

ACTIVITY REPORT

Activity: Workshop on Indigenous Peoples Land Management Strategy for Southern Suriname (GEF project concept)
Date: April 8th, 2005

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this activity was to have a primary discussion with representatives of the Trio and Wayana communities, the Government, the Private sector, NGOs and international organizations on the concept proposal that will be submitted to the GEF.

COORDINATION:

Activities were coordinated by the Ministry of Labor, Technological Development and Environment and the OAS Office for Sustainable Development and Environment (Sasha Gottlieb). The workshop facilitator was Neville Gunther (OAS).

PARTICIPANTS:

Ministry of Natural Resources (NH): Stinasu, Nature Conservation Division, Foundation for Forest Control, Legal Department, Central Bureau for Aerial Mapping, NH policy makers.

Ministry of Regional Development (RO): District Commissioner Sipaliwini, Mr. Hewitt, Mr. K. Verneuil, E. Schelts, Fund for Development of the Interior.

Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation (PLOS): K. Lo A Njoe, P. Tjan A Tjoi (Director).

Ministry of Health: Medical Mission.

Ministry of Labour, Technological development and Environment (ATM): M. Kerkhoffs-Zerp (GEF Focal Point)

Ministry of Education: Department for the Interior.

University of Suriname: Center for Agricultural Research in Suriname, National Zoological Department Suriname, Herbarium van Suriname.

Ministry of Social Affairs

Ministry of Justice and Police

Ministry of Defense: National Army

Indigenous communities: Trio, Wayana, Association for Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname.

NGO's: Sanomaro Esa H. Vreedzaam, Conservation International Suriname: S. Malone, Amazon

Conservation Team: G. Emanuels-Smith, B. de Vries, World Wildlife Fund: G. Zondervan, Bureau Forum
NGO's: H. Wesenhagen.

Private Sector: Suralco, Billiton, Association of Wildlife Traders, private consultants Teunissen and Noordam.

PRIOR ACTIVITIES:

Prior to the workshop the Trio and Wayana tribes have had extensive consultations with the OAS, where the VIDS (Association of Indigenous Village Leaders) facilitated. The outcome of the consultation has resulted in the following needs for the communities:

- Land rights (acknowledgement, increase negotiating capacity)
- Capacity building in protection of the natural resources
- Fire prevention and protection

The tribes also urge a need to compile a single land-use and potentially risk map for Southern Suriname.

WORKSHOP REPORT:

The one-day meeting was officially opened at 8.45 hour by the Minister of Labor, Technological Development and Environment, who explained the importance of such a GEF project for Suriname.

The opening-session was followed by a short presentation by the OAS representative S. Gottlieb on the participation of Suriname in OAS activities, the objective of the Office for Sustainable Development and Environment and the GEF project.

The facilitator explained to the audience that this was an open discussion and that it would be held on 4 specific topics: 1) collective land rights, 2) collaboration between Government and Indigenous communities, 3) sustainable income generation, 4) capacity building. Each topic was given a time frame so that the topics could be finished throughout the day. The participants were asked if they could agree on this work plan, and it was unanimously accepted.

A presentation was given by the Granman (Chief) of the Trio tribe, representing both the views of the Trio and Wayana communities in Southern Suriname. The Granman explained that the outcome of the consultations were the most important issues that are currently living in the communities. The tribes also explained that they are tourists in their own land. They stressed the need for a single map of South Suriname, including both the Wayana and Trio communities.

Questions and discussion

Ms. Vreedzaam (NGO Sanomaro Esa) stressed that the aid from OAS to Suriname indigenous communities should be based on a legal framework.

Mr. Strijk (district commissioner Sipaliwini-interior of Suriname) was questioning the fact that the indigenous leaders are on the payroll of the Government and cannot be a negotiating body. Captain Ewka from Sipaliwini stressed that the South and Western tribes are collaborating from now on in handling the most important issues on the agenda such as land rights. The tribal representative Thomas explained their way of living closely related to nature and how they sometimes cannot understand the behavior of tourists and other people coming to their lands (e.g. throwing away fish that was caught by sport fishermen).

The discussion on land rights was more of a question section with the following points:

- Is issuing land rights a prerequisite for development/management or not?
- For the GEF project, why is Brazil not involved? Do we need observers from Brazil?
- Are there agreements between the Tareno communities of Brazil and Suriname?

The representative of Kawemhakan (Captain Miep) is not satisfied that some indigenous organizations are well represented at the meeting (VIDS) and others such as the OIS (Organization for Indigenous Peoples in Suriname) are not. Many participants felt that there is a great deal of information on land rights sent to the Government by means of the President, Minister of Regional Development and the National Assembly, and that this information should be compiled together to get a better overview.

The discussion on the type of collaboration with the Government, indigenous communities and various stakeholders was addressed by proposing several initiatives to fulfill this role. The (unofficial) inter-ministerial land rights initiative seemed to be a good way to address these issues, although the tribes are not

represented. Participants were not agreeing on having the VIDS being the only representative of the tribes, and it seemed that there was no clear view on how to collaborate further on.

The income generation part was troubled by the fact that there was no clear overview on the ongoing OAS project with ACT and how the GEF project fits in. This was clarified. It was notified that tribal knowledge, related to some sort of product, cannot be marketed without respecting intellectual property.

The last discussion was about capacity building. The tribes stressed their need for capacity building, and other representatives pointed out that the tribes need to work on their contacts with their brothers and sisters in the border region. One prerequisite for building capacity should be having a legal framework for working in indigenous communities.