



# **Strengthening Guyana's Mental Health System**

## **An examination of the efforts of MHPSS Technical Working Group**

# Guyana - Land of Many Waters

Formerly known as British Guiana until 1966.

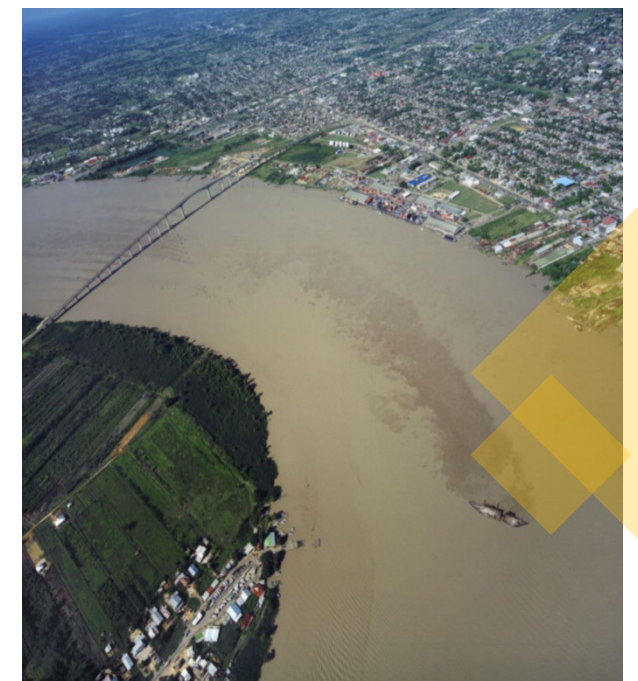
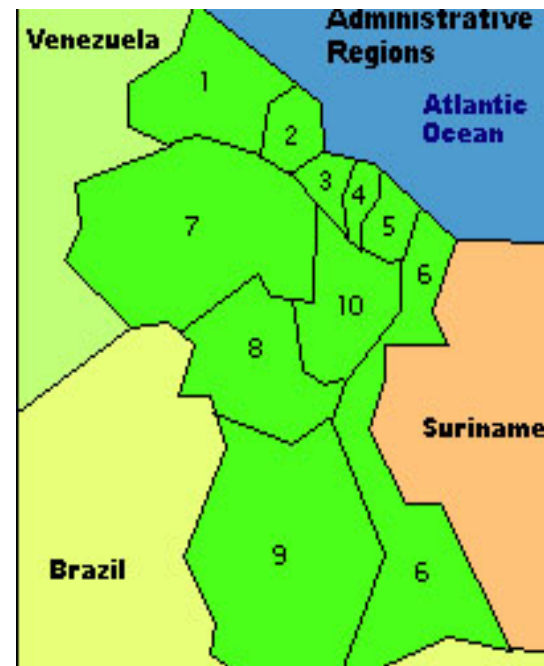
Only English-speaking country in South America

Neighbours – Brazil, Suriname, Venezuela

Population – 748,000 (Census 2012)

Covered by dense rain forests in the southern part of the country.

90% of population lives along the Atlantic coast






# The 6 Ethnic Groups of GUYANA



# Outline

- The importance of mental health and psychosocial support during emergencies.
  - The need to establish a robust and integrated MHPSS preparedness and response system
  - The essential principles and criteria that should guide emergency preparedness and interventions.
  - Exchange of experiences and best practices
  - Recommendations
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*The need to establish a robust and integrated MHPSS preparedness and response system*



# Organization of MHPSS TWG

PAHO acted as convenor for this process. PAHO acted as convenor for this process.

Invitations were sent to agencies working in mental health and/or were responding to the COVID-19 pandemic


Introductory meetings were conducted weekly. Focus was on:

1. IASC MHPSS briefing note
2. Mapping Exercise

Terms of reference were developed and finalized in consultation with members of the TWG with support from PAHO



# **The essential principles and criteria that should guide emergency preparedness and interventions.**

- Robust Plan of Action
  - Informed Team members (knowledgeable and experienced )
  - Excellent Teamwork
  - Excellent Communication Skills
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# Planning and Organization of Outreach activities

Outreach activities were organized in consultation with the Civil Defence Commission (CDC).

A formal report on the flood situation was presented to the MHPSS TWG.

A proposal was presented to the CDC for their concurrence.

Team leaders were identified to plan and organize the MHPSS activities in the shelters.

Outreach activities were planned in consultation with health administrators and shelter managers in the affected regions.

Funding to support these activities was provided by PAHO and the Ministry of Education.





Exchange of experiences and best practices





Kwakwani

## Jeep Landing, Kwakwani, Berbice River



**BEFORE**

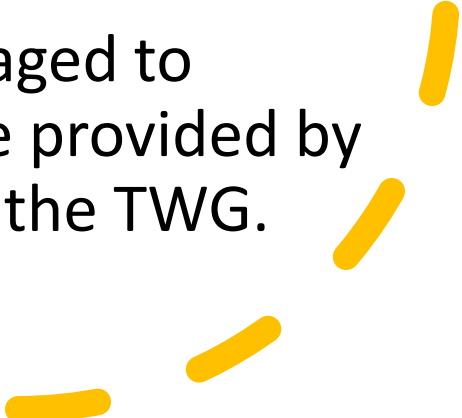


**AFTER**





# Kwakwani - Introductory session with media

- On arrival, the team met with the media and outlined activities that would be conducted in the communities and the shelters.
  - The purpose of the MHPSS TWG was shared with the community.
  - Representatives from the various agencies provided an overview of the work of the respective agencies.
  - The concept of MHPSS was discussed.
  - Community members were encouraged to access select services that would be provided by the team during the 3 days visit by the TWG.
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# MHPSS Activities with Adults and Children

Hosted one-on-one psychosocial sessions with the residents of the Kwakwani Primary School Shelter

Group counselling activities with the parents and the children, between the teenage and young age groups

Distribution of pamphlets on self-care and coping skills as well as stress balls to the parents of the shelter to help them better deal with stressful situations.



# Shelter management





# HIV Counselling and testing

# Picture of group session with parents of the Primary School Shelter



# Pictures of the one-on-one sessions with the parents

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Pictures of activities done with the young children at Kwakwani Primary School

# Recommendations

Resuscitate the MHPSS- TWG

Exchange programmes/opportunities among TWGs to share best practices

Incorporate measures to improve flood resilience for future events.

Flood interventions address the psychosocial needs of those affected, by comprehensively incorporating MHPSS principles.



Thank you!