**Government of Guyana**

**Ministry of Health**

**Primary Health Care**

**Re: Call for Contributions: Examples of a Human Rights Based Approach to Universal Health Coverage**

Universal Health Coverage is one of the overall goals of the health system in Guyana. Over the past three (3) decades a lot of efforts have gone into reorganizing the system to achieve this goal. The main foundation for the health system is primary health care which is a recommended strategy for achieving universal coverage.

Health in Guyana is delivered by two sectors: health and local government. The health sector is mainly responsible for providing policies, strategies, technical oversight and monitoring of implementation and the regional system provide the human resource and infrastructure. There are some overlapping areas that allows both sectors to fully participate to achieve the set targets for service delivery.

Guyana is one of the many countries that signed on to the Human Rights Convention and actively works on implementing this within the health care system. Guyana also signed on to the Sustainable Development Goals with a timeline for achieving targets by the year 2030 as well as the commitment for achieving Universal Health Coverage by 2030.

There have been many strategies, policies and programs developed and implemented that have fully integrated the human rights approach in working towards Universal Health Coverage. Examples are as follows:

1. **Development of policies to determine the delivery of equitable services for all.** The Ministry of Health developed the Family Health Policy of 2007 which outlined services such as family planning, antenatal care, post-natal care, child health inclusive of vaccination and school health and indicated that they must be fully decentralized, as such across the country 100% of the facilities have these services available.
2. **The development of a suite of services**. The “Package of Essential Health Services” is the suite of services that the health sector and by extension the Government of Guyana is committing to offer the population utilizing the principles of universal health access and coverage. It will provide services based on a life course approach for at least 116 ICD-10 coded most common disease conditions. This was completed and is currently being implemented across the country. All the services to be offered will be at no cost to the individual if it is accessed within the public health care system which is currently free for all persons living in Guyana regardless of nationality.
3. **Incremental budgetary allocations for public health issues.** The Government after the guidance from the health sector in relation to the epidemiological profile of the country which has outlined that Non-Communicable Diseases is now the main cause or morbidity, mortality and disability has taken steps to have resources focused on this public health concern. Within the last two years a specific program with budgetary allocations has been developed. The budgetary allocations have since increased over time as evidence is becoming more available for decision making.
4. **Targeting of special and vulnerable groups.** The HIV epidemic continues to be a concern in Guyana even with reduced incidence and prevalence over the past 10 years. The population of persons living with HIV continues to received substantial support from the Government in order to reduce the financial burden of having resources available to remain healthy. There are special provisions made to support the nutritional needs of persons living with HIV as well as their exposed infants. Currently for the past three years less than two percent (2%) of infants born to HIV positive women were infected through vertical transmission.

Additionally, populations of the hinterland because of cultural practices as well as educational and socioeconomic status with the added challenge of the locations where they live have experiences health services that were inequitable as compared to persons who live in the urban regions. Based on this there has been additional budgetary allocations for these regions for the quality of services to be improved. Additional budgetary allocations have led to the purchase of equipment needed, improvement in the health infrastructure as well as increased training opportunities.

Also, Guyana continues to be one of the countries with the highest maternal, neonatal and infant mortality rates in the Caribbean and Latin America. Based on this fact there has been targeted effort to ensure that pregnant women and their newborn receive the highest possible quality of care within the country. To this end the Government negotiated a loan through one of the developmental banks focusing specifically on this target population. This allowed for the system to have changes implemented that has benefitted the overall system in the delivery of health care services.