Republic of Suriname

Country Report

On progress in regard to the implementation of the Brasilia Consensus,
December 2010 – October 2011

46th Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Introduction

This report is a preliminary report that presents the progress made at the national level with respect to the implementation of the eight thematic areas of the Brasilia Consensus during December 2010 – October 2011. The Final Report will be submitted to the ECLAC shortly.

The Surinamese delegation is pleased to participate in the 46th Meeting of Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. With his appointment as Minister of Home Affairs, responsible for the national gender policy in August 2010, the Minister committed himself to the goals of the new government to create a society in which gender equality, gender equity, and women’s rights are fully experienced and respected.

More than before, the new Government of His Excellency Desiré Bouterse, will tune its overall policy to scientific data and analyses. This will also be the case with the National Bureau Gender policy (NBG) which resides directly under the Minister of Home Affairs. The capacity of this bureau that is the national authority which executes, monitors and evaluates this policy, urgently needs strengthening. This national gender authority will be transformed into an efficient and effective national machinery with special responsibilities regarding gender issues and all aspects that concern women and the equality between men and women in Suriname. The strategy is based on a sustained dialogue with all stakeholders to prepare, develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the national policy on gender. Activities from international and regional commitments such as the Brasilia Consensus will be included in the policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. The Gender Management System, that is a system of Gender Focal Points in all the ministries, will be made more efficient also.

The gender issue, as formulated in the Development Plan 2012 – 2016 of the Government of Suriname (“Suriname in transformation”) goes beyond other main policy areas, thus playing a leading role. It is considered and positioned as a key theme within a framework of gender being a multi-disciplinary policy-area which relates to a system of roles and relations between men and women that are not biologically but socially constructed. It is about roles, which are assigned to men and women in their functioning, in their daily activities and work and the types of work they do, their place in education etc.

Since Suriname is a plural society, with descendants from Europe, Africa and Asia, with inhabitants living in urban as well as rural areas and Amer-Indians and Maroons
living in the interior, de-concentration of the gender policy is identified as a priority. The multi ethnicity of our country goes alongside the geographical spacing and will thus play an important role in the formulation and implementation of the national gender policy. At this moment, the NBG has only an office in the West of Suriname.

As stated above, the Government of Suriname will focus on eliminating all forms of discrimination and inequality between men and women, making e.g. access to education, healthcare, sexual and reproductive health and labour market possible for all. An assessment of legislation that is discriminatory and detrimental to women will be carried out and more attention will be given to phenomenon’s like domestic violence, sexual violence and gender based violence. Time use surveys will be used to gather information on the unremunerated labour of women so that proper measures can be taken in favor of themselves and families. We have a request pending with the ECLAC for Technical Assistance.

Training programs in the housing sector, small entrepreneurship for women, introduction of Conditional Cash Transfers, introduction of Gender Based Budgeting, appointment of women in decision-making positions, legislation to deal with sexual violence and domestic violence, awareness activities in regard to Gender Based Violence, research on gender issues and cooperation with organizations like UNFPA, UNWOMEN and the CARICOM are elaborated on in the report.

The key-activities planned by the NBG from November 2011 till December 2012 are also included in this report. Reference is also made to the position of rural women in especially decision-making.
Part One

Actions undertaken to implement the Brasilia Consensus during December 2010 – October 2011

1. Attain greater economic autonomy and equality in the workplace

   - The Government of Suriname (GoS) has prepared a housing program (nationwide) to alleviate the housing problem with which a substantial part of the population has to contend with. The Government is preparing some mega projects, such as a nationwide housing project. Thousands of houses will be constructed. There is an extra need for construction workers. Currently, vocational training programs are carried out by a working arm of the Ministry of Labour, the Foundation for Labour mobilization and Development (SAO) to train potential construction workers for a job in this sector. These trainings are not limited to men: enrollment of women is also possible.

   - The Women in Business Group of the National Women’s Movement encourages women to become small entrepreneurs. Training and other kinds of support are provided.

   - The Ministry of Social Affairs and Public Housing, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Community Development, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance, The Central Bank of Suriname and the Inter-American Development Bank, is in the phase of implementing a Conditional Cash Transfer program in Suriname. This program will enable poor households, including the poor female headed households, to increase possibilities for a brighter future for their selves and their children.

   - The Government of Suriname believes that sustainable employment is essential for the economic development of our country. With that, the attention is not only focused on the economic growth but especially on the all-embracing participation of all who have the capability to work. The Ministry of Labour, Technological Development and Environment is responsible for the policy on labour market issues and as such for decent work. Decent work is, like gender, a somewhat cross-cutting policy area. Decent Work as a comprehensive concept to emphasize the labour issues (developed in 1999 by the ILO) seeks to increase the productivity and is a tool to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. The decent work agenda runs into a strategy, which gives man and women the opportunity to work in freedom, equality, safety and human dignity. Employers as well as employees should be involved in the planning. Actions in Suriname to achieve this
strategic goal will be cross-cutting and will include the promotion of gender equality.

In regard to employment, our Constitution guarantees the right to labour, equal chances and payment. The Surinamese employment legislation is in general equally applicable on women and men.

The social dialogue between the State Council, the Social Economic Council, entities of the Ministry of Labour like the Labour Advisory Board and the National Board for Employment is a suitable mechanism to promote, attain and expand the decent work concept in Suriname with the emphasis on gender equality in the labour market.

37% of the economic active population in Suriname is women and 69% of the women have a secondary or higher education. 53% of the unemployed is a woman.

The Minister of Labour, Technological Development and Environment has taken the initiative to prepare a Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) for Suriname with support from the ILO.

2. Enhance the citizenship of women

- Article I of our constitution states that “The Republic of Suriname is a democratic State based upon the sovereignty of the people and on the respect and guarantee of the fundamental right and liberties.” “The Suriname Nation shall determine in full freedom its economic social and cultural development.” Article 8 emphasizes equality of all citizens in the country: “No one shall be discriminated against on the grounds of birth, sex, race, language, religious origin, education, political beliefs, economic position or any other status.”

- The General Bureau of Statistics incorporates variables such as sex and ethnicity in almost all their research (social division) such as Household Surveys, Multi Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and Population Censuses. At this moment, preparations are being made by the General Bureau of Statistics for the Eighth Census in 2012.

- On initiative of the Parliament, discussions were started within the government to work towards a people centered budget. The Ministry of Home Affairs is one of the pilot ministries. In this regard, a presentation was held for the officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs in August 2011 by staff
members of the Ministry of Finance which is responsible for the coordination of this activity.

- The Ministry of Home Affairs will introduce the Gender Based Budgeting concept in 2013 when making its own budget.

3. **Broaden the participation of women in decision-making and the exercise of power**
   - The present administration has appointed several women in various positions within the government administration. There are two female Ministers in the Cabinet.
   - **District commissioners**
     Women (6) were appointed respectively in the districts Commewijne, Coronie, Nickerie and Sipaliwini. Two of these Commissioners are representatives of the Indigenous people: one is an Amer-Indian and one a Maroon. The dean of the District commissioners is also a woman.
   - **Ambassadors**
     Women were also appointed as ambassadors and in positions within the embassies and permanent missions of Suriname for the United Nations and the Organization of American States. The Ambassadors in the Republic of Indonesia, India and Trinidad and Tobago are women as is the Ambassador to the Organization of American States.
   - **Traditional authority**
     In Suriname, the Indigenous people have within their community their own authority. Currently, there are 1618 dignitaries of whom 657 are women and 961 men. There are no women in the positions of Grand Chief, Tribal Chief and Head Captain, but there are women appointed for Captains, Head Basjas and Basjas\(^1\). The data on these traditional authorities is currently being incorporated in the Database of the Ministry of Regional Development.

4. **Address all forms of violence against women**
   - The Ministry of Home Affairs participates in the **Steering Group Domestic Violence** with the task to develop a **National Action Program on Domestic Violence** in collaboration with the Ministries of Justice and Police, Social Affairs and Public Housing, Education and Community Development, Health and Regional Development.
   - Although Suriname has no specific programs on the prevention of sexual violence yet, legislative actions on sexual violence were taken, like the **Sexual**

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\(^1\) These are assistants of the captains.
harassment Bill and the Sexual harassment on the workplace Bill (achievement of both the Government and NGO’s). These were drafted but still need to be enacted. The Sexual harassment on the workplace bill was formulated by the Ministry of Home Affairs. This bill has been modified by the Foundation Ilse Henar and presented to the Minister of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Labour, Technological development and Environment. Currently, the bill is being screened and adjusted by the Ministry of Labour, Technological development and Environment.

- The Penal code was revised in regard to sexual crimes (approved in July 2009 by Parliament). Within this revision, rape within marriage has become a crime.
- The Act on the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons has become effective and special attention is given to training, education, reception, and counseling of victims and children of domestic violence.
- Awareness activities aimed at students and organizations (Governmental and Non-Governmental) dealing with victims of domestic violence/gender based violence, legislation and institutional provisions are carried out.
- The Domestic Violence Act, which aims at protecting victims of domestic violence in an early stage with special proceedings, became effective in June 2009. Protection takes place by enforcing protection orders.
- Drafted laws such as the Stalking Bill have been sent to the Parliament for enactment.
- In 2010, the Ministry of Justice and Police has provided a shelter for female victims of domestic violence and their children.
- Suriname has a Bureau for aid to victims in the district of Nickerie and the capital, Paramaribo, where victims of domestic violence can be counseled.
- The Government has also developed victims’ rooms in police stations which guarantee more privacy for victims when interrogated.
- In addition, various groups - such as priests, police officers and social workers - were trained in several aspects of domestic violence and information and education sessions were held for students, social workers and teachers.
- In connection with “16 Days of Activism 2011” the Minister of Home Affairs addressed the nation in a television appeal to stop all violence against women, girls but also men and boys. In a sixteen day campaign, politicians, role models and popular figures will make a statement in regard to stopping gender based violence.
5. Facilitate women’s access to new technologies and promote egalitarian, democratic and nondiscriminatory practices by the media
   - With regard to the celebration of the International Women’s Day, several activities have been carried out in Paramaribo and Nickerie. A panel discussion on the UN theme “Equal access to education, training and science and technology: Pathway to decent work for women” was held in Paramaribo. On this day, Indigenous women from the interior presented a petition about their living conditions to the Minister of Home Affairs. The Minister of Home Affairs shared this petition with the Council of Ministers.
   - The Ministry of Education and Community Development considers gender equality as very important, especially in the development of the new curriculum and the high dropout rate of boys at the various levels and also the accessibility of education for both boys and girls.

6. Promote the conditions for the integral health of women and for their sexual and reproductive health
   - Information on issue 6 will be presented in the final report.

7. Carry out training and activities for exchanging and disseminating experiences with a view to the formulation of public policies based on the data collected by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean
   - By order of the Ministry of Home Affairs and with support of UN Women, the Situation Analysis on Gender Equality, Gender Relations and the Position of Women in Suriname (SITAN Women) was prepared and presented in February 2011. Although the study reflects many issues regarding men and women, more analyses of the data in the report is necessary. A baseline will be carried out to complement the shortcomings in this report.
     - The Pan American Health Organization is organizing training on “Strengthening the capacity for analysis of gender statistics” within one of its strategic areas of the PAHO/WHO Plan of Action for implementing the Gender Equality Policy. This activity aims at strengthening the capacity of the member states to produce, analyze and use information disaggregated by sex and other relevant variables. The SITAN will be used in this exercise.
     - The transformed National Bureau Gender policy will in its new form focus more on research on gender issues, gender specific data-collection and sharing. Contact with local, regional and international organizations will be optimized and the compliance to treaties like CEDAW and Belem do Para will be met. At the moment, the Ministry of Home Affairs is preparing the
combined 4th and 5th CEDAW report. Due to unclear reasons, the former administration did not succeed to produce these reports on time.

- The Ministry of Home Affairs requested ECLAC’s assistance in conducting the first Time Use Survey in Suriname.

**8. Promote international and regional cooperation for gender equality**

- In collaboration with the CARICOM and UN WOMEN, the Government of Suriname (Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Education and Community Development) hosted the Artists UNITE-ing against Gender Based Violence Workshop in July 2011.
- Within the scope of Women and Poverty and Women and Economy, the Ministry of Trade and Industry launched the CARICOM-Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Trade and Competitiveness Project (CIDA Project). With regard to the subcomponent gender in this project, namely Gender Analysis of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and its impact in Suriname, consultants were hired to review the different roles of men and women in the development of the CSME and carry out an analysis of the effects of the CSME free trade regime on men and women.

**Part two**

**Activities planned for November 2011 – December 2012**

- A baseline study will be conducted on the situation of women in Suriname;
- With regard to the International Day for Violence against Women and the 16 Days of Activism against gender based violence, the Ministry will carry out several activities in collaboration with NGOs with the aim to contribute to the prevention of violence against women;
- The Ministry of Home Affairs, the Foundation Stop Violence Against Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are organizing a two-day conference entitled "Working together to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence: a necessity." This conference will be held on November 30 and December 1, 2011 and will focus on prevention, cooperation and partnerships, sharing regional and international practices regarding domestic violence;
- Continuation of Institutional measures in order to professionalize the National Bureau for Gender policy (institutional strengthening), set up a research – unit, data – sharing with stakeholders, set up of a structured mechanism for compiling data for reporting obligations, development and maintenance of a website;
• Gender mainstreaming within the government: institutionalize gender focal points within the different ministries, set up of gender units in the districts, support organizations that promote gender equality;
• Introduce Gender Based Budgeting when composing the Budget 2013;
• Carry out awareness activities on several gender issues through education and the media.