

**Response prepared by the International Decade for People of African Descent Assembly–Guyana (IDPADA-G) For the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**1. THE REQUEST FROM THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Inputs for the preparation of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 43/1 on the “Promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers”.**

**2. INTRODUCTION**

**The International Decade for People of African Descent**, 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2024, was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 68/237, with the theme **“People of African descent: recognition, justice and development”**. By its resolution 69/16, the UN General Assembly adopted a programme of activities for the implementation of the Decade.

The overall objective of the Decade is to promote respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of people of African descent.

UN Resolution 68/237, which decreed the International Decade, was subscribed to by the then Government of Guyana led-by the Peoples Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), representing a national consensus on the objectives and need for such a Resolution to promote the rights and development of people of African Descent in Guyana.

**3. ROLE OF IDPADA-G**

**The International Decade for People of African Descent Assembly – Guyana (IDPADA-G)**, emerged out of a Core Group of African Guyanese leaders that was established in 2017, at the behest of then President David Granger, whose APNU+AFC Coalition Government came to power via elections held in May 2015. IDPADA-G was formalized in 2017 as an umbrella organization of African Guyanese cultural, social and community organizations, dedicated to promoting and advancing the conditions of African-Descendants in Guyana. The **CHARTER** of IDPADA-G outlines its goal as follows:

“The Goal of IDPADA, Guyana is to craft the Guyana plan for the International Decade for People of African Descent, in keeping with the provisions of the UN’s Resolution; and as mandated by His Excellency the President at the Cuffy 250 Committee Annual Forum on August 07[sic], 2016, inclusive of mechanisms for implementing, superintending and monitoring the plan, as may be deemed necessary”.

#### **4. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Any attempt to understand the current situation and challenges facing African-Descendants in Guyana must start with an understanding of the political, socio-economic, and cultural formations, processes and forces that created the contemporary conditions affecting the African-Descendants.

The African ancestors were brought as enslaved persons from Africa to the Guiana coast and integrated into the slave and plantation economy from the 1600s. They survived the horrors of the cruel and barbaric slave mode of production in the plantation economy as unpaid labor contributing to building that plantation economy. Their unpaid labor was extracted for the benefit of the slave plantation owners and the material benefits exported to European principalities and states to develop the emerging capitalist empires and societies there.

For the African-Descendants who were brought to what is now Guyana as enslaved persons, the plantation nurtured a practice and culture of repression, violence, economic and cultural dispossession, despoliation and discrimination which shaped societal perceptions of enslaved Guyanese that carried over into the post-emancipation period.

The colonial socio-economic and political order was buttressed and maintained using force underpinned by discriminatory and repressive laws and criminal codes, that were designed to maintain the enslaved in subjection and submission.

That system of exploitation, at bottom based on race, was perpetuated after the formal end of slavery, in 1834 and surreptitiously entrenched in different forms in the period after 1838.

When Emancipation was decreed after 1838, the previously enslaved Africans constituted the majority of the population in the Colony of British Guiana. Thereafter, they moved, in large numbers, into the villages and homesteads that they created from the purchase of abandoned plantations and lands in Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice.

However, as the consequence of the shortage of labour, due in large measure to the unwillingness of the formerly enslaved to continue to provide their labour to the plantations on exploitative terms, the Colonial Administration and the Plantation owners resorted to the importation of Indentured labourers, initially from China, then Madeira and finally from India, along with smaller numbers from the Caribbean and Sierra Leone.

As a result, by the 1880's East Indians constituted the majority of the population in the Colony, concentrated on the various sugar plantations.

According to the 2012 national population census African Guyanese constitute 29.2 percent of the population; and a significant portion of the Mixed-race population that comprises an additional 19.9 percent of the total population. East Indians are the largest ethnic group and comprise 39.8 percent. 10.5 percent of the population identify as

Indigenous persons while Whites, including Portuguese and Chinese are the smallest groups representing less than 1 percent of the population.

Nearly two hundred years after the emancipation of enslaved Africans, and over fifty years after the granting of formal political independence from Britain , the socio-economic situation of Guyanese of African Descent is less than acceptable and cries out for **recognition, justice, and development.**

##### **5. THE ROLE OF THE POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT IN THE SUBJUGATION AND REPRESSION OF AFRICAN GUYANESE IN THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD**

The post-Emancipation socio-economic and political order was maintained through control of the legislatures colonial government by the planter class, who used the colonial police, militias, and the coercive power of the legal system to repress and control the formerly enslaved. Thus strikes by mostly African-Descendants in the urban centers such as in 1905 and the 1930s were brutally repressed by the colonial police, through use of excessive force and enforcement of a socio-economic order inimical to the interests of the largely African Guyanese urban working classes.

There developed, from the period of African enslavement through to the contemporary period, a culture of policing that was repressive, violent, discriminatory, contemptuous of the human rights of its victims, and singularly based on the interests of the ruling and dominant classes, and their favored subsidiary groups and interests. Policing and law enforcement were based on maximum use of force, characterized by impunity.

According to Mike McCormack, of the Guyana Human Rights Association (GHRA):

“[T]he Guyana Police Force began life as a militia. The model on which it was based was the Royal Irish Constabulary. The Royal Irish Constabulary was the instrument by which the British suppressed Ireland, not Northern Ireland, Ireland, the original Ireland. It became the model, the template for the colonial police forces. It was a militia. It was structured like a military force, operates in barracks, and basically had a repressive role. That’s what was created. That’s how the Guyana Police Force began life. As things progressed its name changed, but its functions didn’t and never have.” **Innovations for Successful Societies**, Bobst Center for Peace and Justice Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, 08544, USA [www.princeton.edu/successfulsocieties](http://www.princeton.edu/successfulsocieties), Interview given by McCormack in 2009, p. 12.

Crime and violence are unfortunate pathologies of modern-day societies, and Guyana is no exception. These are often the product of adverse socio-economic conditions and the response of the repressed and disadvantaged.

Criminal activity in Guyana demonstrated an upsurge in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s as a result of the economic downturn affecting its economy at that time. This largely impacted

the urban populations where most of the African Guyanese labouring classes reside. This situation was exacerbated in the 1990s and 2000s as the elements of race and capital accumulation by the largely Indo-Guyanese monied classes wreaked further havoc on the increasingly dispossessed and marginalized African Guyanese.

According to the US State Department Report for 2000, **Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor**, 1999, dated February 23, 2000:

“There continued to be serious problems in the Government's human rights record, although it improved slightly in a few areas. The police continued to commit extrajudicial killings; however, they committed fewer such killings than in the previous year, and police abuse of suspects also declined. The authorities took some steps to investigate these abuses more effectively and brought charges against some individual policemen accused of killings. However, in general the police continued to commit abuses with impunity. Prison conditions are poor, and lengthy pretrial detention is a problem. The inefficient judicial system results in long delays in trials. Police infringed on citizens' privacy rights. Members of both major political parties engaged in propaganda attacks that exacerbated racial tensions and social insecurity. Other human rights problems included violence against women and children, societal discrimination against women and indigenous Amerindians, and incidents of discrimination stemming from the racial tensions between Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese.

Since 2000 there emerged rogue police units, variously labelled Black Clothes, Phantom or Fountain Squad which were accused of committing extra-judicial executions with impunity under the direction of the then Minister of Home Affairs.

The period between 2002 and 2008 have been described as ‘The Troubles’, during which excessive police violence and extrajudicial killings became the order of the day. Various accounts hold that over 400 persons, mostly African Guyanese youth, were the victims of such excessive use of often deadly force by law enforcement during this period. According to a **Demerara Waves** feature captioned **None of the 420 killings is a cold case - Guyana Police Force**, Posted by: Denis Chabrol in Crime, News Tuesday, 26 November 2019:

“The Guyana Police Force says none of the more than 420 killings between 2002 and 2006 has been declared a cold case.

“Investigations into the deaths of those persons during that period of our history have never been closed and (the Guyana Police Force) is consequently urging anyone who may be in possession of any information into the incidents to come forward and inform the Police,” the law enforcement agency said in a statement.

These extrajudicial killings have remained unresolved and unsolved.

An early example of their mode of operation was described by Elder Statesman Mr. Eusi Kwayana, a Pan Africanist, a former Minister in the first post-Independence Cabinet, and a leader in the struggle for African-Guyanese socio-economic and cultural development:

“This morning [April 6, 2002] those sentiments were deliberately provoked, in the name of the Guyana Police Force, by the unit known as "The Black Clothes." Just ahead of 1 AM, six members of this unit kicked down the door of Shaka Blair's home, Middle Walk, Buxton, separated his wife and their two children from him and shot him. They then removed Blair from the home, according to reports, dragged him part of the way and left in their vehicle. Shaka Blair had been tried, found guilty and executed in a few minutes.

I declare that the act of the Black Clothes in this particular matter is entirely without justification and is a human rights crime of the gravest nature.”

Blair was not on the police wanted list nor was he being investigated for any crime.

IDPADA-G carried out consultations in over 20 African Guyanese villages and communities as part of the process in preparing its **Strategic Plan: 2020-2024**. Participants were asked to give **examples of how the police, community policing groups, and prison service officers, discriminate against and criminalize African Guyanese suspected, charged, or convicted of committing offenses**. The top six responses were as follows: “African youths are given no fair hearing, they're beaten and locked up” **62.5%**; “Illegal searches, false charges” **25.0%**; “Africans cannot afford to pay bribes” **25.0%**; “African youths are treated based on their appearance, profiled, arrested on suspicion” **25.0%**; “Community police are mostly East Indians who deal racially with African suspects” **12.5%**; and “Poor legal representation” **12.5%**.

The responses with respect to the administration of justice and the functioning of the police and prison services vis-à-vis African Guyanese point to a highly negative view of these bodies. These include race and class biases, poorly investigated cases and equally poor hearings, lengthy litigation, solicitation of bribes, discriminatory treatment of African Guyanese youth, illegal searches and false charges, racial profiling of African Guyanese, and discriminatory treatment by community policing groups. Such views are very much a part of popular lore. The actions, programmes and policies to address this situation included, (re-)education and training for officials, clamping down on corruption, programmes to reduce race and class discrimination, legal aid for African Guyanese, non-custodial sentences, improved investigations, sensitization training for police and prison officers, advocacy and vigilance by African Guyanese organizations, and a watchdog organization to monitor treatment of African Guyanese youth.

## 6. AFRICAN GUYANESE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS' PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH POLICE AND THE OVERALL SECURITY OF AFRICAN CITIZENS

To ensure that this report reflects the opinions and experiences of the widest cross-section of our community, IDPADA-G conducted a survey of its 60 member organizations representing communities of African descent across Guyana. Over fifty percent of the organizations responded.

Overall, African Guyanese are despondent about their security in the society. Without a national safety net, the widespread experience of marginalization and discrimination in employment, reduced access to land and land ownership and negligible opportunities for business development lead to economic insecurity. As a direct result, the community has experienced high incidences of homelessness, vagrancy and squatting and crime attracting the increased attention and negative interactions with a police force that still operates, to a significant degree, on its 1839 founding principles.

Recognizing these linkages, the IDPADA-G survey instrument posed several questions, some directly related to perceptions of law enforcement and others that provide information about the overall socio-economic position of the African Guyanese community.

Respondents described the current situation of African Guyanese as troubling, unsatisfactory, frustrating, untenable, horrible and an economic genocide. All participants indicated that they have observed discrimination against African Guyanese or have been victims of such discrimination. Respondents identified discrimination in, *inter alia*, access to jobs and employment; access to capital and economic opportunities; access to training and development opportunities; freedom of expression and religious beliefs; and enforcement of law (**See Appendix I**).

With respect to law enforcement, the survey revealed that African Guyanese are generally dissatisfied with the conduct of police and the judiciary in the exercise of the law. They indicated that these institutions are used as political weapons in some cases to intimidate and “victimize” the African Guyanese community. While some respondents perceive the conduct of some police officers positively, the majority had a negative perception of police force, describing them, among other negative terms, as cruel, harsh, and provocative, (Appendix I, Figure 2). Forty-six percent of organisations responding suggested that African Guyanese males suffer greater discrimination than females, and highlighted the frequency of negative, harmful interactions of males particularly in relation to the police and law enforcement.

Finally, respondents collectively agreed that the government has not addressed allegations of discrimination and policy brutality against African Guyanese. In fact, a significant majority of the organisations felt that government's actions have directly and indirectly contributed to furthering instability in the society and discrimination against African Guyanese.

## **7. POLICE MALTREATMENT AND ULTRA VIRES ACTS**

Article 39 (2) of the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana mandates the courts to pay heed to international law, international conventions, covenants, and charters attendant to human rights in their interpretation of the fundamental rights provisions of the Constitution.

Guyana is signatory to a collection of international human rights treaties, with the invocation of their relevant provisions sanctioned by Article 154A of the Constitution. Among those international treaties are the following:

1. Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
3. Convention Against Torture and Other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
4. Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
5. Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

A brief reference to the material articles of the respective international treaties serves to contextualise the engagement of some members of the Guyana Police Force and predominantly Guyanese males of African descent.

Pursuant to Article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 'No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Further, 'No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily.'

Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination stipulates that State Parties 'condemn racial discrimination and undertake to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms and promoting understanding among all races.'

Pursuant to Article 2 of the Convention Against Torture and Other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 'Each State shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction.'

Article 7 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that 'No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.'

Police treatment of civilians captures a wide range of actions across which spectrum are instances of unlawful arrest and detention, searches of premises without a search warrant, assault, torture, and summary execution. Guyana is replete with instances of police overreach. However, available statistics do not capture the gravity of the police's ultra vires actions against civilians, predominantly persons of African descent. This is perhaps best borne out by an articulation of the intimate workings of certain aspects of the criminal justice system.

It is an uncontroverted fact that persons of African descent - especially young males from economically, socially, and educationally marginalised communities - are stereotyped as being prone to criminal activities or as being socialised as criminals by certain persons. This makes them ready targets for the police who have traditionally meted out the abovementioned range of actions against persons of African descent with impunity, state complicity, and presumably outright state sanction. The dreaded Target Special Squad (Black Clothes Police) of the 1990s and the Phantom Squad of the 2000s, populated presumably by retired and select members of law enforcement, are among known units to so operate.

Many persons of African descent are arrested and detained by the police on a daily basis for "inquiries". Several of them are not told what is the nature of the inquiries. Several of these detained persons are not permitted to contact family members or relatives, with the police's justification being that no allegations have been put to them as they are being detained on 'inquiries' - inquiries of an unspecified and undisclosed nature. It is the routine practice of the police to move detained persons across a network of police stations to protract the time it will take for them to be discovered by family members and attorneys-at-law. During this crisscrossing of police stations the detained persons are invariably subject to rigorous interrogations in violation of their rights to have someone of their choice, inclusive of legal counsel, present when they are invited to respond to the allegations brought against them. It is commonplace for persons to be subject to various degrees of assault and torture and forced to sign confession statements which are the subject of the police's own invention.

Some of the persons detained by the police and whose rights have been violated - whether by unlawful detention, assault or torture - are then released without being charged and the treatment to which they are subject escape any form of recording. The persons who are arrested, subjected to police maltreatment, and charged appear before the magistrates' court where all criminal matters commence. Several of them appear before the courts with visible injuries. Those both with and without visible injuries invariably report to the magistrates their treatment at the hands of the police. These complaints are captured by the magistrates on the case jackets. The prosecution routinely denies the accuracy of the complaints based upon the instructions of the complainant police officer. These complaints hardly progress beyond their being recorded on the case jackets, and

no statistics of these complaints that are made to the court are compiled by the judiciary or any other institution.

Those who allege that the police have coerced their confessions by the use of violence against them have these complaints interrogated by *voir dire* (trial within a trial or mini trial) since the courts are barred from admitting into evidence confessions that are not freely and voluntarily given after the caution is administered to the accused persons. The hurdle they must surmount is the evidence of experienced police officers who all deny the treatment complained of and the fact that in many instances of assault and outright torture by the police there are no visible signs of injuries or medical report in favour of the accused persons. The corollary is that several of these statements are admitted into evidence procuring the conviction of an array of innocent persons. There are occasions on which these statements are proven to have been oppressively obtained and are not admitted into evidence. These instances too are not captured by any statistical aggregation.

The Police Complaints Authority is tasked with investigating misconduct by police officers pursuant to the Police Complaints Authority Act, Cap. 17:02, Laws of Guyana. The findings of the investigations are reported to the Commissioner of Police for disciplinary actions to be taken against the officers pursuant to the Police (Discipline) Act. Relative to the report herein, pursuant to section 7 of the Schedule, police misconduct is constituted by the police 'being guilty of any unlawful or unnecessary exercise of authority to wit:

- i. Without good and sufficient cause, making any unlawful or unnecessary arrest; or
- ii. Using any unnecessary violence to any prisoner, or other person with whom he may be brought into contact in the execution of his duty.

It warrants observing that the Police Complaints Authority, in theory an organisation that investigates complaints of police misconduct, is in effect a single person, - qualified as a judge of the high court - who is appointed by the president in this role. The terms and conditions of employment are likewise determined by the president. The Authority is constrained by its confidentiality requirement, in terms of what information it can disclose of its investigations. **A recent discussion with the Authority, retired Justice William Ramlal, revealed that between January 2010 and August 2020 that there have been seventy-six (76) meritorious complaints of police misconduct, inclusive of the use of more force than is necessary and unlawful killing. The Authority disclosed that these numbers do not remotely capture the actual instances of police misconduct as innumerable instances of police misconduct do not reach the authority by formal complaint.**

What follows is an assortment of allegations of police misconduct recorded in the public domain and listed here in no particular chronology of dates or the nature of the allegations. This list is by no means even remotely exhaustive:

1. **Marlon Fredericks**- shot and killed by city constable in January 2018.
2. **City Constable Clifton Pellew** charged and committed to stand trial for sexual penetration with an under aged boy in August 2015 after the boy was arrested for loitering.
3. **Teon Maxwell**- shot and killed by the police in April 2019 during the course of an arrest.
4. **Mark Johnson**- shot and killed by police in March 2019.
5. **Shamar Tanner**- allegedly beaten by police officers in March 2019 resulting in the loss of several of his teeth.
6. **Dameon Belgrave**- shot and killed by the police in October 2012.
7. **Alex Griffith**- then aged 15 years old shot in the mouth by police in April 2014.
8. **Shaquille Grant**- shot and killed by police in September 2012.
9. **Colwyn Harding**- allegedly beaten and sodomised by the police in November 2013.
10. **Yohance Douglas**- shot and killed by police in March 2003.
11. **Carl Abrams**- killed by the police in November 2005
12. **David Kennedy**- beaten by police and died while in the lockups in 1996.
13. **Samuel McPhoy**- killed by the police in 1980.
14. **Denzie Newton**- killed by the police in 1983.
15. **Percival Thompson**- shot and killed by the police in 1984.
16. **Quincy Little**- brutally beaten by police with a pair of handcuffs during an arrest for an undisclosed reason in December 2019.
17. **Nephew of Ms. Valerie St. Kitts**- beaten by the police to confess to a murder in August 2015.
18. **Ms. Shirley Thomas' teenaged son**- genitals were severely burnt by the police while he was detained in October 2009.

It is apposite to document a few instances of the deployment of the police to unlawfully or unduly arrest and detain Guyanese of African descent, inclusive of prominent Guyanese. The police at the behest of the government have arrested and detained the following persons, either unlawfully or unduly for protracted periods unsubstantiated by the circumstances of the respective allegations:

1. **Christopher Jones**, former Head of the National Sports Commission and current Member of Parliament for the parliamentary opposition - arrested and detained by police after his premises were illegally searched and items belonging to him removed therefrom in violation of a prohibition order of the Supreme Court in August, 2020.

2. **Clairmont Mingo**, former Returning Officer of the Guyana Elections Commission - arrested and detained in August 2020 for an unduly protracted period on allegations of electoral fraud.
3. **Roxanne Myers**, Deputy Chief Elections Officer - arrested and detained in October 2020 for an unduly protracted period for perverting the course of justice after exercising her right to silence. The Guyana Police Force by press release dated October 7, 2020 flagrantly misrepresented the arrest and detention of Ms. Myers as occasioned by allegations of electoral fraud.
4. **Carol Joseph**, opposition party activist - unduly arrested and detained in September 2020 for allegations of electoral fraud.

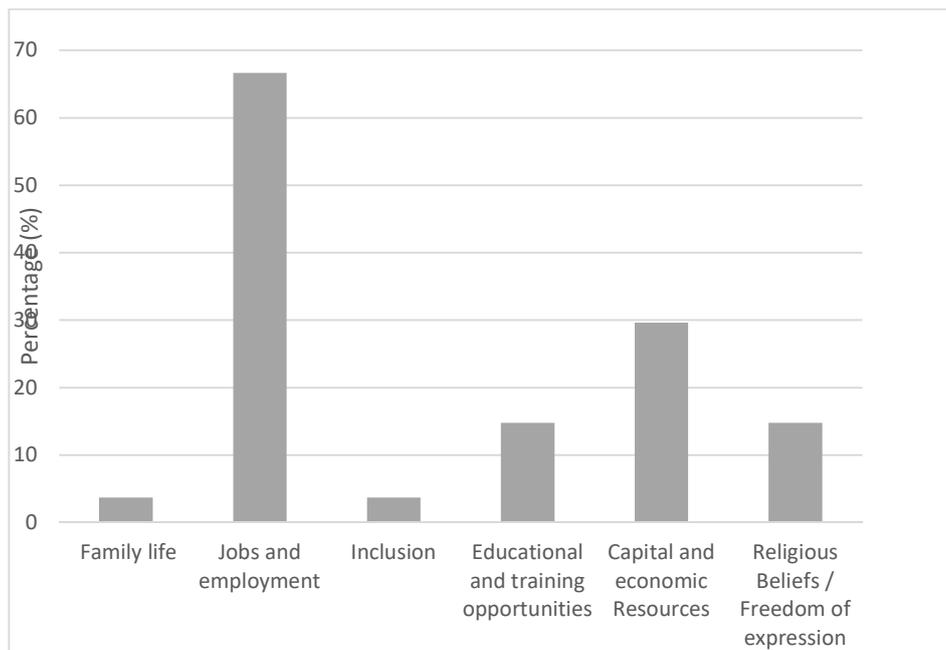
The above list is by no means exhaustive or closed, and new instances have been added in recent weeks.

**APPENDIX I**  
**SURVEY OF IDPADA-G MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS**

**1. FINDINGS**

**1. Forms of discrimination**

African Guyanese described their current situation as troubling, unsatisfactory, frustrating, untenable, horrible and an economic genocide. All participants indicated that they have observed discrimination against African Guyanese or have been victims of such discrimination. African Guyanese reported discrimination in, *inter alia*, access to jobs and employment; access to capital and economic opportunities; access to training and development opportunities; freedom of expression and religious beliefs; and enforcement of law (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Forms of Discrimination against African Guyanese**

a) Access to jobs and employment

Most persons expressed concern regarding discriminatory practices in accessing jobs in the public and private sectors and the maltreatment of African Guyanese at the workplace. Reference was made to the recent termination of a large number of public servants following the installation of the new Government in Guyana. Most of these were Guyanese of African descent.

b) Access to economic resources

Others lamented the lack of economic resources and capital available to African Guyanese to support entrepreneurial development. This includes difficulties encountered in obtaining loans from financial institutions, accessing lands and award of government contracts. Organisations believed that this has contributed to the continued economic-dependence of a largely consumer-based African Guyanese population with a limited number of African Guyanese owned businesses. One organization noted that this national situation is effectively reflected and reinforced in the primary school textbook, the Rampat Family where the Indo-Guyanese is pictured as the seller and the African Guyanese is depicted as the consumer. It was suggested that this accurately illustrates the economic imbalance between African Guyanese and other ethnic groups nationally. This perception of economic superiority and dependence continues to be perpetuated through the education of children. Respondents observed that at the community level, disparities in national and regional budgetary allocations favour non-Afrocentric communities. Members of the community of Pattensen, located in Georgetown, indicated that even though their community has been labelled “depressed”, it continues to be neglected even though the community accounts for “10 percent” of Georgetown’s population.

c) Religious beliefs / Freedom of expression

Members of the Rastafarian community believe that the criminalisation of marijuana is a discrimination against the free practice of their religious beliefs.

d) Discrimination by Law Enforcement and Judiciary officers

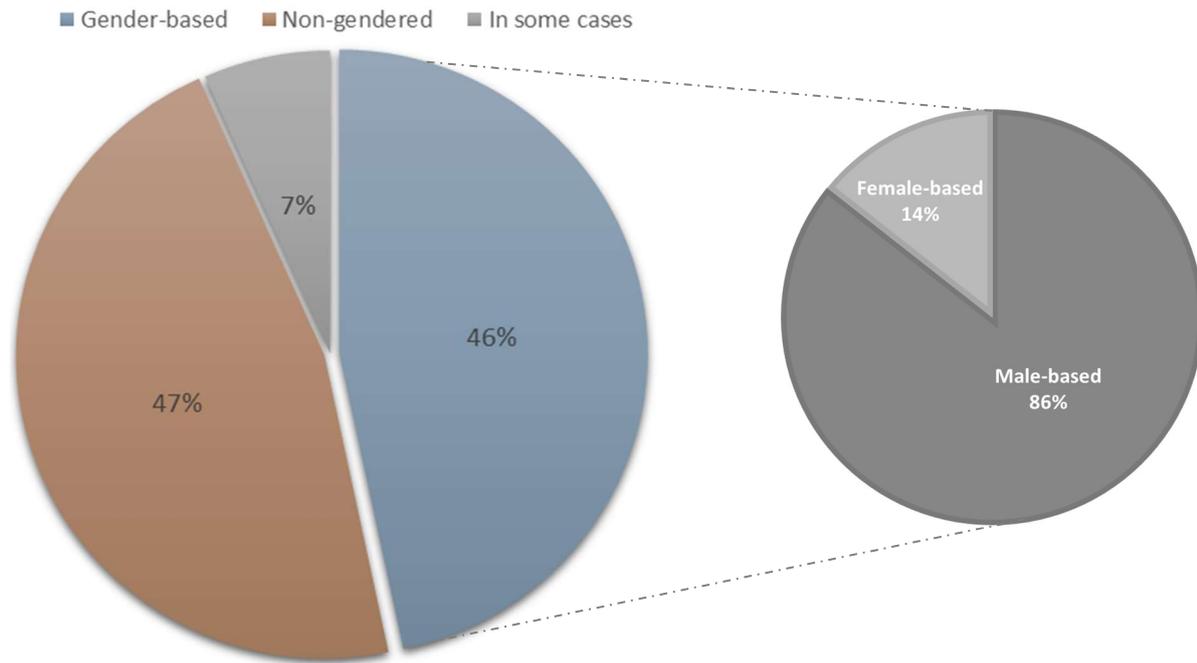
Respondents were generally dissatisfied with the conduct of police and the judiciary in the exercise of the law. African Guyanese indicated that these institutions are used as political weapons in some cases to intimidate and “victimize” black communities and African Guyanese. While some individuals view the conduct of some police officers positively, the majority of persons African Guyanese had a negative perception of police, referring to them as, amongst others, cruel, harsh, and provocative (Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Perceptions of police by African Guyanese**

## **2. Gender and anti-black- discrimination**

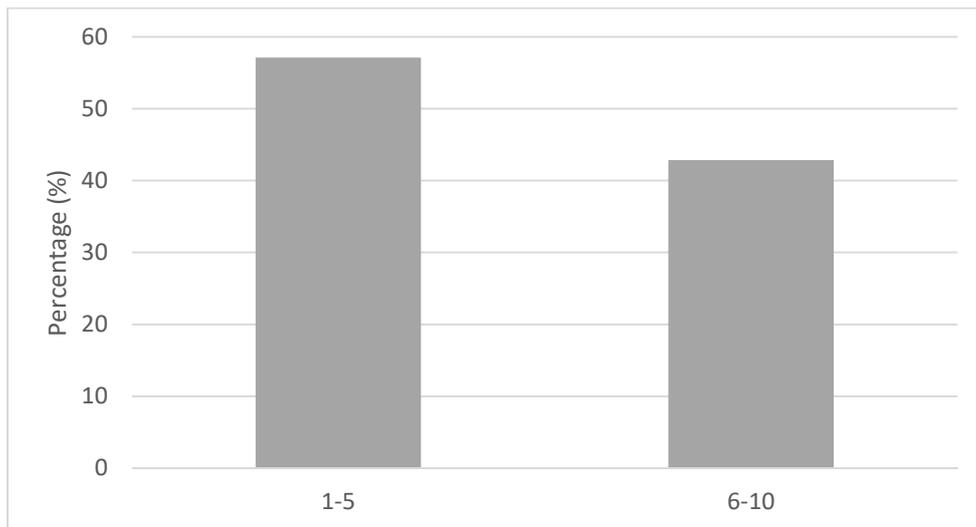
According to some African Guyanese, discrimination against African Guyanese is not differentiated by gender, with both males and females being equally impacted by discrimination (Figure 3). However, forty-six percent of organisations suggested that the discrimination meted out to African Guyanese is biased towards African males, particularly regarding the enforcement of laws. One participant recalled that her ex-husband was beaten and locked up by the police who later discovered that it was a case of mistaken identity.



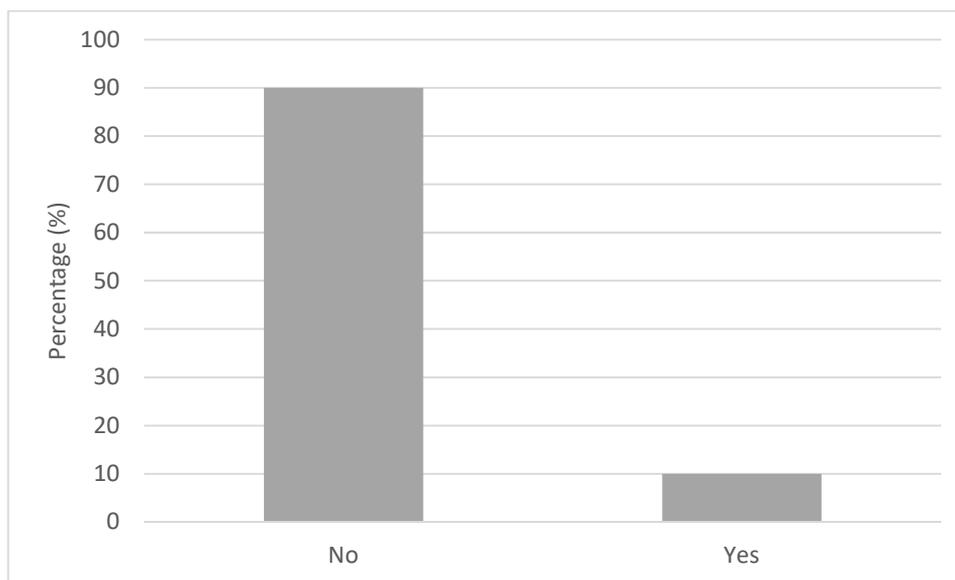
**Figure 2: Gender-based racial discrimination among African Guyanese**

### **3. Impact of COVID – 19 on African Guyanese**

The survey suggests that African Guyanese have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 55 percent of respondents reported that the quality of life of African Guyanese has decreased since the pandemic. While most persons are aware of the availability of assistance from government of the equivalent of USD 100 per household, the majority of persons have indicated that they have not received this assistance to date (Figure 4).



**Figure 3: Post-COVID situation of African Guyanese**



**Figure 4: Receipt of COVID relief assistance**

#### **4. Government’s response**

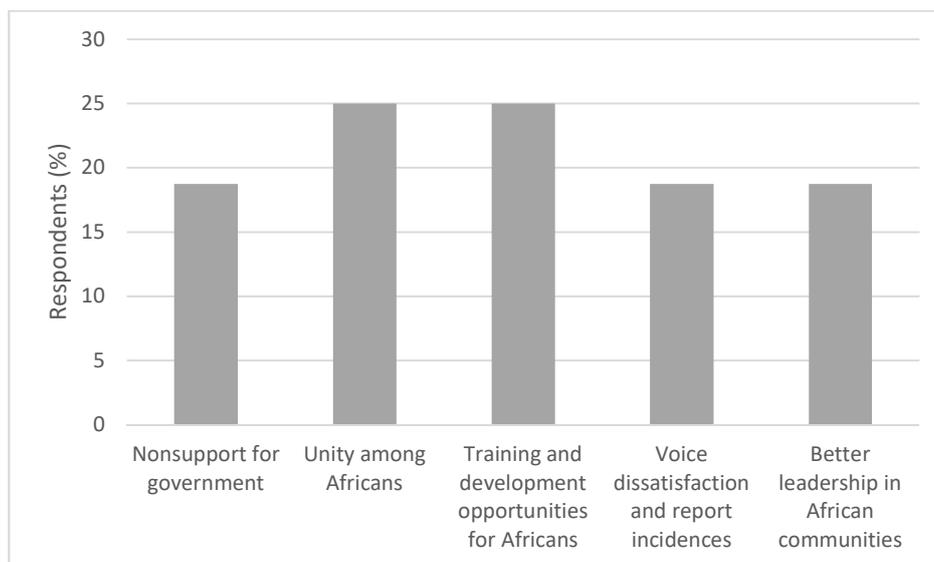
Respondents collectively agreed that the government has not addressed allegations of discrimination against African Guyanese. In fact, a significant majority of the organisations felt that government’s actions have directly and indirectly contributed to furthering instability and perpetuating discrimination against African Guyanese.

#### **5. Response from Civil Society Organisations**

Most civil society organisations have not responded adequately to reduce racial discrimination against African Guyanese. This was the view held by respondents. Those organisations that have attempted to respond often lacked adequate technical and financial resources to make a significant impact. Some organisations provide support in areas such as skills training however, it was believed that the lack of resources has limited the work of most civil society groups. It was hoped that they might be able to play a greater role in bridging the gap with the regard to the provision of moral, technical, and financial support African Guyanese communities.

#### **6. How can African Guyanese combat discrimination?**

Among the actions suggested to assist individuals and communities in combatting discrimination are the promotion of unity in African communities; facilitating development and training opportunities for African Guyanese at the community level; and becoming more vocal about observed discriminatory actions against African Guyanese(Figure 6).



**Figure 5: Actions to manage discrimination**

## 7. Important focus areas

Participants have requested that in the United Nations report specific attention be given to systemic racism, political persecution, economic suppression of Africans, revision of the education system, justice for crimes perpetrated against Africans and strengthening of cultural practices and institutions.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

Information for this study was gathered from thirty-one civil society organisations in Guyana through surveys and focus-group discussions. The organisations were drawn from regions of the country with the largest populations of African Guyanese.

## **3. SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

The following ten questions were posed to respondents:

### **IDPADA-G SURVEY QUESTIONS**

1. How would you describe the position faced by African Guyanese today? Are African Guyanese experiencing discrimination? In what areas do you observe discrimination?
2. Can you give examples of discrimination that you know of first-hand?
3. Is government doing anything to address this discrimination at the local, regional, and national levels? If so, what is being done?
4. The UN is particularly interested in how law enforcement deals with people of African descent. How would you and the members of your organization characterize police conduct in your community?

5. Do you feel confident that the police and the judiciary are even-handed and fair towards African Guyanese?
6. How would your members rate the quality of their lives as they cope with COVID 19 (1 poor – 10 excellent)? Is government being responsive? Is government support to families and individuals advertised to ensure that all Guyanese are aware of assistance? Is assistance easily accessible?
7. What would you wish us to stress in our report to the UN?
8. What actions do you think can be taken by us to deal with the discrimination that we experience?
9. Is the discrimination gender bias? If so, in which circumstances is it prevalent?
10. Are our organisations sufficiently proactive in looking after the interest of our communities? If not, for what reason?