POLICY REPORT ON THE INDIAN DIASPORA IN GUYANA

Government of the Republic of Guyana

KS ARAVINDHAAN

POLICY BRIEF

Policy Report on the Indian Diaspora in Guyana

INDIAN DIASPORIC NETWORK

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Policy Report on the Indian Diaspora in Guyana

Introduction

The Indian diaspora in Guyana represents one of the most significant and influential immigrant communities in history and development. Originating from the arrival of indentured labourers in the 19th century, Indo-Guyanese people have shaped Guyana's demographics, culture, politics and economy for nearly two centuries. They comprise around 40% of Guyana's population and have close cultural links to India.

This policy paper examines the Indian diaspora in Guyana's historical context, demographic patterns, cultural contributions, and current challenges. It attempts to give a thorough picture to support policy suggestions for the governments of Guyanese and India on how to interact with this group, improve bilateral ties, and aid in the socioeconomic advancement of Indo-Guyanese citizens.

Historical Background:

Impact of the French Revolution on British political and ideological.

The beginnings of the modern era of emigration in India are deeply rooted in the heart of the British colonial apparatus. It is linked not only to the economic conditions of the United Kingdom but also to the political and ideological discussions across Europe, especially in the UK. European settlers in Guyana recruited African slaves to work their plantations but in the late 1700s and early 1800s, particularly following the French Revolution, were marked by discussions on the concept of a liberal society in the UK and intense debates on the characteristics of a society after feudalism. This liberal framework advocated for governance by "free men" instead of the labour provided by slaves.

British Anti-Slavery Movement:


BRITISH RAJ FLAG

The British anti-slavery movement, led by figures such as Lord Gladstone and William Wilberforce, has been thoroughly examined and analysed, culminating in the passage of the Slavery Abolition Act in August 1833. Many of these liberated Africans then refused to work on the plantations so the planters were obliged to free 100,000 of their captive workers. Following the end of slavery in the British colonies sparked a significant debate on how to tackle the labour shortage issue; the colonial undertaking still required cheap labour to preserve the extensive territories around their colonies. The labour shortfall caused by the abolition of slavery needed to be addressed somehow by one means or another.

Rise of Indentured Labour

Planters began to recruit "indentured" workers to take their place. In fact, between 1838 and 1917, when the last large batch of these immigrants arrived, British Guyana took in more than 430,000 of these "colonists"—the majority coming from India, then the "Jewel in the Crown" of the British Empire. This gave the colonial governments the chance to rethink their relationship with their colonies and marked the emergence of indentured labour. This incident highlights the colonial British government's perspective on the emergence of indentured labour as a major change in labour dynamics in the world at that time." The shift from indentured labour to free labour in the colonies was identified as an experiment to see if the staple product of tropical countries could be produced as effectively and profitably by free labour as by slaves. The creation of contract law within a rational-legal bureaucracy led to numerous discussions on precisely what constituted "free labour," the movement of indentured labour laid the groundwork for the colonial project's civilising mission, based on liberal ideas of "free will." This period also saw the rise of the paternalistic migration state, with a complex bureaucratic system in place to assess the extent of "free will" among indentured labourers.

Slavery in Early Colonial Economies

Europeans began their acquisition of land which was previously owned by native people. First to arrive in Guyana, the Dutch called the region the "Wild Coast." The Portuguese to the east and the Spanish to the west regarded the region as uninhabitable for a variety of reasons, chief among them being the area's frequent flooding by saltwater, which rendered the land unsuitable for cultivation. By implementing a technique known as the polder drainage method, the Dutch immigrants transformed the "Wild Coast " and rendered it suitable for tobacco growing. Following a conflict between the Dutch and the British in 1781, the British took control of Guyana; however, the Dutch briefly recovered control when they allied with the French. Guyana was formerly possessed by Britain from 1831 until its independence in 1966

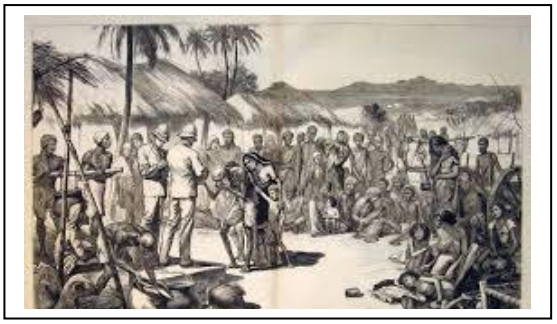
Colonial Civilising Mission

Over a century, the British separated millions of people from their native country. The colonists from Britain are liable for bringing labourers from India to the West Indies and settling them there. To replace the liberated African slaves on the sugar estates, these people—known as East Indians—were primarily hired for indentureship. Beginning in Guyana in 1838, the southern Caribbean region's indenture system ended in 1917. Throughout the indentureship era, an estimated 240,000 East Indians arrived in Guyana. predominate most of them were men This system lasted beyond the twentieth century and beyond. For hundreds of years many generations were isolated from their places of origin by the mass migration that the British colonists engineered. When the British government created indentured labour, many people joined for a number of reasons, some of which included wanting to flee their current situation for legal or personal reasons. individuals unable to rent property or find agricultural employment in this remote area, emigration was one of their limited options. Since the villages didn't often conduct recruitment, the emigrants had already moved

in quest of better opportunities. Rather than the population decline that was happening at the time, the significance of the floods and famines appears to have been in terms of individual disruption.

Long-term Effects on Labour Dynamics:

The challenges resulting from the overall increase in costs ran concurrently with the issues brought on by climatic variability and population expansion. The extension of the railway and the rise in agricultural output export prices, which was accompanied by an increase in the cost of imported commodities into the districts, were linked by certain officials to this. Even though the prices of imported goods were raised for everyone, some farmers were not able to profit from the increase in agricultural prices. This was due to two factors: either their creditors who dealt in grains controlled the prices of their produce, or they were too far away from the railheads to receive the export-influenced price for their produce. There was a lot of pressure on those who had to purchase both domestic and foreign items. The condition of tenants-at-will and subtenants in these districts was made more difficult by the price increase. Particularly if they belonged to the lowest castes, they paid rack rents and were frequently indebted. The farmer was forced to move as a result of this debt, which grew throughout times of famine, drought, and flooding. There weren't many alternative jobs available because the local economies relied mostly on agriculture. While it was evident that a system of recruitment was also required to enable the residents of these regions to depart, the people living there were facing hardships throughout the colonial recruiting period. Once recruiters saw positive outcomes from this method and some emigrants returned with tales of opportunities in the colonies, the system was probably going to be able to support itself.



Colonial Civilising Mission:

Britain was liable for bringing labourers from India to Guyana. commonly referred to as East Indians, were mostly hired for indentureship, serving as the liberated African slaves' replacements on the sugar estates. The indenture business was established in Guyana in 1838 and came to an end in the southern Caribbean in 1917. 240,000 East Indians are thought to have arrived in Guyana during the indentureship era. During those days, male East Indians made up 68% of the total, while female East Indians made up only 38%. Similar gender differences were observed in Guyana, where the main population was male. The catastrophic voyage taken by East Indians to leave their villages, socio-religious contexts, and familial bonds to cross the "seven seas" to Guyana (British Guiana) is summed up by the word "kala pani," which means "black waters." argued that another meaning of the phrase "kala pani" is "metaphor" for life on a sugar plantation. The Black Sea crossing was a belief shared by many emigrants that it would never bring them back to their homelands. The recruiters' deceptive tactics and the innocuous nature of the indentured labourers brought Indians to British overseas sugar estates. There was a lack of awareness among many immigrants about the distance between India and the Caribbean, the cultural adjustment they would have to make, and the possibility of being permanently cut off from their birthplace, caste, family, and society. This could be one interpretation of what the term "kala pani" means.

Social and Religious Impact on Indentured Labourers:

The recruiters created a strong belief system and outlined the advantages that they would gain from working in the plantation field. Up until 1917, a large number of immigrants boarded ships sailing towards Guyana. The Indians seemed to be convinced by the agents to board the ships and travel across the ocean. According to an emigrant agent's testimony, the Indians would not have travelled to the Caribbean if they had been aware of the kala pani. Bengal, Orissa, Punjab, Mumbai, and Uttar Pradesh accounted for a smaller portion of the East Indian population than Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The majority came from lower castes. University studies note that a larger proportion of Muslim women than Muslim men emigrated, and similarly, Brahmin women did the same. Due to the policy's mandate that women be recruited, recruiters received more money from women who joined the West Indies. Of the women that arrived, one-third were married, and the others were widowed, unmarried, or had fled their homes because of domestic issues. The East Indians belonged to the following religious groups: 83.6 percent Muslims, 16.3 percent Hindus, and around 1% Christians The language barrier was one of the immigrants' internal and external struggles. Indians in Guyana lost their language and created a single language of communication when they adopted a common dialect known as "plantation Hindustani." Plantation life can be compared to legal slavery, in which East Indians were granted minimal or no autonomy over their lives for the duration of the agreement. The Indian Immigration Ordinance ruled the majority of Indians' lives throughout the indentureship era. It was noted that the ordinance was consistently biased in favour of the plantation owners, who had complete control over the lives of the workers. Any type of socio-religious identity was strictly prohibited by British colonial policy in Guyana.

Post-Indentureship Era:

Following the end of the indentureship era, Indians were eventually granted the right to settle and acknowledged as citizens of the colony. The percentage of these indentured labourers who were not residing on the plantation rose to 34% in 1881 and 50% in 1921. The need to survive in a foreign environment caused the East Indians to adapt their worldview to the new circumstances. It is believed that Indians in British Guyana have evolved their religious customs from their homeland. She goes on to say that the limitations on practising Hinduism in British territory are the cause of this disparity. Hindus in Guyana adopted the altered religious rituals as new customs, which sparked the revival of Indian culture in the early 1900s. findings show that Hinduism in the Caribbean is different from Hinduism in India and can be considered a special variation of that faith. History demonstrates that the policies put in place to rule Guyana under European occupation gave preference to the ruling class as well as ignored the interests of the working class. British Guiana's colonial growth was significantly influenced by Britain. This era marked the British government's efforts, through the East India Company, to utilise the indentured system by sending workers from India initially to other British colonies. The abuses within the system were quickly recognized,

especially in contract enforcement and the first recorded legislation on Indian emigrant labour was the India Act V in May 1837.

This Act placed the Superintendent of Police at the main port of Calcutta (now Kolkata and India's capital at the time) in charge of indentured labourers, overseeing their identification, and belongings at the port, and ensuring they had accommodation on the ship .Thus, this period saw the emergence of the first "Emigration Agent," a role that was soon to be more clearly defined.In 1838, more reports emerged of the mistreatment and exploitation of Indian workers within the system, prompting the prohibition of labourers' movement to the colonies until a thorough investigation into their conditions in the colonies was conducted. This decision was formalised with the enactment of the India Act XIV on May 29, 1839. The India Act XV in 1842, however, introduced regulations and removed the ban on the emigration of Indian indentured labourers under the East India Company's control to Mauritius. This marked the first time that any laws mentioned the need for "Emigration Agents" at the main ports of Calcutta (now Kolkata), Bombay (now Mumbai), and Madras (now Chennai) to oversee the affairs of those intending to migrate.

Governance of Indentured Labour:

The prohibition on emigration to the colonies in the British West Indies was lifted with the India Act of XXI in 1843, but the only port of exit for these colonies remained Calcutta The emigration of indentured labourers continued under these fragmented governance structures throughout the following decades, with various issues arising concerning the transport of migrants from the countryside to the port, their accommodation at the port until their departure, and their journey to their final destinations. Eventually, the East India Company ceased to exist in 1857, and India was directly governed by the British Crown. It was during this time that the British signed agreements with France in 1861 and Denmark in 1863 for the transport of Indian indentured labourers to their colonies in the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean as well. These events led to the consolidation of the various laws related to emigration into the first Emigration Act, which was passed on March 18, 1864. Throughout this period, a total of nineteen different emigration-related laws were enacted between 1842 and 1864. The process of emigration required a more systematic and coherent approach to function effectively. This situation paved the way for the establishment of the first emigration state.In 1838, further reports of abuse and exploitation of Indian workers within the system led to the banning of 4,444 workers in the colonies pending a full investigation into the exact fate of workers in those colonies. This was brought into law with the passing of the India Act XIV on 29 May 1839.

Legal frameworks

Indian Act Indian contract workers came under the jurisdiction of the East India Company in Mauritius. This was the first time a regulation mentioned requiring “migration agents” at the major ports of Calcutta (now Kolkata), Bombay (now Mumbai) and Madras (now Chennai) to manage the affairs of those who come in the future. The ban was later lifted from the British West Indies colonies under the India Act XXI of 1843, however, the port of exit from these colonies was limited to Calcutta Migration of indentured labourers continued along these fractured lines of governance for consecutive decades with some problems associated with the transportation of migrants from the hinterland arrival at the port, their accommodation at the port until embarkation and their journey to their possible

destinations. Finally, the East India Company ceased to exist in 1857 and India came directly under the control of Great Britain. At this time, the British signed treaties with France in 1861 and with Denmark in 1863 to transport Indian indentured labourers to their colonies in the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean. These events led to the consolidation of various laws relating to migration into the First Emigration Law, passed on March 18, 1864. A total of 19 different laws relating to immigration were passed between 1842 and 1864. The migration process needs a more rational and coherent approach to work as intended This leads to the formation of the first iteration of the migratory state. Thus began the Indian exodus to British Guiana and the history of the Indo-Guyanese people.

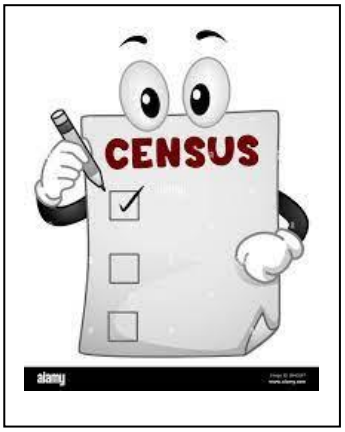
Demographic Analysis

Many Indians who had served five years on plantations in Guyana had no intention of staying. Between 1838 and 1917, it is estimated that 75,808 indentured servants returned to India. Scholarly findings indicate that many Indians who chose to re-emigrate to the British West Indies did so because they could not effectively reintegrate into Indian culture.

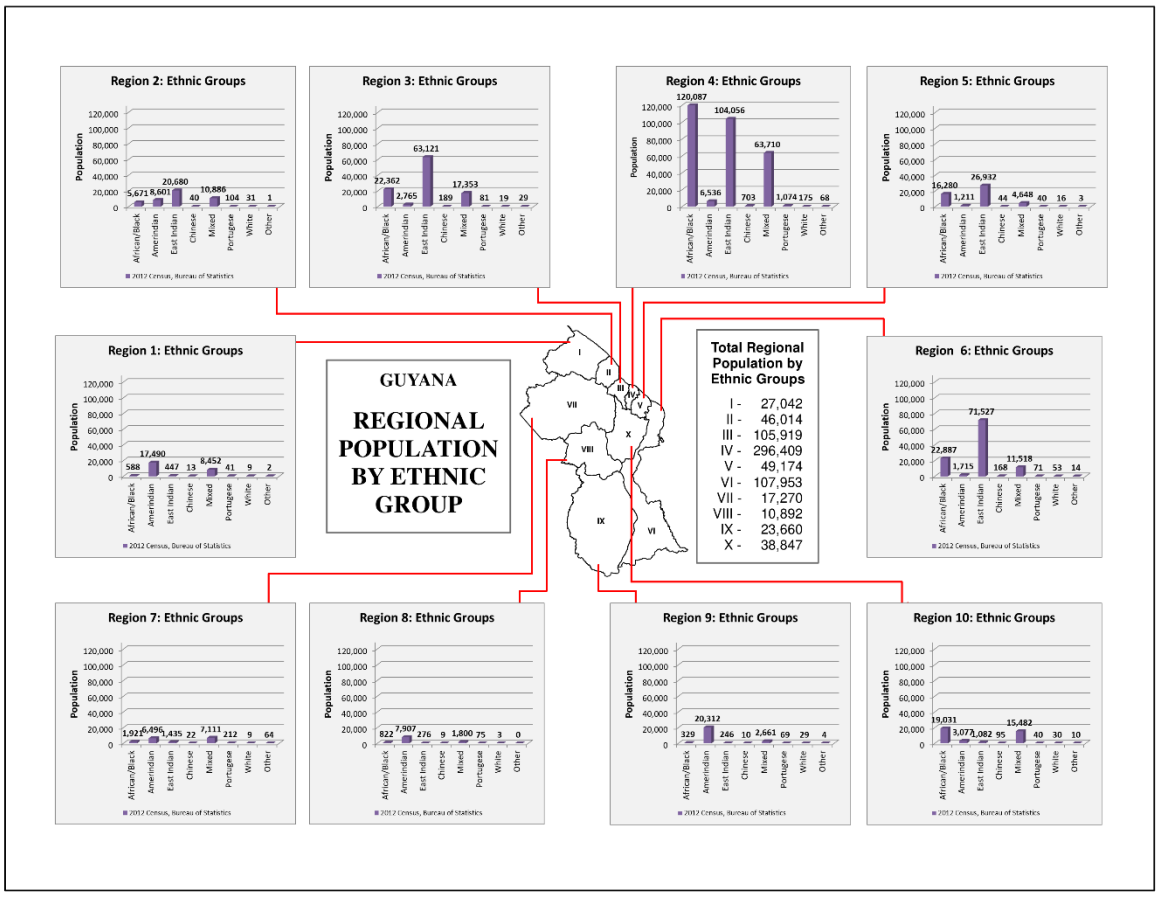
The ethnic variety of Guyana's population may be attributed to its six primary groupings: Amerindians, Africans, Indians, Europeans, Portuguese, and Chinese. The Indo-Guyanese group, who are descended from the initial indentured labourers, has had a major influence on the demographics of the nation. The biggest ethnic group in the nation, the Indo-Guyanese make up 39.8% of the population, according to the 2012 census. In comparison to earlier censuses, this shows a progressive decline:

Many reasons, such as emigration to the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, as well as shifting birth rates among various ethnic groups, might have contributed to this decline.

- Census 1946: 163,434 (43.5% of the total population)
- Census 1960: 267,840 (47.8%)
- Census 1980: 394,417 (51.9%)
- Census 1991: 351,939 (48.6%)
- Census 2002: 326,277 (43.4%)
- Census 2012: 297,493 (39.8%)



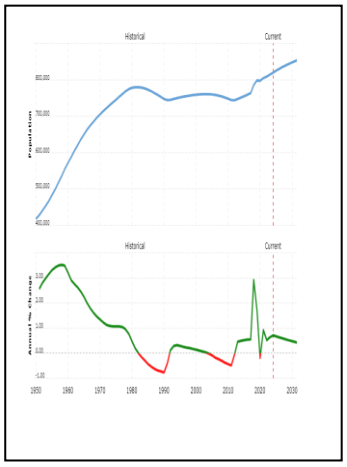
Approximately 1,500 Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and 320,000 Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) call Guyana home today, demonstrating the long-lasting impact of Indian culture in the nation. The bigger PIO group and NRIs, who are frequently more recent newcomers, combine to produce a dynamic interaction between traditional Indo-Guyanese culture and modern Indian influences



Population Dynamics and Demographic Structure in Guyana

The population of Guyana was 751,223 in 2002; by 2012, it had slightly decreased to 747,884, representing an annual negative growth rate of -0.04%. The population climbed to 804,567 by 2021. Two decades is the median age. In 2002, there were three age groups: 4.2% older than 65, 60.2% older than 15 and 35.6% less than 14 years old. These percentages were 33.6%, 62.1%, and 4.3%, respectively, by 2010.

Population Dynamics in Urban and Rural Areas



Georgetown and other metropolitan areas in Guyana had a population fall from 209,992 to 191,810 between 2002 and 2012, representing an annual negative growth rate of -0.87%. On the other hand, Rose Hall and New Amsterdam saw modest yearly growth rates of 0.59% and 0.17%, respectively. Due to migration to new housing developments outside of cities, there was a drop in the urban population, leaving 73.6% of people living in rural regions and 26.4% in urban areas.

Birth Rates and Fertility

Guyana's teenage birth rate, which was 67 per 1,000 females between the ages of 15 and 19, was expected to drop to 65 per 1,000 by 2024. With 32% of females getting married by the age of 18, child marriage is still a problem in 2023. These

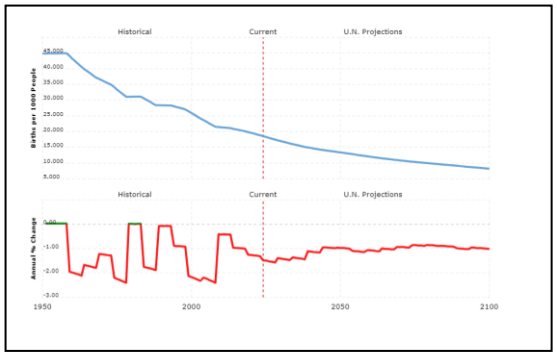
high rates of teenage pregnancies and early marriages are a reflection of larger socio-economic issues as well as restricted access to healthcare.

Participation in the Labor Force

In Guyana, women made up 39.6% of the workforce in 2023, while men made up 62.5%. Notwithstanding this disparity, women accounted for 45.9% of senior and intermediate management jobs in 2019 and 35.4% of seats in the national parliament in 2022, demonstrating a notable presence of women in leadership positions.

Demographic Trends and Gender-Based Challenges

The distribution of ages in Guyana has changed over time. 35.6% of the population was under 14 years old in 2002, 60.2% was between the ages of 15 and 64, and 4.2% was 65 and above. These percentages changed somewhat by 2010 to 33.6%, 62.1%, and 4.3%, respectively. The population's median age is 26 years and there are a lot of young people in the population. In Guyana, where 32% of girls marry before turning 18, child marriage is still a serious problem as of 2023.



Gender Parity and Education

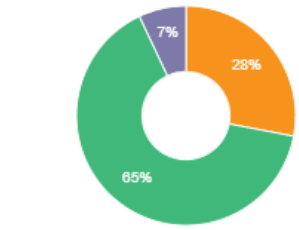
In Guyana, the percentage of people enrolled in school has been largely stable. Between 2017 and 2023, 83% of students enrolled in elementary and lower secondary education overall, while 62% of students enrolled in upper secondary education. For these levels, the gender parity index is 1, meaning that boys and girls have equal access to education. There has been progress towards gender parity in educational achievement as seen by the practically equal adult literacy rates between men and women.

Socio-Economic Status

Guyana - Overview

Population

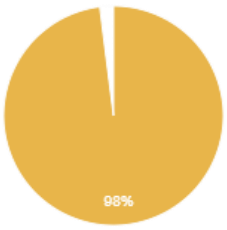
Population, by age group, per cent



Total population in millions, 2024:	0.8
Population annual doubling time, years, 2024:	101
Population aged 0-14, per cent, 2024:	28
Population aged 10-19, per cent, 2024:	18
Population aged 10-24, per cent, 2024:	27
Population aged 15-64, per cent, 2024:	65
Population aged 65 and older, per cent, 2024:	7
Total fertility rate, per woman, 2024:	2.3
Life expectancy at birth, years, 2024, male:	66
Life expectancy at birth, years, 2024, female:	73

Sexual and ReproductiveHealth

Births attended by skilled healthpersonnel, per cent, 2004-2020



Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births)[a], 2020:	112
Births attended by skilled health personnel, per cent, 2004-2020:	98
Range of MMR uncertainty (UI 80%), Lower estimate, 2020:	83
Range of MMR uncertainty (UI 80%), Upper estimate, 2020:	144
Laws and regulations that guarantee access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education, percent, 2022:	87
Number of new HIV infections, all ages, per 1,000 uninfected population, 2022:	0.6
Universal health coverage (UHC) service coverage index, 2021:	76

Family Planning

Proportion of demand satisfied withmodern methods, women aged 15-49, per cent, 2022

Contraceptive prevalence rate women aged 15-49, anymethod, per cent, 2024

All women:	30
Married or in union women:	39

Contraceptive prevalence rate women aged 15-49, modern method, per cent,2024

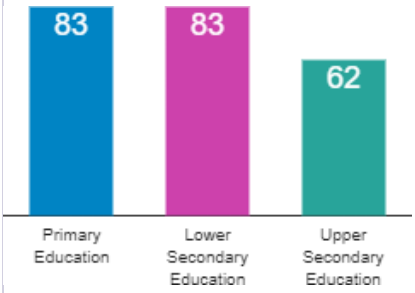
All women:	29
Married or in union women:	38

Unmet need for family planning rate women aged15-49, per cent, 2024

All women:	20
Married or in union women:	28
Proportion of demand satisfied with modern methods, women aged 15-49, per cent, 2024:	57

Education

Total net enrolment rate, percent



Total net enrolment rate, primary education, percent, 2017-2023:	83
Total net enrolment rate, lower secondary education, percent, 2017-2023:	83
Total net enrolment rate, upper secondary education, percent, 2017-2023:	62
Gender parity index, total net enrolment rate, primary education, 2017-2023:	1
Gender parity index, total net enrolment rate, lower secondary education, 2017-2023:	1
Gender parity index, total net enrolment rate, upper secondary education, 2017-2023:	1.1

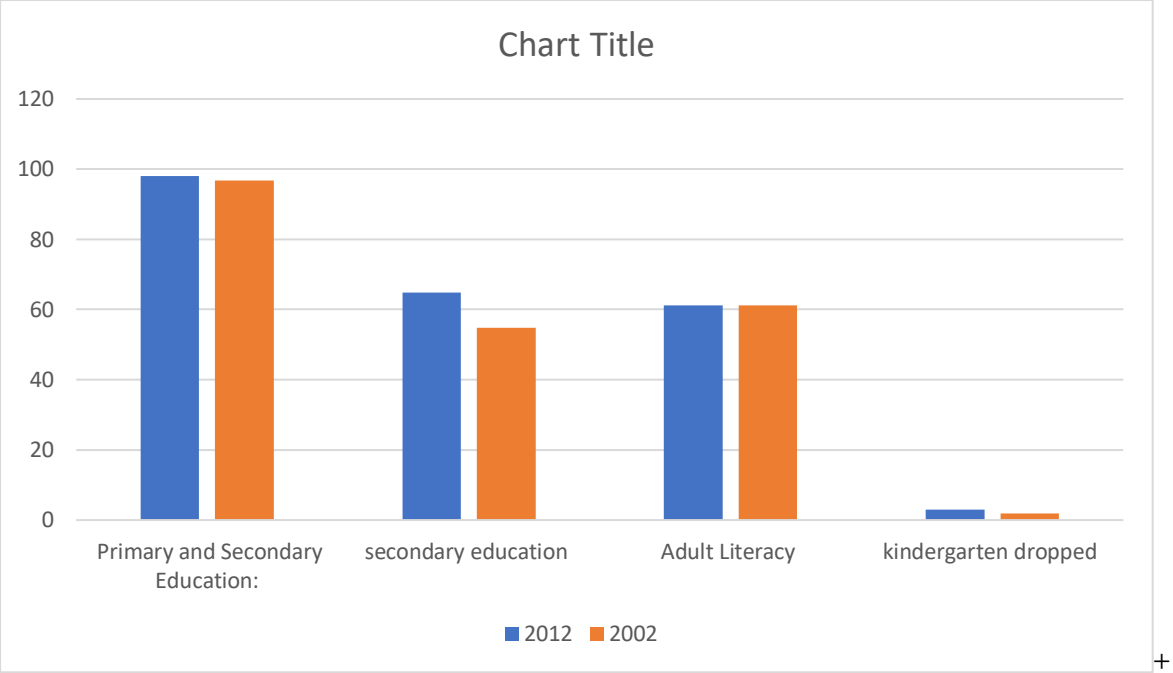
Gender, Rights, and Human Capital

Decision making on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, percent, 2007-2022:	71
Adolescent birth rate per 1,000 girls aged 15-19, 2024:	65
Intimate partner violence, past 12 months, percent, 2018:	11
Decision making on women's own health care, percent, 2007-2022:	92
Decision making on contraceptive use, percent, 2007-2022:	90
Decision making on sexual intercourse, percent, 2007-2022:	83

Harmful Practices

Child marriage by age 18, percent, 2023:	32
Female genital mutilation prevalence among girls aged 15-19, percent, 2022:	-

Education

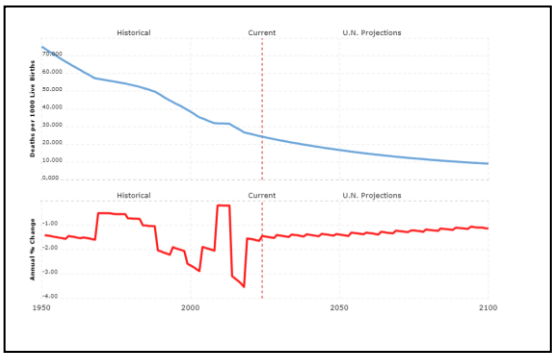


Maternal Mortality:

From 190 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 112 in 2020, Guyana's maternal mortality ratio has improved. It is important to remember that even with this significant improvement, the rate is still higher than the regional norm. According to pregnancy-related causes, the present statistic amounts to about 112 deaths per 100,000 live births among women.

Child Mortality:

In Guyana, there were 21 deaths for every 1,000 live births as of 2012. Infant mortality rates were 13 deaths per 1,000 live births for women with no education and 15 per 1,000 for those with only an elementary school. Remarkably, the rates for post-secondary and secondary-educated women were 20 and 22, respectively, per 1,000 live births. This trend calls for more research into the fundamental causes of infant mortality at various educational levels.



Healthcare Coverage and Access:

In 2020, qualified healthcare workers attended 98% of births. In 2021, the nation's Universal Health Coverage (UHC) service coverage index was 76, which suggests a rather excellent level of access to basic healthcare services.

HIV/AIDS:

The number of new HIV infections across all ages was 0.6 per 1,000 uninfected population in 2022, highlighting the ongoing challenge of HIV prevention and treatment in Guyana.

Cultural Contributions:

Indian artists, dancers, writers, and musicians have left a rich cultural legacy. Traditional food is consumed in large quantities, including the ever-popular curry, puri, roti, bara, kheer, and various vegetable dishes. Festivals like the vibrant Holi, Diwali, and Eid-ul-Fitr are now recognized as national holidays. Even though they are no longer worn for daily wear, traditional Indian clothing like kurtas, saris, and shalwar kameez is still quite popular, especially for religious rituals, weddings, and festivals. Their contributions to sports, particularly "Shivnarine Chanderpaul's" and "Ramnaresh Sarwan" modern-day exploits, have made them national heroes. Guyanese people still celebrate Indian holidays such as Phagwah (Holi), Diwali, and Navratri.

Culinary Heritage and Cuisine

The Caribbean's Indo-Guyanese cuisine offers a diverse range of dishes that are essential to the region's culinary identity since it combines Indian customs with regional flavours. Everyday meals include mostly staples like roti, curry, and dhal bhat (rice and lentils), with snacks like gantia and sal sev in between. Festivities and special events highlight intricate delicacies like the seven curry, which includes options for meat and seafood including chicken, fish, and shrimp curry, as well as a range of vegetarian curries such aloo and channa. Traditionally, these meals are served with roti or dhalpuri, which symbolises the joyousness of social gatherings as well as the pragmatism of dining every day.The most important thing that India has done for Guyana is provide its soft power. Guyana was able to go forward differently from other Caribbean nations thanks to the cultural ties, religious customs, and economic tendencies that were carried with them throughout the indentureship period. India and Guyana reached a cultural agreement in 1974, and it became operative on March 31, 1977. This agreement states that during the 1993 visit of the Guyanese President Cheddi Jagan to New Delhi, the two nations inked the inaugural Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) for 1994, 1995, and 1996.

The West Indies have also been captained by four Guyanese players of Indian descent: Rohan Kanhai, Alvin Kallicharan, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, and Ramnaresh Sarwan.

Kanhai was a member of the West Indies side that won the World Cup in 1975. He played for the team from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s.Sunil Gavaskar, the former captain of India and renowned opening batsman, was so impressed with Kanhai's abilities that he gave his son Rohan Gavaskar's name in his honour.

"To say that he is the greatest batsman I have ever seen so far is to put it mildly."

Cultural Agreements and Diplomatic Relations:

According to the International minority group (2018), the current CEP for 2007–2008, 2009, and 2010 facilitates the exchange of archivists and records of mutual interest, the National Archives of India trains Guyanese officials in archives management, and the National Art Galleries of the two countries exchange exhibitions. These activities also allow cultural troupes from India to visit Guyana.On January 31, 2018, MOU on Cultural Exchange Program 2018-2021 was signed while Minister of Foreign Affairs and Second Vice President Carl B. Greenidge was visiting India. Indian cultural troupes have occasionally visited and performed in various places of Guyana, both under and outside of the CEP. The Indian Cultural Centre, presently called the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC), was founded in Georgetown in 1972 to foster better understanding and cultural ties between the peoples of India and Guyana. The Center offers regular yoga, music, and Kathak dance sessions. The instructors and students of the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC) take part in community-organised activities that focus on mythology, culture, and the writings of notable academics and writers. In addition to offering regular sessions in yoga, music, and Kathak dance, the centre has started instructing young girls in Indian folk dances, which have gained a lot of popularity in an effort to broaden its scope of operations, the Center has begun offering vocal and harmonica instruction. Indian movies and music, particularly Bollywood movies, are highly well-liked in Guyanese culture because of the large Indian diaspora and PIO population. In keeping with their goals and desires, the Center hosts monthly screenings of Indian films in its auditorium, which is well-received by everyone. The Indo-Guyanese were able to preserve their strong cultural links to India thanks to the diverse range of programs organised by the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC).

Cultural Agreements and Diplomatic Relations:

The religious composition of Guyana reflects the strong influence of Indian cultural heritage. The breakdown of religious affiliations in Guyana is as follows:

- Hindu: 28.4%

- Pentecostal: 16.9%

- Roman Catholic: 8.1%

- Muslim: 7.2%

- Anglican: 6.9%

- Seventh-day Adventist: 5%

- Other Christian denominations: 20.5%

- No religion: 4.3%

- Rastafarian: 0.5%

- Bahá'í: 0.1%

- Other faiths: 2.2%

The significant presence of Hinduism and Islam, brought by Indian migrants, alongside various Christian denominations, creates a unique religious landscape that is distinct in South America.

The great majority originated in the Hindi-speaking regions of North India, known as Hindustani. Speaking in east Uttar Pradesh and west Bihar, Bhojpuri was the most widely spoken dialect, followed by Awadhi in central Uttar Pradesh. 3.2% of all Indian immigrants to Guyana arrived at the port of Madras in South India, while 96.8% of all Indian immigrants arrived at the port of Calcutta in North India.

Guyana's culture was profoundly influenced by Indian immigration. Following the expiration of their work contracts, they returned to their former jobs and brought nearly every aspect of traditional Indian village life back to their adoptive country.

Political and Civic Engagement:

Diplomatic Relations Between Guyana and India:

From the beginning of the political history of the nation to the present, the Indo-Guyanese population has had a significant impact on shaping the political and cultural environment of Guyana. The migration of Indo-Guyanese people in Guyana is a reflection of the intricate interactions between foreign diplomacy, cultural preservation, and political battles.

Contributions of early political pioneers

Important characters in this story include Joseph Luckhoo, E.A. Luckhoo, A.E. Seeram, J.B. Singh, Peer Bacchus, C.R. Jacob, A.M. Edun, and most prominently, Dr. Cheddi Jagan. Their contributions demonstrate the significant influence Indo-Guyanese people have had on Guyanese politics and society. Joseph Luckhoo, the first Indian elected to the Combined Court, was a political pathfinder in Guyanese history. With his victory, the Indo-Guyanese community in the nation began to have a significant political presence. Among these figures, Dr. Cheddi Jagan is notable for having a pivotal role in the national liberation movement. His services were crucial to the independence movement in Guyana as well as the development of the country's post-colonial political system. Jagan led the fight for freedom from British colonial control as a well-known leader of the People's Progressive Party (PPP). His dedication to Marxist ideas, which he attempted to put into practice through his political platform, was evident throughout his political career. For the Guyanese people to have their rights and ambitions represented and to challenge the existing quo, Jagan's efforts were essential. Both nations have always considered one another to be strategic allies, and their diplomatic interactions show this close relationship.

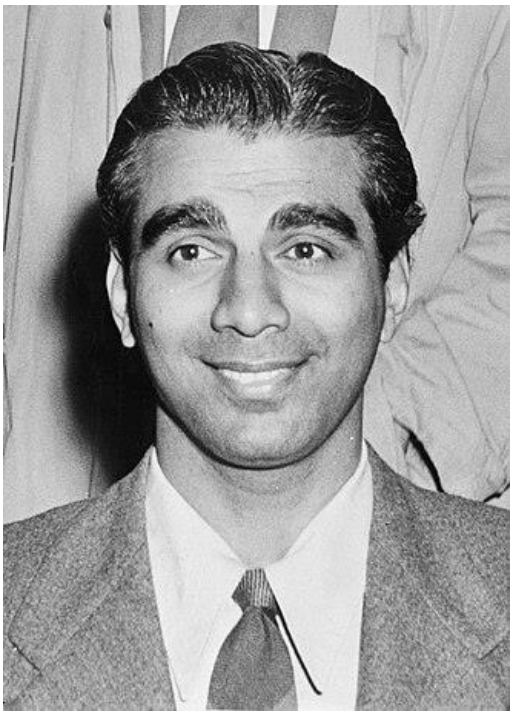
Political and Ethnic Dynamics in Guyana:

Indian leaders including Smt. Indira Gandhi and Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, the former president of India, both visited Guyana in 1968; their trips were noteworthy. The two countries' relationship was strengthened by these trips, which also emphasised the value of collaboration in several areas, including politics, culture, and economic growth.

High-level visits by Guyanese President Bharrat Jagdeo (2003, 2004) and Indian Vice President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat (2006) significantly enhanced bilateral relations in the early 2000s. Guyana's increasing international involvement with India was highlighted by President Jagdeo's significant travels. President Donald Ramotar's trips to India in January 2013 and January 2015, as well as Prime Minister Samuel Hinds' visit in October 2012, both emphasised the continued cooperation between the two nations. The strategic connection between Guyana and India was strengthened by these trips, which also promoted closer diplomatic ties. India gave Guyana the Indian Arrival Monument, one of the most significant representations of the Indo-Guyanese contribution to Guyanese civilization. This monument honours the arrival on May 5, 1838, of the first group of indentured labourers in Guyana. The monument comprises six bronze statues that symbolise different facets of Indo-Guyanese ancestry. It was officially opened on May 5, 2019, by President David Granger and Shri Akhilesh Mishra, Director General of the International Committee of the Red Cross. They feature ladies carrying traditional objects including a bundle, a tawa, and a chatty, as well as a Muslim and Hindu guy and a drum player.

Dr. Cheddi Jagan's leadership in the national liberation movement

A memorial honouring the Indo-Guyanese community's lasting cultural impact in Guyana, it is situated in Palmyra Village, Berbice. Political and ethnic disputes have characterised Guyana's political history, particularly between the Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese groups. An important turning point in Guyanese politics came with the establishment of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) in 1950, which aimed at reducing racial and economic disparities. When Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham created the PPP, their first goal was to bring the Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese people together under the same political agenda. However, Burnham's relationship with Jagan soured, and as a result, he founded the People's National Congress (PNC). Deeply rooted ethnic tensions brought up by this schism influenced Guyanese politics for many years. In 1953, the Guyanese constitution was suspended due to political intervention by the British colonial authority, which was worried about the PPP's Marxist tendency. The British took advantage of the racial division to weaken the PPP's rule, which in turn increased ethnic



tensions. After winning their respective ethnic communities' support in the next elections, the PPP and PNC emerged as the two main political parties. As a result, Guyanese society became more divided, and the rivalry between the two parties affected the nation's political landscape.

Contemporary Political and Civic Engagement:

In 1964, the PPP, in a coalition with the United Forces (UF), fell to the PNC, marking a turning point in Guyanese political history. After this change in power, there were claims of electoral fraud and political unrest for some time. While the PNC under Burnham's direction sought a socialist agenda, the economic policies brought about serious problems, such as shortages of necessities and economic downturn. Ethnic conflicts and economic issues got worse by Burnham's dictatorial policies. Desmond Hoyte took over as president in 1985 after Burnham passed away, and he started to move away from Burnham's socialist principles. Hoyte tried to resolve the nation's economic issues and enhance political stability by working on market reforms and economic recovery. Political tensions remained in place despite these measures, and concerns about electoral fairness dominated the 1991 elections. With the help of other countries and the backing of US President Jimmy Carter, Jagan and the PPP battled against election fraud and attempted to uphold a just democratic process.

Cheddi Jagan's Presidency and Legacy:

Cheddi Jagan was re-elected as president in 1992 after the PPP won the election. During Jagan's leadership, democratic socialism and economic reform prevailed, with a focus on improving infrastructure, healthcare, and education and lowering inequality. Under his direction, Guyana's foreign ties were improved, especially with the US, and international development programs were supported. The government of Jagan, which aimed to give equal representation and attend to the interests of all Guyanese people, also played a role in the steady decrease of ethnic hostilities. Following Jagan's sudden death in 1997, his wife Janet Jagan was elected to the presidency. Her administration carried on her husband's legacy by emphasising social and economic changes. During this time, the political and social obstacles that had accompanied the Indo-Guyanese community's fight for equality and representation were resolved. The lives of Indo-Guyanese people have been improved, and the political and economic growth of Guyana has been aided by the efforts of leaders such as Cheddi and Janet Jagan. International diplomacy, cultural preservation, and political struggle are all intricately woven together in the Indo-Guyanese experience in Guyana. The Indo-Guyanese community has had a significant influence on Guyana's political environment, from early political figures to current leaders. The diplomatic ties and cultural exchanges that characterise the relationship between Guyana and India highlight the strength of the two countries' ongoing bond. The Indo-Guyanese community has triumphed over great obstacles to maintain its cultural legacy and make a constructive contribution to Guyana's advancement. Leaders of the Indo-Guyanese community have made significant contributions to politics and culture, and continuous initiatives to advance cultural interchange have a lasting impact on Guyanese society, helping to build a more just and inclusive country.

	Person	Profession
Sports	Andreas Athanasiou	Canadian NHL player for the Chicago Blackhawks
	Faoud Bacchus	West Indian cricketer
	Shivnarine Chanderpaul,	former captain of the West Indies cricket team
	Kriskal Persaud	chess player
	Dhanraj Singh	boxer
	Alvin Kallicharran	former captain of the West Indies cricket team
	Mahendra Nagamootoo	West Indian cricketer
Religion and Philosophy	Maya Tiwari	Hindu spiritual teacher
	Shabir Ally	Imam
Arts and Entertainment	Raymond Ablack	, Canadian actor
	Anjulie	Canadian singer-songwriter
	Gaiutra Bahadur	writer
Politics	Cheddi Jagan,	former President of Guyana, dentist, and the Father of the Nation
	Irfaan Ali,	President of Guyana
	Doodnauth Singh,	former Attorney General of Guyana
	Waheed Alli, Baron Alli,	life peer in the British House of Lords
	Shaik Baksh	Minister of Education
	Isahak Basir	Member of Parliament
	Vickram Bharrat	politician
	Ranji Chandisingh	former Vice President of Guyana

	Ronald Gajraj	politician
	Bharrat Jagdeo	Vice President of Guyana, former President of Guyana, and former Prime Minister of Guyana
	Shridath Ramphal	former Commonwealth Secretary General
Judge	JOY PERSAUD-SINGH	PUISNE JUDGE IN GUYANA

Bilateral Brief

Since Guyana's independence on May 26, 1966, India and that country have maintained diplomatic relations. In May 1965, a Commission of India was established in Georgetown, and in 1968, it evolved into the official High Commission of India. Guyana became a member of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) in 1998, a step closer to the Islamic world, even though only 6.4% of its population is Muslim.

There have been several high-profile visits and diplomatic meetings between Guyana and India, which have strengthened their relationship and encouraged respect and collaboration between the two countries. President Bharrat Jagdeo's 2003 trip to India and Vice President Bhairon Singh Sekhawat's 2006 visit to Guyana are two notable examples of state visits. The visits by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1968, President Dr. Chung in 1975, Vice President Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma in 1988, and President Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham in 1971 are among the historical individuals. President David Granger and Indian officials met many times in 2015 and 2016, which highlights the two nations' continuous diplomatic correspondence. Other more recent interactions include President Donald Ramotar's travel to India in January 2015.

Economic and infrastructure development

After taking part in events in 2016 and 2017, Prime Minister Moses Nagamootoo addressed the World Tamil Economic Conference in Pondicherry in October 2018. In March 2018, talks about energy and environmental measures were emphasised by President David Granger's presence at the **International Solar Alliance's** Founding Conference. In addition, the significance of bilateral collaboration in fields like infrastructure, security, and renewable energy has been highlighted by visits by Guyanese authorities including Foreign Minister Carl B. Greenidge and Minister of Public Security Khemraj Ramjattan.

Cultural and educational exchanges

May 2018 visit of Dr. Satya Pal Singh to Guyana aided in the promotion of human resources and water management programs as well as conversations with influential politicians. Further highlighting the cooperative efforts in sectors including energy, digital technology, and disaster resilience was Foreign Minister Hugh Hilton Todd's involvement in the Raisina Dialogue in 2022, when he participated in panel discussions and talks with Indian business leaders. Their shared commitment to mutual development goals has been reaffirmed by their regular encounters at international fora such as the UNGA between the foreign ministers of both countries.President Mohamed Irfaan Ali's official visit to India in January 2023 strengthened this foundation, as he took part in the 17th **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas** and had in-depth conversations on a range of topics, including infrastructure, commerce, and healthcare. Collaboration between agriculture and sustainable development was highlighted by the visits of Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo in February 2023 and Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha at the Global Year of Millets Conference in March 2023. With an emphasis on health, investment, and regional cooperation, the strategic alliance has been further cemented by External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar's visit to Guyana in April 2023 and Health Minister Dr. Frank Anthony's attendance at the India-LAC Conclave in August 2023.

Vaccine Maitri initiative,

India dispatched 80,000 Covishield pills to Guyana on March 7, 2021. Through the India-UN Development Partnership Fund, India donated USD 1 million to Guyana in 2020 so that it could fight COVID-19 and update its essential healthcare facilities. As a result, Guyana was able to purchase more than 34 ventilators, hundreds of pieces of protective gear, emergency care drugs, and other essentials. Furthermore, as a gesture of goodwill to support the Guyana government in its fight against COVID-19 last year, the Indian government supplied 30,000 hydroxychloroquine tablets to that country. In addition, India funded Guyana's efforts to lower adolescent pregnancies US$ 500,000 in collaboration with the UNFPA. Guyana has been granted credit facilities by India to be utilised in fields where both parties agree, such as agriculture and information technology. Indian companies are interested in biofuels, minerals, energy, pharmaceuticals, and energy. Although the overall trade turnover is still low, the trend appears to be positive.A few of the projects that the Government of Guyana has finished with help from the Government of India are the National Cricket Stadium (USD 25 million), the supply and installation of 50 solar traffic lights (USD 2.1 million), the installation of drainage pumps (USD 2.9 million), and the creation of a Center of Excellence in Information Technology (CEIT) (USD 2 million).

Trade

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23 (Apr-Sep)
India's **Exports** to Guyana	20.07	26.03	29.66	25.21	35.69	66.41	30.4
India's **Imports** from Guyana	14.48	6.59	6.42	6.95	11.28	156.96	2.83
Total Trade	**34.55**	**32.62**	**36.08**	**32.16**	**46.97**	**223.36**	**32.86**

Ongoing projects

include the construction of an oceangoing vessel/passenger ferry, the renovation of three regional hospitals, the building of an East Bank–East Coast road linkage, the purchase of stationary and mobile pumps along with associated structures and spare parts, and assistance for immediate community development initiatives.Their mutual love of cricket is another important bond between the two countries. The Indian Premier League's debut has resulted in contracts for several Guyanese sportsmen to play in India.

Lines of Credit (LoC) and financial aid programs,

India has completed several noteworthy projects in Guyana. Important projects include a cricket stadium, traffic lights in Georgetown, and the installation of fourteen irrigation drainage pumps. Additionally, India opened a Center of Excellence in Information Technology (CEIT) in Guyana in 2019. Among the notable LoC initiatives are:

1. East Bank-East Coast Road Connectivity:

To complete this project, a US$50 million LoC was extended in 2016. The project was revised in 2020, and M/s RITES Limited was assigned in 2018 to serve as a project management consultant. Phase I started with a US$50 million Letter of Credit and M/s Ashoka Buildcon Limited was given the US$109 million contract.

2. Acquisition of an Ocean Ferry:

In 2016, India proposed a US$10 million LoC and a US$8 million grant for the construction of an ocean ferry. Following a few setbacks, a $12,733,403 contract was signed with Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd. in 2021. In April 2023, the MV Ma Lisha ferry was delivered.

3. Mobile Irrigation Pumps:

A $4 million US extension of the Letter of Credit was made available for these pumps in 2017. These pumps were delivered and installed by M/s Apollo International Limited in 2018, and they have been successfully put into service.

4. Hospital Upgradation:

To modernise three regional hospitals, a US$17.5 million LoC was extended in 2017. Later, the scope was changed to improve just one hospital in Bartica, with consulting services provided by M/s Enarch Consultants Pvt. Ltd.

5. Solar Home Lighting Systems:

Funded by a US$10 million LoC, this initiative aims to install solar lighting systems in 30,000 houses in rural regions.

Additional undertakings consist of:

Solar Photovoltaic Power Plant: Cheddi Jagan International Airport is to host a proposed US$2.5 million solar power plant.

The Indo-Guyana Joint Commission is in charge of managing trade and investment ties. The amount of trade between countries grew dramatically, reaching US$223.36 million in 2021–2022. Prescription drugs is one of India's imports from Guyana and one of its exports, along with lumber and wood products.

In terms of energy cooperation, Guyana joined the Framework Agreement for the International Solar Alliance in 2018, and India has backed projects in Guyana related to renewable energy, such as hydropower and solar energy.

There are extensive initiatives for education and cultural interaction, and the ITEC program offers technical training and scholarships. India has further provided funding for cultural initiatives in Guyana, including the "Indian Arrival Monument" and other cultural gatherings.

Improving the connection between the two nations is the goal of an air services agreement that was signed in April 2023.In general, India and Guyana have a strong and diverse bilateral relationship, which is seen in the country's involvement in infrastructure, trade, energy, education, and cultural interaction.

There is an agreement between Guyana and India that exempts bearers of diplomatic, official, and service passports from the need for a visa. Guyana's residents were added to the group of countries whose citizens are eligible for a tourist visa upon arrival in India on January 25, 2015.

On April 22, 2023, an agreement for air services was signed between India and Guyana. The agreement was finalised by both sides during the ninth annual International Civil Aviation (ICAN) 2016 conference, which was held December 5–9, 2016 in Nassau, Bahamas. Six Indian airports—New Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Chennai—are allowed an unlimited number of flights under the arrangement. Connectivity and passenger transport between Guyana and India will be increased by the new agreement.

Policy Recommendations for the Guyanese Government

Create a National Diaspora Policy:

Create a comprehensive diaspora strategy that describes ways to interact with the Indo-Guyanese community and make use of their networks, investments, and talents.

Create a special diaspora office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to oversee and carry out diaspora-related programs.

Promote Investment from the Diaspora:

Provide loans, tax breaks, and other financial advantages to Indo-Guyanese investors willing to set up companies or make investments in Guyana.

Provide a one-stop shop for business registration, licensing, and other administrative requirements, and streamline the processes for diaspora investments.

Strengthen Educational and Professional Linkages:

Partner with Indian colleges and universities to give professional training programs, cooperative research initiatives, and remote learning to Indo-Guyanese professionals and students.

Promote relationships and the sharing of information between Guyanese and Indian research and academic institutions to promote innovation.

Support Cultural Preservation and Promotion:

Provide money and support for cultural institutions, occasions, and celebrations honouring Indo-Guyanese ancestry and customs.

To protect cultural identity, encourage the teaching of Indian languages, history, and customs at educational institutions and community centres.

Enhance Social and Civic Engagement:

Give cash prizes, awards, and public acknowledgements to the Indo-Guyanese community in order to recognize and appreciate their efforts.

To make sure their opinions and concerns are acknowledged and taken into consideration, promote diaspora involvement in civic projects and policymaking procedures.

Joint Initiatives

Bilateral Diaspora Summits

Plan yearly or biannual diaspora conferences to discuss possibilities and problems with leaders, entrepreneurs, scholars, and officials from both countries who are Indo-Guyanese.

Concentrate on fields like education, healthcare, technology, and renewable energy to develop alliances and workable solutions.

Youth and Next-Generation Engagement

Create youth-oriented initiatives to encourage a feeling of kinship and dedication to both Guyana and India among the Indo-Guyanese diaspora's younger people.

Promote volunteer work, internships, and exchange programs that let young Indo-Guyanese meet people from both countries and learn from them.

Technology and Innovation Hubs

With the help of Indian IT firms and professionals living abroad, establish technology and innovation centres in Guyana.Encourage partnerships and startup incubators that use the Indian diaspora's technology know-how to propel Guyana's economy.

Programs and Initiatives to Enhance Socio-Economic Well-Being of the Indo-Guyanese Diaspora and Strengthen Bilateral Ties

Scholarship and Fellowship Programs:

Joint Scholarships:

Develop joint scholarship programs funded by the Guyanese and Indian governments to help Indo-Guyanese students attend prestigious Indian colleges for higher study.

Research Fellowships:

Provide research fellowships in areas such as technology, medicine, agriculture, and renewable energy to academics who are Indo-Guyanese and studying in Indian institutions.

Online Learning and Skill Developments:

Digital Education Platforms:

Assist Indo-Guyanese professionals and students by partnering with Indian educational institutions to offer online courses and certifications.

Skill Development Workshops:

Utilise Indian expertise in setting up skill development workshops in IT, healthcare, and other vital industries.

Cultural Exchange and Preservation

Cultural Festivals:

To honour Indo-Guyanese heritage and build cultural ties, organize yearly cultural festivals in both nations.

Cultural Centres:

Increase funding for Guyana's cultural centres, which include language, yoga, music, and dance instruction.

Renewable Energy Projects

Solar and Hydro Projects:

Give support to renewable energy initiatives in Guyana using Indian solar and hydropower expertise to deliver environmentally friendly energy solutions.

Energy Efficiency Programs:

Use Indian technology and expertise to implement energy-saving initiatives in Guyanese residences and commercial buildings.

Youth and Leadership Development

Youth Leadership Programs: Provide training in community service, entrepreneurship, and leadership to young Indo-Guyanese people through leadership programs.

Mentorship Programs: Establish programs that connect young Indo-Guyanese people with experts and business owners from India and the diaspora.

Healthcare Collaboration

Telemedicine Services:

Develop telemedicine services for Indo-Guyanese communities with remote access to medical consultations and specialised services.

Medical Training Programs:

Provide workshops and medical training led by Indian medical specialists to Guyanese healthcare workers.

By implementing these recommendations both the Indian and Guyanese governments can enhance their engagement with the Indo-Guyanese diaspora, fostering mutual benefits and strengthening bilateral relations.

Conclusion

With a long history spanning almost two centuries, the Indian diaspora in Guyana is an important and active part of the country's social fabric. The Indo-Guyanese group has played a key role in shaping the cultural, political, and economic landscape of Guyanese society, having begun as indentured labourers and now standing as essential members of the community.From their historical battles to their modern triumphs and ongoing problems, the Indo-Guyanese experience is diverse, as this policy study has demonstrated. In a variety of domains, like as politics, economy, culture, and education, the community's adaptation, resilience, and contributions to Guyana's progress are apparent.

The study does, however, also point out areas that need attention, like resolving ethnic conflicts, advancing economic justice, protecting cultural assets, and improving educational opportunities. The Indo-Guyanese community and Guyanese society as large can both benefit from focused policy initiatives aimed at addressing these issues. Additionally, there is a special opportunity to improve bilateral connections between Guyana and India due to the deep cultural links that many Indo-Guyanese have with that country. Together, the two nations might investigate cooperative ventures in fields like commerce, education, technology, and cultural exchange by using these links.

The Guyanese and Indian governments must work together to implement these suggestions, and the Indo-Guyanese community must take an active role in doing so as well. Stronger bilateral ties between Guyana and India, better socioeconomic results for the diaspora, and general national growth for Guyana can all result from such cooperative efforts. In summary, the Indian diaspora in Guyana is an important demographic group as well as a useful asset for both domestic and global collaboration. Acknowledging and fostering this potential would help India fortify its connections with its diaspora and increase its sway over the Caribbean, while Guyana will improve social cohesion, economic growth, and international alliances. The way forward is via mutual respect, inclusive legislation, and cooperative initiatives that honour each individual's distinct individuality and contributions of the Indo-Guyanese community.

Source

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