

# Annual Progress Report 2017



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# Executive Summary

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2017 saw GEPAN reinforce its commitment to supporting populations that are socially and economically challenged in Guyana, after a period of inactivity during the first half of the year.

This report captures the main activities conducted and accomplishments achieved by the organization in 2017. It gives a brief insight into what's in store for 2018 while outlining the main challenges the team faces when conducting humanitarian work on the field.

Because we believe in transparency and accountability, this report is intended to keep our beneficiaries, partners and donors up to date with our work as a young organization with big dreams for Guyana's most vulnerable.



## INTRODUCTION

The Guyana Empowered Peoples Action Network (GEPAN) is a small NGO start-up that runs on volunteerism and the generosity of private individuals and businesses. Unlike other non-profits, it does not benefit from grants and aid from major donors. However, it is hoped that as the organization grows and builds capacity, it would be eligible to tap in to donor funding.



The organization's mandate seeks to address the socially and economically challenged in Guyana, primarily women and children. Since the organization was founded in January 2016, an annual stationery drive was launched under the Support Education Campaign (SEC), benefitting almost 400 children in villages across Guyana. The organization has also taken up the fight for justice for Maxine

Welch who alleged sexual abuse by a Government official in Region 9. The alleged abuser is now before the law thanks to GEPAN's partnered lobbying, in an effort to seek justice for the victim. The organization also responded to the Rupununi petition in 2016, lobbying the Government of Guyana to investigate the grounds upon which the grievances were made. Due to the nature and extent of the petition, GEPAN also filed a complaint with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as with Government agencies and other non-governmental organizations.

Limited financial resources and the need for a more committed and proactive team are the two main challenges GEPAN currently faces. However, the organization will remain faithful to its mandate while seeking to build both a stronger donor support base and a dedicated team.

2018 will see a renewed commitment to helping communities, extending the organization's network and creating partnerships for advocacy in social and women's rights.

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# WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED IN 2017

## Support Education Campaign

**(SEC) 2017** – an initiative geared towards reducing the back-to-school expenses of low-income households.

Hard work and solidarity from donors made SEC 2017 a success. Although we catered for two hundred and twenty-five (225) primary school children from nine (9) communities, the outpour of support and contributions in both cash and kind allowed us to cover back-to-school supplies (writing material, geometry sets, composition books, water bottles, backpacks) for over two hundred and sixty (260) children in eleven (11) communities.



Communities included Anandale, Hope Estate, Albouystown, Moruca, Lima, Lima Sands, Golden Fleece, Red Village, Pakuri Village, Dartmouth and Adventure Sands. With the exception of Golden Fleece, twenty-five to thirty beneficiaries were selected in each community. Beneficiaries were children coming from modest (low-income) households.

The campaign was coordinated and executed with the help of local Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDC) in Regions 2 and 4, as well as the Pakuri Village Council. Donations came from the steady and reliable support of local businesses, concerned Guyanese and the Guyanese diaspora in North America which contributed generously.

SEC was created to assist modest (low-income) families, by reducing their back-to-school expenses. The initiative is a much welcome one to which beneficiaries look forward.

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## The Rupununi Outreach –

*assessing socioeconomic challenges to human development in Region 9*

The Rupununi outreach was a two week field investigation conducted in fifteen (15) indigenous communities across Region 9 (Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo) with the objective of assessing the social and economic setbacks challenging human development in

a predominantly indigenous populated region. Villages included Paipang, Tipuru, Tiger Pond, Rukumuta, Karasabai, Nappi, Parishara, Hiowa, Aishalton, Awarewanau, Maruranau, Kumu, Moco Moco, Sand Creek and Rupunau.

The initiative was made possible with the cooperation of the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) for Region 9, local businesses in Lethem, as well as indigenous Village Councils and elders. Findings depicted a depressive picture of living conditions detailed in The Rupununi Report available for public consultation on the organization's website (<http://hrpguyana.org/>).

Several actions were proposed in response to the findings of the investigation one of which is the Annual Hinterland Clothes drive for hinterland children especially (but not limited to).

The main challenge encountered when thinking up project proposals, conducting outreaches and coordinating activities for indigenous communities and the hinterland, remains exorbitant travel costs, geographical accessibility and transport costs.

The Rupununi Report reflects GEPAN's commitment to include indigenous peoples within the scope of its mandate.





## Annual Clothes Drive – *launched in November 2017 and ongoing*

The Annual Clothes Drive is a response to the limited resources of low-income families particularly in the hinterland. It was created after a needs assessment was conducted in fifteen (15) communities across the Rupununi during the course of November

2017.

The idea is similar to the annual Support Education Campaign (SEC) insofar as it is a year-round collect aimed at alleviating the financial burdens of parents while increasing comfort for children in small but meaningful gestures.

Launched on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the collect has attracted interest from private persons as well as from the diaspora. The American registered Hamid Foundation has also teamed up with GEPAN to cover a part of the shipping costs for items gathered by donors in New York, to be shipped in 2018.

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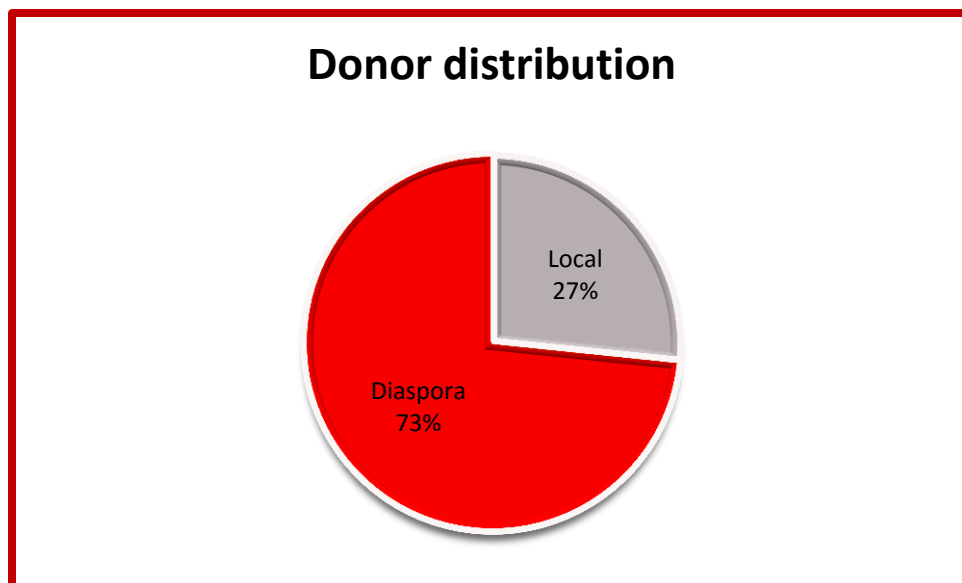
## 2017 Financial overview

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GEPAN is a non-profit which runs on the charitable donations of private individuals and businesses both in Guyana and the diaspora. Although the support has seen a slight increase, these cannot cover administrative costs and as a result, members and team do not receive salaries, stipends, DSA's, travel or other financial allowances. Active members are self-reliant and motivated by their passion for humanitarian work.

In 2017, the Support Education Campaign 2017 received financial donations amounting to GY \$616 733 (approx. US \$3 000). No other financial donations were received by the organization in 2017. Material donations included stationery and clothes.

SEC 2017 offered the possibility of sponsoring a child's back-to-school package for a total of GY \$ 2 700 (US \$13.5). However, smart and conservative spending by the team, cobbled with waivers by local businesses from which stationery was sourced, allowed to meet and exceed the initial target budgeted for under SEC.



Note: represents financial donations for SEC 2017





## Highlights

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### **Our first award!** – *Victoria Regia awarded by TCV, a leading local non-profit addressing suicide in Guyana*

For its [3rd Annual El Dorado Awards](#) on November 18, 2017, The Caribbean Voice (TCV) acknowledged GEPAN's hard work "characterized by a unique focus on humanitarianism and or protection, advocacy/activism". GEPAN was subsequently honoured with TCV's **Victoria Regia award**. The award is a first and came as a surprise since GEPAN was founded just two (2) years ago. It left members feeling humbled and motivated the team in its commitment to our beneficiaries, while encouraging us to establish meaningful partnerships with other civil actors geared towards positively impacting society.



### **The commencement of a path to justice for Maxine Welch**

After more than a year of seeking justice for Maxine Welch, a young woman who was allegedly abused by a political appointee of Region 9, the latter was finally arraigned and charged with sexual assault.

The court case is currently ongoing. However, due to the political dimension of the affair, the major challenge for the victim was to receive legal representation by a lawyer willing to provide pro-bono services. In light of her financial incapacity, GEPAN joined other stakeholders and lobbied in her favor after which she was able to access the services of a lawyer.

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## Projections for 2018 in brief



**Hope For Women**

- Sustainable livelihoods
- Social & economic empowerment
- Stronger and more independent women

**Raise Awareness on:**

- Hinterland development
- Women's rights issues
- Social challenges in rural communities

**Continue SEC & Clothes Drive**

- Increase number of beneficiaries
- Expand areas of intervention

While 2018 offers new avenues for projects, the organization will focus its resources on three areas encompassing women's and children's rights:

1. Empowerment through education
2. Empowerment through economic uplifting
3. Empowerment through awareness

Communities in rural and impoverished areas will continue to be prioritized by the organization, indigenous villages included.

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## OUR VISION

The Guyana Empowered Peoples Action Network believes in empowering vulnerable segments of the rural and hinterland Guyanese population that are afflicted by poverty, in particular women and children.

Follow our blog and social media platforms to keep up with our work.

<http://hrpguyana.org>

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