

**Address by the Hon. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.,
Vice-President and Minister of Public Security
on the
Occasion of the Launch of the Citizen Security Strengthening
Programme
25th January 2016 - Marriot Hotel**

First, I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to our many partners assembled here today to witness the launch of this new initiative aimed at reducing crime and violence; improving police effectiveness through modernization and professionalization; and reducing recidivism among inmates who have served their period of custodial sentences.

Your presence here is an important indication of your commitment and willingness to support Government's crime and violence prevention efforts. While it is obligatory for Governments to address problems related to public security in an effort to safeguard the rights and well-being of their citizens, emerging trends in successful crime prevention show that Government-Citizens partnerships are most effective in tackling crime and violence because of the multi-faceted nature of the phenomenon.

'Crime and violence' is a major obstacle to human, social and economic development and peaceful co-existence and a pressing concern for almost all Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean Region.

In Guyana, particularly during the last decade and a half, crime and violence have become legitimate concerns for everyone. Guyana's homicide rates have dramatically increased since 2000 from 9.9 per 100,000 inhabitants in that year to 20 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2014. In 2013, the robbery rate reached 214.9 per 100,000 inhabitants and the domestic violence rate was 431.2 per 100,000 inhabitants. We have here, according to the WHO Report of 2014, the highest suicide rate in the Americas and the world.

Of course the CDB 2014 Report reveals that we have the highest unemployment rate and highest migration rate in the Caribbean. Both these phenomena directly and indirectly are related to crime and violence.

The crime problem in Guyana is compounded by a high incidence of violent behaviour at the community level; relatively low levels of trust in law enforcement agencies based on perceived low Guyana Police Force's effectiveness to prevent and investigate crimes; high offender recidivism; prevalence of social norms that tolerate use of violence among intimate partners; and limited participation by community members in resolving community problems.

The Assessment Report of the Citizen Security Program (Phase 1) reflects how true this state of affairs is. Take these statistics from that Assessment Report. The Perception of Insecurity increased from 34% in 2006 to 53% in 2014 in Region 4. And increased from 39% in 2006 to 50% in 2014 in Region 6. The Perception that Police not doing a good job rose from 26% in 2006 to 43% in 2014 nationally. Citizens willingness to get involved decreased from 75% in 2006 to 57% in 2014 in Region 4.

1 Key elements of the Citizen Security Strengthening Programme

The Citizen Security Strengthening Programme is designed to tackle the problem of crime and violence by working to reduce risk factors and drivers of crime and violence and promoting and strengthening protective factors. The Citizen Security Security Programme, which is funded through a US\$15 million loan from the Inter American Development Bank, will contribute to reducing crime and violence in Guyana, through a comprehensive approach that combines preventive strategies with institutional strengthening activities. This amount is a significant investment by the people of Guyana to remove a formidable obstacle to development.

The programme comprise three (3) components.

Component 1 involves promoting effective community-based crime prevention. Indicative interventions under this component includes:

- (i) Capacity-building for community-level governance and community-based organizations so that they can develop local solutions for crime and violence, increase citizen engagement.
- (ii) Creation, formalization and strengthening of Community Action Committees to support community-led initiatives to prevent crime and violence.
- (iii) Provision of training for community members to address risks associated with interpersonal violence and norms that promote acceptance of violence. Training programmes will cover parenting, gender norms, counselling and conflict resolution.
- (iv) Public awareness and behaviour change campaigns to prevent inter-personal violence.

(v) A local diagnostic survey of crime phenomena, their characteristics, factors leading to them, the form they take and their extent.

(vi) Activities for creating economic inclusion for at-risk youth (ages 15-30), including: vocational, job-readiness, job seeking and job placement, entrepreneurship, and mentoring training.

(vii) Rapid Impact Projects such as the rehabilitation of multi-purpose centres, sports infrastructure, and lighting, *inter alia*. These are envisioned as safe and inclusive spaces for youths and the wider community to interact.

The interventions mentioned under **component 1** aim to address risk factors to crime and violence at the community, family and individual levels.

In Component 2 Government aims to increase the effectiveness of the Guyana Police Force in preventing and investigating crime and violence. Actions under this component include: strengthening of human resource management tools and mechanisms; expanding the Integrated Crime Information System to all police sub-divisions; and developing multi-sector Domestic Violence protocols.

Further, this component will see the installation of strategically placed cameras as part of the Integrated Surveillance and Patrol Management System. This surveillance technology will enhance law enforcement effectiveness by providing up-to-date information, and supporting the development of proactive operational strategies and intelligence led tactics. This is what I usually refer to as the Smart City project.

Additionally, the programme will support training in criminal and forensic investigations techniques and assist the Forensic Laboratory in achieving ISO certification. The advantages that can accrue from improving forensic practices are: the collection and analysis of high quality evidence to convict criminal perpetrators; generation of conclusions based on scientific methodologies; and the overall deterrence effect when offenders realise that they will not get off after committing a crime.

The Programme will also seek to improve effectiveness in the Guyana Police Force disciplinary control and accountability mechanisms by bridging the capacity gap in Police Complaints Authority and the Office of Professional Responsibility in conducting

independent investigations. Through the CSSP we will offer, too, a system for psycho-social support and counselling for Police Officers.

Further, under this component 18 Police stations will be targeted for rehabilitative works so as to enhance their overall ambience. The focus of the rehabilitation is the Enquiry Office areas and the creation of rooms to allow for confidential reporting of domestic violence.

Component 3 of the Citizen Security Strengthening Programme will seek to strengthen rehabilitative services of the Guyana Prison Service. This component will employ a menu of measures aimed at reducing prisoners' recidivism. Among the efforts identified are: a prison census and a needs assessment; design and implementation of a rehabilitation and social reintegration model; development of case management and monitoring system; strengthening knowledge on alternatives to incarceration for pre-trial detainees and upgrading of prison facilities.

2. Programme Implementation

Monitoring and evaluation will be an integral aspect of project implementation. The importance of monitoring and evaluation cannot be overstated since they ensure that programmes are adapted to respond to changing contexts and issues; help to identify superior approaches to crime prevention; and inform the design of future programmes.

It is important to note that the interventions implemented under the Citizen Security Strengthening Programme serve to complement existing crime and violence reduction programmes. We will continue a robust fight against the trafficking of illegal drugs and illicit firearms; and we will continue to pursue and capture dangerous criminal who are intent on breaking the law. We have no intentions, emphatically, no intentions to forge any alliance with criminals.

Our intention is to work closely with other Government Ministries and Departments, the International community, non-governmental organisation and community based groups to deal with the crime and violence problem. We intend to forge an unbeatable coalition against criminals. We intend to root out violence from our communities, our homes, our schools, our recreational spaces and our workplaces.

To successfully transform the security landscape in our country, implementation of this project requires national ownership. While the IDB is providing the resources, both financial and technical, successful crime prevention projects require local ownership. This is a national undertaking. Some of the stakeholders and beneficiaries are here today. I expect that you too will see this programme as your programme—a national undertaking.

3. *Closing*

In closing, I would like to reiterate that the strength of our combined efforts will be effective in winning this battle against crime and violence. So let us seize the opportunities that this project present to make our homes and communities free from crime and violence. Let us join hearts and hands in eradicating crime and violence.

I want to say finally how pleased and honoured I am to be here at this launch of the Citizen Security Strengthening Programme 2016.

Thank you.

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SECURITY
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