

**THEMATIC COMPILATION OF RELEVANT INFORMATION SUBMITTED
BY GUYANA**

ARTICLE 9, PARAGRAPH 2 UNCAC

MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC FINANCES

GUYANA (THIRTEENTH MEETING)

35. The National Assembly debates the policy matters in the Budget for 5 days where all Members of Parliament participate. The Committee of Supply then considers the proposed budgetary estimates line by line of each agency, during which process the Parliamentary Opposition asks questions, to which answers must be provided. This process, more than anything else, allows for transparency in public expenditure.

36. All of the Parliamentary sittings are live streamed, so the public is able to be informed about the budget process. This ensures that members of the public are informed and can engage in informed exchanges on the subject of public expenditure.

37. To promote transparency the media is an integral part of this process by offering live and written coverage

40. Fifteen to twenty years ago when manual pay sheets were used, there were greater opportunities by persons to commit acts of corruption. With the introduction of the IFMAS and later the implementation of the IFMIS system, an electronic system regarding payments and requests for payments, the Ministry of Finance has been able to prevent and reduce the numbers of acts of corruption of persons attempting to embezzle funds from the state. The IFMIS system has been able to close many additional lope holes in the payments and disbursement of funds.

41. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) exercises powers in keeping with the Legislative Bodies (Evidence) Act, Chapter 1:08 which allows for the summoning of witnesses to give evidence and or provide documents to the Committee. The Act also provides for a person who refuses or neglects to attend without sufficient cause to be apprehended and held in custody for a period not exceeding one week. However, this has never been enforced by the Committee.

42. During the examination of the Auditor General's Annual Report, the PAC requires the Chief Accounting Officers of agencies under scrutiny to appear before the Committee and respond to the Auditor General's findings/statements in that Annual Report under review. During these proceedings members of the media are present and play an active role in keeping the public informed. Due to COVID 19, the PAC has developed a hybrid system which allows members

to choose to attend in person or virtually as well as the media. Most recently these hearings are being live streamed.

53. A good practice in using ICT is that Guyana's budget presentation is live streamed, and sections of the roads are blocked around the Parliament of Guyana with large television screens streaming budget presentations, for the public to view. This is not practiced in many countries around the world. Once the Budget is read, all the documents regarding the Budget are circulated in the National Assembly to all Members of Parliament and posted on public websites.

54. Utilizing information and communications technology to identify and analyze risks of corruption. In establishing the methodology for Guyana's Second Money Laundering/ Terrorist Financing National Risk Assessment Report of July 2021, the working group considered the World Bank's Risk Assessment advisory package provided to Guyana as part of its technical assistance to the country.

55. This is a methodological tool, developed by the World Bank to assist countries in carrying out their own national risk assessments. It is an Excel-based model that enables countries to identify the main drivers of ML/TF risks. It provides a methodological process, based on the understanding of the causal relations among money laundering risk factors and variables relating to the regulatory, institutional, and economic environment. The tool comprises several interrelated modules. These are built on "input variables", which represent factors related to money laundering/terrorist financing threats and vulnerabilities. The model is applied as follows:

- For each sector or area or assessment, a multidisciplinary team is set up consisting of experienced practitioners from government and, the private sector.
- Each team member assigns ratings to input variables related to their area of expertise and justifies those ratings with quantitative and qualitative data.
- Each input variable has an assigned weight and impact on the vulnerability level of the assessed sector, or area.
- The tool generates an overall rating, based on the inputs from the modules.

56. Additionally, at the Audit Office, **the risk-based approach to auditing is being used**, whilst, the Interactive Data Extraction and Analysis (IDEA) software, which is a computer-assisted auditing tool (CAAT) acquired to support the audit process. Further, the Audit Office introduced and implemented a new audit management software (TeamMate AMS), which is also an enhancement of its auditing processes. Use of the software ensures that work is executed

in a consistent manner using procedures and practices that follow international standards. The mechanisms of the software are such, that reviews and sharing of information can be done in real time, regardless of the locations of the users.

57. The Bank of Guyana utilizes a **National Payment System** which is a form of automation and digitization of government processes and services. It should be noted that the National Payment System Act, 2018 is covered by statute passed on July 13th, 2018, in the National Assembly and assented to on August 13th, 2018.

58. The I.T infrastructure of the National Payment System is designed to provide a verifiable audit trail, data is locked into the system, any attempts to alter, remove or delete information from the system will be recorded thereby making it harder to interfere with the data and to hide corrupt transactions. The data is stored on devices other than the primary one as part of the disaster recovery strategy. The system is also encrypted with passwords for protection against hackers.

59. This heavy-security I.T infrastructure is demonstrative of a best practice in the use of ICT for preventing and combatting corruption. Additionally, the Bank is charged with regulating and supervising the National Payment System. Technical officers conduct regular monitoring, periodic evaluation, and reporting. As a result, the system is constantly being upgraded through mechanisms such as stress testing, penetration testing and security testing with the aim of identifying gaps or loopholes in the system.

75. The Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) has introduced eServices, intended to make increasing use of technology and to improve taxpayers' overall experience when interacting with the GRA. In 2021, the GRA replaced their flagship taxes software (TRIPS) with the new, intuitive, and powerful Optimal Revenue Management System (RMS). By switching to Optimal RMS, they are offering a new and improved eServices platform. Forms for the application of Value Added Tax Services, Taxpayer Identification Number, Compliance, Exemptions, Mortgage Interest Relief, Income Tax Submission Of Returns, Allowances: Taxable & Non-Taxable Allowances, Property Tax and Miscellaneous Taxes are available on the GRA website.¹

¹ Link to the GRA website: <https://www.gra.gov.gy/tax-services/>