

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*

*Santiago, Chili
28 – 30 November 2011*

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This is the final report regarding the progress made at the national level with respect to the implementation of the eight thematic areas of the Brasilia Consensus December 2010 – October 2011.

The preliminary report was presented during the *46th Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean* which was held from November 28-30, 2011 in Santiago, Chili.

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. As of August 12 2010, a new administration is in power. This Government does its utmost to create a society in which gender equality, gender equity, and women's rights are fully experienced and respected because it is convinced that gender equality is for the better of the development of Suriname. Gender equality makes a valuable contribution to the economic wealth of Suriname.

The Ministry of Home Affairs is responsible for the coordination of the national gender policy. The National Bureau Gender policy (NBG) which resides directly under the Minister is the national authority that executes, monitors and evaluates this policy. This national gender authority will be transformed into 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 our society. 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 issue, as formulated in the *Development Plan 2012 – 2016* of the Government of Suriname called "*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 must be 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.

The President of the Republic of Suriname, H.E. Desiré Delano Bouterse is currently the Chairman of Caricom. Besides the policy areas Culture, Youth and Sport, Gender is also in his portfolio. Regarding the Surinamese situation, issues of concern related to gender equality and solutions for existing problems in this field have to be given. Undisputed is that every member of the Caricom should establish substantial improvement measures regarding actual gender relations and the position of women and men in the Caribbean.

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 those phenomenon 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.

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.

March 1st, 2012

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 reduce the housing problem with which a substantial part of the population has to contend with. With this nationwide housing project thousands of houses will be constructed. Therefore extra construction workers are needed. Hence, the Ministry of Labor has written a program for vocational training regarding the abovementioned housing project. This program is being executed by the working arm of the Ministry, the Foundation for Labor



Start of the Nationwide Housing Program, August 2011

Source: gov.sr

Mobilization (SAO). This training project is subsidized by the government of Suriname and is accessible for everyone that has reached the age of 18 years. The labor law only allows persons from the age of 18 to have a job in order to prevent child labor. The prohibition of child labor is embedded in the Surinamese constitution. The vocational trainings by the SAO are also aimed at giving a second chance to school dropouts from the primary and secondary education. Participants in this course do not have to pay an entry fee; instead they receive a weekly allowance along with protection gear, such as helmets, gloves, safety shoes and safety goggles. These courses will be trained in 7 modules. The first module has already been finished. Although the vocational course for the housing project is easily accessible, only 4.5% of the participants are female. It is not yet clear why only few women participate. A research needs to be done in order to anticipate on policy that will help women to participate in such projects.

- The SAO has been established in May 1981 as a working arm of the Ministry of Labor, Technology Development and Environment and coordinates vocational training in Suriname with the goal to provide the labor market with competent labor force. The vocational trainings are categorized in care and services (such as nursing aide, basic home-care, maternity care, but also beautician, textile art,

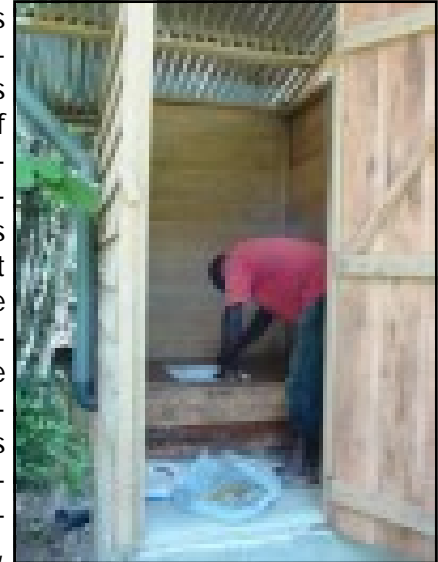


Completion of a classroom in Fort New Amsterdam, November 2011

Source: SAO

etc.) and technical workmanship (such as car mechanic, electrician, metalworking, etc.) and ICT. It is noticeable that a significant amount of female participants choose the (care) service courses and ICT while the male choose the technical courses. In 2011 the total amount of participants that finished a course in (care) services are 1.3% male and 98.7% female, in the technical workmanship 96.9% male and 3.1% female and in ICT 21.7% male and 78.3% female.

- The mission of the National Women's Movement (NVB) is "empowering women to do better in life by doing business and to enhance the quality of their life". The focus of this movement is housing, and alleviating poverty of its target group. The activities are centered on information, training of the target group, community development, raising funds and project management. The NVB is consulted regularly in the preparation of government planning with regards to gender related policies. The Ministry of Home Affairs supports the Movement financially on a regular basis and in the past two years the support has increased. The NVB also has a close relationship with important intermediary women's organizations and is an active participant in national platforms and networks. With other NGOs there exists a functional obligation with regards to health, credit provision to women, responsible parenthood and sexuality, housing and activities in the interior of Suriname. In at least six villages in the interior where the local community was not used to lavatories, 123 eco-lavatories were built. With the eco-lavatories not only the hygiene issue is dealt with, but the lavatories also have a recycling purpose. The urine and faeces can be used as fertilizer. With the support of the Dutch Foundation World Waternet the NVB is performing a research to recycle waste water.



Construction of an eco-lavatory

Source: NVB

- With some financial support of the Ministry of Home Affairs another NGO the Women in Business Group (WBG) is also very active in training women to unleash their entrepreneurial spirit. Their goal is to support and counsel woman entrepreneurs and communities to reduce poverty.



Source: NVB

- 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 preparing to implement a proposed Cash Transfer Program. The goal of this program is to alleviate poverty amongst especially female headed households by transferring cash in order to increase possibilities for a brighter future for themselves and their children. Beneficiaries of this program will receive a monthly cash transfer if they comply with the conditions that are formulated in the Social Protection Support Program. The conditions vary for the different beneficiaries with regard to age and region of residence in order to reflect the different monetary and opportunity costs of health care and education. For students, monthly transfers will be complemented by yearly bonuses for successful grade progression. Students in the urban areas of the Coastal region will be eligible for the bonus only when attending secondary education, while the extension of the bonus to primary school students will

be considered in the Interior and in the rural areas of the Coast. For all pregnant and lactating women, monthly transfers will be given upon compliance with monthly health check-ups and educational seminars on health, nutrition and parenting. For pre-school aged children, monthly transfers will be given upon compliance with regular health check-ups.

- It is important for the Government of Suriname to create sustainable employment which 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 cross-cutting policy area. A first step has been set to discuss about the issue of decent work for Suriname that has also a gender specific agenda. With that regard a panel discussion on the UN theme “Equal access to education, training and science and technology: Pathway to decent work for women” was held. The recommendations that have come out of this discussion have been given to the relevant ministries in order to plan and make gender specific policy with this regard in order to develop gender equality. With 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 however a gender specific policy is necessary to guarantee that women will have the same work-related treatment. 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. This program is still in its preparation phase and still has to be implemented. A 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 therefore necessary and a suitable mechanism to promote, attain and expand the decent work concept in Suriname with the emphasis on gender equality in the labour market.

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.” These articles imply that the position of women has also been considered. Therefore, women rights and all crime and discrimination against women are taken into account in these articles.
- For the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of gender policy sex segregated data is important. Therefore the General Bureau of Statistics (ABS) incorporates variables such as sex and ethnicity in almost all their research (social division) such as Household Surveys, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and Population Censuses. The General Bureau of Statistics is making preparations for the Eight Census in 2012.

- With the support of PAHO/WHO the UNFPA in cooperation with the Ministry of Health held a workshop on how to breakdown health statistics in gender segregated data. The acquired data can be used for planning purposes and gender policy making.
- 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. Therefore, the Ministry of Home Affairs will introduce the People Centered Budgeting concept in 2013 when making its own budget.

3. Broaden the participation of women in decision-making and the exercise of power

- **National Government**

The legislative branch of the government of Suriname is called the National Assembly. Unfortunately, of the 51 members only 11.8% is female, a decrease of 13.2%. From 2005 -2010 the percentage of women in the National Assembly was 25% (Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Regional Development, 2010).

The executive branch of the government consists of the cabinet of the President, the cabinet of the Vice President and 17 Ministries of which there are only two female ministers; this means a decrease of one female representation in the executive branch of government. The decision-making staff of this administration consists of twenty-four directors of which 25% is female and 69 sub-directors of which 43.48% is women.

- **Local Government**

Suriname consists of 10 districts. The district council is the highest political and administrative organ of the district. The composition of the District council takes place after the elections in the resorts of a specific district, as specified in the electoral system. After the elections of May 2010 of the 86 elected District council members 30 are female. This is just a small increase in percentage (25.86%) compared to the previous election (2005) where the percentage of elected women district council members was 24.53%. The chair of the District council is the District Commissioner, who is in charge of the activities of the district council. Of the thirteen appointed Districts Commissioners 5 are women, respectively in the districts Commewijne, Coronie, Nickerie and Sipaliwini (2). Two of these Commissioners are representatives of the Tribal people: one is Indigenous and one Maroon. The Tribal people have a history of being very traditional, which implies that women were seen as persons responsible for the reproductive side of the community. The Tribal people living primarily in the interior of Suriname, where access to education, technology and other development resources are scarce (Development Plan, 2011:73). The development progress in these remote areas is far below the postulated objective (Unicef Suriname 2010:10). Since the Tribal people had a deprivation in development and hence lacked behind in the awareness of gender equality, appointing women as Districts Commissioners for these communities is a milestone. The Resort council is the highest political and administrative body of a resort. Members of a resort council are chosen within their resort during the elections as specified in the electoral system. The elected female Resort council has increased from 30.65% in 2005 to 35.69% in 2010.

- **International representation**

Out of the 16 ambassador's post that Suriname has there are five female ambassadors and one female chargé d'affaires (37.5%). From 2005-2010 there were fourteen ambassadors of which 5 were women (35.7%). Suriname has two women consulate general out of four, one in the US (Miami) and one in Curacao (Willemstad), which was the case since 2000. So with regards to the representation of Suriname in foreign country by women there has been a rather small increase.

- **Traditional authority**

In Suriname, the Tribal people have within their community their own authority. Currently, there are 1618 dignitaries of whom 657 are women and 961 men. As mentioned before, the Tribal people do not have the tradition to have women as authority figures. Nominating local women as dignitaries in the Tribal community and appointing them to fulfill this duty is a big step in the development of these communities with regards to gender equality. However, 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. In 2012 Ministry of Regional Development started to incorporate the data on these traditional authorities in their Database.

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. These efforts are taken to reduce domestic violence against women. Because of the awareness programs as a result of the abovementioned steering group, people are more aware that domestic violence is a crime and therefore needs to be stopped. If data shows an increase in domestic violence it may be because more people are now aware of the urgency to report such crime. Therefore, domestic violence has become visible and the authorities can now implement specific on preventive and curative measures.
- Suriname has taken legislative actions on sexual harassment. The draft of the Law ***Sexual harassment*** and the ***Sexual harassment on the workplace*** has already been presented to the Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Labour, Technology and Environment and also to the chairperson of the National Assembly on March 22nd 2011 and is now for approval at the National Assembly.
- The Moral Law which was revised in July 2009 has criminalized rape within marriage (S.B. 2009 no. 122 and article 295 of the Penal Code). This has brought awareness to men as well as women, which can make rape within marriage visible and specific action can be taken.

- The ***Act on the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons*** has become effective. This has led to awareness of the community, which has in turn led to dismantling several human trafficking operations and putting the perpetrators behind bars. Also special attention is given to training, education, reception, and counseling of victims and children of domestic violence.
- The ***Domestic Violence Act***, which aims at protecting victims of domestic violence in an early stage with special proceedings, became effective in June 2009. Because of this law, victims or possible victims can be protected by requesting a protection order. Based on this act the Ministry of Home Affairs in cooperation with the Foundation Stop Violence Against Women has recommended a precautionary approach.
- The draft law on ***Stalking*** has been sent to the Parliament for enactment.
- With regards to domestic violence, the Ministry of Justice and Police has provided a shelter for female victims and their children. The Foundation Sticris (Foundation for crisis) has also provided a refuge shelter for women in crisis situations and victims of domestic violence. These shelters provide relief for 3 months. Thereafter the women are either escorted back home (after it turns out to be safe) or being helped to find a new one.
- Two ***Bureaus for aid to victims*** were put up in the districts Paramaribo and Nickerie, where victims of domestic violence can be counseled.
- The Ministry of Justice and Police has also put up victims' rooms in police stations to guarantee more privacy for victims when they are questioned. In addition, police officers have been trained how to treat victims of domestic violence. Also various groups - such as priests 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 made statements in regard to stopping gender based violence. This program was to make people aware that domestic violence is a crime and needs to be reported.
- 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:
 - By order of the Ministry of Justice and Police the Foundation "Ilse Henar-Hewitt Juridische Bijstand voor Vrouwen" (NGO) made awareness programs regarding domestic violence. This program was cast on regional- and national television and radio stations. The main message was to alert the community about domestic violence and how to deal with it and where to go for help.
 - The Bureau for Women and Child Policy (Ministry of Justice and Police) made an information folder regarding domestic violence and distributed it to relevant organizations.

A folder containing information and guidelines about sexual crimes for teachers of the primary and secondary schools is distributed to 24 primary schools. It is a pilot project with the duration of one year started on November 2009. The purpose of this project is to make teachers able to identify sexual abuse, to give tools to teachers how to discuss this subject with the students, and to give an overview of available services in case of further referral.

- Information and education sessions were/ are held by the Foundation Stop Violence Against Women in cooperation with the Ministry of Home Affairs for students, social workers and teachers. The aim of these sessions is to increase the awareness of domestic violence and to promote healthy partner relations especially among youngsters.
- The Women Rights Centre publishes each month an article "Gender Optiek" in the newspaper. This article emphasizes gender and gender related issues.

5. Facilitate women's access to new technologies and promote egalitarian, democratic and nondiscriminatory practices by the media

- 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 as part of the celebration of the International Women's Day in 2011. The outcome of this discussion is that recommendations have been given in order to plan and make policy with this regard.
- Several primary schools have taken the initiative to build a multimedia centre (a library with computer facilities) with the support of parents and other donors, while the Ministry of Education is the facilitator. These efforts are unfortunately not on a structural basis yet. Children are being introduced to the digital world. Some of the abovementioned schools have put time aside in their school roster for computer education. Access is for boys and girls alike.

6. Promote the conditions for the integral health of women and for their sexual and reproductive health

- The Surinamese Constitution in article 36 recites that "everyone shall have a right to good health" and that the "State shall promote the general health care by systematic improvement of living and working conditions and shall give information on the protection of health". Therefore, the Ministry of Health has supported primary health care with emphasis on community participation. With regards to reproductive health Suriname has special health care centers for pregnant women, where they go for prenatal checkups until the baby is born. Pregnant women are also being tested for HIV/AIDS in order to give them special care and guidance during pregnancy and at childbirth. Also after the child has been born guidance is given to the infected mother in order to protect the child.

- There are programs implemented to reduce maternal mortality through improvement/ expansion of obstetrics facilities at all policlinics. In order to improve the service of the obstetrics 60 midwives have been trained. Refresher training has been provided for existing birth attendants to provide basic Emergency Obstetric Care life-saving functions. Also procurement of equipment in order to provide emergency obstetric care during pregnancy, delivery and post partum.
- In the interior programs have been implemented that aimed at improving and stimulating early antenatal care. Also programs started that aimed at capacity building of traditional birth attendants and strengthening of partnership between Traditional Birth Attendants and policlinic health workers in the interior.
- Teenage mothers are given social guidance through a pilot project that is aimed at a better functioning of the target group in the educational process.
- Strengthening of the capacities of the health system by:
 1. Development of programs on empowering of girls and boys in the prevention of STI/ HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies, especially in low-educated, low income areas.
 2. Development of effective and high quality youth friendly services for the improvement of youth's physical, sexual and mental health.

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

- In February 2011, the *Situation Analysis on Gender Equality, Gender Relations and the Position of Women in Suriname (SITAN Women)* was released. This report presents a situation analysis of gender relations and gender equity in Suriname. Promoting gender equality is one of the goals of Suriname's Multiple Year Development plan, one of the Millennium Development Goals, and inherent to various conventions ratified by Suriname. The presented data constitute a basis for evidence based gender policy, as described in the Integral Gender Action Plan 2006-2010. The research was commissioned by the National Bureau Gender policy (NBG) of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs (BIZA). In addition to support with respect to content, the NBG also gave logistic and technical assistance. Financial support was provided by the Government of Suriname and the EC/UN Partnership on Gender Equality for development and Peace in Suriname (EC, UNIFEM, and ITC-ILO). 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.

- With the support of PAHO/WHO the UNFPA in cooperation with the Ministry of Health held a workshop on how to breakdown health statistics in gender segregated data. The acquired data can be used for planning purposes and gender policy making.
- 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 with the objective to reach the public at large and the youth in particular.
- 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 carried out an analysis of the effects of the CSME free trade regime on men and women

Activities planned for November 2011 – December 2012

- The Ministry of Home Affairs recognizes the importance of data collection. Because of the lack of data the situation is cluttered and therefore gender specific policy has not fully been implemented as yet. A baseline study will be conducted on the situation of women in Suriname which will help identify the bottlenecks regarding poverty, education and gender equality that women have to deal with. The Baseline study will also provide the necessary information for specific gender policy making;
- With regard to the International Day for Violence against Women and the 16 Days of Activism against gender based violence, the Ministry of Home Affairs 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;
- The intention is to introduce People Centered Budgeting when composing the Budget 2013;
- Carry out awareness activities on several gender issues through education and the media. With this regard a communication plan is being developed.

The Ministry of Home Affairs does its utmost to achieve gender equality in the Surinamese society. This government, in particular the Ministry of Home Affairs that is ultimately responsible for the national gender policy sees the many bottlenecks such as the limited financial resources, the shortcomings of data and the lack of a structural cooperation with the different stakeholders as a challenge.

The Ministry of Home Affairs focuses on combined forces by the entire community, men as well as women regardless of their culture, ethnicity en religion in order to achieve gender equality and therefore development, wealth and well-being in the Surinamese society.