

**Implementation of the agreed conclusions on
'Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work'**

Strengthening normative and legal frameworks (paragraphs 40 (a) to (j))

- **What specific actions have been taken to enact, strengthen and enforce laws and regulatory frameworks that ensure gender equality and prohibit discrimination against women in the world of work?**

On 11 April 2019, the principle of non-discrimination was incorporated in the Employment Protection Act for parenthood/families which was adopted in Parliament and entered into force on 18 June 2019, (S.B. 2019 no. 64) . This Act regulates parental leave before and after childbirth, in the form of a prohibition of discrimination on the basis of gender. The participation of women on the labour market was promoted by the introduction of mandatory maternity leave (16 weeks) and paternal leave (8 days), employment protection related to maternity and paternity leave and the labour conditions of pregnant and lactating women.

The text of this act may be obtained from: https://www.dna.sr/media/259817/SB_2019__64.pdf

In order to introduce more Work-Life-Balance in the world of work, which could benefit women who tend to accept relatively more specific family responsibilities, the Government of Suriname submitted the Bill Working Time to The National Assembly in 2019. This bill is to promote productive, gender friendly, family conscious and safe working time arrangements (flexible working time concept). Only applicable to the private sector.

The text of the draft bill may be obtained from:
https://www.dna.sr/media/263490/Wet_Werktijdenregeling_2019.pdf

The approval of this bill is still pending.

The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Youth Affairs drafted a bill on Equal Treatment regarding Labour Matters. This draft bill was submitted to the National Assembly in July 2019 for approval.

The bill contains a definition on distinction (article 1.g) which includes both direct and indirect distinction, and reads as follows:

“Direct and indirect distinction as well as the assignment to make a distinction based on race, sex, religion, skin color, ethnic origin, national origin, social origin, political opinion, disability or family responsibility, pregnancy, age or marital status”.

The draft bill applies primarily to the private sector. In addition, the draft bill, in article 11a, contains provisions that regulate the application of the law to the public sector.

The text of the draft bill may be obtained from
http://www.dna.sr/media/263434/Wet_Gelijke_Behandeling_Arbeid__ID_50211_.pdf.

The approval of this bill is still pending.

• What specific actions have been taken to enact, strengthen and enforce laws and regulations that uphold the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value in both the public and private sectors?

The Ministry of Labour drafted a bill on Equal Treatment regarding Labour Matters and submitted to the National Assembly in July 2019 for approval. In this bill the principle of equal pay for work of equal value is also included.

The draft bill applies primarily to the private sector. In addition, the draft bill, in article 11a, contains provisions that regulate the application of the law to the public sector.

The text of the draft bill may be obtained from:
http://www.dna.sr/media/263434/Wet_Gelijke_Behandeling_Arbeid__ID_50211_.pdf.

The approval of this bill is still pending.

• What measures have been taken to enact, strengthen and enforce laws and policies to eliminate all forms of violence and harassment against women in the world of work and provide means of effective redress in cases of noncompliance?

In 2019 the draft bill on Violence and Sexual Harassment on the Work Floor was submitted to the National Assembly for approval. The draft bill applies primarily to the private sector. In addition, the draft bill contains provisions that regulate the application of the law to the public sector.

The text of the draft bill may be obtained from:

https://www.dna.sr/media/263873/Wet_Geweld_en_Seksuele_Intimidatie_Arbeid.pdf

The approval of this bill is still pending.

Furthermore, a reporting unit for sexual harassment in the workplace has been operationalized at the ministry of Defense where complaints may be filed anonymously. Both victims and perpetrators are guided.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic special attention has been given to domestic violence. Worth mentioning in this regard is the implementation of the project “Gender Based Violence (GBV) interventions in response to COVID – 19 measures”. This project is being carried out since June 2020 and is a joint effort of the ministry of Home Affairs, the ministry of Justice and Police, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Development Program together with civil society organizations and government institutions. This project consists of three components, namely: communication campaign, capacity building and establishment of referral pathways with the following objectives:

- Ensure continuation of essential Gender Based Violence (GBV) / Domestic Violence (DV) services including through remote service provision;
- Increased knowledge on GBV/DV and the available support services;
- Increased knowledge of stress coping mechanism to prevent violence; and
- Establishment of GBV/DV referral pathways for improved access to services

The project produced the following results:

- video communication material has been developed and broadcasted in various languages through television from December 2020 to January 2021. In general the message was that gender based violence is condemned and that services for survivors are available.
- a number of trainers from different organizations have been virtually trained during three to four months in remote GBV case management service provision. During all training sessions the gender and survivor-centred approached perspective was constantly emphasized. The survivor approach involves; respect, non-discrimination, safety and confidentiality. These trainers are intended to train other service providers.
- a mapping of available GBV service providers has been done and referral pathways have been developed in booklet form, as well as a poster, containing information about various GBV services. Hard copies of the booklet and poster have been disseminated nationwide and is available in digital format. The GBV services are available in Paramaribo, Nickerie, and several others areas outside Paramaribo.

Another important measure or so to speak to meet the needs of especially victims of domestic / gender based violence, that the government Foundation —Kinder- en Jongeren Telefoon has expanded its services. The 123 help line is now also 24 hours available for adults who are victims of domestic violence or gender based violence. The services of the hotline was since its establishment in 2008 only available for children and youngsters during office hours. Due to the expansion of the services, the name has also been changed to “Mi lijn”. In addition to the number 123, contact can also be made via WhatsApp and social media. So far it has been noted that most of the callers are women.

Strengthening education, training, and skills development (paragraphs 40 (k) to (n))

- **What measures have been taken to mainstream a gender perspective into education and training programmes in order to facilitate the effective transition from education or unemployment to work?**

No information available

Implementing economic and social policies for women’s economic empowerment (paragraphs 40 (o) to (mm))

- **What steps have been taken to promote decent paid care and domestic work in the public and private sectors?**

- Employment Protection Act (2019). In the past, women employed in the private sector by companies without a collective labor agreement had no legal coverage for maternity leave services provided by their employers. With this law employed women are entitled to paid maternity leave for at least 16 weeks and men to 8 days paternity leave. Women who have a multiple birth, i.e. three or more children, are entitled to maternity leave up to a maximum of 24 weeks.
- Promoted decent work for paid care workers, including migrant workers. The ministry of Labor with support of the ILO has conducted the Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) 2014-2016. This program has two main objectives namely, to promote decent work as a key component of national development strategies and to organize ILO knowledge, instruments, advocacy and cooperation at the service of tripartite constituents in a results-based framework in order to

advance the decent work agenda. In this context several activities have been conducted among which the formulation of the Termination of Employment Act 2016; State decree on Dismissal Permits and Summary Dismissals; Ministerial Decree Criteria Termination of Employment. Furthermore, the acts on Collective Labor Agreement and Trade Union Freedom have been approved unanimously by the National Assembly in 2016. Preparations are being made with regard to setting up the second Decent Work Country Program (DWCP 2019-2021). Suriname has implemented the first program (DWCP 2014-2016) to the satisfaction of the ILO. This program has mainly resulted in both the adaptation of existing and the production of new labor laws.

• **What actions and investments have been made to support gender-responsive social protection and care infrastructure and services?**

- Expansion of primary health services in the coastal areas and in the interior: renovation of policlinics and transformation of some of these clinics to community health centers, with significant expansion of mother and child health care, including obstetric services. Construction of 3 hospitals, 2 in rural areas and 1 in the interior in 2019.
- The Minimum Hour Wage Act was promulgated as the third component of the social security system. The law came into force as of January 1, 2015. This law is aimed at preventing extremely low wages and also results in an overall increase in labor productivity. This law is withdrawn and replaced with the approved Minimum Wage Act of July 2019, given the significant devaluation of the Surinamese dollar which undermines the purpose of this law to guarantee employees and their families a certain minimum subsistence. In consultation with social partners and trade unions the minimum hour wage has increased by approximately 95 percent within the period 2015-2018.
- The Civil Servants Pension Fund (*'Pensioenfonds Suriname'*): The government manages a pension system granting a pension to Surinamese civil servants and employees of State-owned enterprises.
- Widows Pension System: Governmental Pension Bureau manages a Widows Pension System for widows of civil servants and employees of State-owned enterprises.
- Support in access to Universal Health Care is provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing (MSAH). The law, making basic health insurance mandatory, was passed in 2014 and subsequently, the ministry was put in charge of the implementation. Three main categories are persons under the age of 17 years, 60 years and older, and the age group 17 to 59 years. Up until now the government pays for the insurance premium of the two former groups and for those from the latter group that lack the fund to pay for them. If necessary (if the limit of the coverage of the health insurance has been reached) extra medical costs are covered by the MSAH.
- Social transfers that were budgeted the past five years are financial assistance to poor households, financial assistance to persons with disabilities, child allowance and general old age pension.
- For the other cash transfers there was no increase in the amounts. A challenge for all cash transfers is the payment in the interior, due to the high transportation costs. To overcome these and other challenges related to other social transfers and to facilitate the elderly and persons with disabilities the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing introduced the so-called Moni Karta in 2017. The Moni Karta is a debit card on which the various financial benefits provided by the

government are made available every month for the eligible persons. The Moni Karta is also made available for persons living in the interior.

- Financial assistance and food packages have been provided to mothers with triplets.
- Increased access of villages in the interior to clean drinking water and sanitation. The Ministry of Natural Resources has signed agreements with UNICEF to build or restore some of the water systems in the interior (Upper Suriname River mostly). The water systems in the villages Abenaston and MasiaKriki within the district of Sipaliwini have been fully restored. Mostly women and children make use of water in these areas as they live and stay in the villages and use water for daily maintenance and care of children and the elderly.
- A movie regarding dangers of unclean water and bad hygiene practices and the necessity of clean water was produced. A WASH awareness booklet for children in school was also developed.
- Access to safe sanitation: In addition to the WASH project, the Ministry of Regional Development also signed an agreement with UNICEF to provide material to build toilets in some of the villages in the interior. The goal of this project is to stimulate and motivate the villagers, mostly women and the elderly, in the use of toilets and therefore decreasing the risk for diseases and the pollution of their immediate environment.
- Other projects that were executed in the interior were among others:
 - 2 Rain Water Harvesting Projects in the interior reaching approximately 100 Households.
 - In 2017, 2 men and 11 women of the village Asigrón were trained in a rain harvesting project by making concrete platforms on which water reservoirs can be placed. The participants have been trained in how to install and maintain water reservoirs (duro tanks)

• **What specific measures have been implemented to promote women's entry, reentry and advancement in the labour market?**

- The formal establishment of the Suriname National Training Authority (SNTA) and the execution of a nationwide project (funded by the Islamic Bank) for strengthening of vocational education aimed at strengthening skills among young people and close gaps between schools and needs of labor market. Also, in vocational education, the share of female students is increasing.
- Furthermore, the Business Support Unit of the Ministry of Labor in collaboration with SPWE has started to provide basic business skills trainings since February 2019 and has trained 97 men and 62 women in the past months. The trainings provided by the Business unit were all free of cost. Recently the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing has also conducted trainings for entrepreneurs who had just started their businesses.
- Markets have been established where the vast majority of the vendors consists of female entrepreneurs among others: The craft market 'Waterkant', for the sale of handicraft products made by mainly Maroon and Indigenous women and the 'Haitian market', for generally Haitian female farmers and the 'Kwakoe Market' for mainly Maroon women to offer their fruits and vegetables to the community.
- The Suriname Agriculture Market Access Project (SAMAP) is being carried out by the ministry of Agriculture, Husbandry and Fisheries for a period of four (4) years to strengthen sustainable agricultural development in Suriname through more competitive and safe production and better access to the export market. The emphasis will be on fruit and vegetables, non-wood forest products and the processing of root crops by inland communities. Among other things this project will work with at least 1,000 small-scale farmers, of which at least 30% are women.

- In March 2019 the agricultural cooperation "Wi Uma fu Sranan" has provided the training, 'Good Agricultural Practice' (GAP), to entrepreneurs in the district of Coronie. This training has been provided in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Husbandry and Fisheries. GAP can contribute to the proper administration and registration of the income and expenses of the company or entrepreneur.

In the period May till December 2018, the Ministry of "Economic Affairs, Entrepreneurship and Technological Innovation" has provided training sessions called 'entrepreneurship and Business plan' for potential and starting entrepreneurs. The total of participants for the training sessions was 188, among which 106 females and 82 males. Furthermore, in the period January - June 2019, this ministry in collaboration with the organization REDD+ has provided 'entrepreneurship trainings' for 107 persons among which 67 females and 40 males. Some of these sessions were also conducted in the districts and overall more women than man has been trained.

Addressing the growing informality of work and mobility of women workers (paragraphs 40 (nn) to (qq))

• What measures have been implemented to promote the transition from informal to formal paid employment for women?

- The vocational training institute (SAO) of the Ministry of Labour provides schooling, re-training and further training of job-seekers, drop-outs and workers on behalf of the Labour Market. Besides expanding the different types of training options, training is also offered in rural areas to increase accessibility for this target group. The participation rate of women in training courses is 48 per cent.
- Foundation Productive Work Units (SPWE), a Department of the Ministry of Labour, offers coaching and training to micro and small entrepreneurs. Women's participation in these courses and programs is very high, i.e. 59 per cent in training courses and 88 per cent in coaching programmes during 2010-2013.

Managing technological and digital change for women's economic empowerment (paragraphs 40 (rr) to (ss))

• What specific actions have been taken to support women's access to skills development and decent work in emerging fields, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics?

No information available

Strengthening women's collective voice, leadership, and decision-making (paragraphs 40 (tt) to (aaa))

The Ministry of Home Affairs has launched in July 2019 its Gender Vision Policy Document 2021 – 2035. Power and decision- making within private and public life is one of the seven priority areas identified. Encouraging women in decision-making is more than political decision-making and therefore in the coming years more attention will be paid to stimulate women in decision-making positions in all sectors of society as well as non-traditional occupations such as construction, mining and logging.

The gender vision policy document contains long term goals to be achieved within five to fifteen years. Among other, the following long term goals are identified to be achieved between five to ten years for the thematic area Power and decision- making:

- Full and effective participation of women and ensure equal opportunities with regard to leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.
- Increase the use of innovative technology, in particular information and communication technology, to achieve greater empowerment of women.
- Eradicate enduring, discriminatory stereotypes of the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society.

Through the development of annual gender action plans (actions plans as of 2019 have already been developed and partially implemented) activities or interventions regarding the abovementioned goals are further elaborated to be carried out with various stakeholders such as the media and the business community.

In the past years activities were organized by several institutions such as the Ministry of Home Affairs, the National Parliament whether or not in collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations and International Organizations such as the United Nations Development Program to discuss the possibility for introducing quota as a means to increase the number of women in decision-making positions. However, there are still different opinions on e.g. determining legal quota for appointments.

Various campaigns and projects have also been carried out to encourage and support more women to claim a place in political structures. These activities were mainly carried out by NGOs and women's organisations. The last major activities took place prior to the 2015 general elections. Encouraged by the female Speaker, the National Assembly tried to improve the position in politics in the same period through various capacity strengthening initiatives. A cautious conclusion can be drawn that these activities may have had an impact on the general elections of May 2020.

In 2020 the NGO Stas International has implemented an awareness campaign "*Balance in 2020*", with support of the UNDP and the Dutch Embassy, with the aim to achieve balance (men/women and young/old candidates) on the election lists of 25 May 2020. Live television debates with political organizations were also part of this awareness campaign.

In addition, we have noted that the media (De Ware Tijd) and other women's organizations such as the Women's Right Centre Suriname have also paid attention to introducing new and young candidates including women to the public by inter alia publishing written articles.

Due to lack of finances and Covid- 19 measurements some of the activities the Bureau Gender Affairs had identified in the Gender Action Plan 2019-2020 could not be implemented. But in order to achieve a gender balance within the various electoral commissions and structures which were installed within the framework of the general elections of 2020, a letter was sent to the management team responsible for the elections of the Ministry of Home affairs. This has resulted in a balanced participation of men and women in the various election commissions and working groups.

A letter was also sent to the OKB (Electoral Authority) for encouraging a gender balance at the OKB and between the observers. Slogans to promote equal participation of women and men in decision-making were developed to share with the wider community through social media.

Strengthening the role of the private sector in women's economic empowerment (paragraphs 40 (bbb) to (eee))

• What efforts have been undertaken to encourage private firms and institutions to mainstream gender equality considerations in policies and practices?

- The Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) 2014-2016 of Suriname that has been conducted by the ILO and has represented a tripartite commitment of Government, employers' and workers' organizations to achieve Suriname's national development goals, as well as articulate a program of action for the key areas in which the ILO's collaboration with the tripartite partners is expected to lead to positive changes in the world of work. This DWCP, the tripartite partners focused on integrating gender equality into work-related strategies, policies and laws to ensure equal opportunities and treatment for men and women, in line with the ratified ILO Conventions No. 100 on equal pay (in 2017) and No. 111 concerning abolition of discrimination at work (in 2017).

• What action has been taken to increase investment and support for women entrepreneurs?

- The Ministry of "Economic Affairs, Entrepreneurship and Technological Innovation", and the Cooperative Savings and Credit Bank Godo G.A., have signed a cooperation agreement in February 2019 to improve entrepreneurship in Suriname. They have agreed to work together to guide entrepreneurs in Suriname and offer technical support where needed, as well as joint education and training. The guidance, technical support, education and training will be available for eligible entrepreneurs within the tourism and agricultural sector, as well as those who are involved in the import replacement industry.
- The work arms of the ministry of Labor namely Foundation for Productive Works (SPWE) and Vocational Training Institute (SAO), the Council for Cooperatives (RACO) and Trustbank Amanah have agreed to a Public Private Partnership and an MOU has been signed in April 2019. The purpose of this collaboration is to stimulate micro and small entrepreneurship. Strengthening this sector will result in the growth of job creation. Trustbank Amanah will offer access to finances for men and women at the start-up and expansion of their business.