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NATIONAL REPORT: SURINAME

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

GENERAL ASPECTS

In the formal task of the Ministry of Home Affairs (BIZA) it has been incorporated that this ministry has the responsibility to involve women to contribute in the development process and to pursue an emancipatory policy for women, taking into account specific Surinamese characteristics. The Policy Plan 2006-2010 of BIZA contains the realization of the Integral Gender Action Plan. This Ministry has a leading role in further developing, implementing and promoting the national gender policy.

The Surinamese government presents its national gender policy in the Integral Gender Action Plan (IGAP). This plan was formulated for the first time in 2000 for a period of five years.

For 2006-2010 a revised Integral gender Action Plan is formulated in collaboration with stakeholders (governmental/non governmental), as was the first IGAP, with the principal aim to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Platform for action.

Suriname has also installed a Social Indicators and Millennium Development Goals Committee, of which the General Bureau of Statistics has a coordinating role. The first MDG Report (2005) of Suriname is a baseline report, incorporating the available data on Suriname's progress with regard to achieving the MDGs.

Suriname ratified the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) on 1 march 1993. The 3rd Progress report for the period from 1 January 1999-31 March 2002 has been submitted to the UN-CEDAW Commission and will be on the agenda of the commission in January-February 2007.

From 2004-2008, the Republic of Suriname is a member of the UN Commission on the status of Women (CSW). Suriname has participated in the 48th, 49th and the 50th session in New York.

The legislative power is exercised by the National Assembly and the Government. The National Assembly consists of 51 members and is elected for a period of 5 years through general elections. The National Assembly approves the socio-economic and political policies of the Government. The Constitution establishes a very important role for the state and sets out three levels of representative bodies: national (National Assembly), district (10 District Councils and District Administration) and sub-district bodies (62 Resorts Councils). District Commissioners are appointed by the President and chair both the District Council and District Administration. Resort Councils are elected directly by the people during general elections. Suriname had general elections on 25th of May 2005 and the new government and parliament is already installed.

A new Multi Annual Development Plan for the coming five years is formulated. This plan is a strategic plan for the development of the whole nation. The formulation process was elaborate with intensive consultation sessions with state and non-state actors (private sector, NGO's). The final draft is now reviewed in the parliament for approval.

From November 1st 2005, an acting head of the National Bureau for Gender Policy, has been appointed to coordinate the implementation of the Integral Gender Action plan 2005-2010 and to bring structure in the general gender affairs.

I. FOLLOW-UP ON 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. JURIDICAL, POLITICAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

In the past two years (2004- 2006) the juridical, political and socio-economic situation has not undergone major changes.

Juridical situation:

Article 8 paragraph 2 of the Constitution: "No one shall be discriminated on grounds of birth, sex, race, language, religion, origin, education, political opinion, economic position or social circumstances, or any other status".

The principle of equality of men and women is also incorporated in the Constitution: "men and women are equal by law" (article 35 paragraph 2 of the Constitution).

The only recourse for a woman being discriminated on account of her sex is the regular court of justice, there is no other provision for a special institute for these cases.

Political situation:

The Republic of Suriname celebrated in 2005 its 30th anniversary and the 5th free and fair elections since the interruption of democracy in the early 1980s.

According to article 52 section 2 of the Constitution, women as well as men can participate in general, free and secret elections. The law allows women to hold any public position at all levels of government. The General Election took place on 25th of May 2005.

Compared with the earlier elections there is a growth of female representatives on national and regional level.

Socio-economic situation:

Suriname is a society that comprises more than seven different ethnic groups speaking more than 15 languages. The official language is Dutch. According to the latest census report, the population has increased from 355.240 in 1980 to 492.829 in 2005 (50.3% men and 49.7% women).

Mining, the agricultural sector and manufacturing are the most important sectors in the Suriname economy. The primary export products are: bauxite, alumina, crude oil, rice, vegetables, shrimp, fish and fish products, wood and wood products.

Data from 2001 show that 20% of the population lives in extreme poverty. The government has social programmes for people of certain groups: such as the general Old-Age Pension (AOV), financial aid, health insurance (through the State Health Insurance company-SZF, or private health insurance companies, the medical aid card of the Ministry of Social Affairs) and also the general child benefit program. Each citizen who has the age of sixty can claim in accordance of the law a pension from the General Old Pension Fund. Parents and guardians receive child allowance upon request from the general child allowance at a maximum of 4 children per family.

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

The Ministry of Home Affairs (BIZA) has formulated a new Integral Gender Plan of Action (IGAP) covering 2006-2010, using the evaluation results and lessons learnt from the previous plan (period 2000-2005). The IGAP is a policy plan containing the gender policy of the Surinamese government which is developed by the Ministry of Home Affairs in dialogue with governments – and non governmental actors. The Integral Gender Action Plan 2006-2010 indicates a systematic approach for strengthening of the necessary basis for partnership and for development of a structural implementation frame for gender sensitive policy development and-planning. The areas described in this chapter relate to necessary actions which must lead to respectively more effective executing skills and greater equality. The following action points of the Integral Action Plan have already been implemented:

1. Major developments were made with the police force in the area of domestic violence, such as the setting-up of a data surveillance system, modified special records for the police, modules for training of the police force and the establishment of 4 victim chambers.
2. The Ministry of Social Affairs undertook steps for legislation concerning childcare for children of 0-8 years within the framework of the programme Social Investment for Child Protection (with a link to the programme Early Childhood Development).
3. Regarding domestic violence: the Regional Health Service provided continuing education and developed a medical protocol for doctors and chief nurses for identification and treatment of victims of domestic violence and the Women's Rights Center formulated a draft law regarding domestic violence (is at final stage) and initiated the training of magistrates in domestic violence.
4. The Commission on Gender legislation (which was installed by the Ministry of Home Affairs) has composed draft laws and regulations which have to be submitted to the parliament for approval: extension sentence law regarding financial and mental violence, stalking and trafficking in human beings.
5. The foundation Stop Violence against Women trained assistant counselors in 4 districts with partial financial support of BIZA and made commencement with the promotion of training modules and training expertise in domestic violence in the training of doctors, nurses and assistant experts in applied social studies.
6. The Women Parliament Forum, with financial support of BIZA carried out gender analyses to examine and promote the participation of women at decision-making levels in government. It also conducted a campaign and trained gender coaches of political parties in collaboration with PROJEKTA to increase female candidates for election and to promote the gender sensitivity of party programmes for the 2005-elections.

7. Within the framework of poverty reduction and the economic empowerment of women the National Women's Movement and the Women's Business Group among other things carried out entrepreneurship trainings, credit supply, and the promotion of the participation of women to trade exchange markets.
8. BIZA supported Pro Health (an NGO) in Brokopondo with the implementation of a training project for traditional midwives and key persons for the reduction of mother – and child mortality.

II. IMPLEMENTATION CIM STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION ON A NATIONAL LEVEL

a. Guidelines on public policies and legislative reforms and development programs to implement the Strategic Plan by government agencies and institutions of civil society

Eradication of poverty of women

Within the scope to combat poverty reduction and the economic empowerment of women, BIZA in collaboration with the National Women's Movement (NVB) and the Women's Business Group (WBG) implemented entrepreneurial trainings, access to credit supply and the participation of women to trade exchange markets. Female entrepreneurs are assisted to participate in the annual production exchange market and other events of the chamber of commerce and factories. NVB organized the bi-annual 'Women in Bisnis fair' with substantial financial support from the Ministry of Home Affairs. The government 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 of gender equality:

- Community Development Fund Suriname (mandated to 2007);
- Low- Income Shelter Program;
- Fund Developing Hinterland (Fonds Ontwikkeling Binnenland)
- Technical Assistance programmes of the EU, IADB, PAHO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA en UNV;
- Global Fund;
- Local Women Fund of the Dutch embassy (Vrouwenfonds Lokaal);
- Canada Fund for Local Initiative (CFLI);
- Canada Gender Equality Program entrepreneurship (CGEP);
- Sectoral Programmes (housing, health, education, agriculture, legal protection & security and environment).

The above-mentioned programmes contribute in the eradication of obstacles (lack of adequate and payable child-daycare, adequate training and limited access to property and credit-facilities) women experience to access employment in the formal sector. Women choose for a job in the informal sector (with irregular working hours) because of their care-providers role. The Ministry of Labor provides vocational training, job mediation and guidance of micro-entrepreneurs to eradicate unemployment.

Elimination of Violence

- There is a National Network ‘Fight against domestic violence’ in which governmental and non-governmental organizations are participating and commit themselves to promote the rights of women and to eradicate violence against women.
- An awareness program on domestic violence for “first-aid” medical personnel by the Women’s Rights Center
- The Ministry of Justice and Police made an analysis regarding domestic violence and a policy is to be implemented this year. Two main projects regarding a special unit for the protection of women and a nation wide hotline will be implemented.
- The police trained their personnel regarding counseling of victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. The Foundation Stop Violence against Women has several training programs for the prevention and eradication of violence.
- The drafting of a law on domestic violence which is already reviewed by stakeholders and is in the final phase.
- Installment by the Corps Police Suriname of 4 victims rooms, a special protocol, reporting and data surveillance system for domestic violence in collaboration with 2 NGO’s.

Education

The education infrastructure in Suriname comprises preschool, primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, and vocational and tertiary education (University and other institutions of higher education). Several programmes are already in place to encourage economically and socially disadvantaged children to go to and remain in school. Examples of such programmes are:

- a school nutrition programme,
 - the introduction of school transportation in some regions,
 - allowances for the rental of books and subsidies for school uniforms and other relevant learning materials and
 - a programme that enables teenage mothers to continue their education. The last programme allows pregnant girls to leave schools (as a maternity leave) six weeks in advance and to re-enter school six weeks after their delivery, while being supervised and coached by a special unit within the Ministry of Education.
 - Possibilities for evening school for students at junior and senior secondary level have also been expanded.
 - Regarding participation of women in education, gross enrolment rates for education show disparities between girls and boys with a higher number of girls enrolled in junior and secondary schools.
- b. Participation of women in power structures and decision-making as well as the situation of women with respect to work, health, national institutions responsible for the advancement of women, participation of women in power structures and decision-making**

Participation of women in power structures and decision-making

- Regarding ‘Women and/in decision making’, the women parliament forum (VPF) with funding from the Ministry of Home affairs, did a gender analysis to examine and

- promote the participation of women at decision making levels in government, in the national assembly, the District Councils and resort councils.
- VPF and PROJECTA conducted a campaign and trained gender coaches of political parties to increase female candidates for election and to promote the gender sensitivity of party programmes for the 2005-elections.
 - A survey shows that almost 50% of the management in State offices is done by women.^{1/}
 - VPF, in the period April/May 2004 and in June 2006, organized the gender training course “Gender and Democracy”. They also started a 50/50 campaign geared towards a proportional representation of women in policy and decision-making positions.

Table below shows the results of the elections regarding women representation:^{2/}

	2000	2005	progress
Government (ministers)	15%	16.7%	+ 1.7%
Parliament	17.6%	25%	+ 7.4%
District council	18%	24.5%	+ 6.5%
Resort council	24.7%	30.6%	+ 5.9%
<i>Average</i>	<i>18.8%</i>	<i>24.2%</i>	<i>+ 4.3%</i>

Situation of women with respect to work and health Work

Women in Suriname enjoy the same rights as men regarding free choice of profession and employment. In Suriname, the Ministry of labor, Technology and the Environment (ATM) is responsible for the national labor policy, while the Ministry of Home Affairs and the ministry of ATM are responsible for the policy on equality of men and women in the workplace. The Ministry of ATM uses the following instruments to eradicate unemployment among women: vocational training, job mediation and guidance of micro-entrepreneurs. The Foundation for Labor Mobilization and Development (SAO), which comes under the Ministry of ATM, aims at organizing vocational training for dropouts and job seekers.

The latest unemployment figures for Suriname stand at 9.5% with the Youth unemployment rates (person 15-24 years of age) for males 15.8% and for females 33.4%. Overall, the female unemployment rate in Suriname is higher than for men whereas women seem to have a higher job-seeking rate than men. Lack of suitable jobs and of specific skills and expertise are some causes for the high unemployment rates among women.

Health

The Ministry of Health has implemented projects in the previous period (2004-2006) related to women and health:

- Procurement of contraceptives: from this fund contraceptives (condoms, pills, puncture pills) are bought.

1. Survey done by R. Hasnoe for Women Parliament Forum (an NGO).
2. Research by H. Guicherit for Women Parliament Forum (an NGO).

- Training of 30 obstetric nurses: Now 13 obstetricians are in training. The first group will graduate in 2007.
- Training of health assistants, nurses and physicians in Sexual and Reproductive Health issues. Also a group of about 50 doctors of the Regional Health Services (RGD) are trained.
- Procurement of obstetric equipment: the RGD and Medical Mission (MZ) will be provided with obstetric equipment. The RGD received already 12 baby cribs in these.
- Since June 2004 Suriname has a Multi Annual Health Sector Plan 2004-2008, which mentions the gender targets regarding health.
- A Health Sector Reform Plan to improve the efficiency and effectively of the management and the institutional strengthening of the sector is formulated, in which the role, responsibilities, competences and tasks of all relevant organizations are well defined and in harmony.
- In the previous years sexually transmitted diseases have become the major threats for the health of women. Particularly HIV/AIDS demands a high price of women: as a care provider, as an infected person and for the reproductively. HIV/AIDS infection is the highest among girls and young women in the age group of 15-29 years.
- A policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health is drafted.

National institutions responsible for the advancement of women

The National Bureau for Gender Policy (NBG): The implementation of the Integral Gender Action Plan is in accordance with the formal task and is the responsibility of BIZA. The Core activities of NBG:

1. Coordination of the IGAP and gender management system;
2. Technical advice and support of the implementing partners:
 - Information- and data collection for effective lobby, monitoring and evaluation and reporting;
 - Training and increasing awareness and implementation capacity.
3. Communication to increase the public awareness concerning gender issues.

III. MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION ON THE PREVENTION PUNISHMENT AND ERADICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (CONVENTION BELEM DO PARA)

Since most of violence against women is mentioned and prohibited in our penal code, the Ministry of Justice and Police focuses on the institutional framework to tackle violence against women. The high priorities are action against domestic violence and measures against the trafficking of women and children.

In 2003 the Commission Trafficking in Persons was established by the ministry of Justice with the task to set out policy and legislation measures, guidelines and procedures for police and other institutions. Recently a new law regarding counter-trafficking in persons came into force. The victim-

assistance policy is in process and a new immigration/foreign-policy is processed with specific attention and measures to control and prevent the exploitation of women and children.

A prosecutor is specialized in domestic violence cases. A commission regarding sexual molestation at the work-office is installed. This is also a complaint office. All complaints are seriously examined and adequate measures are taken to protect victims and punish perpetrators within the scope of the Personnel Act. The commitment of the Ministry in order to promote the protection of women and active intervention against any violation is the basic policy. The government is also participating in and facilitating the national network combating domestic violence.

For more information reference is made to Paragraph II of this report.

Maternal, psychosocial, spiritual, legal, medical aid and so forth are given by NGO's such as Foundation Stop Violence against Women, the Surinamese Department of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), STICRIS and the ILSE HENAR-Hewitt Legal Aid Bureau for Women.

The Foundation Stop Violence against Women is an organization involved in individual care, guidance, counseling of female victims of violence and also training. Since 2001 the foundation started with self help groups for women. A project is in progress where these women will be trained to guide other victims to e.g. the police or to participate in educational sessions or fairs. This organization also offers individual and crisis counseling while in some cases it provides partner and system oriented counseling and participation in self help groups.

The new Integral Action Plan 2006-2010 also contains measures regarding violence against women such as legislation provisions regarding trafficking in persons, sexual harassment on the workplace and domestic violence.

V. FUTURE ACTIONS TO ADVANCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CIM STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION

The implementation of the Integral Gender Action Plan 2006 – 2010 that is based on the evaluation and recommendations of the First Integral Action Plan 2000-2005 with the following paragraphs:

- A. Institutional mechanisms;
- B. Poverty;
- C. Economy and Labor market;
- D. Voice and decision making;
- E. Human rights;
- F. Domestic and Sexual Violence;
- G. Education and Training;
- H. Health;
- I. Media;
- J. Environment.