

INTRODUCTION

The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) had conducted House-to-House Registration in 2008 to produce a new National Register of Registrants which would form the basis for the preparation of Lists of Electors for future elections. Thereafter, the Commission focused its attention on preparatory works for the holding of Local Government Elections in 2009.

This Report is a representation of the various categories/levels of major tasks which were carried out by GECOM and its Secretariat following the House-to-House Registration and as parts of the preparatory works for Local Government Elections, throughout 2009.

In addition to the development and implementation of the strategic plans pertaining to the preparatory works for the holding of Local Government Elections, the Commission and its Secretariat were engaged with policy matters and administrative tasks which are pivotal to the smooth functioning of the Commission and its Secretariat.

1. Production of the New National Register Of Registrants

The imperative to conduct House-to-House Registration was born out of the need for the creation of an indisputable National Register of Registrants Database (NRRDB) which could be used as the basis for the preparation of future Electoral Lists, and which would be commonly acceptable by all stakeholders as being patent and unblemished. The primary objective of this exercise which was done in 2008 was the creation of a pure and current NRRDB which would be perpetually updated and purified through future Cycles of Continuous Registration and their respective concomitant Claims and Objections exercises. This would inevitably lead to the preparation of future Electoral Lists that would be commonly acceptable by and among all Political Parties and other stakeholders.

Consequent upon the compilation of the List of Registrants containing persons captured during the 2008 House-to-House Registration exercise, GECOM had immediately (July 2008) commenced negotiations with USAID for the provision of funds to conduct a Fingerprint Cross Matching (FCM) exercise to check whether duplicate registration transactions had taken place. It was not until **February 16, 2009**, that the money was paid and the fingerprints were sent to COGENT, the firm that was contracted to conduct the FCM exercise.

2. Fingerprint Cross Matching

Cognizant of the compulsory need to produce an accurate National Register of Registrants from the 2008 House-to-House Registration exercise, a Fingerprint Cross Matching (FCM) exercise was conducted to determine whether multiple registrations existed among the registration data collected during the Registration exercise.

The FCM exercise, involved the cross matching of the fingerprints of 430,746 persons, who were registered during the 2008 House-to-House Registration exercise, against each other. This exercise was conducted by **Cogent** Systems, through De La Rue of the United Kingdom, and under the auspices of USAID. **Cogent** Systems is a leading international provider of Automated Fingerprint Identification Systems (AFIS) based in California, United States of America.

The Report on the FCM exercise, which was received during March, 2009, showed the existence of 280 cases of 'genuine' duplicate registration transactions and 84 'suspected' duplicate registration transactions. The latter category was classified as 'suspected' because the fingerprints were not of the desired quality to facilitate adequate cross matching.

Upon receipt of the Report of the FCM exercise, GECOM's Secretariat immediately commenced internal investigations of the 280 cases of 'genuine' duplicates and the 84 'suspected' duplicates. This was done to determine how the duplicate transactions occurred. The investigations involved referring to the originals of the respective Application for Registration forms (Form No. RO1), and the relevant source documents which were used in support of the applications for registration.

The investigations, which involved the conduct of statistical analyses of both of the reported categories of duplicate registrations, revealed the following:-

2.1. Statistical Analysis of ‘Genuine’ Duplicate Registrations

227 of the reported 280 ‘genuine’ duplicate registrations were confirmed internally as involving the same registrant, while 50 have been confirmed as involving two ‘different individuals’. Three of the reported 280 duplicate registrations could not be confirmed via examination of the respective RO1 Forms and the relevant source documents. These will be further investigated by the respective applicants being summoned to appear in person before GECOM Officials to determine the validity of the transactions.

132 of the reported 280 duplicate registrations were from different Registration Areas and 15 were of different addresses. 63 of the 280 duplicate registrations were from different Registration Divisions, while 20 were of different biographic data.

2.2. Statistical Analysis of ‘Suspected’ Duplicate Registrations

57 of the reported 84 “suspected” duplicate registrations were confirmed internally as involving the same registrant, and 53 of the reported 84 duplicate registrations were found to be from different Registration Areas. Ten of the reported 84 duplicate registrations were from different Registration Divisions, 2 were of different addresses, eleven are of different bio data, and 24 of the reported 84 duplicate registrations were associated with different individuals. One of the 84 duplicate registrations could not be confirmed via examination of the respective RO1 Forms and the relevant source documents. This too was further investigated by the respective applicants being summoned to appear in person before GECOM Officials to determine the validity of the transaction.

The findings of the Statistical Analyses were presented to the Commission and were discussed at the GECOM Statutory Meeting held on Tuesday, March 24, 2009, with the objective of bringing the new National Register of Registrants Database (NRRDB) to finality. During its deliberations on the findings, and with a view to achieving this objective in the shortest possible time, and based on the Commission’s instructions, the following courses of action were taken:-

- Documented summons, signed by Mr. Gocool Boodoo, Chief Election Officer, were dispatched to persons associated with the duplicate registrations which required further investigations. The summonses were dispatched by the respective Registration Officers (ROs) by registered post or by hand where this (registered post) was not possible. The summoned persons were given two weeks’ notice to present themselves at given locations on given dates and times. The summons indicated that the person(s) must bring along the respective source documents to adequately facilitate the investigations.
- In cases of duplicate registrations involving different individuals, the summoned persons were invited to present themselves at the same location on the same date and time.
- The summons indicated that the failure of the summoned persons to present themselves as required will result in their registration transactions being cancelled.
- The failure, by the summoned person(s) associated with a particular case of duplicate registrations, to present himself/herself/themselves as summoned resulted in both transactions being cancelled.

- In the case of the duplicate registrations that were confirmed, the earlier transactions were cancelled.
- A list of persons whose transactions were cancelled because of their involvement in duplicate registrations was submitted to the Commission for approval before deletion.
- The particulars of persons whose transactions have been cancelled will be published in the print media after the cancellations would have been made.
- The fingerprints of those persons who were listed among the ‘suspected’ were retaken. These will be submitted, along with the fingerprints of new registrants, to be checked during the next FCM exercise.

The Commission is convinced that the implementation of the above led to the production of an unquestionable NRRDB which, having been updated via the Claims and Objections exercise and future Cycles of Continuous Registration, could be used as the basis for the preparation of Voters’ Lists for future elections.

In keeping with the spirit of the Agreement signed between the Government of Guyana, GECOM and the Parliamentary Political Parties, electronic copies of the finalized NRR were shared with all of the signatories to the Agreement with a view to getting them to approve it (the NRR), within a specified timeframe, before it was certified by the CEO.

2.3. Police Action

The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) has requested the Guyana Police Force to investigate 253 confirmed cases of persons who applied for registration more than once during the 2008 House-to-House Registration exercise.

The documents pertaining to those registration transactions were sent, with a covering letter dated 20/Jul/2009, to the Commissioner of Police requesting investigation and the possible prosecution of the persons involved in such transactions.

This course of action has been taken in keeping with GECOM’s steadfastness to have a perpetually clean National Register of Registrants from which Lists of Electors will be produced for future General, Regional and Local Government Elections.

3. Production of New ID Cards

The decision to produce **new** National Identification Cards for all persons registered during the 2008 House-to-House Registration exercise was premised on the facts that (i) there are currently differently designed ID Cards in existence, (ii) counterfeit ID Cards have been discovered by GECOM and the Guyana Police Force, and (iii) the ID Card of the oldest design i.e. the “red” one has been in existence for decades. The Commission is of the firm conviction that ID Cards of only one design, and with security features which cannot be duplicated, must be in existence at any given time.

GECOM, at its 185th Statutory Meeting which was held on Tuesday June 26, 2007, had taken the decision that New National Identification Cards with a more modern design (more “modern design” refers a new colour and security features) would be produced and issued to all registrants captured during the 2008 House-to-House Registration exercise. The Commission approved the use of an **“Optically Variable Ink (OVI)**, for the production of National Identification Cards, and the outline of the map of Guyana appearing on the front of the Card and with additional security features that will not be visible to the bare eyes, nor detected without the use of appropriate technology. Following this, the Commission had contacted De La Rue and this Company responded with a comprehensive document which indicated the items to be supplied and the costs associated with the exercise.

De La Rue was contracted during May 2009, to supply teslin (base material), hardware, software and consumables associated with the production of National Identification Cards for all persons registered during the 2008 House-to-House Registration exercise. Further, the Commission accepted that the OVI security feature is used on British Passports as well as on the US\$50 bills currently in circulation. The durability of the Card was given as being in excess of eight years.

The contract included the delegation of De La Rue personnel to visit GECOM to set up the ID card production system and train the Commission’s staff to operate it.

The installation of software and hardware for the production of National Identification Cards for all persons who were registered during the 2008 House-to-House Registration exercise commenced on Monday, October 26, 2009, with distribution of the ID cards commencing very soon thereafter.

The installation was conducted by Mr. David Colgan, De La Rue’s Team Leader for the project, and Mr. Pedro Granados, a De La Rue IT Technician. GECOM contracted De La Rue to supply the teslin (base material), hardware, software and consumables associated with the production of National Identification Cards for all persons registered during the 2008 House-to-House Registration exercise. The work includes (i) the installation of the hardware and software, (ii) ensuring that the newly installed ID production system works without fault, and (iii) security features consisting of the use of an **“Optically Variable Ink (OVI)**, for the production of the ID Cards and with additional features that will not be visible to the bare eyes, nor detected without the use of appropriate technology..

The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) had identified key personnel, who worked alongside the De La Rue Technicians, to ensure that there is institutional capacity and memory to perpetually operate the ID production system.

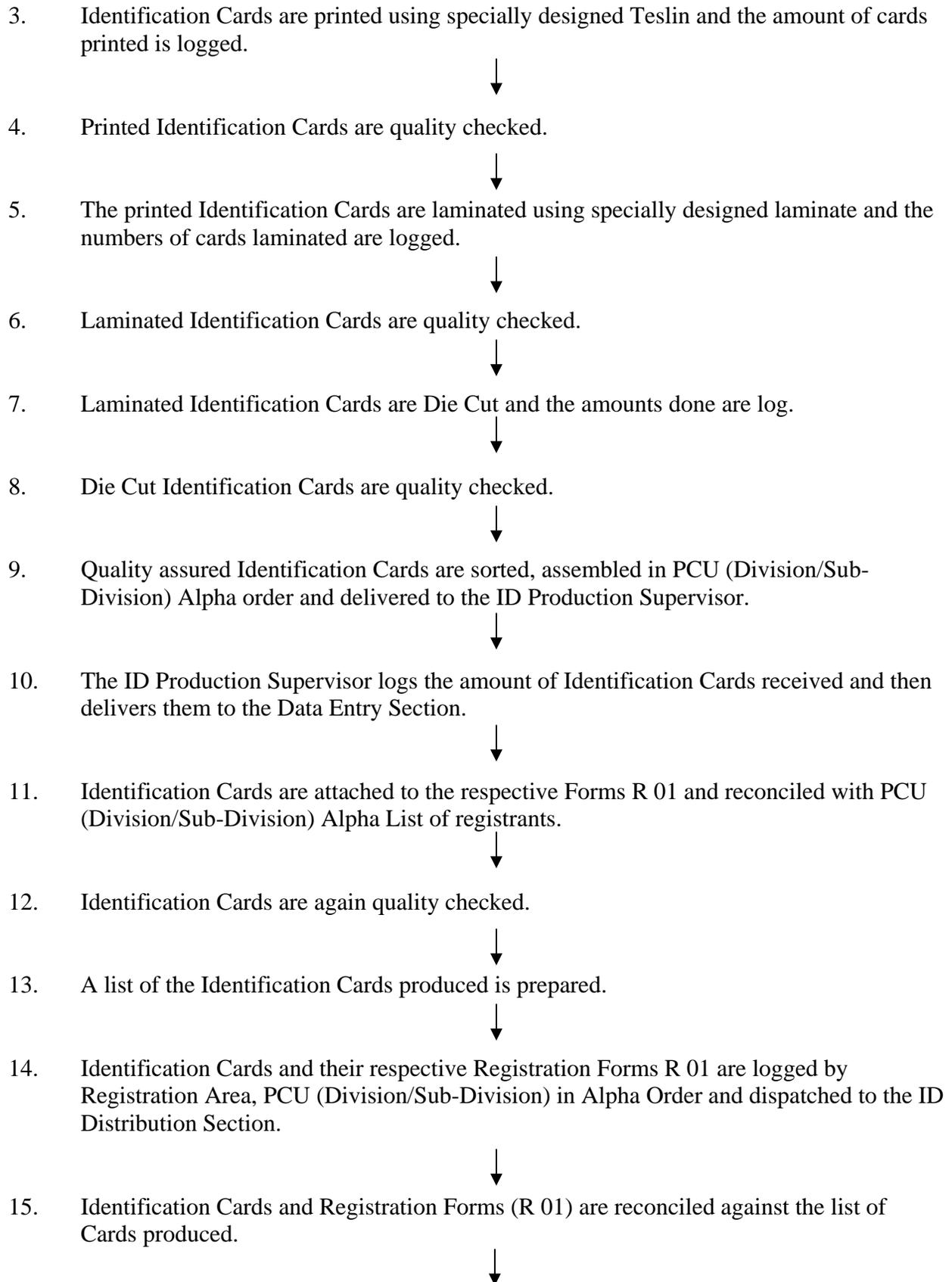
3.1. Steps For Processing Transactions For The Production Of National Identification Cards

1. The Registration Form (R 01) is moved from Filing Room and store in Data Entry Section.



2. The Registration Form (R 01) is exported electronically from the Data Entry Section to the ID Production Section while retain the physical Form is retained.





16. Information on the Identification Card is compared with information on the respective Registration Form (R 01) for accuracy.
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17. Identification Cards are stored with the relevant printed list of Registrants in boxes
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18. Identification Numbers are written on the Registration Forms R 01.
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19. Identification Cards are reconciled with the list of Cards produced with the participation of the relevant Registration Officer and then stored with the list in canisters.
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20. Identification Cards are delivered in canisters to the respective Registration Officers along with the relevant duplicate Forms R 01.

4. ID Card Distribution

The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) began the distribution of National Identification Cards, for persons registered during the 2008 House-to-House Registration exercise on Monday, November 9, 2009.

The exercise was deliberately started in Registration District No. 4, even while ID Card production was ongoing, with due consideration having been given to the size of the population of this District. Distribution of ID Cards in Districts (Regions) 5, 6 and 3 commenced on November 13, 14 and 15, 2009, respectively. This was followed by the commencement of distribution in Districts (Regions) 1, 2, 7, 8, 9 and 10 shortly thereafter.

Approximately 272 temporary Distribution Centres was established countrywide to provide easy access for registrants to uplift their respective ID Cards. These centres remained operable up to and including December 31, 2009. Thereafter, distribution continued from GECOM's permanent Registration Offices which are strategically located in all of the Registration Districts (Administrative Regions) in Guyana.

The hours of distribution were (i) 15:00 hours (3:00 pm) to 19:00 hours (7:00 pm) on Mondays to Fridays, and (ii) 10:00 hours (10:00 am) to 16:00 hours (4:00 pm) on Saturdays and Sundays.

Registrants were advised to ensure that they take with them the "pink slips", which were given to them at the time of their respective registrations to facilitate the prompt delivery of their ID Cards.

An internal administrative procedure to treat with registrants, who were/are not in possession of their "pink slips", was established thereby ensuring that persons within this category were/are given their Cards. This latter administrative procedure involves a time consuming exercise.

Hotline numbers were established to provide registrants with information pertaining to the ID Card distribution exercise e.g. the specific Distribution Centre where a registrant was required to uplift his/her ID Card.

The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), through a Media Statement, had acknowledged that some National Identification Cards with photographs, which did not meet commonly acceptable standards, were produced for persons who were registered during the 2008 House-to-House Registration exercise. The Commission accepted that, notwithstanding the quality control procedures which were installed throughout the three eight-hours shift system to ensure that ID Cards of the highest quality were produced, some ID Cards with photographs of objectionable quality bypassed this component of the production system and were dispatched among Cards of superior standard for distribution.

GECOM viewed this state of affairs as a very regrettable one and, consequently, implemented several deliberate remedial measures with the objective of replacing all photo-deficient ID Cards with unacceptable photographs, so that ID Cards of superlative quality would be delivered to registrants.

Enquiries into the nature of the problem revealed to the Commission that the completed ID Cards with unacceptable photographs were mainly from Registration District No. 4. The Commission had earlier taken the purposeful decision to commence printing and distribution of ID Cards for registrants of this District simply because it is the Administrative Region with the largest number of registered persons, and was therefore likely to pose greater challenges in terms of achieving optimal distribution within the duration of the exercise. Remedial action, which was implemented immediately upon detection during the initial production stages, led to the problem not being replicated in a significant way in the other Registration Districts. The remedial action included the brief suspension of the delivery of ID Cards for the internal retrieval and reproduction of those with photographs deemed to be of poor quality.

The Commission equipped every ID Card Distribution Centre with a digital camera, with clear instructions for the relevant staff to retake registrants' photographs which are found to be markedly dissimilar to the facial features of the respective registrants. Simultaneously, the commission, in a proactive move, instructed all of the Registration Officers to extract all ID cards with deficient photos in their possession at the respective Registration Offices and return them to the Secretariat to facilitate the reproduction of the cards with acceptable photos. These measures continued at the temporary distribution offices until the end of the exercise.

Any registrant, collecting his/her ID Card, who was not be satisfied with the quality of the photograph because his/her facial features were not recognizable, could have made a request for remedial action involving the photograph being re-taken on the spot, and culminating with the replacement of the ID Card with an acceptable photograph.

GECOM had also recognized that ID Cards with unacceptable photographs would already have been delivered. Accordingly, affected persons were afforded the opportunity to initiate remedial action during the Claims and Objections exercise for the upcoming Local Government Elections which followed the ID Card distribution exercise. We urged such persons to take advantage of this opportunity.

5. Preparations For The Conduct Of Local Government Elections

Early 2009, GECOM instructed its Secretariat to commence preparations for the conduct of Local Government Elections. In this regard, emphasis was placed on five major areas of activity which needed to be completed to bring the Guyana Elections Commission GECOM to a state of preparedness for the holding of Local Government Elections. Some of them were intertwined, while others represented definitive precursors to important activities as were evident from the Microsoft Project Plan for Local Government Elections which had been developed by the GECOM Secretariat and approved by the Commission). This plan included (i) advertising for, training, short-listing and hiring of temporary staff upon completing of the required levels of training, (ii) Demarcation/Delimitation of Constituencies, (iii) identification of temporary offices in all Local Government Areas for the conduct of, and (iv) procurement of the materials required for the efficient completion of the exercise.

The initial Microsoft Project Plan, which earmarked Election Day for the holding of Local Government Elections as November 30, 2009, was based on the commencement of production and distribution of ID Cards starting on July 1, 2009, with distribution concluding on November 29, 2009 i.e. a duration of 132 days. However, it became clear that, due to no fault of the GECOM, the first ID Card could not have been produced as intended.

Based on the schedules delineated in the GECOM/De La Rue contract, it became necessary for the Microsoft Project Plan to be revised. Consequently, the revised plan earmarked the commencement of production of ID Cards on 16.10.2009 with the possible completion date of November 14, 2009. Distribution was done over a 49 days period. This significant reduction in the number of days for the production and distribution of ID Cards represented GECOM's commitment towards the holding of Local Government Elections as soon as possible.

5.1. Consultations with the Minister of Local Government for the Holding Of Local Government Elections

The Chairman of Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), Dr. Steve Surujbally accompanied by Members of the Commission and Senior Managers of the Commission's Secretariat met with Mr. Kellawan Lall, Minister of Local Government, in a consultative approach associated with in determination the number of seats in the existing Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs), especially those that are geographically small and/or underpopulated.

The meeting was held on the initiative of GECOM to advise Minister Lall of the essential need for the number of seats for NDCs which are geographically small and/or underpopulated to be reduced before any Order pertaining to the of constituencies was made.

GECOM was aware that the Minister of Local Government could, by Order, reduce the number of seats on an NDC, and that this would be possible only after the draft Election Laws (Amendment) Amending Bill 2009 was put before the National Assembly and became law.

Minister Lall had acknowledged that GECOM possesses the knowledge and expertise to deal with the constituencies. Further, he recognized that this task fell within GECOM's mandate, the implementation of which neither he nor his Ministry could be officially associated with.

Minister Lall had assured the GECOM team that the boundaries of the existing NDCs will not be changed for the Local Government Elections, and advised that the demarcation of constituencies be carried out with this in mind.

At this meeting, GECOM undertook to put together a proposal for the demarcation of constituencies within NDCs which are geographically small and/or underpopulated and with suggestions for the number of seats respectively for consideration by Minister Lall.

Dr. Surujbally was accompanied by Commissioners Mr. V. Alexander, Mr. C. Corbin, Mr. M. Shaw and Mr. R. Williams, Mr. G. Boodoo – Chief Election Officer, Mr. C. Benn – Deputy Chief Election Officer, Mr. K. Lowenfield – Assistant Chief Election Officer and Mr. V. Persaud – Public Relations Officer.

A Team of senior personnel and Commissioners of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), headed by Dr. Steve Surujbally, Chairman of GECOM, held a strategic meeting with Minister of Local Government, Mr. Kellawan Lall, to discuss the fundamental need for the number of seats for Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs), which are geographically small and/or underpopulated to be reduced before he (the Minister) makes any Order pertaining to the delimitation of constituencies.

This meeting was a follow up to a previous one between GECOM and Minister Lall at which the Commission had undertaken to put together a proposal for the reduction of the existing number of seats for NDCs which are geographically small and/or under-populated, and with suggestions for the number of seats respectively for consideration by Minister Lall.

Prior to this meeting, GECOM had sent to Minister Lall, for his consideration, a comprehensive document containing the recommendations of the Commission pertaining to the delimitation of constituencies for Local Government Elections within NDCs which are geographically small, and/or under-populated, etc, and which need to be addressed in the interest of effective representation at Local Government levels.

In preparing the document, GECOM's senior technical staff had conducted in-depth analyses of the physical structure of all of the NDCs in Guyana. An examination of population densities within the respective NDCs revealed that there are several areas of concern which need to be addressed to allow for effective representation at the community levels. Consequently, GECOM has recommended that the number of seats in seven NDCs be reduced to allow for adequate delimitation of constituencies in a manner that will facilitate effective representation. Ample consideration was given to Minister Lall's earlier advice that the boundaries of the existing NDCs will not be changed for the upcoming Local Government Elections.

Some of the factors which were considered as crucial to the delimitation process, and which were shared with the Minister, include (i) existing boundaries, (ii) existing patterns of human settlement, (iii) population density, (iv) communities of interest, (v) geographic features, (vi) financial and administrative capacity of the respective LGAs, and (vii) financial and administrative considerations which need to be addressed.

Minister Lall pointed out at this meeting that he had studied the recommendations thoroughly and gave the assurance that he found favour with them. Nonetheless, he had underscored the need for the Political Stakeholders to be allowed time to consider the Commission's

recommendations in a consultative approach before he moves to the stage of signing an Order authorizing that the recommendations be brought into effect. However, Dr. Surujbally had replied that, as a matter of great concern to the Commission, the consultative process must be done within the shortest possible time bearing in mind that the ongoing preparatory works for the holding of Local Government Elections must not suffer any slippage. He further reminded the Minister that GECOM had already met with Representatives of ten Political Parties on Wednesday, August 26, 2009 to apprise them of the principles which would serve to inform the delimitation process leading up to the establishment of constituencies for Local Government Elections.

Dr. Surujbally had also brought to Minister Lall's attention, as a matter of concern, the fact that President Bharrat Jagdeo had not as yet assented to the Local Authorities (Elections) (Amendment) Act 2009, which had been approved by the National Assembly. He noted that this was essential to the holding of the Local Government Elections. Minister Lall had rejoined that this matter was then being dealt with by the Attorney General's Chambers, and would be concluded in a manner that would not interfere with GECOM's timetable for the conduct Local Government Elections.

Minister Lall was accompanied at the Meeting by Mr. Clinton Collymore, Advisor to the Minister of Local Government, and Mr. Seewchan, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government. Dr. Surujbally was accompanied by Commissioners Mr. C. Corbin, Mr. M. Shaw and Mr. R. Williams, Mr. G. Boodoo – Chief Election Officer, Mr. C. Benn – Deputy Chief Election Officer, Mr. D. Ramlall – Assistant Chief Election Officer (ag) and Mr. V. Persaud – Public Relations Officer.

5.2. Consultations with Representatives of Political Parties

The Guyana Elections Commission met with Representatives of ten Political Parties to apprise them of the principles which will serve to inform the delimitation process leading up to the establishment of constituencies for Local Government Elections. This meeting, which was held on Wednesday, August 26, 2009, was arranged on the initiative of GECOM in recognition of the need to keep stakeholders abreast with the Commission's ongoing preparations for the holding of Local Government Elections.

Written invitations were dispatched to all Parliamentary and non-Parliamentary Political Parties for their respective Chief Scrutineers and one other representative to attend and participate at the meeting, which was held at the Conference Hall of GECOM's Secretariat. The ten Political Parties that were represented are the People's Progressive Party/Civic, People's National Congress Reform, The United Force, Justice For All Party, A Good And Green Guyana, National Republican Party, Guyana National Congress, Good Bless Guyana, People's Democratic Party and Guyana United Muslim Party.

Some of the factors which are being considered as crucial to the delimitation process, and which were shared with the political participants at the meeting, include (i) existing boundaries, (ii) existing patterns of human settlement, (iii) population density, (iv) communities of interest, (v) geographic features, (vi) financial and administrative capacity of the respective LGAs, and (vii) financial and administrative considerations which need to be addressed.

The participants were also informed that the delimitation process will be guided by the principle that, as a matter of policy, the boundaries of the existing Local Government Areas will not be changed for the upcoming Local Government Elections.

After contemplating the information presented to them at this meeting, the participants were invited to submit concerns/suggestions which would serve to (i) inform the delimitation process, and (ii) enhance transparency in the delimitation of constituencies for the Local Government Elections and acceptability of the outcomes.

GECOM Representatives at the meeting included Dr. Steve Surujbally – Chairman of GECOM, Commissioner M. Shaw, Mr. Gocool Boodoo – Chief Election Officer, Mr. Calvin Benn – Deputy Chief Election Officer, Mr. Deolall Ramlall – Civic & Voter Education Manager, Mrs. Beverley Critchlow – Voter Registration Manager and Mr. Colin April – Logistics Manager.

5.3. Order of the Minister of Local Government, Hon. Kellawan Lall, pertaining to Seats and constituencies in Local Government Organs

The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) received the Order of the Minister of Local Government, Hon. Kellawan Lall, pertaining to Seats and constituencies in Local Government Organs with regards to the holding of Local Government Elections in accordance with the Local Authorities (Elections) Act as amended by the Local Authorities (Elections) (Amendment) Act 2009.

The Minister's Order gave GECOM the unambiguous guidance which was necessary to facilitate the delimitation of constituencies as an integral aspect of the preparations for the holding of Local Government Elections.

GECOM discussed issues associated with the delimitation of constituencies with Minister Lall on two occasions. However, in anticipation of the Order being issued, GECOM had already commenced work within the respective Municipalities and Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs). This work included consultations with:-

- (i) Representatives of Political Parties to apprise them of the principles which will serve to inform the delimitation process leading up to the establishment of constituencies for Local Government Elections. This was done at a meeting, which was held on Wednesday, August 26, 2009, on the initiative of GECOM in recognition of the need to keep stakeholders abreast with the Commission's ongoing preparations for the holding of Local Government Elections.
- (ii) Consultations with Representatives of the existing Municipalities and NDCs with a view to discussing matters relevant to the delimitation process leading up to the establishment of constituencies within the respective Local Authorities for Local Government Elections.

The Minister's Order gave GECOM the clear authority to move forward in finalizing the delimitation of constituencies, in accordance with the number of councillors to be elected within the respective Municipalities and NDCs, as mandated by the Order.

The Minister's Order had always been seen by GECOM as one of the key legal requirements which had to be met in a timely manner to facilitate the holding of Local Government Elections.

5.4.Delimitation (Demarcation/Delineation) of Boundaries for Constituencies

In the delimitation of constituencies, GECOM did not change the existing boundaries for any Local Authority Area (LAA). Rather, the Commission established constituencies within each LAA without breaching the boundaries and in keeping with the mandatory Order which was signed by the Minister of Local Government relative to the number of Councillors, and by extension the number of constituencies for the respective LAAs.

A Concept Paper for Demarcation/Delineation of Boundaries for Local Government Areas was developed by the GECOM Secretariat. This document contained Operational Guidelines and Principles pertaining to the delimitation exercise which were determined by the Commission and shared with Stakeholders (Political Parties, Regional Democratic Councils, Local Authority Areas, Village Leaders, etc) prior to the actual demarcation of constituencies.

The implementation of the foregoing was hinged directly on the passage of the new system for Local Government Elections as enshrined in the Local Authorities (Elections) (Amendment) Act No. 26 of 2009.

In demarcating constituencies, GECOM did not change the divisional boundaries used for electoral purposes. Adjustments, where necessary, were made to Sub-divisions – an action over which GECOM has legal and administrative authority.

Pertinent to the above, GECOM had decided that

- 1) The Draft Concept Paper on demarcating constituencies, which the Secretariat had developed, had to be improved in order to incorporate new practical and implementable thoughts and ideas which have emanated from the many discussions on the matter.
- 2) Operational guidelines and Principles pertaining to the exercise must be solidly established and shared with Stakeholders (Political Parties, Regional Democratic Councils, Local Authority areas, Village Leaders, etc).
- 3) Within the context of the demarcation of boundaries, the following factors (each of which was time consuming) were considered
 - (i) Existing boundaries.
 - (ii) Heavily populated areas.
 - (iii) Large and small communities (Voting population).
 - (iv) Linking communities of similar and varying interests.
 - (v) Dealing with separate/specific communities which exist outside the ambit of existing NDCs e.g. New Housing Schemes; Amerindian Reservations Cooperative Societies (which may or may not be affiliated to the respective NDCs.

- 4) GECOM awaited the final decision from the Minister of Local Government on the number of seats for each Local Authority Area.
- 5) The implementation of the above was hinged directly on the passage of the proposed new system governing the Local Government Elections.

The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) had hosted a **National Consultation on Delimitation of Constituencies for Local Government Elections today, Friday, November 13, 2009, at 13:00 hours (1:00 pm)**. Key stakeholders, including representatives of Political Parties, were invited to participate at this event. This **National Consultation** was being held at the Carifesta Sports Club (Guyana National Service Sports Complex), Carifesta Avenue, Georgetown.

5.5.Civic and Voter Education

The Commission had prepared a comprehensive strategy for embarking on a Civic and Voter Education campaign for the conduct of Local Government Elections. This strategy involved providing pertinent information via varying formats and messages, and via all available media, including at grass roots levels, about all aspects of the new electoral system.

The Civic and Voter Education strategy included the production and installation of suitable billboards and banners at strategic locations, the production and distribution of flyers/pamphlets, visits to schools, and the publication of notices in the local newspapers. Appropriate infomercials were also produced for publication via radio and television.

The Civic and Voter Education strategy focused initially on those aspects of the electoral process for Local Government Elections which were not hinged to Parliamentary approval of the Local Authorities (Elections) (Amendment) Act No. 26 of 2009 e.g. distribution of ID Cards, the various aspects of the Claims and Objections exercise which was commenced in January 2010, the need to obtain the relevant source documents for registration etc. Thereafter, the focus was shifted to educating the electorate about pertinent aspects of the new electoral system for local Government Elections.

5.6.Staff Training for Local Government Elections

GECOM), as part of the preparations for the holding of Local Government Elections, held several countrywide training programmes for temporary field staff to be involved in the conduct of the elections and the precursor Claims and Objections exercise. *See Appendix I for a Summary of the Training Activities.*

The Training Programmes targeted applicants, who met the eligibility for appointment requirements, from across Guyana's ten Administrative Regions/Electoral Districts, and who would have applied for the advertised positions. The successful candidates, who received further (refresher) training, would have been hired to work in the respective Registration/Electoral Divisions for the C & O exercise and LGE, should the latter have become a reality in 2009. (The C & O exercise would commence in the first quarter of 2010).

The various sessions at the Training Programme sought to provide the candidates with comprehensive knowledge required for the efficient conduct of the C & O exercise and LGE.

The suitability of a candidate for appointment was determined through an evaluation process, which was conducted at various stages of the Training Programmes, right up to their conclusion. The most suitable Candidates were earmarked for appointment.

Resource persons at the training sessions included Mr. Gocool Boodoo – Chief Election Officer, Mr. Calvin Benn – Deputy Chief Election Officer, Mr. Keith Lowenfield – Assistant Chief Election Officer, Mr. Deolall Ramlall – Civic & Voter Education Manager and Mrs. Beverley Critchlow – Voter Registration Manager, Mr. Colin April, Logistics Manager, Ms. Indira Anandjit, Human Resources Manager, Mr. Joseph Gilgeous, Temporary Assistant to the DCEO, Mr. Lawrence Duncan, Logistics Coordinator, and Mr. Duarte Hetsberger, Supervisor – Photography.

5.7. Claims and Objections for Local Government Elections

During 2009, GECOM embarked on preparations to conduct the compulsory Claims and Objections exercise to produce the Registers of Voters as a prerequisite for the holding of Local Government Elections (LGE) to be held possibly during the latter half of 2009.

During any C & O exercise, persons who meet the eligibility criteria for registration are given the opportunity to apply for registration and be issued their respective National Identification Cards.

The conduct of Claims and Objections provides, opportunities for persons to carry out the following types of registration transactions:-

- make a claim to entry on the Official List of Electors (OLE), if they will be eligible to vote at the upcoming Local Government Elections and their names are not on the list;
- apply for a transfer, if they have changed their addresses;
- apply for a correction, if they have changed their names, or if there is incorrect information on the List or on their National ID Cards;
- object to the inclusion of the name of any person who is suspected not to have the eligibility requirements for such inclusion

In preparation for the C&O exercise GECOM had posted up Divisional/Sub Divisional Lists of Registrants at two prominent places in all of the Electoral Divisions/Sub Divisions and at GECOM Office/Sub-Offices located in the respective Registration/Electoral Divisions for public scrutiny. Registered persons were required to check the Lists to determine the accuracy of their respective registration data as published. Further, the entire List of Registrants was shared with the Parliamentary Political Parties for examination and feedback.

GECOM was aware that many eligible persons could not be registered during the 2008 House-to-House Registration exercise because they were not in possession of the required source documents e.g. Birth Certificates, Passports and Marriage Certificates etc.

Since this was a matter of the utmost importance, GECOM invited the relevant stakeholders,

specifically the various Political Parties, to urge their constituents to spare no effort to acquire their respective source documents to become registered during the C & O exercise. Further, GECOM appealed to the Political Parties to assist their constituents (who might find some difficulty in obtaining a Deed Poll) by convincing the lawyers and Justices of the Peace and Commissioners of Oaths, affiliated to the respective Parties, to prepare and lodge the required instruments of name change (Deed Polls), through Notaries Public, at the Deeds Registry. Further, the Commission held strategic meetings with the Minister of Home Affairs and the Registrar General to emphasise the need to the process associated with the registration of births to be made easily accessible to the concerned persons and that the preparation and dispatch of Birth Certificates be alacritized.

6. Consultation with Private Sector Commission (PSC)

The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) met with members of the executive of the Private Sector Commission (PSC) on Wednesday, November 18, 2009 at the GECOM Boardroom relative to the Commission's capacity and ability to honour its mandates insofar as the conduct of Local government elections was concerned.

The meeting was held in order that the PSC could be apprised of the current status of (i) the National Identification Card production and distribution exercise, (ii) preparations for the conduct of Claims and Objections exercise as a prerequisite for the holding of Local Government Elections, and (iii) the preparations for the conduct of these elections.

Dr. Steve Surujbally, Chairman of GECOM gave detailed accounts of the status of the above referred activities, which are outlined in a GECOM Work Plan for the conduct of Local Government Elections. This Plan, which was prepared in Microsoft Project format, allowed GECOM to monitor the implementation of the tasks delineated therein via critical path analyses. Dr. Surujbally had assured the PSC team, which was headed by Mr. Gouveia, that GECOM is satisfied at the pace of implementation of the listed tasks.

Among other issues of interest to the PSC, the Executives were particularly concerned that approximately 30,000 persons were unable to register during the 2008 House-to-House Registration exercise because they were not in possession of the required source documents, especially Birth Certificates.

The Chairman had answered that GECOM had, via media releases, published notices, and several meetings with the relevant agencies – inter alia the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs – emphasized the need for Birth Certificates to be applied for, and produced and distributed to the applicants. He noted that the issuance of source documents was legally and administratively out of GECOM's ambit.

Dr. Surujbally was accompanied at the meeting by, Mr. R. Williams - Commissioner, Mr. G. Boodoo - Chief Election Officer, Mr. C. Benn - Deputy Chief Election Officer, Mr. K. Lowenfield Assistant Chief Election Officer, Mr. Andrew Chung - IT Administrator/Systems Analyst, and Mr. V. Persaud – Public Relations Officer.

Apart from Mr. Gouveia the PSC team comprised Mr. R. Ramsarran – Executive Director, Mr. Komal Ramnauth and Mr. Eon Caesar – Senior Vice President and Junior Vice President of the

Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Industry respectively, Mr. D. Gouveia of Roraima Airways, Ms. Elizabeth Alleyne of the PSC.

7. Discussion on Issues of Concern with AFC and GAP-ROAR

Dr. Steve Surujbally, Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) gave the assurance that the Commission recognized the Alliance For Change (AFC) and the Guyana Action Party-Rise Organize And Rebuild (GAP-ROAR) as legitimate components of the Combined Opposition Political Parties in Parliament, and that GECOM had never and will never treat these two entities with bias either collectively or individually.

This guarantee was given during a Meeting with a team of representatives of the above referred Parties and Mr. Gerry Gouveia – Chairman of the Private Sector Commission, who attended the Meeting as an observer with the agreement of GECOM and the AFC and GAP-ROAR. The Meeting was held at the GECOM Boardroom on Tuesday, November 24, 2009, immediately before the Commission’s the 273rd Statutory Meeting.

The AFC and GAP-ROAR team comprised Mr. Raphael Trotman – Leader, Mr. A. Griffith – Chief Scrutineer, Mr. Clayton Hall, Mr. David Patterson and Mr. Martin Cheong all of the AFC, and Mr. Everall Franklin of GAP-ROAR. GECOM was represented at the Meeting by Dr. Surujbally – Chairman, Mr. G. Boodoo – Chief Election Officer, and Commissioners Mr. V. Alexander, Mr. C. Corbin, Dr. K. Mangal Mr. M. McDoom, Mr. M. Shaw and Mr. R. Williams.

The primary issue raised by Mr. Trotman for discussion is that the AFC and GAP-ROAR feel that relations with GECOM must be improved. He said that these Parties feel “estranged” from the Commission, and that this should not be the case.

Mr. Trotman had referred specifically to the occurrence relative to the AFC having had to uplift the accreditation Cards for Scrutineers appointed by this Party from the People’s National Congress Reform (PNCR). Acknowledging that it is the Leader of the Opposition who must submit the names of Scrutineers to GECOM for accreditation, he said that an administrative arrangement could have been put in place for the AFC to uplift the accreditation Cards for its Scrutineers directly from GECOM. Responding to this position, Mr. Boodoo said that the accreditation Cards for all Scrutineers appointed to work for and on behalf of the Combined Opposition Political Parties in Parliament had been submitted to him by Mr. Robert Corbin in his (Mr. Corbin’s) capacity as Leader of the Opposition. Consequently, the accreditation Cards had been packaged for delivery to Mr. Corbin, and had been uplifted by a representative of the PNCR and handed over to the Leader of the Opposition.

Notwithstanding Mr. Boodoo’s explanation, the Chairman had assured the AFC and GAP-ROAR that the concerns expressed by Mr. Trotman would be given the fullest consideration during the Commission’s 273rd Statutory Meeting and this was done. Further, he gave the Commission’s commitment to work towards bringing the relationship between GECOM and the AFC and GAP-ROAR to a mutually satisfactory level, but that the achievement of this high point would only be achieved through committed efforts from both sides. Dr. Surujbally had noted though that improving the relationship is a two way course, and that comments from the AFC regarding GECOM must be based on truth.

8. GECOM Media Monitoring Unit (MMU)

The GECOM **Media Monitoring Unit** (MMU) continued to monitor media behaviour during 2008, using the criteria set out in the Media Code of Conduct for the August 2006 General and Regional Elections.

The importance and need for retention of the MMU were seen and understood within the context of an absence of broadcast legislation and a ‘**Watchdog**’ body to regulate and sanction the media in Guyana.

In the aftermath of the August, 2006 Elections the MMU was acknowledged by both the local and international organizations as being a major influence for responsible media reporting, lifting journalistic standards and contributing to the overall peaceful pre; peri; and post elections environment. This public commendation vindicated the Unit’s hard work.

GECOM and International Development Partners (IDP), in recognition of the work of the MMU, collaborated to ensure that the Unit continued to objectively monitor the local media all year round for infractions of the principles enshrined in the 2006 Media Code of Conduct, and international best practices associated with journalism. Moreover, the Unit’s work took on even greater significance and national importance as it strove to ensure equity, fairness and balance in news reporting on sensitive matters which could have impacted on House-to-House Registration and Local Government Elections.

The work of the Unit was deemed significant relative to media reportage on Local Government Elections (LGE). Accordingly, the operations of the Unit was focused on keeping partisan reporting to a minimum; curb excesses of those elements in the media fraternity inclined towards irresponsibility and recklessness; and ensure equity, fairness and balance in news reporting.

In light of the above and in the execution of its mandate in 2009, the MMU operated within the following framework:-

Aims

- Working towards the creation and maintenance of suitable environment under which the Guyana Elections Commission could carry out its mandate with regards to Local Government Elections in a manner commonly acceptable as being peaceful, free and fair.
- Improving the current standards of media reportage of election, political, governance and social issues.
- Strengthening of GECOM’s Public Relations Department in the area of information gathering and image building.

Objectives

- To monitor the local media and report on breaches of the principles enshrined in the 2006 Media Code of Conduct and norms associated with international best practices in journalism.
- To promote the raising of professional standards in the media with regards to the reporting of political, electoral, governance and general social issues.

- To encourage equity, balance and fairness in news reporting.
- To influence media owners/operatives to abide by the principles enshrined of the 2006 Media Code of Conduct.
- To support GECOM's Public Relations Department in information gathering and improving the organization's public image.

Scope of Work

- Daily monitoring of Guyana's print and broadcast media for conformity to the principles enshrined 2006 Media Code of Conduct and international best practices in journalism.
- The compilation of a body of incontrovertible evidence-based information of local media performance through a system of continuous daily monitoring using the 2006 Media Code of Conduct (MCC) as the standard.
- Dissemination of periodic reports of the Unit's findings on the local media's performance and submission of same to interested stakeholders, in this case the local media, GECOM and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- Providing GECOM's Public Relations Department with back-up support in the area of information gathering.
- The provision of information that can be used as a reference by any stakeholder or interested party for assessing/evaluating the media's behavior/performance at any given time.
- Produce quarterly reports on the MMU's findings in relation to media reportage of election, political, governance and other related social issues.
- Produce a comprehensive final report upon the conclusion of the work of the MMU for the year 2009, including successes/failures, advantages/disadvantages, that affected its work, and relevant recommendations.

Key Responsibilities

- Monitor and analyze the publication of information on election, political, governance and related social issues by the print and electronic media using the MCC as a guide to so do.
- Specific documentation of all incidents of publication of information in the media which have the potential of being detrimental to the public good in an accurate and timely manner.
- Alert GECOM to all instances of published information in the print and broadcast media that portrays the organization negatively.

The MMU produced four quarterly Reports for 2009. These Reports can be viewed on the Reports and Manuals page of this website.

8. Conclusion

Despite several challenges which confronted the Commission during the year 2009, the successes achieved in the period under review were, as delineated in this Report, were accomplished as a result of strategic policy development at the level of the Commission and efficient planning and implementation of the relevant projects by the Commission's Secretariat. This represents a clear demonstration of the capacity of the Commission and its Secretariat to prepare for and to conduct elections in compliance with international best practice, thereby guaranteeing that future pre; peri; and post elections periods would find Guyana in a state of peace and tranquility as was the case with the 2006 elections

APPENDIX I

SUMMARY OF TRAINING DONE APRIL TO OCTOBER, 2009

<u>DATE</u>	<u>VENUE</u>	<u>CATEGORY</u>
April 3 rd & 4 th , 2009	St. Joseph's High School	TRAINERS
April 18 th & 19 th , 2009	Campbellville Secondary	FIELD MANAGERS
	Tutorial High School	
	North Georgetown Secondary	
	St. Stanislaus College	
	North Georgetown Primary	
	St. Joseph's High School (A)	
	St. Joseph's High School (B)	
	Critchlow Labor College	
	Silver City Secondary School	
April 25 th & 26 th , 2009	St. Joseph's High	
	St. John's Community High School	
	Cotton Field Secondary	
May 2 nd & 3 rd , 2009	All Saints Primary	
	J. C. Chandisingh High School	
	Mackenzie High School	
	Belladrum Community High School	
	Tagore Memorial School	
	Fort Wellington Secondary School	
May 16 th & 17 th , 2009	Providence Primary School	
	Tutorial High School	
	Critchlow Labor College	
	St. Joseph's High School	
	North Georgetown Secondary School	
	Montrose Primary School	
	Annandale Secondary School	
May 23 rd & 24 th , 2009	St. John's High School	
	Vreed-en-Hoop Community High School	
	Mabaruma Secondary	
	Bartica Secondary	
	Cotton Field Secondary	
May 30 th & 31 st , 2009	Tagore Memorial Secondary	
June 13 th , 2009	Mabaruma Secondary	
June 6 th , 2009	Cotton Field Secondary	ID CARD DISTRIBU TION STAFF
	St. John's Community High	
	Providence Primary	
	Montrose Primary	
	Annandale Secondary	

	St. Joseph's High School	
	North Georgetown Secondary School	
	Tutorial High School	
	Critchlow Labor College	
	Belladrum Secondary	
	J. C. Chandisingh Secondary	
	Tagore Secondary School	
	Mackenzie Secondary School	
June 7 th , 2009	Pomona Secondary School	
	Vreed-en-Hoop Community High	
	Craig Primary School	
	Cove & John Secondary School	
	Helena No. 2 Primary	
	Bath Primary School	
	All Saints Primary	
	New Silver City Secondary School	
	<u>REFRESHER TRAINING</u>	
October 3 rd , 2009	Providence Primary	
October 4 th , 2009	St. Joseph's High School	
	North Georgetown Secondary School	
	Vreed-en-Hoop Secondary School	
	St. John's Community High School	
October 10 th , 2009	Belladrum Secondary School	
	All Saints Primary School	
	J.C. Chandisingh Secondary	
	Tagore Memorial	
	Registration Office Coldingen	
October 17 th , 2009	Cotton Field Secondary	
	Mackenzie High School	
	Mabaruma Secondary	