

## The local government system in

## Guyana



## Key facts

**POPULATION (Census 2002)<sup>1</sup>:** 751,223**AREA<sup>2</sup>:** 214,969 sq km**CAPITAL:** Georgetown**LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION TO GDP:** -**CURRENCY:** Guyana dollar (GYD)**HEAD OF STATE:** President Bharrat Jagdeo**HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:** Prime Minister Sam Hinds**FORM OF GOVERNMENT:** republic**PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:** unicameral**STATE STRUCTURE:** unitary**LANGUAGES:** English (official) Guyanese Creole, Portuguese, Hindi, Spanish, Akawaio, Macushi, Wai Wai, Arawak, Patamona, Warrau, Carib, Wapishiana, Arekuna (recognised)**NATIONAL ELECTIONS: last:** 2006; **turnout:** 68.8%; **next:** Aug 2011**LOCAL ELECTIONS: last:** 1994; **turnout:** - **next:** 2011**SUMMARY**

Guyana is a unitary republic with three spheres of government: central, regional and local. Local government is enshrined in Chapter VII of the constitution and the main governing legislation includes the Municipal and District Councils Act, 1988 and Local Government Act 1998. The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development has responsibility for overseeing local government, which comprises ten regional development councils (RDCs), seven municipalities and 65 neighbourhood democratic councils (NDCs). There are also 75 Amerindian village councils (AVCs). The municipalities and NDCs are responsible for raising and collecting taxes and the central government makes annual grants for specified developmental work. RDCs have responsibility for education, health and agriculture support whilst NDCs are responsible for waste collection and sanitation, roads/dams and markets. Municipalities are responsible for drainage and irrigation, waste collection and maintenance of infrastructure.

**1. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT**

Guyana is a unitary republic with a unicameral parliament known as the National Assembly. The head of state is an executive president indirectly elected as part of the party list system and is usually leader of the majority party. The National Assembly has 65 members elected for a five-year period; comprising 40 elected by proportional representation and 25 indirectly elected by regional assemblies. The cabinet is appointed by the president and may include no more than five individuals not sitting in the National Assembly.

**2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT****2.1 Constitutional provisions:**

Local government is enshrined in the constitution. Chapter VII, section 71(1) states that local government is a vital aspect of democracy and shall be organised so as to involve as many people as possible in the task of managing and developing the communities in which they live.

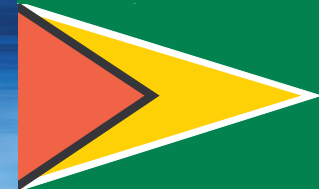
**2.2 Main legislative texts:**

Local government is governed by the following legislation:

- Municipal and District Councils Act, Chapter 28:01, 1969
- Local Government Act, Chapter 28:02, 1945
- Local Authorities Elections Act, Chapter 28:03, 1969
- Valuation for Rating Purposes Act, Chapter 28:04, 1969, Amended in 1971, 1972

**3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT****3.1 Local government within the state:**

Guyana is divided into ten regions for administrative purposes (second-tier government). Local government forms the third tier and comprises three types of council: regional, municipal and neighbourhood. The constitution does make provision for further sub-divisions, but these have not been realised.



**Table 1.** Distribution of councils and population (Census 2002)

Regional/RDCs	NDCs*	Municipality	AVCs	Population	% rural	
Barima-Waini	2	0	n/a	24,275	n/a	
Pomeroon-Supenaam	5	1	n/a	49,253	n/a	
Essequibo Is-W. Demerara	14	0	n/a	103,061	n/a	
Demerara-Mahaica	15	1	n/a	310,320	n/a	
Mahaica-Berbice	10	0	n/a	52,428	n/a	
East Berbice-Corentyne	16	3	n/a	123,695	n/a	
Cuyuni-Mazaruni	1	0	n/a	17,597	n/a	
Potaro-Siparuni	0	0	n/a	10,095	n/a	
Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo	1	0	n/a	19,387	n/a	
Upper Demerara-Berbice	1	1	n/a	41,112	n/a	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>751,223</b>	<b>65</b>	
Largest:	~295,000 <sup>a</sup>	~2,000	~250,000 <sup>c</sup>	n/a	310,320	-
Smallest:	5,574 <sup>b</sup>	~15,000	~13,000 <sup>d</sup>	n/a	10,095	-

\*enumerates only districts that are currently administered Source: Statistics Guyana<sup>1</sup> a) Demerara/Mahaica b) Potaro/Siparuni c) Georgetown d) Anna Regina

### 3.2 Ministerial oversight:

The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (MLGRD) is the government agency which links the various local government authorities with central government. The MLGRD facilitates, coordinates and monitors the execution of projects and programmes across the local government sector. The minister is responsible for supervising and administering laws pertaining to local government. In fulfilling these duties there have been instances in which the minister has suspended elected councillors from office. A degree of authority for the supervision of the neighbourhood democratic councils (NDCs) has been delegated by the MLGRD to the regional democratic councils (RDCs).

Amerindian Village Councils (AVCs) are governed by the Amerindian Act and therefore managed by the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. The MLGRD however, provides relevant support to these councils in the execution of these programmes and provision of services.

### 3.3 Council types:

There are three types of local government operating in Guyana: ten RDCs, seven municipalities and 65 NDCs. There are also 75 Amerindian village councils (AVCs).

#### 3.3.1 Regional democratic councils (RDCs)

operate as decentralised offices of central government delivering services on its behalf. The ten regions have councils elected to govern them for five-year terms. The function of the regions is to provide all services necessary for the wellbeing of the citizens within their jurisdiction. The RDCs are required to establish three committees – finance, works and social

development – and can set up additional committees at their discretion. Regional chairs appoint advisory committees and the RDCs have an additional oversight role with regards to the NDCs.

**3.3.2 Town or municipal councils** are responsible for the services allocated to them under the Municipal and District Councils Act 1998. Like RDCs, municipal councils are required to establish finance, works and social development committees and have full discretion to establish further committees as they see fit. Like regional chairs, mayors also appoint advisory committees. The MLGRD has direct oversight of municipalities since 1994, although the municipalities of Georgetown and New Amsterdam do have greater autonomy than the rest.

**3.3.3 Neighbourhood democratic councils (NDCs)** carry out the responsibilities allocated to them in the Local Government Act, 1998. The NDCs must establish two committees, finance and works, and beyond these have full discretion to establish committees as they see fit. The chairperson appoints an advisory committee, but the council retains executive powers.

#### 3.3.4 Amerindian village councils (AVC):

The Amerindian Act provides for separate Amerindian village councils of the indigenous people of Guyana, with responsibilities similar to other local government councils.

## 4. ELECTIONS

### 4.1 Recent local elections:

In 1994 local government elections were held and chairpersons for the NDCs and councillors for the municipalities were elected. Elections were held for RDCs only in 2006.

### 4.2 Voting system:

The system for local elections of councillors is proportional representation, based on universal suffrage of citizens who have attained the age of 18. Councillors are elected by the entire electorate of the authority; therefore there is no ward system. RDC councillors are elected for a term of office of five years.

Councillors in the municipalities and NDCs are elected for terms of three years. The mayors, chairpersons and their deputies are elected indirectly by the councillors on an annual basis. The chairperson of the NDC is elected annually.

### 4.3 Elected representatives:

The 75 Amerindian councils sit for terms of two years. These are elected by the indigenous peoples. Decision-making is by the full council following reports and recommendations made by the sub-committees.

### 4.4 Women's representation:

In 2008, only 5% of all councillors were women; none are regional chairs, though two regional vice-chairs are female. One of the deputy mayors is a woman, but there are no female mayors. Two of the NDC chairs are women and there are two women vice-chairs.

## 5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### 5.1 Legal requirement:

The constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana section 71 requires that involvement of all stakeholders, inclusive of communities, is obtained.

### 5.2 Implementation:

Local authorities are required to hold regular community meetings as part of the democratic and inclusive nature of local government. Issues pertinent to the needs of communities and

developmental potential are discussed and mechanisms for service delivery are decided.

**5.3 E-government:**

E-government utilised by local government organs, particularly the ministry and the RDCs include use of the Integrated Financial Management System (IFMAS) and posting of Invitation for Bids (IFBS) on the national procurement website. IFMAS is accessed by the respective government agencies (ministry and RDC) whilst the website is for public use.

**6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

The Guyana Association of Local Authorities (GALA) is a voluntary body financed by membership fees and drawing its membership from councillors of the NDCs and the municipal councils.

**7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

NDCs are overseen by the RDCs while the municipalities and RDCs are overseen by the MLGRD. The relations between these spheres of government are conducted through organised as well as ad-hoc meetings. GALA is actively involved in the promotion of open relations between central and local government.

**8. MONITORING SYSTEMS**

The MLGRD conducts monitoring exercises to ensure that local authorities operate within their legal and administrative parameters and that budgets and work programmes are effectively implemented. Further, there are three independent scrutiny bodies relating to local government: the Auditor General's Office, the Central Housing and Planning Authority and the Central Board of Health.

**9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES**

Local governments are not permitted to set deficit budgets.

**9.1 Locally raised revenue:**

The municipalities and NDCs are responsible for raising and collecting taxes.

**9.2 Transfers:**

There is no revenue-sharing policy, but central government does provide subventions to local government bodies on an annual basis. These grants are for specified developmental work or activities.

**9.3 Local authority staff:**

RDC staff are recruited by central government, which retains the power to hire and dismiss staff. Although the law allows for the deployment of central government staff to local government, it is uncommon for this to take place. The RDCs are required to designate a chief

**Table 2.** Aggregate revenue (2005) and expenditure (2001) for local government

Revenue (2005)	G\$m	Expenditure (2001)	G\$m
<b>Government transfers</b>	200	<b>Administrative and operational</b>	
<b>Local revenue</b>	420	Salaries total	125.6
-	-	Administrative costs	28.6
-	-	<b>Service delivery</b>	-
-	-	Works – capital and current	331.2
Miscellaneous/other	-	Other	85.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>571</b>

Source: Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development\*

executive officer as head of the paid service, normally referred to as the regional executive officer (REO). This officer is also designated as the accounting officer and is accountable to the MLGRD and the Ministry of Finance as it relates to the execution of their programmes and utilisation of funding provided. The regional chairs and vice-chairs normally work full-time for their RDC and are remunerated accordingly.

The chairperson of the NDC works part-time and is remunerated at a rate determined by the MLGRD. The RDCs are responsible for the approval of the appointment of staff by all the NDCs. The legislation covering NDCs stipulates that they must be headed by an overseer, who collects rates in the absence of any other officer. Overseers and assistant overseers of the NDCs are also appointed by the MLGRD. In the NDCs the staffing structure is relatively flat with the overseer managing a structure comprising heads of division supported by general staff.

There are six municipalities, the mayors and deputy mayors of Georgetown and New Amsterdam work full-time, the mayors and deputy mayors of the other four municipalities are part-time and all are remunerated accordingly. Municipalities must appoint a town clerk (head of the paid service), clerk of markets, engineer, medical health officer, environmental officer and municipal treasurer.

**10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY**

**10.1 RDCs:**

RDCs administer services such as education, health, agriculture support and public works. They also coordinate the activities of local NDCs, providing support where necessary, and identify and undertake revenue-earning projects within the region.

**10.2 NDCs:**

NDCs are required to provide services such as solid waste collection and disposal, sanitation, rehabilitation of roads and dams and operation of markets, etc. They also levy and collect rates.

**10.3 Municipalities:**

Municipalities are also required to execute a range of services such as drainage and irrigation, solid waste collection and disposal, maintenance of infrastructure, market operation and management and child welfare. They too levy and collect rates.

**10.4 Amerindian village councils:**

The responsibilities for the village councils are similar to other local government councils, however they have no structures for self-financing.

**References and useful websites**

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List of NDCs/Municipalities  
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2. UN statistics  
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2008/Table03.pdf>
3. IMF statistics [www.imf.org/external/data.htm](http://www.imf.org/external/data.htm)
4. Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development  
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5. Government of Guyana [www.gina.gov.gy](http://www.gina.gov.gy)
6. UNDP Human Development Report 2010  
[www.hdr.undp.org](http://www.hdr.undp.org)
7. Local Government Association website
8. Local government legislation  
[www.gecom.org.gy/local\\_government.html](http://www.gecom.org.gy/local_government.html)
9. Guyana Electoral Commission  
[www.gecom.org.gy](http://www.gecom.org.gy)



## Annex A. Summary of service provision in different spheres of government

Service	Delivering authority			Remarks
	Central	Regional	Local Government	
<b>GENERAL ADMINISTRATION</b>				
Police	■			
Fire protection	■			
Civil protection	■			
Criminal justice	■			
Civil justice	■			
Civil status register	■			
Statistical office	■			
Electoral register	■			
<b>EDUCATION</b>				
Pre-school	■			Private
Primary		■		Private
Secondary	■	■		Private
Vocational and technical	■	■		
Higher education	■			
Adult education	■			Private
<b>SOCIAL WELFARE</b>				
Kindergarten and nursery	■			Private
Family welfare services	■			
Welfare homes	■			
Social security	■			
<b>PUBLIC HEALTH</b>				
Primary care	■	■		
Hospitals	■	■	■	
Health Protection	■			
<b>HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING</b>				
Housing	■	■		
Town planning	■			
Agriculture Land planning	■			
<b>TRANSPORT</b>				
Roads	■	■	■	
Transport	■			
Urban roads	■			
Urban Public Transport	■			
Ports	■			
Airports	■			Private
Other	■			
<b>ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION</b>				
Water and sanitation	■			
Refuse collection and disposal	■		■	
Cemeteries and crematoria	■		■	
Slaughterhouses	■		■	
Environmental protection	■			
Consumer protection	■			
<b>CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS</b>				
Theatre and concerts	■			
Museums and libraries	■			
Parks and open spaces	■	■	■	
Sports and leisure	■			
Other cultural facilities	■			
<b>UTILITIES</b>				
Gas services	■			Private
District heating	■			
Water supply	■			
Electricity	■			
<b>ECONOMIC</b>				
Agriculture, forests and fisheries	■			
Economic promotion	■			
Trade and industry	■			
Tourism	■			