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PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CANADA HAPPY TO SUPPORT HELP AND SHELTER IN COMBATTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN RURAL AREAS.

The Canadian High Commissioner to Guyana, H.E. Charles Court today handed over a cheque for G\$7,628,850 to directors of Help and Shelter, to execute a project aimed at expanding their counselling services to rural areas. Funding was made available through the Caribbean Gender Equality Programme of the Canadian International Development Agency.

The goal of the project is to educate and empower people to adopt peaceful and non-violent means for resolving conflicts in their lives and to pursue healthy relationships which are based on mutual respect and appreciation of human rights. It is also intended to make a significant impact in rural areas of Guyana towards a reduction in the incidence of domestic and gender-based violence and in rendering assistance to victims of abuse.

This is a second project with Help and Shelter this year. In January 2009, High Commissioner Court signed an agreement with Help and Shelter that paved the way to provide critical support to various project initiatives that are geared to mitigate the effects of domestic violence, including online counselling and training for social workers and educators to counsel victims.

Canada is delighted to continue to support civil society groups that are working hard to mitigate the effects of the problem of domestic violence in Guyana.

Please see attached fact sheet for more details of Help and Shelter and the project.

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HELP AND SHELTER RURAL COUNSELLING SERVICES PROJECT

Help & Shelter is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status and is recognised as the premier organization in the fight to combat domestic and gender-based violence in Guyana. It is the only organization that has a shelter for victims of domestic and gender-based violence. All services are offered free of cost to clients.

Core activities are:

Counselling: They provide hotline, face-to-face and court support counselling for women, children, youth and men who are the victims of violence.

Public education/advocacy: They actively foster a high level of awareness among all sectors, both government and non-governmental, about the prevalence, causes and costs of violence, with emphasis on domestic and gender-based violence, and about alternatives to the use of violence.

Shelter: They provide a temporary (maximum 6 months) shelter for abused women and their children, with training that can develop psychological and practical skills needed for increased self-sufficiency.

Legal support: They contribute to improved legal recourse for victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

The target groups are women, men, youth and children who are victims of domestic violence –HIV/AIDS and Trafficking in Persons.

Victims of domestic and gender-based violence will be provided with counselling, referrals to other agencies and organizations for relevant assistance as needed and receive information about the options open to them.

Rural inhabitants, as a result of Help and Shelter's public education materials, will be sensitized to the problems of domestic and gender-based violence and made aware of the services available to victims. This will include the dissemination of Help & Shelter's brochures and other educational materials.

The problems faced by victims of gender-based and domestic violence are compounded when they live in rural areas, as they may well be unable to access the various forms of assistance available in Georgetown, the capital city of Guyana. In addition, despite Help & Shelter's ongoing public education campaign, there are undoubtedly a fairly large number of people who live in rural areas that are not aware of the services Help & Shelter provides, including hotline counselling for those who cannot come to their office.

The project will allow Help & Shelter to expand its counselling services to Moruca and Leguan due to the demand for this service.

The project will also provide counselling training for the staff of Hope for All, a non-governmental organisation headquartered at Suddie on the Essequibo Coast, so that they will have the skills to counsel their clients who are HIV positive and those who are experiencing Domestic Violence. Hope for All works in several villages on the Essequibo Coast and the Pomeroon River.

The project will also provide capacity building and counselling training for two NGOs in Berbice – Family Awareness Consciousness Togetherness (FACT) in Springlands and Comforting Hearts, in New Amsterdam. These two NGOs work in the area of HIV/AIDS in Region 6 and have requested training to work in the areas of Domestic Violence and Gender-based Violence with their clients who are experiencing violence in the home and in the communities.