

Guyana in the UK: Research

Guyana is a lower middle income country. The country has high emigration rates, particularly of highly skilled citizens such as teachers and nurses. In 2010 the World Bank estimated that 432,900 people born in Guyana lived outside the country. When considering that many of the Guyanese who left the country did so from the 1950s, there is also likely to be a far larger number of second and third generation Guyanese living around the world. In 2009 it was estimated that 76.9% of the tertiary-educated population had left the country (UNDP, 2009)

Post independence in 1966, it became increasingly evident that there was a shortage of skilled workers in the country. This led to a number of policies designed to attract Guyanese migrants back to the country. In 1967, the then president of Guyana, Forbes Burnham, launched a scheme to encourage the return of Guyanese nationals to the country. This was followed by the establishment of the Personal Development Unit in 1970 whose key aim was to keep in touch with Guyanese expatriates and to keep them informed of opportunities at home. Between 1970 and 1977, 385 returns occurred through various repatriation schemes. The average age of return migrants was 38. Approximately 75% were male and of those 66% were married. 96% of them held paper qualifications of which 47% were bachelor degrees or higher. 61% of return migrants came from the UK, 23% from the USA and 12% from Canada. Despite sanctions against return migrants who chose to leave again, 10% still decided to remigrate (Strachan, 1980). It is evident, therefore, that these policies have had limited success leading Tilokie to conclude that:

“Guyana’s human capital plight began since the late 1960’s and has continued unabated to the current day” (2011, p866)

All around the world people are talking about diasporas and how they can be involved in the development of their respective ‘home countries’. Part of this discourse has been a discussion of remittances and how the money that is sent into countries from abroad can have important impacts at both the micro and macro level. It is estimated that remittance inflows represented 13% of Guyana’s GDP in 2010 (World Bank, 2011). It is however evident that the diaspora has is not purely through monetary contributions. Mr. Robert Persaud, Information Liason to the President of Guyana recently stated: *“There is even a view that the Diaspora’s influence on policy making and development drive is at its peak”*.

In the 1960s, the United Kingdom was the top destination country for Guyanese people moving abroad. It is now estimated that around 6% of Guyanese born migrants are in the United Kingdom. In the UK there are at least 52 registered Guyanese associations and many more operating with different aims and purposes.

I am currently doing research for the University of Maastricht in the Netherlands which looks specifically at the Guyanese community living in the UK. The aim of this study is to consider the ways in which Guyanese people in the UK are engaged with Guyana as well as the reasons why some of those individuals send money to the country. I would therefore invite any readers who were either born in Guyana or who have Guyanese heritage to consider giving 20 minutes of their time towards this study by completing the following survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Guyana-UK>

Thank you for taking the time to read this article.

References

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