



GUYANA

SUMMARY

Guyana is a unitary republic with three spheres of government: national, regional and local. Local government is enshrined in Chapter VII of the constitution. The main governing legislation includes the Municipal and District Councils Act 1988 and the Local Government Act 1998. The Ministry of Communities has responsibility for overseeing local government, which comprises ten regional development councils, six municipalities and 65 neighbourhood democratic councils. There are also 75 Amerindian village councils. In 2016 local elections took place after an almost 20-year gap. The municipalities and neighbourhood democratic councils are responsible for raising and collecting taxes and the national government makes annual grants for specified development work. Regional development councils have responsibility for education, health and agriculture support; neighbourhood democratic councils are responsible for waste collection and sanitation, roads/dams and markets; and municipalities are responsible for drainage and irrigation, waste collection and maintenance of infrastructure.

1. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Guyana is a unitary republic with a unicameral parliament known as the National Assembly.^{16.1a} The head of state is an executive president indirectly elected as part of the party list system and is usually the leader of the majority party. The national assembly has 65 members elected for a five-year period: 40 elected by proportional representation and 25 indirectly elected by regional assemblies. Following the 2015 national election, 31.9% (22/69) of national assembly members were women.^{16.1b} 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.^{16.2a} 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:

- Local Government Act 1998 (amended 2015)^{16.2b}
- Municipal and District Councils Act 1998 (amended 2015)^{16.2c}
- Local Authorities (Elections) Act 1988 (amended 2015)^{16.2d}
- Local Democratic Organs Act 1998
- Amerindian Act 2006.^{16.2e}

2.3 Proposed legislative changes

A draft amendment to the Amerindian Act has been proposed by the Amerindian community.

2.4 National urban policy

There is no national urban policy.

However, in 2003 the Government of Guyana together with the Government of Germany developed a pilot land use policy, which outlined criteria for land use which is sustainable, socially and environmentally compatible, socially desirable and economically sound. The policy set in motion social processes of decision-making and consensus-building concerning the use and protection of private, communal and public areas, and now forms part of the Guyana Vision 2030 plan (see Section 10.3) adopted by the government. Objectives and the development goals for the regional land-use plan include: economic efficiency, sustainable use of resources, environmental protection, social equity, regional equity and spatial diversification, social acceptance/benefits, and guidelines on multiple/competing land uses and poverty reduction.

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: municipal, neighbourhood and Amerindian village.^{16.3b} The constitution does make provision for further subdivisions, but these have not been realised.

3.2 Ministerial oversight

The Ministry of Communities^{16.3c} (MOC) is the government arm with responsibility for local government. The MOC 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 MOC to the regional development councils (RDCs).



KEY FACTS

POPULATION (2017 estimate):
777,859

AREA (UN 2006): 214,969 sq km

CAPITAL: Georgetown

CURRENCY: Guyana dollar (GYD)

HEAD OF STATE:
President David Granger

HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:
Prime Minister Moses Nagamootoo

FORM OF GOVERNMENT:
republic

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:
unicameral

STATE STRUCTURE: unitary

LANGUAGES:
English (official); Akawaio, Arawak, Arekuna, Carib, Guyanese Creole, Hindi, Macushi, Patamona, Portuguese, Spanish, Wai Wai, Wapishiana, Warrau (recognised)

NATIONAL ELECTIONS:
last: 2015, turnout: na; next: 2020

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT (2014):
31.9%

LOCAL ELECTIONS:
last: 2016, turnout: 47.6%; next: 2019

WOMEN COUNCILLORS:
5.0% (2005)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE as a percentage of total government expenditure 2016/17:
2.0%



Table 16.1a Distribution of councils and population

Region	Regional development councils	Neighbourhood democratic councils	Municipalities	Amerindian village councils	Population (2012 Census)	Population (estimate 2017)	% rural (2012)
Barima-Waini	1	2	0	na	27,643	na	na
Pomeroon-Supenaam	1	5	1	na	46,810	na	na
Essequibo Islands-West Demerara	1	14	0	na	107,785	na	na
Demerara-Mahaica	1	15	1	na	311,563	na	na
Mahaica-Berbice	1	10	0	na	49,820	na	na
East Berbice-Corentyne	1	16	3	na	109,652	na	na
Cuyuni-Mazuruni	1	1	0	na	18,375	na	na
Potaro-Siparuni	1	0	0	na	11,077	na	na
Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo	1	1	0	na	24,238	na	na
Upper Demerara-Berbice	1	1	1	na	39,992	na	na
TOTAL	10	65	6	75	746,955	777,859	71.4

Source: Guyana 2012 Population and Housing Census^{16,30}

Amerindian village councils (AVCs) are governed by the Amerindian Act 2006 and are therefore managed by the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. The MOC, however, provides support to these councils in the execution of their programmes and provision of services.

3.3 Council types

There are three types of local government operating in Guyana: six municipalities, 65 NDCs and 75 AVCs.

3.3.1 Regional development councils (RDCs) operate as devolved offices of national 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 regard 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 1988. 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. Between 1998 and 2016, the MOC's predecessor, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, had direct oversight of municipalities.

3.3.3 Neighbourhood democratic councils (NDCs) carry out the responsibilities allocated to them under 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, who is elected annually appoints an advisory committee, but the council retains executive powers.

3.3.4 Amerindian village councils (AVCs)

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

4. ELECTIONS

4.1 Recent local elections

Local elections were held 2016 with a turnout of 47.6%.^{16,4a} The last elections for NDC and municipal/ town councils took place in 1994, however there were elections for the regional democratic councils in 2006.

4.2 Voting system

Elections are held using a mixed system of proportional representation and first-past-the-post. Half the councillors of each local authority area are elected through the proportional representation component and the other 50% through the first-past-the-post or constituency component. This is done via universal suffrage of citizens who have attained the age of 18. Councillors are elected by the entire electorate of the authority; 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 and chairpersons, and their deputies, are elected indirectly by the councillors on an annual basis.

4.3 Elected representatives

No information is available on elected representatives for RDCs, town or municipal councils and NDCs. The 75 Amerindian councils sit for terms of two years. These are elected by Guyana's indigenous peoples. Decision-making is by the full council.

4.4 Women's representation

No information was available on the number of women councillors following the 2016 elections. In 2008, 5% of RDC councillors were women; none were regional chairs, though two regional vice-chairs were female. This included one female deputy mayor, but no female mayors. All other councils were under administration. Following the 1994 elections for all councils approximately 22% of councillors were women.

5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Legal requirement

Section 71 of the constitution requires that involvement of all stakeholders, including communities, be obtained.

5.2 Implementation

Local authorities are required to hold regular community meetings as part of their mandate to be democratic and inclusive. Issues pertinent to the needs of communities and their developmental potential are discussed, and mechanisms for service delivery are decided.


Table 16.1b Women councillors and mayors following the last three local elections

Election	1994		2006 (RDCs)		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Councillors						
Female councillors	na	~22	na	5	na	na
Male councillors	na	~78	na	95	na	na
Total councillors	na	100.0	na	100.0	na	100.0
Chairpersons						
Female mayors/chairs	na	na	na	0	na	na
Male mayors/chairs	na	na	na	100	na	na
Total mayors/chairs	na	100.0	na	100.0	na	100.0

Source: MOC correspondence with CLGF and Visser^{16.4a}

5.3 ICT use in citizen engagement

E-government used for local government activities, particularly by the MOC and the RDCs, includes an integrated financial management system (IFMAS) and posting of invitations for bids (IFBS) on the national procurement website. IFMAS is only accessed by the respective government agencies (MOC and RDCs), but the procurement 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. The Guyana Association of Municipalities (GAM) represents municipal councils.^{16.6}

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

At the national level, in 2017 the Government of Guyana initiated a National Regional Development Consultative Committee (NRDCC). The NRDCC includes representatives of all RDCs and serves as an annual forum where strategic planning and coordination can take place to improve governance and accountability. At the sub-national level, NDCs are overseen by the RDCs while the municipalities and RDCs are overseen by the MOC. GALA is actively involved in the promotion of open relations between national and local government.

8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

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

9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

9.1 Local government expenditure

No information is available on local government expenditure as a proportion of total government expenditure.

9.2 Locally raised revenue

The municipalities and NDCs are responsible for raising and collecting taxes. Local governments are not permitted to set deficit budgets.

9.3 Transfers

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

9.4 Loans

No information is available.

9.5 Local authority staff

RDC staff are recruited by national government, which retains the power to hire and dismiss. Although the law allows for the deployment of national government staff to local government, it is uncommon for this to take place. The RDCs are required to designate a chief 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 MOC and the Ministry of Finance for 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. RDCs are responsible for approving the appointment of staff by NDCs. The chairperson of the NDC works part-time and is remunerated at a rate determined by the MOC. 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 MOC. Within NDCs the staffing structure is relatively flat, with the overseer managing a structure comprising heads of division supported by general staff. Among the six municipalities, the mayors and deputy mayors of Georgetown and New Amsterdam work full-time, while the mayors and deputy mayors of the other four municipalities are part-time and 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 Overview of local government service delivery responsibility

10.1.1 Regional development councils (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.

10.1.2 Municipalities and towns are required to provide 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 are empowered to levy and collect rates.

10.1.3 Neighbourhood democratic councils

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



10.1.4 Amerindian village councils

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

10.2 ICT use in service delivery

No information is available.

10.3 The role of local government in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

At the 2015 UN summit on the SDGs, President Granger confirmed Guyana's commitment to sustainable development.^{16.10a} This commitment was reaffirmed in 2017 by Guyana's ambassador to the UN, who also stressed the value of public-private partnerships.^{16.10b} One example of a successful partnership is the current arrangement with the Government of Norway whereby Guyana is preserving the forests and woodland which cover over 85% of its land mass, managing them sustainably in return for cash payments that can be used for other projects aligned with the SDGs. For example, there is a need for eco-tourism and travel to/within Guyana to be made easier by improving air connectivity, roads, urban amenities and tourism infrastructure beyond the more developed coastland.^{16.10c}

REFERENCES AND USEFUL WEBSITES

- 16.1a Government of Guyana www.gina.gov.gy
- 16.1b Women in national parliaments. Inter-Parliamentary Union www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm
- 16.2a Constitution of Guyana <http://parliament.gov.gy/constitution.pdf>
- 16.2b Local Government Act 1998 (amended 2015) <http://parliament.gov.gy/chamber-business/bill-status/local-authorities-elections-amendment-bill-2015-1/>
- 16.2c Municipal and District Councils Act 1988 (amended 2015) <http://parliament.gov.gy/publications/acts-of-parliament/municipal-and-district-councils-and-local-authorities-elections-amendment-ac>
- 16.2d Local Authorities (Elections) (Amendment) Bill 2015 <http://parliament.gov.gy/chamber-business/bill-status/local-authorities-elections-amendment-bill-2015-2>
- 16.2e Amerindian Act 2006 <https://moipa.gov.gy/legislation-the-amerindian-act>
- 16.3a 2012 Population and Housing Census www.statisticsguyana.gov.gy/census.html
- 16.3b List of NDCs/municipalities www.statisticsguyana.gov.gy/pubs/List_of_NDCs.pdf
- 16.3c Ministry of Communities <http://moc.gov.gy>
- 16.4a Guyana Elections Commission www.gecom.org.gy/local_government.html
- 16.4b Vassell, L. '2003 Women, Power and Decision-making' in Tang Nain, G. and Bailey, B.E. (ed) *Gender Equality in the Caribbean: Reality Or Illusion*
- 16.5 No reference for this section
- 16.6 GAM elections 2017 <http://gina.gov.gy/guyana-association-of-municipalities-gam-elections>
- 16.7 No reference for this section
- 16.8 No reference for this section
- 16.9 No reference for this section
- 16.10a President Granger reaffirms Guyana's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at 2015 UN Summit <http://caricom.org/communications/view/president-granger-reaffirms-guyanas-commitment-to-the-2030-agenda-for-susta>
- 16.10b Statement by Ambassador Michael Ten-Pow on the role of public-private partnerships in achieving the SDGs, May 2017 www.un.int/guyana/statements-speeches/statement-delivered-ambassador-michael-ten-pow-united-nations-conference-role
- 16.10c Guyana Vision 2030 www.guyana2030.com
- 16.11a UN statistics surface area <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2006/Table03.pdf>
- 16.11b Commonwealth Local Government Knowledge Hub www.clgf.org.uk/resource-centre/knowledge-hub
- 16.11c UNDP HDR Guyana country profile <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/GUY>



Annex 16a Summary of service provision in different spheres of government in Guyana

Services	Delivering authority					Remarks
	National government	Regional development councils	Neighbourhood democratic councils	Municipalities	Amerindian village councils	
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION						
Police	■					
Fire protection	■					
Civil protection	■					
Criminal justice	■					
Civil status register	■					
Statistical office	■					
Electoral register	■					
EDUCATION						
Pre-school (kindergarten and nursery)						
Primary		■				
Secondary		■				
Vocational and technical						
Higher education	■					
Adult education						
SOCIAL WELFARE						
Family welfare services				■		
Welfare homes	■					
Social security	■					
PUBLIC HEALTH						
Primary care		■				
Hospitals		■				
Health protection		■				
HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING						
Housing	■					
Town planning	■					
Regional planning	■					
TRANSPORT						
Roads		■	■	■	■	
Transport		■				
Urban roads		■				
Urban rail						
Ports	■					
Airports	■					
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION						
Water and sanitation			■	■	■	
Refuse collection and disposal			■	■	■	
Cemeteries and crematoria			■	■	■	
Slaughterhouses			■	■	■	
Environmental protection	■					
Consumer protection	■					
CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS						
Theatres and concerts						
Museums and libraries						
Parks and open spaces			■	■	■	
Sports and leisure facilities						
Religious facilities						
UTILITIES						
Gas services	■					
District heating						
Water supply		■	■	■	■	
Electricity	■					
ECONOMIC						
Agriculture, forests and fisheries		■				
Local economic development/promotion	■					
Trade and industry	■					
Tourism	■					

■ sole responsibility service ■ joint responsibility service ■ discretionary service