



INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN

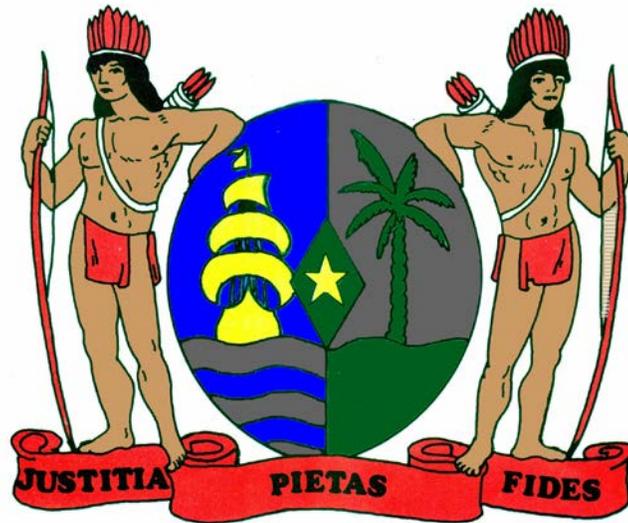
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REPUBLIC OF SURINAME



**NATIONAL REPORT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME AT
THE THIRTY- FOURTH ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES OF
THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN
(CIM)**

November, 2008

NATIONAL REPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME
AT THE THIRTY-FOURTH ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES
OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN

GENERAL ASPECTS

Suriname is fully aware of its international commitments on gender equality. As a result, this concept is included in all its policy documents, in particular in its Multi- Annual Development Plan 2006-2011. One of the principles of our human rights based development strategy indicates that a cross-cutting gender perspective should be mainstreamed in all plans and programs.

The Ministry of Home Affairs is in charge of Gender Affairs. The Integral Gender Action Plan 2006-2010 is the main policy initiative to improve the situation of women, men, boys and girls. It identifies the priorities for special attention, such as poverty eradication, health, domestic violence and voice and decision-making.

In January 2007 Suriname presented its third Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) report for the period March 31st 1999-March 2002 before the UN CEDAW Committee in New York. As recommended in article 8 and 37 of the Concluding Comments of the Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women the Ministry of Home Affairs started in March 2008 with the dissemination of the Concluding Comments and other international commitments to all ministries, NGO's, libraries, the University, the National Youth Parliament, Statistical Bureaus etc.

At this moment the Government of Suriname is preparing the fourth and fifth CEDAW Report.

For the first time, in April 2007, a Joint United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) was launched as a result of strong cooperation between Government, the UN "Country Team" in Suriname and Civil Society. The Common Country Programme Action Plan for the period 2008-2011 operationalizes this UNDAF. The UN Common Country Programme for Suriname encompasses three broad development outcomes of the Multi- Annual Development Plan 2006-2011. The priority areas are:

- Fair distribution of wealth and equal opportunities for all;
- Strengthening democratic governance;
- Improved social services.

During the 10th session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Suriname was elected as one of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women.

In October 2007 the Government of Suriname together with UNIFEM organized an Optional Protocol Information Tour. The purpose of this tour was to disseminate information about the content and the effect of the Optional Protocol. Several institutions, organizations, the press, the community have been informed through radio programmes. A press conference and a seminar (panel discussion) were also held on this occasion. Visits were paid to the vice-president, several ministers and the Court.

The Government of Suriname also participated at the 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women on “Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women”. An expert from Suriname also participated in the interactive expert panel “Key Policy Initiatives on Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women”.

The Surinamese Government has recently finalized its second Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey 2006. The General Statistics Office collects and publishes quantitative gender statistics every two years since 2002, and is interested in, and open to adding more information and including more areas and indicators than the current themes (education; population and health; labor, employment and unemployment; criminality; public governance; households; budgets, expenditures and ethnicity) so as to have gender statistics available which cover more sectors. The different Ministries have also been asked to ensure that all data collected are sex-disaggregated.

In 2006 a Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Women’s and Children’s Rights was installed. Recently on the highest educational level, the University of Suriname, an Institute for Women, Gender and Development Studies was proclaimed.

II. FOLLOW-UP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN PROGRAM ON THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN’S HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY AND THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION OF THE CIM

A. LEGAL, POLITICAL & SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

Compared to the previous national report, the legal, political and socio-economic situation on women has not changed much.

Legal situation:

The Government of Suriname installed a committee which is currently revising the Penal Code. There is also a Committee that is revising the Civil Code. One of the proposed adjustments is a more precise statement of the concept of violence against women and sharpening up the penalty in case of discrimination against women or violence against women.

Furthermore, in the Draft Penal Code, the word “he” has been changed to ‘someone’, which means that the law is gender-neutral.

Political situation:

One of the strategies of participation in decision-making processes is through participation in political parties. According to article 53 of the constitution, every citizen has the right to participate in decision-making bodies in the form of political parties. In this respect, apparently the participation of women in politics is not as high as it should be. There are, however, differences between political parties, which have to do with the political culture within parties, but also with cultural aspects within the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Surinamese society.

At this moment the Republic of Suriname is preparing for the General Elections, which will take place in May 2010. Some legislation was adopted regarding the indication of the maiden name of the female candidate on the ballots. These new regulations will be applicable at the upcoming elections in 2010.

Socio-economic situation:

The Social Security System provides financial support and healthcare on the basis of certain criteria to very poor people. The Government has increased the General Old- Age Pension in 2008. At this moment, the Government of Suriname is taking measures to increase gradually the retiring age from 60 years to 65 years.

B. OUTLINE OF PUBLIC POLICIES AND PROGRESS MADE WITH RESPECT TO LEGISLATION

The basis of the current Multi- Annual Plan 2006 – 2011 is the political document on the basis of which the Government presented its development vision, namely the Government Statement for the period 2005 – 2011, presented to parliament after the cabinet was formed. One of the main challenges of the development strategy is the Government's desire to generate sufficient funds to finance the development program as much as possible by own initiative. Another challenge is the implementation of the new participatory process through which partners are involved in continuous monitoring and annual reviews, instead of waiting until the end of the five-year period to evaluate.

The Ministry of Agriculture Husbandry and Fisheries has announced plans to offer gender training through a special gender unit to be established within the ministry, to all staff and to non-state actors with whom it collaborates in order to build knowledge and expertise to recognize gender aspects, develop better policies and take more balanced decisions, and to further develop guidelines for gender mainstreaming in the sector.

The Ministry of Education has stated that it intends to assess the existing curricula and remove gender stereotyping.

On March 07th 2008 a Monitoring Group Integral Gender Action Plan 2006-2010 has been installed by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The group consists of representatives of various ministries and non-state actors. The ultimate purpose is to increase the tempo of the implementation of the actions mentioned in the Integral Gender Action Plan 2006-2010. The general task of the committee

is to advise and to support the National Bureau of Gender Policy and the other executing partners in policy development, formulation of plans, the approach of specific issues or the solution for practical problems, provide information for making the right decision and to assist in the implementation of an effective, efficient and results-based execution of the Integral Gender Action Plan 2006-2010.

Two Introductory Presentations on Gender for High Level Government Officials were organized by the Ministry of Home Affairs in collaboration with UNFPA in 2007 and 2008. The goal was to conduct a presentation on gender for ministers, directors and deputy directors with emphasis on the basics of gender. This was done against the background of the policy process of the government of Suriname, in order to create a common foundation to comprehend the policy area and policy issues with a gender-based approach.

For continuous testing the national legislation against conventions and to present concrete legislative amendments to the government, the Government of Suriname has installed the National Committee on Gender Legislation on the 1st of June 2007. This Committee consists of representatives from the ministries and non-state actors, including representatives of the University of Suriname and women's organizations.

In December 2007, the Law on Domestic Violence has been approved by the Council of Ministers and the State Council. Also a Draft Law on Stalking and a Draft Law on Sexual Harassment have been prepared within this Committee on Gender Legislation.

C. OUTLINE OF PUBLIC POLICIES AND PROGRESS IN LEGISLATION,
TOGETHER WITH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AIMED AT
IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Eradication of poverty

The poverty reduction strategy in Multi-Annual Work Plan 2006 – 2011 aims at supporting civil society organizations to eradicate all forms of violence against women and children and to improve access to reproductive health facilities.

The Multi-Annual Work Plan 2006 – 2011 states that the Government conforms to the conclusions of the Beijing Platform for Action with respect to the economic independence of women, and that the best way to reduce poverty is to give women the opportunity to generate their own income by providing them with access to facilities, resources, employment opportunities, markets and trade possibilities.

The government is in the process of:

- increasing the Old Age Pension;
- adjusting the wages of civil servants and
- adjusting the General Old Pension

The government of Suriname contributes to poverty reduction by allocating of financial resources and technical assistance from a number of multi-annual programmes which contain intrinsic components for the promotion gender equality such as:

- The Low-Income Shelter Program.
- Sectoral Programmes (housing, education, agriculture, legal protection& security and environment).

The Low Income Shelter Program (LISP) provides the opportunity to the needy who want to renovate their homes. This programme has made a significant contribution to decrease the housing problem in Suriname

Within the framework of the bilateral collaboration between Suriname and China a Community House Building Project is carried out. This project contains the building of 200 houses at Tout Lui Faut and will be financed by donation of China.

The Government Foundation of Productive Working Units supports people who want to start micro- and small enterprises. Training, counseling and coaching of these starting entrepreneurs are the main objectives of this foundation. There are also working units available for them.

Gender Based Violence

The Committee on Gender Legislation has submitted the Draft Law on Stalking and the Draft Law on Sexual Harassment to the Ministry of Justice and Police for screening.

In order to align better policies and achieve a comprehensive approach to domestic violence, six ministries have signed a covenant on Domestic Violence. On May 5th 2008 the Ministry of Justice installed a Steering Group on Domestic Violence, which will set up a networking- and management system of all actors for a integrally approach of domestic violence and to draft a integral policy regarding this issue.

In December 2007, the law on Domestic Violence was approved by the Council of Ministers and recently also by the State Council. The next phase is to subscribe this law to the Parliament for approval.

Recently a bureau for aid to victims has been set up in the district Nickerie, where victims of domestic violence can be counseled. Currently another bureau for aid to victims is being prepared for district Paramaribo. Victims of suicide can also go to this bureau.

Awareness programmes regarding domestic violence have been carried out in the district Nickerie through local radio and television stations.

Education

The Education Sector Plan focuses on conducting a study to analyze gender issues in education, with the purpose to mainstream gender on all levels and types of education. The analysis will make it possible to elaborate implications which will lead to the following:

- all levels and types of schools accessible for both boys and girls;
- gender awareness incorporated in the curricula at all levels of education and all stereotyping will be removed and;
- gender awareness training for teachers, school principals and others involved in education.

There is an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Committee in Suriname. The ECD policy is coordinated by the following ministries: Education, Public Health, Social Affairs, Regional Affairs, Planning & Development Cooperation and Justice and Police.

Each ministry has a representative in the ECD Committee. The ECD-Committee focuses on: policy, legislation, mother and child care, nursery, education, training, environment and enlightenment.

The Government of Suriname explicitly embraced the “Human Rights-Based” approach to development as formulated in the Government Policy Statement 2006-2010 and indicated that “human rights and development are inseparable, because human rights are about respect for humanity, protection, and possibilities to develop human potential in an atmosphere of equality, equity, self-determination, peace and security”.

Suriname believes that the “human rights-based” approach to development is an acknowledgement of interconnection and interdependence of economic, social and cultural rights and that development will be achieved when everyone is able to enjoy these rights.

Moreover, the Multi-Annual Development Plan of Suriname 2006-2010 is based on the Millennium Development Goals, and contains the following vision:” a fair society that guarantees human rights and basic social security for all”. The development mission is given in this document as: “improve the life of all Surinamese”. The special importance of human rights education is recognized within the University of Suriname and in secondary schools, as well as by NGOs (such as the human rights organization Moiwana, the United Nations Association Suriname and the Organization for Justice and Peace) and various programmes have been developed.

Participation of women in power and decision-making structures

Women are still a minority in top management positions in both public and private organizations. There are no reliable statistics available about the private sector. Regarding the public sector women are taking over the higher positions in the government more rapidly now, although there is still an imbalance in the top positions. The main reason for optimism is the position that women are taking in the educational field: the number of female students in higher educational institutions is considerably higher than the male students. In addition, more female students are

graduating than male and so there are more females than males with a higher degree who are entering government service.

High education is not the only factor influencing participation in decision-making processes. It is a step forward. To empower women, changes in political culture, legislation and gender ideology in general are needed.

Participation of women at international and national forum

| Position | Gender | | Total |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | |
| Ambassador | 60% | 40% | |
| Consul | 34% | 66% | |
| Consul general | 34% | 66% | |
| Members of the parliament | 75% | 25% | |
| Members of local councils | 75.5% | 24.5% | |
| Ministers of Cabinet | 82% | 18% | |
| | | | |

With regard to the participation of women at international and national fora in 2006, more women became visible in high diplomatic positions: there are currently four female and six male ambassadors. Regarding the second highest rank at embassies almost 27% is female. Among the consuls/consuls general the proportion of women is 66%. There are also 3 female and 14 male ministers.

Situation of women in respect of work

The Government Foundation for Labor Mobilization and Development (SAO), a department of the Ministry of Labor, Technological Development and Environment, aims to organize vocational training for dropouts and job-seekers. Through this foundation approximately 700 students over the whole country are being trained yearly in 15-18 day courses and 6 night courses. There were also special courses for women in non-traditional jobs in collaboration with non-governmental organization, such as a course in painting. But most of the courses in which females participated were the traditional jobs, such as homecare, healthcare and textile. The Ministry is in the process of regulating the acceptance of the certificate of these types of training to ease the entrance of the students in follow-up studies in the healthcare.

The Government of Suriname does not have a minimum wage system for Suriname. A tripartite board has been installed within the Ministry of Labor, Technological Development and Environment to perform studies regarding this issue and to advise the government about the best suitable minimum wage system that can be introduced.

The Labor Act and Civil Code do not allow dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy, childbirth and marriage. Female civil servants are entitled to 12 weeks of maternity leave, i.e. 6 weeks before and 6 weeks after childbirth. The State Health Insurance Fund covers the cost of delivery. Private enterprises which have signed a collective labor agreement with their employees have a similar arrangement.

The Ministry of Regional Affairs, in collaboration with UNICEF, initiated four research studies in the interior regions on the economic and social situation of women and children. These research studies have shown a great contribution of women in the household through “unpaid work” activities, especially in agriculture and handicraft.

Through the State Mediation Bureau, the Ministry of Labor, Technological Development and Environment mediates for persons seeking a job and employers looking for employees.

Gender and HIV/Health

AIDS is the leading cause of death in the 24-49 age groups. The national prevalence of HIV amongst adults (15-49) is estimated at 1.9%. The gender distribution of new HIV + cases has shifted over the years and there are now more females than males.

There is also a fast increase in the number of HIV+ men in the age group, where the rate for males is twice as high as that of female's.

The Government of Suriname has developed a Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy and has committed itself to achieve the target of universal access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Care. An important strategy for the Ministry of Health is working towards the inclusion of Sexual and Reproductive Health in the Primary Health Care System.

The Ministry of Health is making arrangements to strengthen its ability to acquit its essential public health functions. To this end, two over-riding challenges are to develop the requisite human capacity and to establish a viable national health information system, a pre-requisite for evidence-based decision-making, which has too-long remained unmet.

Suriname is also giving priority to the needs of the vast under-served interior.

The Government has approved the National Strategic Plan on HIV/ AIDS 2004- 2008, (with policy interventions by the National AIDS Program, supported by UN AID). The plan has the following specific targets:

- 25% reduction of all new HIV infections in the age group of 15-24 years;
- 25% reduction of all HIV- positive pregnant women.

The Council of Ministers has approved the Draft Law “Revisions Indecency Offence”. Article 249 has been added to this Law and this article states that: “he who is infected with HIV and deliberately commits sexual actions with another, who is unaware of this fact and has the intention to infect the other person, will be sentenced to imprisonment for a maximum period of six years”.

National Institutions responsible for the advancement of women

The National Bureau of Gender Policy (NBG) has a coordinating role in the National Gender Policy of the government. A Gender Management System has been set up with Gender Focal Points in all ministries. This system will also be expanded to the District Administration Bodies.

The Ministry of Home affairs initiated a number of activities in order to strengthen the National Bureau of Gender policy, through the recruitment of higher educated and qualified persons and training of staff members of the Bureau. This bureau has a structural collaboration with Civil Society Organizations, while it has a sound collaboration with several regional and international organizations such as UNFPA, UNIFEM, UNDP and the CARICOM Secretariat.

Recently the Government of Suriname has signed a Letter of Agreement with UNIFEM regarding the Programme EC/UN Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace". This programme also includes capacity building of the Gender Management System.

The National Bureau of Gender Policy (NBG) of the Ministry of Home Affairs is currently discussing the possibility of setting up and maintaining a Gender Database to monitor and report on the situation of women, and to conduct gender analyses regularly.

At this moment the Bureau is carrying out an interim evaluation of the Integral Gender Action Plan 2006-2010.

Within the Ministry of Justice and Police there is a Bureau for Woman and Child Policy.

There is also a Permanent Committee on Women and Children Rights within the Parliament.

Gender and Migration

The Caribbean has the world's highest emigration rate to member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which is affecting the development prospects of the region. Suriname has a negative net migration rate -0.78 migrant/1,000 population (2007 est). There is a surplus of settlement mostly in Paramaribo and Wanica, because of the deficiency of job opportunities in rural districts, especially in the interior. External migration of skilled professionals is affecting several actors, in particular health and education. The loss in human capital has not been balanced by remittances, and there are no policies addressing it. Women migrants are more likely than men to occupy low paid jobs in traditionally 'female occupations' such as domestic work, and work in service sectors. Some of these women are coerced and are engaged in prostitution which results in human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, which has become a mayor problem for Suriname. Most persons trafficked are women and girls from Brazil, Colombia, Guyana and Dominican Republic. They are brought to casinos, "clubs" and the streets of Paramaribo to work as commercial sex workers or in other forms of forced labor. Trafficked women are exposed to sexual violence and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, yet they have little access to medical or legal services.

Gender and Natural Disaster

In 2006, heavy rainfall in the interior resulted in serious flooding of large parts of the interior districts, causing widespread damage and directly affecting 35,000 persons in the interior.

In the medium to long term, emerging environmental issues related to climate change, will have an impact on Suriname. These issues include rising in sea levels, water and soil salinity, decline in agricultural productivity, increase in agricultural pest and disease outbreaks and loss of the fish nurseries provided by the mangrove belts.

C. MEASURES UNDERTAKEN TO PREVENT, PUNISH, AND ERADICATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, AS WELL AS ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION ON THE PREVENTION, PUNISHMENT, AND ERADICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, "CONVENTION OF *BELEM DO PARA*"

Within the Ministry of Justice and Police, a Bureau for Women and Children has been set up to tackle domestic violence, to act as a focal point and to establish a center for victims of domestic violence. This Ministry has also established a Complaints Committee, where individual complaints can be submitted with the possibility for sanctions when sexual harassment is proven.

See the information below the theme: Gender Based Violence

III. FUTURE ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE INTER-AMERICAN PROGRAM ON THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY AND THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION OF THE CIM

A. NATIONAL LEVEL

The Integral Gender Action Plan 2006-2010 which is the main gender policy document of the Government of Suriname and is based on the Beijing Platform for Action and contains several themes of the Strategic Plan. This IGAP 2006-2010 will be implemented for the remaining two years. Furthermore, all sector plans of the various ministries will also be implemented.

The Government of Suriname will implement its international commitments such as the Belem do Para Convention, the CEDAW Convention etc.

B. REGIONAL LEVEL

As one of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Government of Suriname will try to push forward the work of CIM through ECLAC and CARICOM.