spheres of political, economic, and social life, and prohibits discrimination based on sex.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, Guyana’s “constitutional, conventional, and regulatory framework is well established to guarantee de jure gender equality and female empowerment.”<sup>38</sup> Despite these mechanisms, gender inequalities persist in Guyana due to a lack of implementing protocols; limited resources, capacity, and political will; and challenges in accountability procedures.

The Guyanese constitution also institutionalized support for groups under threat of marginalization.<sup>39</sup> It even mentions that “every person in Guyana is entitled to the basic right to a happy, creative, and productive life, free from hunger, ignorance, and want. That right includes the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual.”<sup>40</sup> The language applies to all individuals, not just citizens; therefore, under the constitution, migrant populations should be awarded these basic rights. Furthermore, the constitution prohibits discrimination: “no person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner by any person acting by virtue of any written law or in the performance of the functions of any public office or any public authority.”<sup>41</sup> However discriminatory practices, particularly against migrants, persist in public institutions, such as hospitals and law enforcement.

In regard to GBV, the Guyanese government has indicated that eliminating GBV is a priority. In 2016, the previous administration, under President David A. Granger, affirmed its commitment to fighting GBV by taking a multi-sectoral approach with the aim to “increase social awareness around the rights of women, children, vulnerable groups, and hinterland communities, eradicate discriminatory practices that violate the rights of girls (i.e. child marriage), and eradicate gender harassment in public spaces, schools, and work places.”<sup>42</sup> Additionally, various “capacity building trainings have been conducted on sexual and domestic violence laws and protocols to promote awareness and skills on management of incidents among social workers, police, probation officers, health workers, prosecutors, civil society organizations, court officers, community and faith-based

leaders among others.”<sup>43</sup> The government also provided financial support to four shelters managed by NGOs that provide short-term accommodation, counseling, court advocacy, and training for women and girls.

Another measure that the GOG has taken for addressing GBV has been boosting the capacity of the GPF. The GPF has taken steps to (i) establish Domestic Violence and Sexual Offense Units at Police Force Headquarters; (ii) train ranks through the CopSquad2000 program and encourage more people-friendly precincts; (iii) remodel key precincts with designated private spaces to facilitate reporting GBV cases; and (iv) work with Non-Governmental Organizations and the Ministry of Social Protection.<sup>44</sup> The state has also sought to improve the response to GBV in the justice sector, including creating a specialized family court and a sexual offenses court. However, “the lack of systematic and comprehensive national data that records and tracks the incidence of GBV is a major gap.”<sup>45</sup>

From a policy level, it appears that the GOG is committed to preventing and responding to GBV. Over the last several decades, the government has passed various legislative commitments and policies related to this issue.

**Table 1**

| Policies and Acts Passed by the Guyanese Government |             |   |
|---|-------------|---|
| Title   | Year Passed | Brief Description   |
| Equal Right Act                                     | 1990        | An Act to make provisions for the enforcement of the principles enshrined in article 29 of the Constitution so as to secure equality for women and for matters connected therewith.   |
| Domestic Violence Act                               | 1996        | An Act to afford protection in cases involving domestic violence by the granting of a protection order, to provide the police with powers of arrest where a domestic violence offence occurs and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.                         |
| Prevention of Discrimination Act                    | 1997        | An Act to provide for the elimination of discrimination in employment, training, recruitment, and membership of professional bodies and the promotion of equal remuneration to men and women in employment to perform work of equal value, and for matters connected therewith. |
| Combatting of Trafficking in Person’s Act           | 2005        | Prohibits trafficking and makes it a criminal offence, provides a basis for a multi-sectoral approach to combating trafficking in persons and the establishment of the Ministerial Task Force on TIPs.  |
| National Policy on Domestic Violence                | 2008        | This Policy is intended to guide interventions and all activities and programs aimed at the prevention of Domestic Violence and the provision of services to victims/survivors.   |
| Sexual Offense Act                                  | 2010        | Provides legal remedies to protect victims of various sexual offences, including rape, sexual assault, incest, sexual indecency, grooming and voyeurism. The Act is gender neutral.   |

In order to implement the policies listed in the table above, the government, with the assistance of UN agencies, has created various task forces, working groups, committees, and units.

**Table 2**

| Groups Organized to Combat Gender-Based Violence in Guyana |   |                           |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| Title  | Purpose   | Additional Comments       |
| <b>National GBV Response and Working Group</b>             | The working group is made up of UN agencies, international organizations, local NGOs, and the MHSSS that meets every four weeks to discuss the national GBV response. | Co-led by UNFPA and UNHCR |

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>National Task Force for the Prevention of Sexual Violence</b> | The Sexual Offences Act of 2010 indicates that there must be a national task force that works with various ministries to develop policies for the eradication of all forms of violence.                       | Chaired by Ministers of Social Protection, Legal Affairs, Public Security, Social Protection, Indigenous Peoples Affairs, Education, and Public Health                                    |
| <b>National Democratic Violence Oversight Committee</b>          | Oversight of the implementation of the National Policy on Domestic Violence.  | Consists of senior officials in Government Ministries and Agencies, and other organizations that play a role in reducing domestic violence  |
| <b>Trafficking in Persons Task Force</b>                         | Conducts awareness campaigns and training events. Initiated a review of the TIP Act.  | The Ministry of Social Protection participates in this Task Force   |
| <b>Counter-Trafficking Unit</b>                                  | Creating a system to report incidents of trafficking, share information about rights of victims, and procedures to report trafficking to authorities.   | The Ministry of Social Protection oversees this unit  |
| <b>Multi-Agency Coordinating Committee</b>                       | To address the influx of migrants into the country by bringing together various public institutions, ministries, and UN Agencies.   | Chaired by the Minister of Citizenship  |
| <b>Plan of Action on GBV</b>                                     | Plan to prevent and respond to GBV—was expected to be completed in 2022.  | Created by NGOs in partnership with the MHSSS   |
| <b>Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Policy Unit</b>         | The main government institution that deals with GBV prevention and response. Serves as the secretariat for the National Task Force on Sexual Violence and the National Domestic Violence Oversight Committee. | Operates through the MHSSS<br><br>The Spotlight Initiative documented that, as of 2019, this unit is non-functional and that the Domestic Violence Act still needed to be operationalized |
| <b>iMatter App/914 Hotline</b>                                   | Gives direct access for victims to the country's 914 toll-free domestic abuse hotline. The app also provides access to relevant education information on GBV and how to find support services.                | Operates through the MHSSS and was developed in collaboration with the Spotlight Initiative   |
| <b>CopSquad2000</b>  | Provided training for 2,000 officers of the Guyana Police Force, to increase their knowledge on laws pertaining to GBV in order to equip them with the necessary training to deal with GBV crimes.            | Operates through the MHSSS and was co-led with UNFPA  |
| <b>Pro Bono 500 Initiative</b>                                   | Gives free legal services to people experiencing GBV and establishes a legal pro-bono referral department within the MHSSS. It was operationalized in January 2022.   | Operates through the MHSSS and is co-led with the Bar Association of Guyana   |

Furthermore, Guyana has signed and ratified various international conventions that seek to protect the basic human rights and security of women and migrants, included in the table below. State actors and lawmakers have a legal duty to comply with the terms of these conventions.



**Table 3**

| International Conventions Ratified by Guyana  |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Title   | Date Ratified     |
| International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination                             | February 15, 1977 |
| International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights   | February 15, 1977 |
| Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)                            | July 17, 1980     |
| Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women            | January 10, 1995  |
| International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families | July 7, 2010      |

Despite these gender-responsive commitments, policies, and groups, GBV rates in Guyana are still above the global average. It should also be noted that Guyana does not have a National Action Plan as laid out in UNHCR 1325 on women, peace, and security. This highlights the country’s current lack of political will, institutional and human resources capacity, follow through, and resources to prevent and respond to GBV.<sup>46</sup> For example, in 2019, members of the Working Group for the National GBV Response developed a national referral pathway, but it has never been implemented due to the change in government administration.<sup>47</sup> One huge barrier to ensuring the implementation of these policies is that there is no “stringently enforced watchdog or reporting mechanisms to identify breaches at the institutional level...and no established disciplinary actions are routinely adopted when these protective laws are breached.”<sup>48</sup>

### Necessity of Change

The current policy environment is insufficient; thus, change is needed now. Specifically, a new approach towards combating GBV is advisable and necessary. With Nicolas Maduro serving as president of Venezuela until the 2024 election, it is expected that the crisis will continue to cause widespread poverty and chronic shortages of food, medicine, and other necessities, leading many to flee. Venezuelans are also motivated to migrate due to the rising economic opportunities available in Guyana. With these two factors combined, the influx of migrants from Venezuela is not expected to decrease in the near future.

With the anticipated rise in migration of Venezuelans coming into the country, the Guyanese government should facilitate their integration, particularly into the labor market—especially given

*“The government needs some sort of labor policy to attract diaspora Guyanese or other workers to take on the huge swell of vacancies.”*

that their introduction into the labor market and economy has potential benefits. According to the International Monetary Fund, the spillover from the Venezuelan crisis can increase the total labor supply, boost Guyana’s growth potential, and increase Guyana’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita.<sup>49</sup> In the long term, investing in assimilating and integrating Venezuelans into the Guyanese economy has the potential to increase GDP up to 4.5 percentage points by 2030; and, Venezuelan migrant labor could help sustain



Guyana's economic growth by filling demographic and skills shortages in the local population.<sup>50</sup> The Venezuelan population represents an untapped asset that Guyana can economically benefit from in the long run.

In regard to GBV, change must occur now more than ever because GBV rates in Guyana (38%) are above the global average (26%).<sup>51</sup> Additionally, the Guyana Women's Health and Life Experiences Survey in 2018, found that one in five (20%) women living in Guyana have experienced non-partner sexual abuse in their lifetime, with 13% reporting experiencing such abuse before age 18.<sup>52</sup> Addressing GBV is imperative as its prevalence remains high, despite attempts from the government to deter it, and because justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators are lacking.

*“There is a dearth of employees in Guyana that are qualified to work. Especially when you consider 85% of Guyanese graduates leave Guyana.”*

Change can happen now due to the increased awareness of GBV challenges in Guyana. Both the GOG and CSOs have started to bring more attention to this issue. CSOs are now gathering data on GBV and can highlight the barriers and challenges that women face. This awareness and advocacy can best inform and expand policies, programs, and strategies to combat and decrease incidences of GBV in Guyana. The current administration, under President Dr. Mohamad Irfaan Ali, has expressed and promised commitments towards implementing new approaches to address GBV in the country. The increased awareness of the issue in the country by government officials and CSOs demonstrates a willingness to work on addressing GBV in Guyana; and, an increased availability of data will allow them to better cater their response to the actual needs of victims and survivors.

### III. Methodology

For purposes of this Capstone research, we collaborated with our client NCC Guyana. NCC Guyana's membership is located in various regions throughout the country, and it is among the leading NGOs in Guyana addressing social issues such as at-risk youth, crime and violence, education development, and GBV, in order to support national priorities. In 2022, NCC Guyana conducted a rapid assessment which found that there are established GBV referral pathways that provide legal, psychosocial, and promotion awareness support. However, NCC Guyana seeks a larger macro-level analysis of the social, political, and cultural norms that contribute to increased rates of GBV against Venezuelan women migrants in Guyana.

To do this, the research team implemented a mixed-methods approach. First, the team conducted a desk review to better understand the situation. The desk research involved the following steps:

- 1) Analyze secondary sources and data to get a clear idea of the social, political, and cultural norms in Guyanese society and how those norms can possibly affect migrants and their ability to assimilate.
- 2) Assess whether Guyana has ratified and is implementing any international conventions or standards, such as CEDAW, National Action Plans, or UNSCR 1325, among others.
- 3) Review the local laws, customs, and constitutions to evaluate if they discriminate against women or migrants in any way.
- 4) Review NCC Guyana's reports and other sources to understand the treatment of Venezuelan female migrants in the local context, especially GBV challenges.

- 5) Review NCC Guyana’s reports and other sources to gain a micro understanding of what is currently being done to address vulnerabilities.

To validate the findings from the desk research, and to better understand how laws and patriarchal structures affect the everyday experiences of female Venezuelan migrants, the research team gathered qualitative data in Guyana. Previously, NCC Guyana conducted focus groups in various regions of Guyana as part of their Rapid Gender-Based Violence Assessment. The purpose of this assessment was to gather data about Venezuelan migrants and their experiences with GBV in order to identify the drivers of GBV, the gaps in services to prevent and respond to GBV, and to inform future responses. NCC Guyana gathered data from migrants in all regions in Guyana except for Regions 2, 5, and 6; therefore, the research team assisted NCC Guyana in conducting focus groups with migrant women in these three regions in order to complete their rapid assessment. Two virtual focus groups were held in Region 2, with a total of 10 participants. Additionally, two in-person focus groups were held in Region 5, with a total of 8 participants; and, one in-person focus group was held in Region 6 with 5 participants. The list of questions asked to participants in these focus groups is included in Appendix D in English and Appendix E in Spanish. It should be noted that the research team did not lead the focus groups nor develop these discussion questions.

To provide better depth to our research, the research team also conducted 11 semi-structured oral interviews, both virtually and in-person, with various stakeholders including government and embassy officials, UN agencies, CSOs, and a university professor. The list of questions asked to these various stakeholder groups is included in Appendix F. At the conclusion of our semi-structured oral interviews, we used the snowball sampling technique to identify other CSOs and GBV experts who could provide additional information for our research.

Lastly, the research team analyzed the qualitative data gathered from the focus groups and interviews by transcribing and coding the data to identify patterns and triangulate findings with the desk review. The following section discusses key findings from the most common responses from both the oral interviews and focus group discussions. The findings are organized according to the same topics above in order to compare and contrast with our background research.

## IV. Key Research Findings

### Venezuelan Migrants in Guyana

Focus group participants were asked why they chose to immigrate to Guyana, as opposed to another country—especially given Guyana is not a Spanish-speaking country. The majority of respondents chose to come to Guyana in search of better economic opportunities, since it is “impossible to work in Venezuela.” Others mentioned that the level of harassment and discrimination against Venezuelans, in countries like Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Chile, and Ecuador, are worse than in Guyana. A few participants indicated that Guyana was geographically closer to them than other regions.

*“I would rather be here making money for myself than dying of hunger in Venezuela. It’s not the best way to make money (prostitution), but...”*

When asked about their experiences as female migrants in Guyana, focus group participants mostly spoke on two subjects—economic difficulties and discrimination or disrespect. The stories shared

on economic difficulties focused on three main topics—the difficulty in finding jobs, not being paid fairly, and being exploited. Many women are unable to find jobs and are therefore forced into sex work or other poor working conditions such as in the mines, housekeeping, or restaurants. Wherever they are working, they are exploited. Furthermore, migrants often do not get paid the full amount, are given their pay late, or do not get paid at all.

One of the key findings from the focus groups was how often participants mentioned that Guyanese men do not respect them and treat them poorly. One participant stated, “it is as if we don’t have any value.” In fact, the most common phrases mentioned during focus groups were “there is no respect” and “the Guyanese treat us badly.”

Many respondents also discussed how hard life is here and their sole focus is on survival. “All I can do is survive, work, and continue forward.” Most of the respondents mentioned that they do not want to continue living in Guyana due to these rough conditions; however, the situation back in Venezuela is much worse, so they are willing to continue living “a shitty life.”

### Forms of Gender-Based Violence

Focus group participants were then asked to share patterns and stories about their experiences of violence in Guyana; this became the main focus of the discussion. Each participant had a lot to share regarding their experiences with violence; therefore, it is impossible to include each story and finding here. However, the main themes and findings from this discussion are captured in the table below. The findings from these focus groups represent only a small sample of the migrant population; therefore, certain forms of violence may be more prominent in other regions, or specific forms of violence may not have been mentioned in these groups. [The table is organized from the most common general form of violence mentioned (listed in the column 1) to the least mentioned].

**Table 4**

| General Forms of Violence     | Specific Experiences   | Key Quotes   |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Violence in their Jobs</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taken advantage of</li> <li>• Abuse, mistreatment, violation from bosses</li> <li>• Hit</li> <li>• Threatened to be killed</li> <li>• Violated</li> <li>• Demands aren’t listened to</li> <li>• Robbed on the job</li> <li>• Have debts to their bosses so they cannot leave</li> </ul> | <p><i>“I can’t do or say anything about it.”</i></p> <p><i>“They think that because of the work we do we don’t have a right to say anything.”</i></p> <p><i>“Based on what we do for work (sex work) they drag us, they take us out in the streets naked, they treat us like bitches.”</i></p> |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Physical Violence</b>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pregnant women made to lift heavy objects</li> <li>• People throw rocks at them</li> <li>• Men hit them</li> <li>• Murdered</li> <li>• Bodies not recovered</li> <li>• Guyanese man poured gasoline on a Venezuelan woman to burn her alive</li> <li>• Kidnapped</li> <li>• Abused</li> </ul>  | <p><i>“In the mines they always kill women with machetes. I have seen women without an arm because of this.”</i></p>   |
| <b>Sexual Violence</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raped</li> <li>• Human trafficked</li> <li>• Forced into prostitution</li> <li>• Treated as objects</li> <li>• Sexually exploited</li> <li>• Harassed</li> <li>• Afraid of getting an STI/HIV</li> <li>• They touch their breasts without consent</li> <li>• Remove/break condom without consent</li> </ul>  | <p><i>“They make fun of us, they rape us, they treat us like bitches.”</i></p> <p><i>“A 13-year-old girl was raped in the school bathroom by a 16-year-old Guyanese boy.”</i></p>  |
| <b>Violence and Discrimination from the Police</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One woman was raped and drugged by a policeman</li> <li>• Violate women</li> <li>• Police don’t do anything</li> <li>• Venezuelans are afraid of filing reports</li> <li>• Have a fear of deportation</li> <li>• One woman was arrested and incarcerated for self-defense</li> <li>• There are stories of Venezuelans being falsely accused and being sent to jail</li> <li>• Police officers are often bribed to keep things under the table</li> </ul> | <p><i>“The police automatically assume that women are looking for what is given to them.”</i></p> <p><i>“If they want sex for money, they are going to get what they get.”</i></p> |
| <b>Violence and Discrimination from Medical Professionals</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurses and doctors leave Venezuelans in pain</li> <li>• Hospitals don’t treat them well</li> <li>• Doctor amputated a women’s whole leg when it didn’t need to be removed</li> <li>• One woman had both ovaries removed by a doctor, without her consent</li> <li>• Doctors will force pregnant women to give birth</li> <li>• Venezuelans are told in hospitals that it is not permitted to speak Spanish</li> </ul>                                    | <p><i>“The doctor said he wouldn’t treat me because Guyana only treated patients that spoke English.”</i></p>  |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Verbal Abuse</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name calling</li> <li>• Told they don't value anything</li> </ul>   | <p><i>"Fuck you prostitute."</i></p> <p><i>"You are a Venezuelan and you don't have any value."</i></p> <p><i>"You are just a Latina and a bitch."</i></p> <p><i>"No Guyanese person treats a Venezuelan well, just on the fact that you are Venezuelan because we are all categorized as the same."</i></p>         |
| <b>Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abused</li> <li>• Paraded outside naked</li> <li>• Manipulated</li> </ul>                                   | <p><i>"Some women fall in love with Guyanese men and if you refuse to have sex, they will hit you, they won't give you housing, won't give you food, leave you, they will do what they want, take your clothes, your belongings, your legal documents, everything."</i></p>  |
| <b>Bullying/Violence in Schools</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullied for being Venezuelan</li> <li>• Raped</li> </ul>  | <p><i>"There was a 12-year-old girl in school, and the kids were disrespecting her, and raped her in the school bathroom, this girl has tried to commit suicide three times."</i></p> <p><i>"A Venezuelan girl of 14 years old was raped in the bathroom of a school by a 16-year-old boy, he also hit her."</i></p> |
| <b>Child Custody Issues</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children only bear name of father</li> <li>• Father must authorize children to leave the country</li> </ul> | <p><i>"I birthed my son here, and immediately took him to Colombia because if not, the father would not have let me keep my son."</i></p>  |

### Root Causes of Violence

In both the interviews with stakeholders and the focus groups with migrant women, participants were asked about the root causes of GBV in Guyana. There were similar patterns found in both the interviews and the focus groups.

**Table 5**

|                             | <b>Stakeholder Interviews</b>  | <b>Focus Groups with Migrant Women</b>  |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Most Common Response</b> | <p>Gender Roles and Toxic Masculinity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforced by society and family</li> <li>• Male privilege</li> <li>• Tolerance of violence in relationships</li> <li>• Perpetrated by popular culture</li> <li>• Don't take "back chat" from a woman</li> <li>• Women perpetuate gender roles as well</li> <li>• "Someone has to be powerful and someone powerless"</li> </ul> | <p>Migrants are Seen as Competition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steal husbands</li> <li>• Steal jobs</li> <li>• Take over the country</li> <li>• Take oil</li> <li>• Take homes</li> </ul> |

|                                    |   |  |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Second Most Common Response</b> | <b>Conservative Norms</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guyanese dress conservatively</li> <li>• Venezuelans dress differently for attention</li> <li>• Venezuelan women seen as exotic</li> <li>• All Latinas are prostitutes</li> <li>• Guyanese are more reserved</li> </ul>  | <b>Cultural Differences and Normalized Violence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Venezuelan women dress differently</li> <li>• Language difference</li> <li>• Patriarchal Society in Guyana</li> <li>• Racism</li> <li>• Corporal Punishment in schools</li> </ul> |
| <b>Third Most Common Response</b>  | <b>Early Childhood Experiences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Dad was abusive to my mom, and I hated him, but as I grew, I found that I was the same man that I hated”</li> <li>• Girls taught to be wives and mothers</li> <li>• Seeing violence as learned behavior</li> <li>• Not able to deal with/unpackage experiences from their childhood</li> </ul> | <b>Parenting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children taught different values than in Venezuela</li> <li>• Children repeat actions of parents</li> <li>• Teach traditional gender roles in Guyana</li> <li>• Fathers teach sons to treat women poorly</li> </ul>  |

When stakeholders were asked what they think can be done to shift these harmful norms, the most common response was parenting/teaching children from a young age. Children need to be socialized from a young age, in both formal and informal education, in order to change gender norms and toxic masculinity— “we have to raise men to accept strong women.” Mental health resources also need to be provided for children and families so they can address their experiences witnessing violence in the home. This approach focuses on the root causes of violence and therefore the prevention of GBV.

Several stakeholders also mentioned the importance of involving men and providing services for perpetrators of violence. Currently, there are few services for perpetrators of violence, but “if you are going to spend resources on making women safe, you have to work with the men. Women go back to men, and men had no intervention.” Men need to be involved, take accountability for their actions, and examine their ideas of masculinity.

### **Barriers to Services and Rights**

In order to validate the desk research findings regarding barriers to services and rights, in interviews with stakeholders, they were asked what barrier to services or rights was the most important to address in the short-term. The most common response was ensuring migrants are aware of and understand Guyanese culture, their rights, and what resources are available to them. Essentially, migrants need assistance in knowing what to expect and acclimatizing them to Guyana. Topics mentioned include:

- Awareness around being scammed for documents that are free
- A package or flier on what to expect
- Possible challenges they may face
- How migrant women are seen by Guyanese men
- Guyanese cultural norms
- The effects of how they dress
- Their rights as a migrant
- GBV services available
- Among others

Several respondents also mentioned the importance of helping migrants obtain legal status in the country and ensuring the proper protection mechanisms for their basic human rights. Ensuring that migrants are granted legal status is critical, because “persons that do not have a regular status will not access services and become invisible. When they are invisible, they become vulnerable.” CSOs can play an important role in helping migrants renew their documents—especially since their movement is restricted and documents must be renewed in Georgetown.

Lastly, stakeholders discussed the importance of providing services in remote areas. Stakeholders recognized the limited nature of services in remote regions, but the high need for GBV services, specifically since the majority of migrants are living in remote areas where many women are working in the mines or as sex workers.

When migrants were asked about their knowledge of services available, it was clear that they either did not know about services that were available or that they thought there are very few services, little help, and nowhere to go when treated poorly. Many also mentioned that services were scarce in remote regions outside of Georgetown. Several shared frustrations about learning that some services, particularly shelters, are restricted to victims of GBV, alluding to the fact that services are available to women only once they are faced with extreme hardship, and not when women need assistance with settling and assimilating into Guyanese society. Focus group participants were then asked what types of services they would like to have access to, which resulted in the following:

**Table 6**

| Type of Service Wanted  | Number of Instances Mentioned |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Assistance with Getting or Renewing Legal Documents   | 5                             |
| Help Finding a Job or Trainings/Classes to Learn Skills that Will Allow them to Obtain Jobs or Start their Own Business | 5                             |
| Translation Services or English Classes   | 4                             |
| Activities to Help Guyanese be More Open, Receptive, and Respectful of Venezuelans                                      | 4                             |
| Human Rights Protection   | 3                             |
| Medical or Mental Health Services (Wellness Checks, STI or HIV Screening, Psychosocial Support)                         | 3                             |
| Advertisements about Services Available   | 3                             |
| Child Care Services   | 1                             |
| Implement a Law to Protect Victims Who File a Report with Police on Harassment to Ensure Real Consequences              | 1                             |

### Current Policy Environment

Stakeholders were asked what the key challenges or barriers in implementing national policies on GBV were, given the decades of legislative commitments and policies to combat GBV. The main reason cited was a lack of political will. In fact, many stakeholders mentioned that Guyana has some of the most

*“Is there a will to combat GBV? Sometimes I wonder.”*



progressive laws in the world, but the government does not see the GBV problem as serious and does not have the will to follow-through. As mentioned above, there is a working group in place as part of the national GBV response; however, according to one stakeholder, there has not been a meeting held in over a year. For this working group to succeed, “it depends on who is in charge, their will power, and their connections.” In fact, according to many, the government is more concerned about leveraging the oil boom in Guyana to become “Dubai by 2025; therefore, priorities are not on the people.” In summary, the policies are helpful, but they require buy-in and political will, especially given implementation of these policies is a consistent challenge.

Another challenge mentioned was the lack of resources, human resources and capacity, and experts to implement these policies properly. According to one stakeholder, professional positions are not being filled at the Ministry of Human Services and Social Services (MHSSS). Furthermore, the judicial system is overwhelmed because there are only 10 judges for the entire country, and there

*“The system in Guyana is damaging and the country has lost track of humanity. Greed and power have trump basic human compassion.”*

are no judges focused on family affairs. Another stakeholder said, “our problem is human resources and capacity building to ensure the implementation of those laws.” Therefore, “it is not that the system isn’t working as it should, it is about the resource challenges, especially in terms of personnel.” Since there are not enough professionals at the government level, there is a heavy reliance on the religious community to combat this issue; however, this is not a unified way to address the issue of GBV.

Our findings also highlighted that the U.S Embassy in Georgetown is not prioritizing GBV perpetrated against VMW and has not strategized an implementation plan to spearhead policy change in the country.

When asked what is missing from the government framework, stakeholders highlighted the need for increased coordination and inclusion. The government needs a multi-faceted approach in order to focus on prevention at the national level. This multi-faceted approach must also be multi-disciplinary—meaning that buy-in from the justice sector, social services, civil society, UN agencies, and the government must be in place to address this issue. The government must also coordinate with and consult different communities and regions, ensuring the inclusion of both genders. The need for a public awareness campaign was also noted.

*“We need to deal with the situation, not just put out fires.”*

Finally, stakeholders were asked why the GPF is not adequately addressing the issue of GBV. The main reason cited was the lack of structure in regard to clear roles, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and proper accountability mechanisms. Currently, there are not enough personnel to provide a prudent response and there is “no clear idea of who should do what.” Additionally, the police force has developed SOPs but many of them are vague, and they do not speak to GBV at all or migrant women. The GPF must also streamline better pathways for referrals.

Another major challenge in addressing GBV in terms of the police is widespread impunity and indifference to the issue. According to one stakeholder, there are not many procedures put in place



and officers “jump over some procedures;” and, when police misbehave, “they are simply moved to another location and that is it.” Furthermore, police often collude with perpetrators; therefore, reports do not move forward, as things are pushed under the table. Police officers are often the perpetrators of violence themselves. Thus, when these sorts of reports are made, it is an “instance of the police investigating the police,” so nothing is likely to come of it. Police have also been found to sell travel permits to migrants—asking for \$400-\$500 USD. Migrants have noted the levels of impunity and indifference in the police force. In fact, migrants will often tell each other not to go to the police because they will not get a good outcome.

There is also a clear need for training and capacity building when it comes to GBV. Many trainings have been conducted; however, there is an institutional gap of retaining knowledge. When police officers leave, that institutional knowledge disappears. Therefore, consistent iterations of training are needed. Furthermore, new recruits and police immigration officers require training.

## V. Policy Options

Based on the key findings from our desk research, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups, the research team suggests the following policy options to be considered by CSOs, the GPF, and the GOG. After discussing each policy option, including the pros and cons, specific policy options will be recommended in the following section, including an implementation plan.

### Civil Society Organizations

#### **Provide Specialized Skills Trainings for VMW**

Currently, Venezuelan migrants have found that they cannot find jobs in the formal economy; and, the jobs they can find in the informal economy do not provide them with a livable wage. Furthermore, while CSOs may be providing various services to migrants, many migrants are

*“There aren’t many trainings that will help women learn a specialized skill that they can then master for employment.”*

unaware of these services, or they are not largely provided in regions outside of Georgetown. In focus group discussions, VMW, particularly those who are involved in sex work, strongly voiced the need for CSOs to provide skills trainings that will help them obtain jobs or start their own businesses. For this reason, it is essential for CSOs to develop training programs that will provide specialized skills for Venezuelan migrants that will allow them to have increased economic opportunities.

These programs should provide vocational skills courses that include hairdressing, sewing/tailoring, culinary skills, jewelry making, etc. These courses should be delivered by CSOs and local entrepreneurs and should be supplemented by trainings in budgeting, financial management, accounting skills, customer service, marketing, and digital literacy. It is important to provide these vocational skills courses to allow women to specialize in a skill that they could economically depend on, which will decrease the chances that they will turn to survival sex as a source of income. This would also promote coordination among CSOs and increase the awareness of services CSOs can provide to Venezuelan migrants.

By training VMW, CSOs can help assist women to enter the formal economy. Their inclusion in the formal work force would improve economic development and increase overall female labor force participation. This would also allow women to find new jobs for economic stability and give them alternatives to sex work. However, implementing a program that provides skills training could be expensive for CSOs to continually fund. As mentioned earlier, some CSOs have difficulty providing services in certain regions, and migrants are unaware of programs and services that exist; therefore, this policy option might be difficult for CSOs to implement in the interior hinterland regions of Guyana. Lastly, for this program to be effective, it would be beneficial for the trainings to be taught by local entrepreneurs with expertise in the various specific skills; thus, this option is dependent on staffing and resource availability.

### **Create a One-Month Program for Newly Arrived Migrants on Living in Guyana**

When migrants arrive in Guyana, they do not know what to do or where to go for help. They are unaware of where to register or get proper documentation, they do not understand their rights in Guyana, and they are not cognizant of proper social and cultural norms and etiquette; therefore, their inexperience and differing cultural norms clash with those in Guyana. This has created xenophobia amongst Guyanese citizens that manifests itself in harassment, bullying, and violence perpetrated against the incoming migrant population. It is evident from both stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions that migrants do not feel welcomed, respected, or valued. Thus, it is necessary to assist newly arrived migrants in acclimatizing to Guyana by creating and implementing a one-month program for newly arrived migrants.

This program should include various modules that cover important topics that help migrants understand what to expect in Guyana. First, the program should cover the process to register and renew documents, including what is needed from the migrants to complete this process. This will minimize the likelihood of them being scammed for documents that are free. Another module could discuss possible challenges migrants may face in Guyana, particularly female migrants, including how migrant women are seen by Guyanese men. It is also important to cover Guyanese social and cultural norms, particularly the conservative norms around dress and attire. This can assist migrants to assimilate better, understand the root causes of xenophobia, and ideally limit harassment and bullying. Another module should discuss their rights as a migrant in Guyana and lastly, what services are available, particularly GBV services—ensuring increased knowledge. All this information should be made widely available in Spanish. Migrants could attend these awareness sessions over the course of a month in order to better acclimatize to Guyana.

Implementing this program will facilitate migrant assimilation and integration, increase migrants' understanding of their rights and situational awareness, improve knowledge and access to services, and provide migrants with realistic expectations on living in Guyana. Ultimately, this program would minimize vulnerability to harassment and violence. However, implementing this program would require a constant source of funding, including possible incentives for migrant participation. This program could be time-consuming for CSOs that have other programs and responsibilities, and there is a possibility that migrants would not be receptive to a program like this.

## Guyana Police Force

### **Implement Annual Trainings on GBV and Vulnerable Populations**

The current trainings provided to officers in the GPF are not effective. In particular, GPF officers are not sufficiently trained on effective and proper responses to GBV and dealing with vulnerable populations. In 2009, the GPF did introduce a training module on domestic violence for its officers.<sup>53</sup> However, this training is outdated. Furthermore, as an effort to lower the rising rates of domestic violence and GBV in Guyana, the MHSSS implemented an initiative titled “COPSQUAD2000,” that trains police officers during a maximum of eight days on how to “deal with interrogation, assessment of safety, how to counsel and respond to people who come to make complaints, and how to write case reports” in relation to cases of domestic violence.<sup>54</sup> This initiative trained nearly 2000 members of the GPF, but the information taught in the trainings does not always trickle down to more junior members or officers stationed in remote outposts.

According to the GPF, when new recruits enter the Police Training School, they are trained for six months on “human rights, anger management, communication, computer training, self-defense, English, Spanish, first aid, basic policing in the different stages such as musketry and drill, progress stage, junior stage, traffic stage, crime stage and firearms.”<sup>55</sup> Currently, the trainings offered to new recruits do not specifically teach them how to deal with incidences of GBV. This is a major gap.

Therefore, it is essential for the GPF to develop a new annual training program that incorporates additional information on how to deal with incidences of GBV and how to help vulnerable populations—specifically youth, women, and migrants. The training should provide information on GBV prevention, response, investigation, victim identification, and referral procedures, so that police responses are rights-based, gender-responsive, and trauma-informed. This training would be most effective if the duration of the training would take place over the course of one week, and it should be offered and available for members of the police force at least three times a year, for scheduling flexibility. To ensure knowledge retention, members of the police force should retake this training every two years. Furthermore, new recruits entering the GPF should take this training within their first six months of duty, in order to equip them with the necessary capacity to deal with cases of GBV.

This training will improve law enforcement through police professionalization, anti-corruption efforts, and community-based policing. This policy will also help police officers to better serve vulnerable populations, including VMW and victims of GBV. However, implementing a new training program would require buy-in from the GOG. There will be a presidential election in 2025. If a new administration should be elected, their national priorities may not be in line with our suggested policy option. Furthermore, there might be push back on this policy option as it will be expensive to provide these trainings across the ten regions of Guyana. Lastly, implementing an effective training program would require subject matter experts that have the necessary capabilities to teach on law enforcement and GBV; therefore, this policy option is dependent on staffing and resource availability.

### **Establish Clear Accountability Mechanisms and Disciplinary Procedures**

Currently, the GPF has weak transparency and accountability mechanisms, which has allowed for members of the police force to bend rules and mismanage their authority. Based on our interviews with stakeholders and the focus groups with migrants, there are many cases in which members of the GPF are the perpetrators of GBV and who then use their authority and power over their victims. Some interviewees and participants shared stories about victims of GBV seeking out assistance from the GPF, only to be re-victimized by police officers. Many of these stories, that go unreported or are not publicly announced on social media or in newspapers, are never investigated due to embedded corruption within the force. Other stakeholders highlighted that perpetrators bribe members of the GPF to have their accusations of GBV removed and be unreported. Currently, when reports against members of the GPF are filed, the Commissioner is the sole authority for initiating investigations into the misconduct. This investigative function is highly centralized, slow, and has a high volume of complaints. Therefore, the current system of filing complaints has not deterred policemen from acting with impunity.

Therefore, it is necessary to establish clear accountability mechanisms and disciplinary procedures in the GPF. This policy option would establish a system of internal and external checks and balances for the GPF to ensure that police members carry out their duties properly as it relates to GBV-related situations and are held responsible if they fail to do so. This policy also includes establishing standard operating procedures (SOPs) on GBV for law enforcement and a complaints system for the public to report misconduct against members of the police.

This policy option would create a system that will ensure that the police are held accountable for their misbehavior. This would uphold police integrity, deter misconduct, and improve public confidence in the GPF. This option will also provide the public with a complaint system that will allow them to report incidents that will be investigated; and, if action is warranted, then these allegations will be referred to for criminal prosecution. Moreover, this would ensure that police officers are aware and understand the proper ethical conduct that is expected in this line of duty, and it would prevent more women who are victims of GBV from being re-victimized by members of the GPF. It would also allow women to take the necessary steps to report and prosecute their abusers. However, implementing clear accountability mechanisms and disciplinary procedures would be a challenge due to a lack of follow-through. While these mechanisms and procedures could be put in place, it is uncertain whether corruption will still hinder the impact of these systems.

## **Government of Guyana**

### **Strengthen Immigration Regulations and Procedures**

The current immigration system is not effective—it is paper-based and therefore slow and unreliable, and it is unable to properly track the influx of migrants into the country. Furthermore, it is not providing migrants with the status and support they need to assimilate, there are insufficient immigration centers in remote regions, and the process to renew documents is lengthy and difficult. It is clear from both the interviews with stakeholders and the focus groups with migrants that obtaining legal status is challenging and limits their ability to enter the formal economy, which in turn increases their vulnerability to various forms of violence. Therefore, it is essential for the GOG to improve immigration regulations and procedures.

This includes digitizing the system for faster, more efficient processes and better data collection and analysis. This also includes extending temporary stay permits to limit the need to renew documents—therefore ensuring migrants do not lose legal status and become invisible. The GOG should also build immigration centers in each region, therefore reducing the need to travel to Georgetown to renew documents. Given the restrictions on migrants' movement, this is an essential service. Additionally, when migrants are initially registered and given temporary stay permits, they should also immediately be given work permits. This will provide migrants, particularly women, with increased economic opportunities, preventing exploitation and reducing the likelihood that they will turn to survival sex. Lastly, the GOG should establish an agency to screen migrants, victims of trafficking, and other individuals arriving in Guyana who may need protection and assistance, to ensure they are referred to the correct services to address their needs.

Implementing this policy option will allow the GOG to better track the influx of migrants and reduce processing time; services will be more accessible to migrants and will allow them to contribute to and improve Guyana's GDP; and it is a long-term solution to a situation that is not predicted to end soon. However, strengthening the immigration system will be lengthy and require political buy-in from decision-makers, which may be difficult to obtain. Decision-makers may push back against this policy option as it will be expensive to obtain the proper technology and software to digitize the system; and, building various immigration centers will also be costly.

### **Implement Watchdog and Accountability Mechanisms**

Presently, the GOG is not prioritizing GBV—they do not see the problem as serious; they lack the political will to follow-through on commitments; implementing policies, procedures, and committees is a constant challenge; and there are no mechanisms in place to ensure the government is fulfilling its responsibilities. This has led to a huge breakdown in the political structure to prevent and respond to GBV on a national level, which creates distrust and prohibits the country's ability to approach this problem in a unified and coordinated manner. Therefore, it is critical to implement stringently enforced watchdog, accountability, and reporting mechanisms that identify breaches at the national level in regard to the GBV framework.

This involves incorporating various actors and levels of accountability including whistleblowers who expose violations; an inspector general or oversight committee that serves as a watchdog for government agencies; and civil society champions, to ensure the GOG is responding to its constituents. This would facilitate the prioritization of GBV in government institutions. This policy would also consist of designing disciplinary actions when there are breaches at the institutional level, therefore ensuring government officials are held accountable when they are not implementing GBV policies properly. Lastly, reporting mechanisms must be put in place to ensure transparency, increase political pressure to adhere to requirements, and provide accurate and timely accounts of the status and progress on this issue.

Implementing this policy option would ensure institutions are responsive to the needs of the people, improve political will, allow for improved implementation of GBV policies and commitments, hold government actors accountable when they are not compliant, and create a government worthy of the public's trust. However, implementing watchdog and accountability mechanisms requires buy-in, coordination, and engagement from all levels of society, which can be challenging. There may also be pushback from government officials who may not approve of

increased accountability. Lastly, even if accountability measures are created, they may not be implemented properly or consistently.

## **VI. Policy Recommendations and Implementation Plans**

### **Civil Society Organizations**

Due to limited funding, staff capacity, and resources, it is feasible for civil society organizations to implement only one of the policy options discussed above. It is recommended that they implement the one-month program for newly arrived migrants on living in Guyana.

#### **Create a One-Month Program for Newly Arrived Migrants on Living in Guyana**

This policy option is recommended as the pros outweigh the cons. It is essential to ensure that migrants are better assimilating into Guyanese society, especially given that the influx of migrants is not expected to decrease; and, strategies can be implemented to curtail the challenges of this policy option.

To implement this policy recommendation, the following steps are suggested: 1) Establish a CSO that will lead on this effort. It is recommended that the CSO chosen to lead this initiative has proven capacity to secure funding sources for programs such as this. The Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) and Catholic Community Charities are two possible options. 2) The lead CSO should select at least three other CSOs as a consortium to assist in this initiative. Each CSO can lead the implementation of this program for one quarter of each fiscal year. This will ensure that the time and resource burden does not fall to one CSO for implementation. Chosen CSOs should be from various regions in Guyana to ensure a wide reach for program implementation. 3) Each CSO should select or hire a staff member to lead this program. Ideally, this staff member would speak Spanish. 4) The consortium must secure funding for this program. It is recommended that the funding solicitation last at least five years. USAID and the U.S. State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) are two possible donors that commonly award programs of this length that could be approached for this initiative. 5) Design the modules for this awareness program. All modules should be created and available in Spanish. The modules that should be included are listed in the previous section. 6) Pilot the program to identify any challenges or course corrections needed. 7) Make any necessary adjustments to the program after conducting the pilot. 8) Create an awareness campaign to disseminate information about this new program, in order to roll it out nationwide. Information in Spanish could be posted in churches, shops, markets, etc., in addition to radio campaigns, TV commercials, and banners. 9) Partner with the Guyanese Immigration Department; when migrants are registered with the Immigration Department, they should be referred to this program. 10) Ensure each CSO has a physical space to conduct this program. 11) Ensure there are Spanish speaking staff who can deliver the workshops. 12) Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework to track program success and gaps. 13) Start implementation of this program. This initiative should begin immediately as it will take time to secure funding, find staff, create the project, and begin its implementation. This process should take no longer than 18 months.

## **Guyana Police Force**

It is recommended that the Guyana Police Force implement clear accountability mechanisms and disciplinary procedures. Implementing this policy option is important to address key gaps in the current policy response and will allow victims of GBV to file reports against their abusers.

### **Establish Clear Accountability Mechanisms and Disciplinary Procedures**

Considering the pros and cons for establishing clear accountability mechanisms and disciplinary procedures listed above, the policy option of establishing clear accountability mechanisms and disciplinary procedures is practical, actionable, innovative, and realistic for the GPF.

To implement this policy recommendation, the following steps are suggested: 1) Establish an oversight committee or office that consists of five qualified individuals who are not political appointees. 2) This committee should then create clear accountability mechanisms and disciplinary procedures that will be enforced throughout the GPF. For example, mechanisms should include holding members of the police force accountable for taking bribes from GBV perpetrators and in instances where they themselves are the perpetrators of GBV. We recommend that the committee work on revisiting and establishing new rules of integrity and codes of conduct that underpin an effective legitimate police service. We also recommend that revised or new disciplinary procedures be instituted that include fines, suspensions, and expulsions for those police officers who commit offenses. 3) The committee should develop clear SOPs that speak to GBV and migrants. 4) Establish a new complaints system for the public to report misconduct to this committee. This would deter investigations to be centralized in the Commissioner's office. 5) Pass whistleblower protection legislation to ensure protection of the individuals who file complaints. 6) Provide training to the current and incoming members of the GPF on the accountability mechanisms and disciplinary procedures. This should be done bi-annually for current members of the force, and it should be incorporated in the training provided to new recruits in the Guyana Police Academy. These steps should be carried out as soon as possible; this implementation process should take no longer than 1 year.

## **Government of Guyana**

It is recommended that the GOG implement both policy options provided above. Both strengthening the immigration system and implementing accountability mechanisms are critical to address key gaps in the current policy response and the root causes of GBV perpetrated against VMW that were highlighted and stressed during interviews and focus group discussions.

### **Strengthen Immigration Regulations and Procedures**

Despite the need to update and upgrade the immigration system in the various ways discussed above, it is not practical, realistic, or feasible to carry out this policy option in its entirety. Therefore, it is recommended that the GOG both extend temporary stay permits and provide temporary work permits to migrants upon registration. These two actions will strengthen the immigration system in a feasible and affordable way that will still address the root causes of violence.



In order to implement this policy, the following steps are recommended: 1) Create a task force within the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to champion this effort and carry out the necessary steps. 2) Determine the new length for temporary stay permits—at least one year is recommended. 3) Develop the work permit document. This permit should also last one year. 4) Establish the application and registration process for work permits; this includes determining what, if anything, is needed from migrants. It is recommended that this process mirror the registration process for temporary stay permits. 5) Deliver new temporary stay permit documents, work permit documents, and corresponding registration process to the Chief Immigration Officer (Commissioner of Police) and Deputy Chief Immigration Officer for approval. 6) Upon approval, regularize new temporary stay and work permits nationally. 7) Train necessary immigration officers on the application and registration process for temporary stay permits and work permits. 8) When migrants are found and taken to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, they should each be assisted in applying for and receiving temporary stay permits and work permits. These steps should be carried out as soon as possible; this process should take no longer than 9 months.

### **Implement Watchdog and Accountability Mechanisms**

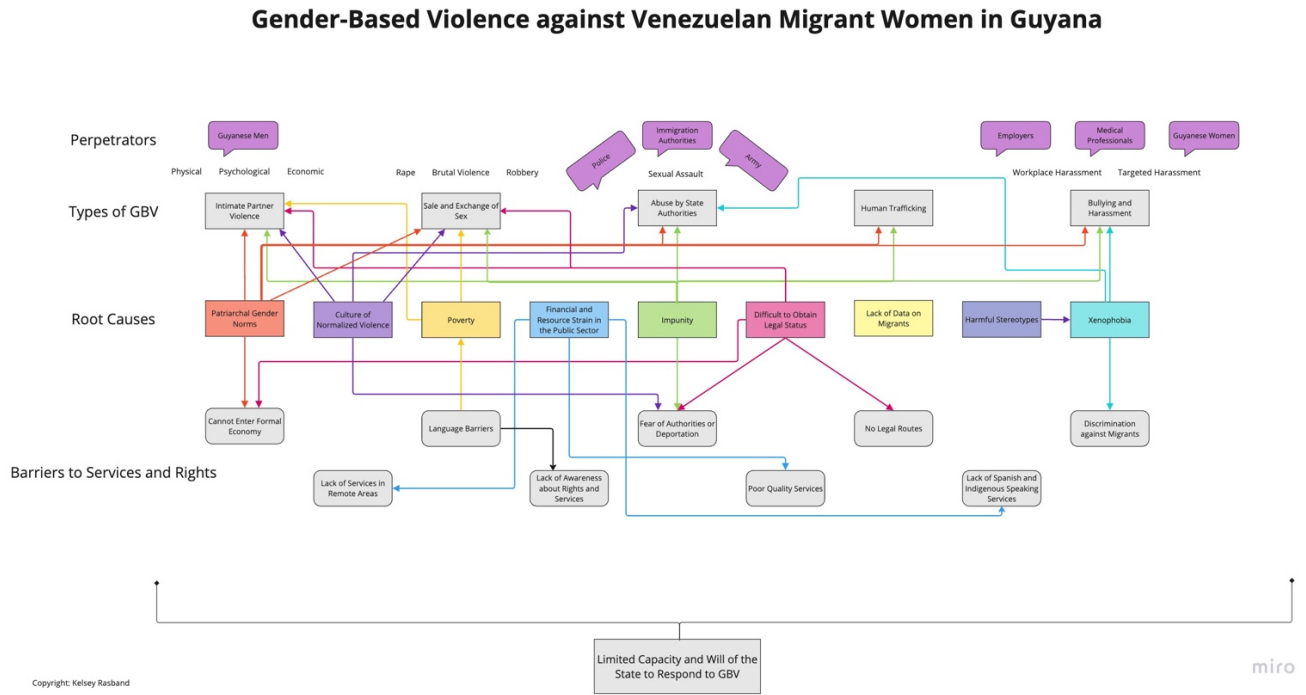
Taking into account the pros and cons for implementing watchdog and accountability mechanisms listed above, this policy option is both practical, realistic, and feasible for the government; and, it will address critical gaps in the current policy response. To implement this policy option, the following steps are recommended: 1) Establish an oversight office that consists of 3-4 qualified individuals. 2) Government stakeholders and civil society stakeholders should hold consultations to determine where the best place for this office is. Possible options include a parliamentary entity, in the President's Office, or some other existing government entity that does oversight like the Ministry of Finance. 3) Train these individuals on serving as a watchdog for government agencies, in addition to the task forces, committees, and other units specified in *Table 2*. This training should be carried out by an international body—preferably the United Nations. 4) The oversight office, with international assistance, should design disciplinary actions and processes for breaches in compliance. 5) Then, the office should create reporting mechanisms and processes; and, determine how often reports should be completed. It is recommended that reports be conducted at least annually. 6) Obtain parliamentary approval for disciplinary actions and processes and reporting mechanisms and processes. 7) Select CSOs to act as champions for this initiative—NCC Guyana is a recommended organization to lead this effort and select other CSO champions. 8) CSO champions, in partnership with the oversight office, could conduct a social media campaign on how the Guyanese community can act as whistleblowers to expose violations or lack of implementation from government agencies and actors. These steps should be carried out as soon as possible; this process should take no longer than 1 year.

If these policy recommendations are taken into consideration and implemented according to the steps provided in the implementation plans, Guyana will greatly strengthen its prevention and response to GBV perpetrated against VMW, ultimately decreasing instances of violence perpetrated against this population.



## Appendix

### A. Guyana GBV Conceptual Framework



### B. Guyana's Performance on Women Peace and Security Indicators

| Guyana's Performance on Women Peace and Security Indicators   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Category  | Measurement |
| Education (Years)   | 8.9         |
| Financial Inclusion (%)   | 59.3%       |
| Employment (%)  | 35.7%       |
| Parliamentary Representation (%)  | 35.7%       |
| Discriminatory Norms (%)  | 13.8%       |
| *Percentage of men ages 15 and older who disagree with the proposition: "It is perfectly acceptable for any woman in your family to have a paid job outside the home if she wants one." |             |
| Intimate Partner Violence (%)   | 10%         |
| Perception of Community Safety (%)  | 51%         |

### C. Organizations and Service Providers

| Organizations and Service Providers     |  |
|---|--|
| UN Agencies and Initiatives             |  |
| Name                                    | Services Offered   |
| Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) | Support various initiatives to promote gender equality, child protection, and female empowerment |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Spotlight Initiative                                  | Aims to address the root causes of violence, prevention of family violence and school-based violence, institutional strengthening   |
| United Nations Development Program (UNDP)             | Support various initiatives to promote gender equality, child protection, and female empowerment  |
| United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)                | Supports work to address GBV at the national level, policy analysis, provides resources and funds to organizations, training for CSOs, training for police force  |
| United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) | Food and hygiene kits, helps register migrants to receive and extend entry permits, mental health, psychosocial support for GBV survivors   |
| United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)               | Support various initiatives to promote gender equality, child protection, and female empowerment, system strengthening, capacity building   |
| UN Women  | Support various initiatives to promote gender equality, child protection, and female empowerment, monitor gender-related progress on SDGs, developing legislation and tools to address GBV  |
| World Health Organization (WHO)                       | Support various initiatives to promote gender equality, child protection, and female empowerment  |
| <b>International Organizations</b>                    |   |
| International Organization for Migration              | Refer cases to Help & Shelter, collaborate with partners, case management, legal accompaniment, psychosocial support, safe shelter, resources for Venezuelan migrants to pay rent, economic empowerment courses, skills training for survivors of GBV and TIP |
| Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP)   | Advocate for reform in GBV laws and push the government to bolster capacity to deal with GBV cases  |
| <b>Local Organizations</b>                            |   |
| Blossom Inc   | Emergency assistance services, support group sessions for sex workers, safe shelter   |
| Catholic Charities of Guyana                          | Shelter, counselling, translation services, legal assistance, food assistance, rent assistance, money for utility bills, online English classes, small business grants  |
| Guyana Legal Aid Clinic                               | Legal representation for migrants in the Magistrate and High Courts, primary agency for handling applications to the magistrates' courts for Protection Orders  |
| Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA)      | Advocate for reform in GBV laws and push the government to bolster capacity to deal with GBV cases, psychosocial counselling, SRH services  |
| Guyana Sex Work Coalition (GSWC)                      | On-the-ground support work for VMW—focusing on the sale and exchange of sex, counselling, HIV education and prevention, HIV testing, life skills training   |
| Guyana Women Miners Organisation                      | Victim rescue, counselling, court support   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) Guyana                | GBV case management, mental health, psychosocial support (individual counselling and support groups), emergency assistance services, help migrants navigate legal system, livelihoods program                             |
| Help & Shelter  | Counselling services; shelter; help victims/survivors navigate police, legal, and health systems; work with perpetrators of violence; social norms change; personal development enhancement                               |
| Hope For All  | Community-based health and social services, educational programs, HIV focus, family planning, SRH services  |
| NCC Guyana  | Work to create a national referral pathway and GBV resource directory, free one-stop shop, advocacy and communication campaigns, community center   |
| Pan American Development Foundation (PADF)                | English classes, training GPF to improve response to vulnerable populations, WASH, provide access to protection mechanisms, education opportunities, sustainable livelihoods skills training, support migrant integration |
| Red Thread  | Community-level education about GBV, help victims/survivors navigate legal services, case management  |
| Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Adventures      | Specialized SRH services and GBV  |
| Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD) | Legal services to document human rights abuses, paralegal services, access to psychosocial counselling  |
| United Bricklayers  | GBV case management, psychosocial support   |
| Voices Gy   | Livelihood program—small business and entrepreneurship opportunities, ESL courses   |

#### **D. Focus Group Discussion Questions in English**

1. Can you tell us a little bit about the experiences of being a woman migrant here in Guyana?
2. Why did you decide to migrate to Guyana?
3. We are specifically interested in understanding a bit more about women's experiences of violence here in Guyana. Are there any patterns you know about or stories you've heard that you'd like to share with us?
  - 3a. What other types of violence and abuse do you think exist towards migrant women?
4. Why do you think that this violence takes place here in Guyana?
5. What sorts of gender-based violence or violence against women services do you know about that exist here in Region [1,7 & 8]? For example, do you know about any shelters, programs for migrant women, access to benefits, access to legal support, access to psychological support, etc.?

6. How easy or difficult is it to access these services?
7. What sorts of GBV services do you think are missing or would you like to have access to?

#### **E. Focus Group Discussion Questions in Spanish**

1. ¿Pueden contarnos un poco sobre las experiencias de ser una mujer migrante aquí en Guyana?
2. ¿Porque decidiste emigrar a Guyana?
3. Nosotras estamos interesadas en entender sobre las experiencias de violencia de las mujeres aquí en Guyana. ¿Hay algún patrón que conozcan o historias que hayan escuchado que quieran compartir con nosotras?
  - 3a. ¿Qué otros tipos de violencia y maltrato creen que existen hacia las mujeres migrantes?
4. ¿Por qué cree que esta violencia existe aquí en Guyana?
5. ¿Qué tipo de servicios de violencia de género o violencia contra la mujer conoce que existen aquí en esta región? Por ejemplo, conocen algún albergue, o programa para mujeres migrantes que dan información sobre cómo tener acceso a beneficios, apoyo legal, o apoyo psicológico?
6. ¿Qué tan fácil o difícil es acceder a estos servicios?
7. ¿Qué tipo de servicios para mujeres víctimas de la violencia de género cree que faltan o a los que le gustaría tener acceso?

#### **F. Interview Questions**

1. Could you describe your organization and its work?
2. What is your role in XXX organization?
3. What is your knowledge of the government's policies to combat GBV in Guyana?
4. Despite decades of legislative commitments and policies to combat GBV by Guyana's government, GBV rates in Guyana are still above the global average. What do you believe have been the key challenges or barriers in implementing these national policies?
5. What do you think is missing from the government's framework to combat GBV?
6. According to our background research on this issue, one of the root causes of violence against women in Guyana are the culturally deep-rooted beliefs, practices, and attitudes about gender. Do you agree that deep-rooted cultural beliefs are one of the root causes of this violence? Why or not?
  - a. What do you think can be done to shift these norms?
  - b. What other factors drive or influence patterns of GBV?

7. VMW face many barriers in accessing essential services, particularly GBV services. What is the most critical barrier to address in the short-term?
  - a. How it can be addressed?
8. Do you know of other organizations in Guyana that provide services that prevent or respond to GBV that we could interview?
9. Do individuals need to have legal documentation in order to receive assistance from the police?
10. What mechanisms are in place to ensure perpetrators of intimate partner violence are held accountable for their actions?
11. What accountability standards or SOPs are in place for perpetrators of violence within the police force?
12. What more do you think could be done so that the GPF has more resources to address issues of gender-based violence?

#### **G. Region 2, 5, and 6 Focus Group Data Combined**

| <b>Experience as a Woman Migrant</b>   |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <b>Code</b>  | <b># of Instances</b> |
| Not Paid Fairly/Exploitation/Hard to Find Jobs   | 25                    |
| Discrimination/Treat us Bad/Disrespect   | 25                    |
| Survival/Life is Hard  | 21                    |
| Violence (murder, rape, false accusations, humiliation, hit, bullied, police ask for bribes, sent to jail) | 7                     |
| Free Education   | 6                     |
| Verbal Abuse   | 3                     |
| Send Remittances   | 3                     |

| <b>Why Migrate to Guyana?</b> |                       |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Code</b>                   | <b># of Instances</b> |
| <b>Work Opportunity/Money</b> | 8                     |
| Not Want to Go to Colombia    | 6                     |
| Geographically Close          | 4                     |
| Education for their Kids      | 3                     |
| Had Connections               | 2                     |

| Experience with Violence                      |                |
|---|----------------|
| Code  | # of Instances |
| <b>Violence on the Job</b>                    | 19             |
| Physical Violence                             | 17             |
| Sexual Violence                               | 16             |
| Police Violence/Discrimination                | 13             |
| Medical Professionals Violence/Discrimination | 8              |
| Verbal Abuse                                  | 6              |
| IPV   | 4              |
| Bullying/Violence in Schools                  | 4              |
| Child Custody Issues                          | 4              |
| Exploitation                                  | 1              |

| Why Violence in Guyana?   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Code  | # of Instances |
| <b>Seen as Competition (husbands, jobs, food, country)</b>                          | 11             |
| Normalized Violence   | 10             |
| Cultural Differences (dress, language, skin color, xenophobia, patriarchal culture) | 10             |
| Parenting   | 7              |
| Closed Minded/Poorly Educated   | 5              |

| Knowledge of Existing Services   |                |
|--|----------------|
| Code   | # of Instances |
| <b>Services (SRH services, trainings on establishing business, handing out essential items, translation, food assistance, temporary housing in hotels, shelters, help enroll kids in school, wellness checks, help file reports w/ police, translation, GBV)</b> | 13             |
| Little Help/Services   | 7              |
| Don't Know About Services  | 6              |
| Services Not Available in Every Region   | 3              |

| Missing Services           |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Code                       | # of Instances |
| <b>Document Assistance</b> | 5              |

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Finding a Job/Skills to Obtain a Job | 5 |
| Help Guyanese be Open/Receptive      | 4 |
| Translation Services/English Classes | 4 |
| Medical Services/Mental Health       | 3 |
| Human Rights Protection              | 3 |
| Advertisements about Services        | 3 |
| Law to Protect Victims Who Report    | 1 |
| Child Care                           | 1 |

## H. Region 2 Focus Group Data

| Experience as a Woman Migrant                         |                |
|---|----------------|
| Code  | # of Instances |
| <b>Not Paid Fairly/Exploitation/Hard to Find Jobs</b> | 14             |
| Discrimination/Treat us Bad/Disrespect                | 10             |
| Survival/Life is Hard                                 | 5              |
| Free Education  | 4              |
| Violence (murder, rape, false accusations)            | 3              |
| Verbal Abuse  | 2              |
| Send Remittances                                      | 1              |

| Why Migrate to Guyana?        |                |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Code                          | # of Instances |
| <b>Work Opportunity/Money</b> | 5              |
| Not Want to Go to Colombia    | 4              |
| Geographically Close          | 3              |
| Education for their Kids      | 3              |

| Experience with Violence                      |                |
|---|----------------|
| Code  | # of Instances |
| <b>Police Violence/Discrimination</b>         | 5              |
| Violence on the Job                           | 3              |
| Verbal Abuse                                  | 2              |
| Sexual Violence                               | 2              |
| Physical Violence                             | 2              |
| Medical Professionals Violence/Discrimination | 2              |
| IPV   | 1              |

| Why Violence in Guyana?                             |                |
|---|----------------|
| Code  | # of Instances |
| Seen as Competition (husbands, jobs, food, country) | 5              |
| Normalized Violence                                 | 2              |
| Cultural Differences (dress)                        | 1              |

| Knowledge of Existing Services   |                |
|--|----------------|
| Code   | # of Instances |
| Services Not Available in Every Region                                     | 2              |
| Services (help file reports w/ Police, translation services, GBV services) | 2              |
| Little Help/Services   | 1              |
| Don't Know About Services  | 1              |

| Missing Services                     |                |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Code                                 | # of Instances |
| Document Assistance                  | 2              |
| Translation Services/English Classes | 1              |
| Human Rights Protection              | 1              |

## I. Region 5 Focus Group Data

| Experience as a Woman Migrant                           |                |
|---|----------------|
| Code  | # of Instances |
| Discrimination/Treat us Bad/Disrespect                  | 14             |
| Not Paid Fairly/Exploitation/Hard to Find Jobs          | 8              |
| Survival/Life is Hard                                   | 8              |
| Violence (bullied, police ask for bribes, sent to jail) | 3              |
| Free Education  | 2              |
| Send Remittances  | 2              |
| Verbal Abuse  | 1              |

| Why Migrate to Guyana? |                |
|------------------------|----------------|
| Code                   | # of Instances |
| Work Opportunity/Money | 2              |
| Had Connections        | 2              |
| Geographically Close   | 1              |



|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Not Want to Go to Colombia | 1 |
|----------------------------|---|

| Experience with Violence                      |                |
|---|----------------|
| Code  | # of Instances |
| <b>Violence on the Job</b>                    | 14             |
| Physical Violence                             | 14             |
| Sexual Violence                               | 10             |
| Medical Professionals Violence/Discrimination | 6              |
| Bullying/Violence in Schools                  | 4              |
| Child Custody Issues                          | 4              |
| Police Violence/Discrimination                | 3              |
| IPV   | 2              |
| Verbal Abuse                                  | 2              |

| Why Violence in Guyana?  |                |
|--|----------------|
| Code   | # of Instances |
| <b>Cultural Differences (dress, language, skin color, xenophobia, patriarchal culture)</b> | 7              |
| Seen as Competition (husbands, jobs, food, country)  | 6              |
| Parenting  | 6              |
| Normalized Violence  | 5              |
| Closed Minded/Poorly Educated  | 5              |

| Knowledge of Existing Services   |                |
|--|----------------|
| Code   | # of Instances |
| <b>Services (SRH services, trainings on establishing business, handing out essential items, translation, food assistance, temporary housing in hotels, shelters, help enroll kids in school)</b> | 9              |
| Little Help/Services   | 5              |
| Don't Know about Services  | 4              |
| Services Not Available in Every Region   | 1              |

| Missing Services                            |                |
|---|----------------|
| Code  | # of Instances |
| <b>Translation Services/English Classes</b> | 3              |
| Help Guyanese be Open/Receptive             | 3              |

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Document Assistance                  | 2 |
| Medical Services                     | 1 |
| Finding a Job/Skills to Obtain a Job | 1 |
| Child Care                           | 1 |

## J. Region 6 Focus Group Data

| Experience as a Woman Migrant                  |                |
|--|----------------|
| Code   | # of Instances |
| Survival/Life is Hard                          | 8              |
| Not Paid Fairly/Exploitation/Hard to Find Jobs | 3              |
| Violence (rape, humiliation, hit)              | 1              |
| Discrimination/Treat us Bad/Disrespect         | 1              |

| Why Migrate to Guyana?     |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Code                       | # of Instances |
| Work Opportunity/Money     | 1              |
| Not Want to Go to Colombia | 1              |

| Experience with Violence       |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Code                           | # of Instances |
| Police Violence/Discrimination | 5              |
| Sexual Violence                | 4              |
| Violence on the Job            | 2              |
| Verbal Abuse                   | 2              |
| IPV                            | 1              |
| Physical Violence              | 1              |
| Exploitation                   | 1              |

| Why Violence in Guyana?   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Code  | # of Instances |
| Normalized Violence   | 3              |
| Cultural Differences (dress, language, skin color, xenophobia, patriarchal culture) | 2              |
| Parenting   | 1              |

| Knowledge of Existing Services |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Code                           | # of Instances |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Services (employment training, wellness checks) | 2 |
| Little Help/Services                            | 1 |
| Don't Know about Services                       | 1 |

| Missing Services                            |                |
|---|----------------|
| Code  | # of Instances |
| <b>Finding a Job/Skills to Obtain a Job</b> | 4              |
| Advertisements about Services               | 3              |
| Medical Services/Mental Health              | 2              |
| Human Rights Protection                     | 2              |
| Document Assistance                         | 1              |
| Help Guyanese be Open/Receptive             | 1              |
| Law to Protect Victims Who Report           | 1              |

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