

Country Technical Note
on Indigenous Peoples' Issues

Republic of Guyana



Investing in rural people

Country technical note on indigenous peoples' issues

REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ACTO:	Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization
AIDSESP:	Inter-ethnic Peruvian Forest Development Association
APA:	Amerindian Peoples' Association
ASDU:	Agricultural Sector Development Unit
CIDOB:	Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia
COICA:	Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin
COIAB:	Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations in the Brazilian Amazon
CONFENIAE:	Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities in the Ecuadorean Amazon
CONIVE:	National Indian Council of Venezuela
IFAD:	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO:	International Labour Organization
FOAG:	Federation of Amerindian Organizations in French Guyana
IPAF:	Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility
MAG:	Ministry of Agriculture
OIS:	Indigenous Peoples Organization of Surinam
OPIAC:	Organization of Indigenous Peoples in the Colombian Amazon
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA:	United Nations Population Fund
WHO:	World Health Organization

Indigenous Peoples Profile – Republic of Guyana

To facilitate policy implementation at the country level, IFAD's Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples (2009) recommended that Country Technical Notes be prepared to provide country-specific information on indigenous peoples, as well as to contribute to the development of country programme strategies and project design. A number of them have been prepared by indigenous peoples' leaders with the support of indigenous peoples' organizations. The Notes are intended as 'living documents' to support learning on indigenous peoples' issues.

We thank those who have contributed to the preparation and update of this note. A special thanks goes to IWGIA. The Indigenous World book which is issued every year by IWGIA provides a source of updated and reliable information. We wish to thank Zahra Hdidou for supporting the 2017 update.

1. Demographics, history, language and culture

1.1 Population

2012 Census.

Total population:	746,955
Men:	371,805 (49.8 %)
Women:	375,150 (50.2 %)

Indigenous population (Amerindian peoples)

Total indigenous/Amerindian population: 78,492 representing 10,5% per cent of the country's total population.¹

Men: No specific data available²

Women: No specific data available

1.2 Age structure

In the absence of specific data, the following table shows the age and gender structure of Guyana's total population and population in rural areas, where indigenous peoples have the greatest presence.

¹ 2012 Census Compendium

² The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in its report CERD/C/GUY/CO/14 of 4 April 2006, expressed concern about the lack of disaggregated statistical data on the number and economic situation of indigenous peoples in Guyana and about their equal enjoyment of the rights guaranteed in the Convention. In the absence of such statistical information, the Committee found it difficult to assess the extent of racial and ethnic discrimination within the territory of the State party (Guyana). The Committee requested that the State party provide in its next periodic report statistical information on the economic situation of members of indigenous peoples and their communities, as well as on their enjoyment of the rights protected under article 5 of the Convention, disaggregated by, inter alia, gender, age, and rural/urban population.

Table 1: Population distribution by age group in Coastland and Hinterland regions 2012

Age group	Coastland			Hinterland		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
0-4	30,072	28,846	58,918	5,781	5,698	11,479
5-9	30,405	29,815	60,220	5,583	5,524	11,107
10-14	36,523	35,285	71,808	5,764	5,572	11,336
15-19	38,086	37,604	75,690	4,610	4,293	8,903
20-24	27,987	28,731	56,718	3,346	3,208	6,554
25-29	22,660	24,166	46,826	2,831	2,436	5,267
30-34	23,373	24,776	48,149	2,741	2,253	4,994
35-39	23,033	24,076	47,109	2,417	1,973	4,390
40-44	22,029	22,066	44,095	2,201	1,679	3,880
45-49	19,508	19,981	39,489	2,056	1,563	3,619
50-54	17,279	17,343	34,622	1,610	1,223	2,833
55-59	12,827	14,005	26,832	1,236	1,009	2,245
60-64	9,606	10,346	19,952	882	696	1,578
65-69	6,038	6,641	12,679	616	556	1,172
70-74	4,398	5,128	9,526	421	397	818
75-79	2,736	3,591	6,327	305	283	588
80+	2,563	4,099	6,664	282	288	573
Total	329123	336499	665,622	42682	38651	81,333

Source: Guyana 2012 Census Compendium

Table 2: Population distribution by age group and sex

Age group	Males	Females	Total
0-4	35,853	34,544	70,397
5-9	35,988	35,339	71,327
10-14	42,287	40,857	83,144
15-19	42,696	41,897	84,593
20-24	31,333	31,939	63,272
25-29	25,491	26,602	52,093
30-34	26,114	27,029	53,143
35-39	25,450	26,049	51,499
40-44	24,230	23,745	47,975
45-49	21,564	21,544	43,108
50-54	18,889	18,566	37,455
55-59	14,063	15,014	29,077
60-64	10,488	11,042	21,530
65-69	6,654	7,197	13,851
70-74	4,819	5,525	10,344
75-79	3,041	3,874	6,915
80+	2,845	4,387	7,232
Total	371,805	375,150	746,955

Source: Guyana 2012 Census Compendium

Table 3: Population distribution by age group 2012

Selected age group	Number	Percentage
Under 18 years	277,023	37.09
18 to 39 years	252,434	33.80
40 to 64 years	179,171	23.99
65 years and over	38,327	5.13

Source: Guyana 2012 Census Compendium

According to the Ethnolinguistic Atlas of Indigenous Peoples of Latin America, Guyana has the largest number of indigenous peoples in a single country in the entire Caribbean. In 1980, Guyana established an administrative system based on 10 regions, replacing one that dated back to the colonial era.

Guyana's indigenous peoples are as follows: Arawaks or Lokonos, Warau, Caribs or Karinya, Akawaio, Patamona, Arekuna, Makushi, Wapichana and Waiwai.³ They live predominantly in the regions of the interior. Indigenous peoples account for more than three quarters of the population in regions 8 and 9 (75.9 per cent and 89.2 per cent, respectively) and close to two thirds of the population in region 1 (62.2 per cent). There are several indigenous peoples in Guyana not recognized by the Census: Trío, Taruma and Atorad (original peoples of America).

1.3 History

Before the Europeans arrived, the area where Guyana is now located was inhabited by Arawak and Carib tribes. The Arawak called it Guayana, meaning "land of many waters", because of its wetlands and coasts lined with mangroves and marshes. The Arawak were displaced by the Caribs, who dominated much of the territory, and moved to the islands of the Caribbean Sea from which they derived their name. Both the Arawak and the Carib were nomadic peoples organized into families of 15 or 20 who lived by hunting and fishing. At the time the Europeans arrived there were an estimated 500,000 inhabitants.

Dutch explorers, attracted by the legend of El Dorado, began to settle in Guyana during the sixteenth century. The Dutch West India Company established a fort at Kyk-Over-Al from 1616 to 1621 in what they called the County of Essequibo. This was the first fort in Guyana, which at the time had three settlements: Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo. Attempts to settle the interior failed, and the Europeans settled along the coast in the mid-1700s, where they set up plantations worked by African slaves, mainly producing coffee, cotton and sugarcane, which became the major crop.

In 1796, the Dutch colony was taken by the English, who had already begun to bring in massive numbers of slaves. A slave uprising in 1763 led by Cuffy, Guyana's national hero, became known as the Berbice slave rebellion. Those slaves who managed to escape the plantations went to live in the forest with the indigenous peoples. The resulting racial and cultural mix gave rise to the so-

³ <http://acnur.org/biblioteca/pdf/6291.pdf?view=1>

called Cimarrons. These groups were joined by Chinese, Japanese and Indian labourers brought in by the English as low-cost manpower.

The colonies de Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice were officially ceded to the United Kingdom in the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1814 and at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. In 1831 they were consolidated as British Guiana.

After slavery was abolished in 1834, thousands of indentured labourers were brought to Guyana to replace slaves on sugarcane plantations, mainly from India, but also from Portugal and China. In this regard, much is known about how the European Conquistadors decimated the local population in various ways after the Conquest, and replaced them through the importation of African slaves to work on the plantations – but little is known about the immigration of over half a million indentured labourers from India who left an indelible cultural imprint on the region that is apparent to the present day.⁴

Most Guyanese indigenous peoples still live in their Pre-Columbian territories, in relatively well-defined ecological niches, and with cross-border cultural and economic ties to neighbouring populations. In Guyana indigenous populations are known as Amerindians⁵ to distinguish them from other peoples who arrived during the slave trade, the colonial era or in more recent times.

Guyana achieved its independence on 26 May 1966, and although the recognition of indigenous territories was one of the conditions on which the former British colony became independent, that recognition has not been fulfilled. Of the 111,000 km² claimed by indigenous peoples, only about 16,000 km² have been awarded to them.

The situation of original peoples in Guyana is quite unique. They were the first in the entire continent of Abya Yala to obtain rights to their lands granted by the Dutch settlers. As early as 1784 they enjoyed “full and free” property to them. Since Guyana is a country crossed by dozens of rivers and forests, mainly impenetrable rainforest, this enabled them to keep their territories free of major aggressions until close to the end of the twentieth century. The European settlers and immigrants stayed in locations where they could establish large plantations, adjacent to the rainforest but without penetrating it, and along the coast where 80 per cent of the country’s population live today.⁶

The virtual isolation of Guyana’s indigenous peoples until nearly the end of the twentieth century led to a system of self-government that was highly decentralized in terms of decision-making. They were able to maintain the system in use during the colonial era whereby “municipal captains” govern communities known as municipal councils.

Property titles are currently awarded to these councils. They enjoy a high level of self-government, which was recognized with the Constitutional Reform of 1999. This form of indigenous government is coordinated by regional and national associations whose apex authorities are the Amerindian Peoples’ Association and the Organization of Guyanese Indigenous Peoples.

⁴ Brooks, Walter Ariel (2002). *Ecos del Colonialismo y la Revolución Industrial*. Guyana: Indios en América. <http://www.almargen.com.ar/sitio/seccion/historia/guyana/index.html>

⁵ The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in its report CERD/C/GUY/CO/14 of 4 April 2006, noted that the Amerindian Act of 2006 systematically refers to the indigenous peoples of Guyana as “Amerindians”. (Art. 2); and recommended that the State of Guyana, in consultation with all indigenous communities concerned, clarify whether “Amerindians” is the preferred term of these communities, that it consider the criteria laid down in article 1 of ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, as well as in the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 8, in defining indigenous peoples, and that it recognize the specific rights and entitlements accorded to indigenous peoples under international law.

⁶ <http://www.pueblosoriginariosenamerica.org/?q=libro/pueblos-origarios-en-america/pueblos-origarios-en-america/guyana>

2. Socio-economic, cultural and natural resources situation

2.1 Geographical distribution

Guyana is divided into 10 regions. The country's indigenous peoples are called Amerindians by the Government of Guyana.

Table 4: Regional Distribution of Amerindian population and percentage distribution of Amerindian population, Guyana 2012

	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Total
Number	17,846	8,834	2,820	7,066	1,270	1,801	6,833	8,009	20,808	3,205	78,492
% of total pop.	2.39	1.18	0.38	0.95	0.17	0.24	0.91	1.07	2.79	0.43	10.51
% of Amerindian pop.	22.74	11.25	3.59	9.00	1.62	2.29	8.71	10.20	26.51	4.08	100
Amerindian % of region	64.56	18.87	2.62	2.27	2.55	1.64	37.19	72.30	85.85	8.01	10.51

Source: 2012 Census Compendium

The greatest number of Amerindian peoples are in regions 1 and 9, with 2.39% and 2.79% of the total population of Guyana respectively. Similarly, 26.5% of the Amerindian population resides in region 9. Amerindian peoples account for 72.3% of the population in region 8 and over three quarters of the population in region 9 (85.85%).

2.2 Years of education, total and by gender

In the absence of specific data, the table below shows the percentage distribution of the population over 15 years of age in Guyana, by the highest year of education achieved, for each of the 10 regions. Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 are those with a greater indigenous presence.

Table 5: Distribution of Adult Population 15 Years and Over by Sex, Classified by Regions and Highest Education Reached, Guyana 2012

Region	None/Nursery /Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary	Post-Secondary	University/Tertiary	Other	Not stated
Region 1	1,079	5,306	7,710	117	284	5	485
Region 2	596	11,088	18,163	351	1,330	18	103
Region 3	1,575	21,604	46,284	1,339	4,864	156	618
Region 4	2,213	41,468	134,339	7,518	24,289	696	2,430

Region 5	555	11,452	20,007	928	1,353	26	193
Region 6	1,814	25,786	43,441	2,066	3,918	53	391
Region 7	484	2,763	7,305	153	322	14	140
Region 8	346	1,050	4,886	92	115	4	71
Region 9	600	2,175	9,587	128	421	8	31
Region 10	202	4,481	16,645	1,894	2,197	44	156
Total	9,464	127,173	308,367	14,586	39,093	1,024	4,618
Region 1	520	2,989	4,046	65	120	2	303
Region 2	294	5,759	9,014	191	558	9	60
Region 3	777	11,257	22,375	693	2,289	60	358
Region 4	1,048	20,340	64,217	3,759	10,678	313	1,387
Region 5	278	6,098	9,361	529	603	11	111
Region 6	842	13,268	21,022	1,173	1,797	23	201
Region 7	251	1,490	3,911	86	157	6	101
Region 8	154	640	2,802	42	50	1	45
Region 9	233	1,150	5,025	76	211	6	23
Region 10	88	2,236	7,934	1,073	878	20	96
Total	4,485	65,227	149,707	7,687	17,341	451	2,685
Region 1	559	2,317	3,664	52	164	3	182
Region 2	302	5,329	9,149	160	772	9	43
Region 3	798	10,347	23,909	646	2,575	96	260
Region 4	1,165	21,128	70,122	3,759	13,611	383	1,043
Region 5	277	5,354	10,646	399	750	15	82
Region 6	972	12,518	22,419	893	2,121	30	190
Region 7	233	1,273	3,394	67	165	8	39
Region 8	192	410	2,084	50	65	3	26
Region 9	367	1,025	4,562	52	210	2	8
Region 10	114	2,245	8,711	821	1,319	24	60
Total	4,979	61,946	158,660	6,899	21,752	573	1,933

Table 6: Socio-economic situation of indigenous peoples

Health

Maternal mortality rate

According to data from 2010, the maternal mortality rate at the national level in Guyana was 280⁷ per 1,000 live births, the second highest in Latin America and the Caribbean, next only to Haiti with 350. The maternal mortality rate among indigenous women is likely to be higher.

Maternal health

Although no specific data are available on the indigenous population, according to UNICEF data, Maternal Mortality in Guyana for 2015 was 229/100,000 live births⁸

Infant mortality rate

⁷ http://www.indexmundi.com/es/guyana/tasa_de_mortalidad_materna.html, based on adjusted maternal mortality rate data from UNICEF.

⁸ https://www.unicef.org/guyana/UNICEF_Situation_Analysis_2016.pdf

According to the 2012 census, the infant mortality rate is 32 per 1,000 for the Amerindian population. The high fertility rate among the Amerindian women (5.4) may be one of the primary reasons for their high infant and childhood mortality rates. The highest infant death rate of 32 deaths per 1,000 live births was exhibited by the Amerindian mothers followed by the East Indian and the Mixed-Heritage mothers with 19 and 16 deaths per 1,000 live births respectively.

Access to drinking water

Overall, 94% of the population in Guyana use an **improved source of drinking water** – 99% in urban areas, 93% in rural areas, 98% in coastal areas and 71% in interior areas (Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Public Health and UNICEF Guyana, April 2015). Among the regions, the situation in Region 9 (Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo) is considerably worse than in other regions; only 42% of the population in this region get its drinking water from an improved source. This is the region in which most Amerindian people live.

Education

No specific data are available for the indigenous population. However, the information below provides an idea of the educational situation in Guyana.

Net enrolment rate

The net enrolment rate in Guyana at the primary school level in 2012 was 98.3 per cent.

Net attendance rate

The net primary school attendance rate during the period 2005-2010 was 91 per cent for men and 93 per cent for women. For secondary school the rate was 70 per cent for men and 79 per cent for women.

Retention rate

The retention rate up to the highest grade of primary school during the period 2006-2009 was 83 per cent.

Housing

No specific data available.

Infrastructure

Sanitation

The percentage of Amerindian people living in houses with improved drinking water sources and improved sanitation is 39%, compared to the national percentage of 95%⁹.

The use of latrines is far from universal in indigenous areas. During the rainy season, run-off transfers fecal material to the rivers used for water supply. Since people rarely boil water before use, this raises the rate of diarrhea during such times of the year (National Development Strategy, 2001-2010).

Fertility rate: 5.4

⁹ Source: MICS 2014 (Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Public Health and UNICEF Guyana, April 2015)

3. National legislation: Indigenous peoples, lands and territories

Although Guyana has not subscribed to ILO Convention No. 169, a special law known as the Amerindian Act covers 63 indigenous communities and two indigenous special districts. However, not all the original peoples are included in the communities and districts, meaning that in practice a number of people are excluded from legal protection.

The communities that are recognized (covering 9,600 square kilometres of the 38,000 recognized as ancestral land by the government authorities – although the indigenous peoples claim 69,200 square kilometres as their own) enjoy a broad range of rights, including the election of indigenous representatives to the National Assembly. Nevertheless, the fact that some communities are excluded from these rights led the Amerindian Peoples' Association in 1993 to propose an amendment to the Amerindian Act and a constitutional reform – granted in 1999 – that ensures fundamental rights to protect indigenous culture and ways of life, including language, and introduce the concept of self-determination.

The Amerindian Act has not yet entered into effect, mainly owing to pressures from mining companies. By virtue of the reform, 20 per cent of profits generated by operations were to be allocated to a fund benefiting indigenous peoples. The mining companies considered the percentage too high and the Government has not dared to enforce it since. Canadian and Brazilian mining companies have total control of the sector. In addition to mining, indigenous peoples face deforestation of tropical forest and rainforest. The Amerindian Act, for its part, does not recognize all of the land claimed by the indigenous peoples as their own.¹⁰

During the Regional Workshop on Land and territories of Indigenous People and Other Tribal Communities of the Amazon Region held in Brasilia from 3 to 5 November 2009, the delegation from Guyana stated:¹¹

1. With respect to the current policies regulating indigenous land tenure, this Government has undertaken to guarantee that titles are awarded to all Amerindian peoples and settlements through their authentically elected Councils and that borders and settlements are clearly defined and delimited. Land use and management in *aldeas* [villages] and related resources: Titled villages of indigenous peoples own the forests within their titled village areas; in addition, forests in reserves under the control of Amerindian peoples are significant and, if harvested sustainably, have the potential to support the indigenous population for many generations to come. The Amerindian Law of 2006 gives Amerindians veto power in matters of small- and medium-scale mining within their villages and adjacent areas. This includes mining in streams and rivers that pass through their titled lands.
2. The administration has moved to demarcate the lands of the 74 existing titled villages, including in the case of applications from untitled communities to obtain titles for their lands. In the latter instance, the Government has been in consultations with the villages concerned to guarantee [that] villagers understand the process and procedures to be followed, and to guarantee good will on the part of the Government. Also today, while indigenous peoples in some countries are being dispossessed of their lands, we have been giving them what is legitimately theirs. More than 70 per cent of Amerindian communities

¹⁰ <http://www.pueblosoriginariosenamerica.org/?q=libro/pueblos-originarios-en-america/pueblos-originarios-en-america/guyana>

¹¹ Brasilia report. Regional Workshop on Lands and Territories of Indigenous Peoples and Other Tribal Communities in the Amazon Region. Official position of the delegation from Guyana as member of ACTO.
http://www.otca.info/portal/admin/_upload/documentos/informe_de_Brasilia_esp.pdf

in Guyana now hold title to their traditional lands and most of these lands are within the Amazon or savannah areas.

The new Ministry for Indigenous Peoples Affairs (MoIPA) aims to "enhance the social, economic and environmental well-being of Indigenous Peoples and their lands through collaboration, sustainable development and appropriate legislation, while at the same time ensuring the preservation of Indigenous culture and traditional knowledge"¹². The new Minister for MoIPA and Vice President of the Republic, Sydney Allcock - widely accepted as a pioneer of indigenous rural community development - won the Caribbean Awards for Excellence in 2010. The Ministry is running several development projects for indigenous people in Guyana including the Hinterland Employment Youth Service targeting 2000 youth in one hundred and six communities across Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9; the Amerindian Development Fund (ADF) (partnered with UNDP) which will be established to provide funding to support the socio-economic development of Amerindian communities and villages, through the implementation of their Community Development Plans (CDPs); the Low Carbon Development Strategy (see below); and the Amerindian Land Titling (ALT) Project. In 2018 significant allocation will be provided for hinterland development for the economic empowerment of indigenous people. Among the transformative projects on the horizon is the flagship initiative a Hinterland Green Enterprise Development Centre which will be constructed at a cost of \$200 million at Bina Hill Institute in Region 9¹³. Other initiatives include youth employment, coffee farming, processing and packaging facility, an agro-processing facility, and ICT programmes to contribute to reducing inequality.

Guyana has been at the forefront of the move toward a REDD mechanism since the offer made by President Bharrat Jagdeo in 2006 to the UK to establish a bilateral partnership to determine how to protect the entirety of the Guyanese rainforest in exchange for economic incentives (Jagdeo, 2008). The UK did not take up the offer, but in November 2009 Guyana and Norway signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for funding of up to USD 250 million over five years. The MOU provides performance-related finance to implement Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), a national plan to reorient Guyana's economy on to a low-carbon path. Under this Strategy Guyana will harness REDD+ finance to make strategic investments to reduce GHG emissions in the energy and transportation sector, along with fostering the development of alternative low-carbon industries to move the economy away from extractive industries¹⁴. Guyana is developing a national-level system for REDD, where payments are linked to the area of the State Forest Estate. Titled Amerindian communities will have the option of opting into the agreement, receiving payments either directly or through an Amerindian Development Fund.

3.1 Factors impeding the exercise of rights

Since the end of two decades of one-party dictatorship in Guyana, euphemistically described as "cooperative socialism", an incredible amount of pressure has been placed on the country's natural resources. More than 10 million hectares of rainforest (an area the size of Portugal), has been leased to foreign timber companies, many of them with track records of concern elsewhere in the world.

A mining bonanza is under way, with a horde of foreign companies engaged in prospection in the interior. More than one tenth of the country is covered by mining concessions, many of them on

¹² MoIPA website: <https://moipa.gov.gy/about-us/>

¹³ <https://moipa.gov.gy/significant-allocations-for-hinterland-development-in-budget-2018/>

¹⁴ <https://theredddesk.org/countries/guyana>

territory claimed by Venezuela. Guyana now has the privilege to be host to one of the largest gold mines in South America, which in 1995 following a ruptured retaining dike spilled three million cubic feet of cyanide-contaminated waste into the country's major river. This tragedy was qualified as a "national environmental disaster" by then President Cheddi Jagan. Those who bore the brunt of the accident were the country's 60,000 indigenous peoples, who live mainly in the sparsely populated interior but whose land rights continue to be curtailed and have not been reaffirmed by the Government since 1969.¹⁵

Although the Geology and Mines Commission has the legal authority to issue operating permits for all types of minerals – including when deposits are located on indigenous land – the Government has adopted a policy whereby it must first obtain the express permission of the communities affected. This may appear to be a positive and progressive position on indigenous rights. However, much remains to be done and there continue to be issues of concern.

Since the above policy is not institutionalized in the form of a law, there is no legal support to ensure that it will not be ignored by the Geology and Mines Commission, as has been the case in the past. On the other hand, the land for which the Amerindians hold property titles comprise a small part of those to which the indigenous peoples of Guyana have claimed rights.

Currently, indigenous peoples have been awarded title to just one fourth of the area recommended by the Lands and Surveys Commission – set up in 1967 pursuant to a legally established condition when the country achieved independence – and approximately one seventh of the area identified by the Amerindians themselves as their own.

The Government's inability to address the issue of indigenous territorial rights is also causing problems in connection with the establishment of a system of protected rights. Several communities, such as the Patamona and the Rupununi, have rejected the creation of national parks on their lands until such time as their territorial rights are fully recognized by the national authorities.

Full recognition of the Amerindians' rights to their land is an incontrovertible measure to check the depredations of multinational mining companies (mainly Canadian) and the Asian timber companies operating in the country.

The indigenous peoples of Guyana have mobilized around this objective. For instance, in October 1997, all the community leaders of the Waiwai, Wapichana and Macusi peoples set up the Amerindian Council of Touchau in region 9, to defend their ancestral territories from mining and timber companies. In October 1998, six aboriginal Akawaio and Pemón leaders from Upper Mazaruni filed the first suit in the country's history for territorial rights with the High Court of Guyana. "Our communities have been requesting title to these lands, which we recognize as our own, since the Amerindian Land Commission visited our communities in 1967. Since then we have attempted on many occasions to discuss the problem, always without success", reads the document presented to the Court.¹⁶

¹⁵ Bello, Luis Jesús (1999). Los derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas en Venezuela [The rights of indigenous peoples in Venezuela]. IWGIA. http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0352_derechos_venezuela.pdf

¹⁶ Source: WRM Bulletin No.17, November 1998. <http://www.wrm.org.uy/boletin/17/Guyana.html>.

Although the recognition of indigenous territories was one of the conditions of independence for the former British colony in 1966, that recognition has not been fulfilled. Of the 111,000 km² claimed by the indigenous peoples, only 16,000 km² have been granted.

Threats to the indigenous population are posed mainly by the granting of concessions to multinational companies for timber and mining operations. In addition, mining has caused major pollution in the bodies of water used as a source of supply by indigenous populations, representing a significant health hazard, according to the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA).

4. International legislation: Treaties, declarations and conventions

Table 7: Status of international treaties, declarations and conventions

Status	ILO Convention No. 169	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	Kyoto Protocol	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	CEDAW Optional Protocol	Belem Do Pará Convention
Signature	1989	07/09/2007		17/07/1980	Not signed	10/01/95
Ratification	Not ratified		05-08-2003 (a)	17/07/1980	No	28/02/96

4.1 Factors limiting or preventing compliance with treaties, declarations and conventions ratified by the country

The Amerindian Peoples' Association (APA) reports that indigenous peoples' rights are often violated, particularly in connection with land. Some indigenous peoples still lack property title to their lands and based on that argument are not properly consulted on projects being implemented in these areas. Accordingly, on 20 May 2011, the COICA Coordinator for Economic Cooperation, Juan Carlos Jintiach, asked the Governments of Guyana, Surinam and France to ratify ILO Convention No.169 on the rights of indigenous peoples, since the ability to place greater pressure on the Government to recognize their rights is dependent upon it.

5. Regional, national and grass-roots organizations and networks

Since the Cooperative Republic of Guyana achieved its independence late (1966), and given its limited territorial area and constant disputes with Venezuela about certain territorial areas, Guyana has very few organizations engaged in defending the rights of its indigenous peoples. Among those that do exist are:

Amerindian Peoples' Association (APA)

One of the main objectives of this organization is the restoration of natural resources in the areas where indigenous peoples live, since their livelihoods depend upon them (e.g. many of their projects focus on reforestation and improvements in mining). In addition, APA is concerned with the full recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples. APA has implemented various campaigns to require full respect and protection for the rights of Guyana's indigenous peoples in national policy and programmes, including those relating to Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD).

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Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations in the Amazon River Basin (COICA)

COICA is a non-profit private-law organization with legal personality, registered with the Ministry of Social Welfare of Ecuador under No. 1255 dated 24 August 1995 for an indefinite duration and having its permanent headquarters in Quito (Ecuador).

Membership: Inter-ethnic Peruvian Forest Development Association (AIDSESEP); APA; Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB); Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations in the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB); Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities in the Ecuadorean Amazon (CONFENIAE); Federation of Amerindian Organizations in French Guyana (FOAG); National Indian Council of Venezuela (CONIVE); Indigenous Peoples Organization of Surinam (OIS); and Organization of Indigenous Peoples in the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC).

COICA website: <http://www.coica.org>

Contact information:

President: Tony James: apaguy@networksgy.com; chiefkokoi@yahoo.com

The Wapichan People of Guyana (South America) have set up their own ground-breaking system to defend their human rights and monitor their ancestral lands against harmful development. Community information has been collected using a grassroots land use monitoring arrangement that involves community monitoring teams, the use of smartphone technology, drones, and community digital maps – all controlled and managed directly by the villages. Today, the Wapichan People are launching a locally owned and managed website to present their monitoring information on the internet. The web site can be accessed here: <http://wapichanao.communitylands.org/>.¹⁷

In 2015, the Wapichan Villages and organisations received the prestigious Equator Prize from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in recognition of their prolonged efforts to legally secure their ancestral lands and conserve extensive rainforests and diverse wildlife habitats in the South Rupununi. The community based organisation **South Central Peoples Development Association (SCPDA)** and individual community leaders have also received the Guyanese Arrow of Achievement national service awards for their work in support of Wapichan land rights, sustainable land use and forest monitoring. The representative body of the Wapichan communities the **South and South Central Rupununi District Tshaos Council** was assisted by the SCPDA in stepping up their collective efforts to gain recognition of their traditional land. They also built a community owned drone with support from NGO Digital Democracy.

¹⁷ <http://www.forestpeoples.org/en/environmental-governance/press-release/2017/press-release-wapichan-people-expose-rights-violations>

6. Operations of IFAD and international cooperation

Ongoing:

- **Project title: Hinterland Environmentally Sustainable Agricultural Development Project**

Project area: All sub-regions of region 9 and in the Mabaruma and Moruca sub-regions of region 1.

Target group: 6,000 poor households, equivalent to 94 per cent of all poor households in the project area. At least 15 per cent of these households (900) will be headed by women, reflecting the overall proportion of women-headed households in the project area.

%IPs beneficiaries: 75%

Total IFAD financing USD: 8.460 million

Implementation period: 2016-2026

https://operations.ifad.org/web/ifad/operations/country/project/tags/guyana/2000001472/project_overview

Closed:

- **Project title: Rural Enterprise and Agricultural Development Project (READ)**

Project area: Pomeroon-Supenaam, Essequibo Islands-West Demerara, Demerara-Mahaica, Mahaica Berbice, East Berbice-Corentyne, Upper Demerara-Upper Berbice Regions

Target group: Rural people, farmers and operators of micro and small-scale enterprises, and poor or extremely poor rural men and women micro- and small entrepreneurs; particularly female-headed households. Carib and Awarak Amerindian groups

%IPs beneficiaries: 16%

Total IFAD financing USD: 5.760 million

Implementation period: 2009-2015

Other project financed by IFAD in Guyana through the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF):

- **Project Title: Building the Capacity of Wapichan People to Secure Traditional Lands and Sustainably Manage their Resources (2008)**

Organization: South Central People Development Association (SCPDA)

Target group: Wapichan

Grant amount: US\$24,000

This project was intended to build institutional capacity among Wapichan community leaders in the districts of Rupununi meridional and Rupununi centromeridional to achieve secure land tenure and long-term sustainable use of natural resources on community lands. Workshops and trainings sessions were held on key aspects of national legislation, the rights of indigenous peoples, and access to natural resources and the environment.

- **Project Title: Indigenous Rights capacity building for indigenous communities in Guyana, 2007-2008**

Indigenous group: Amerindian groups

Organisation of Implementation: Asociacion de Pueblos Amerindios (APA)
Donation amount USD: 20,000

Other international financing:

Inter-American Development Bank

- **Project title: Strengthening the housing delivery system for the indigenous Amerindian population**

Project number: GY-T1115 Status: implementation

Description: The objective is to support the Guyana Government improve service delivery for low income housing.

IDB financing: USD 100,000

<http://www.iadb.org/en/projects/project-description-title,1303.html?id=GY-T1115>

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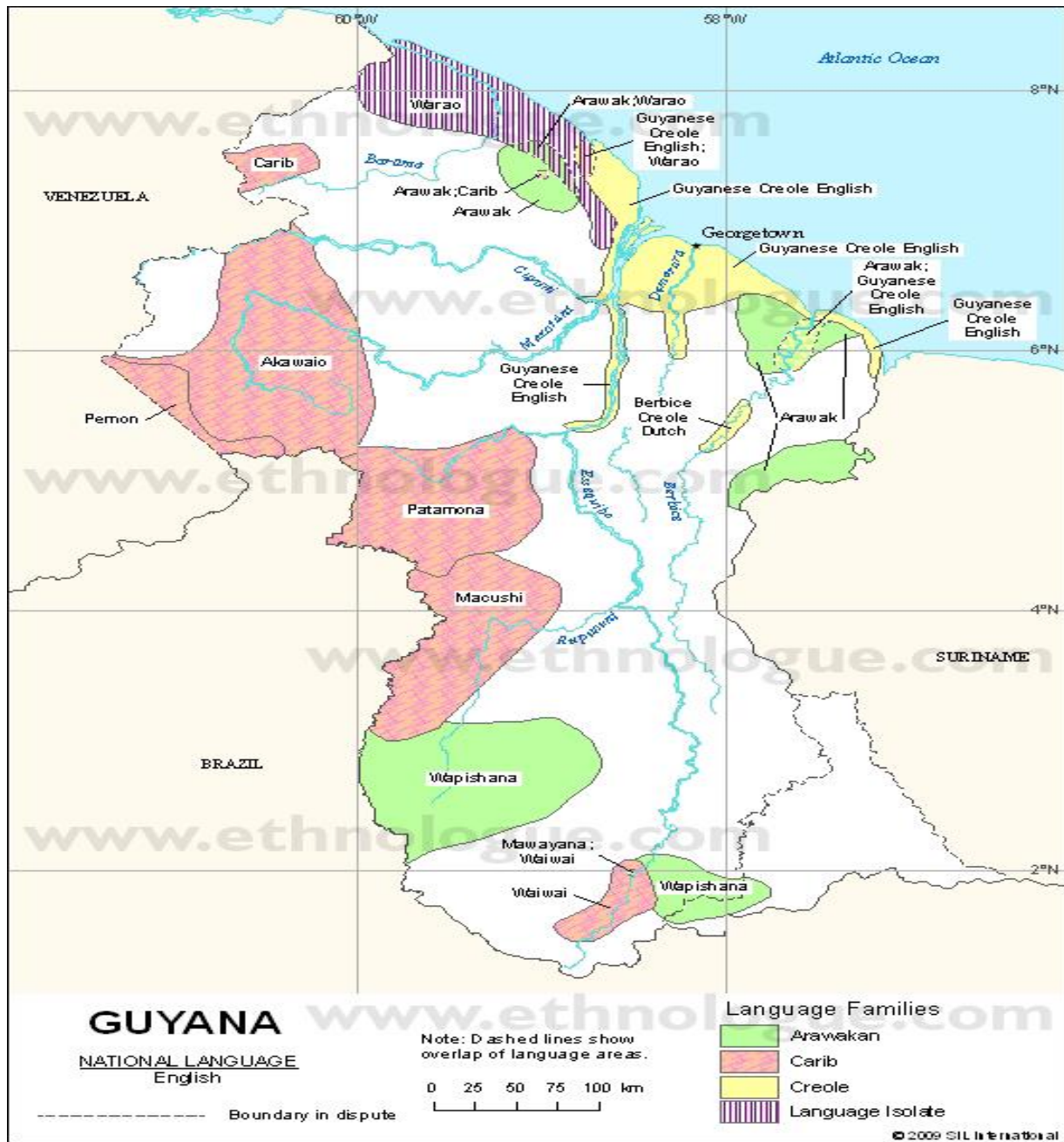
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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Map showing distribution of indigenous population and ethnolinguistic groups



On the basis of the ethnic-racial category, the 2002 Census only recorded the existence of “Amerindians” (68,675 people, 9.16 per cent of the national population).

