



United Nations Suriname Country Team Report prepared in accordance with paragraph 15(B) of resolution 5/1 of the HR Council For the Third Universal Periodic Review of Suriname

I. INTRODUCTION

This report is a joint undertaking of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Suriname for the second half of 2016 to the first quarter of 2021. UNICEF, PAHO, UNHCR, UNDP, UNFPA have contributed to this report which highlights the main issues.

II. BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

Theme: A12 Scope of international obligations/ Acceptance of norms

During the 2016 Universal Periodic Review of Suriname, the country received numerous recommendations to ratify or accede to various international human rights treaties. Suriname duly ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March 2017.

Recommendations:

Suriname ratify the following treaties:

- Rome Statute – ratified/ acceded (ICC member state), but did not ratify the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the ICC; did not ratify the Crime of Aggression and did not ratify Article 8;
- Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families;
- International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

III. COOPERATION WITH HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

Theme: A 22 Cooperation with treaty bodies

Following its second cycle UPR, Suriname submitted the State party report on Follow Up to Concluding Observations on CEDAW in 2020 and the State party's report to the CERD in 2019.

Recommendations:

- Submit the overdue reports for the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).
- Continue its cooperation with the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations.

Theme: A 24 Cooperation with special procedures

Suriname does not have any standing invitations for Special Procedures.¹ The Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues requested a visit for the first half of 2020 but no response was received.

Recommendations:

- Suriname should extend a standing invitation to all Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council.

Theme: A 41 Constitutional & legislative framework

After the Constitution mandated the establishment of a Constitutional Court in 1975, one was finally established in 2020. The Court is tasked with ensuring that the laws are consistent with the Constitution and international treaties. The Court is still not yet fully operational.

Theme: A46 National plans of Actions on Human rights

Since the previous cycle, Suriname has adopted several national policies and action plans. Among them are: the National Strategy Plan HIV 2014-2020, Gender Action Plan for 2019 and 2020, Gender Vision policy document 2021 – 2035, the National Strategic Plan ‘Renewal and Strengthening of Primary Health Care 2014-2018’; Safe Motherhood and Neonatal Health Action Plan, based on the Safe Motherhood Needs Assessment 2014, Maternal and Newborn health strategy 2021-2025 and the National Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Policy of Suriname, 2020-2030.

Theme: A45 National Human Rights Institution (NHRI)

While the National Human Rights Institute was established in 2016 by the Ministry of Justice and Police, this institute is largely dependent on the Government for funding and does not have broad mandate to promote and protect human rights in accordance with the Paris Principles. The transition from the launch in 2016 to the full implementation in accordance with the Paris Principles has not yet taken place.

Recommendations:

- Take all the necessary steps to ensure that the National Human Rights Institution fully complies with the Paris Principles and is fully operational.

Theme: A53 Professional training in human rights

¹ Linked to recommendation 135.31 A/HRC/33/4 (Paraguay) UPR 2016

During the last UPR cycle, the Government of Suriname supported recommendations to develop and implement training programmes for current and trainee police officers to address stigmatization and discrimination of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons.² However, there is still a lack of structured training programmes to give effect to this recommendation.

Recommendations:

- Engage with UN agencies for training for law enforcement and judicial officers to ensure accountability for gender-based violence and discrimination of LGBTI communities.
- Develop and implement human rights education programmes for law enforcement.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS

A. Theme: B31 Equality and non-discrimination

Achievements/best practices: Article 8 of the Constitution of Suriname protects the rights of persons to live free from discrimination. Further, there are no criminal laws against same sex relations or consensual sex between two persons of the same gender, if they are 18 years or older.

Main issues/gaps: The Government of Suriname has not sufficiently taken the necessary steps to adopt legislative and other measures to explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and it has not intensified measures to prevent and sanction violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons.³ There are no legal regulations that specifically address the status of transgender persons. The law prohibits sexual exploitation, including sex work. However, in practice, sex work is tolerated.

The Government of Suriname had committed to conduct a broad-based national consultation process to discuss the subject of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. However, if these hearings were conducted at a national level, the outcomes did not result in any tangible product.

Recommendations:

- Enact legislation that specifically addresses discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals.

Theme: B72 Human rights & toxic wastes

Achievements/Best practices: Suriname acceded to the Minamata Convention in August 2018 and submitted its Minamata Initial Assessment Report and is preparing its National Action Plan for the Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining Sector (ASGM), in partnership with UNDP.⁴

In June 2020 Suriname approved: (i) the Environmental Framework Law establishing the National Environment Authority, (ii) moved the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment from voluntary to

² Linked to recommendation 133.61 A/HRC/33/4 (Ireland) UPR 2016

³ Linked to recommendation 133.58 A/HRC/33/4 (Chile) UPR 2016

⁴ Linked to recommendation 135.43 A/HRC/33/4 (Algeria) UPR 2016

mandatory for designated industries and (iii) enhanced the legislative basis for more stringent environmental regulations, as needed, including sources of pollution.

Suriname has initiated several programmes related to enhancing the ASGM value chain with support from a wide group of partners such as World Bank, UNDP, WWF Guianas and the US Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Bauxite Mining Closure Agreement was approved in Parliament which incorporates the safe decommissioning of the old bauxite refining plant of Suralco at Paranam. Suriname has also implemented the Persistent Organics Pollutants (POPS) programme addressing obsolete pesticides through storage, transportation and disposal.

Suriname implemented the Meki Tamara Programme aimed at identifying long-term impacts on human health from mercury and pesticides used in agriculture, in partnership with the Anton de Kom University of Suriname and University of Tulane, USA.

Recommendations:

- Continue work to combat land and water pollution caused by industrial waste.
- Promulgate supplementary regulations geared towards the implementation of the Environmental Framework Law.

Theme: D22 Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

Suriname supported the recommendation to prosecute the perpetrators of the extrajudicial executions of December 1982.⁵ On 29th November 2019, then President Desi Bouterse was convicted by the military court for the executions of 15 political opponents in 1982. Former President Bouterse was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment and has since appealed the conviction which is still before the Courts. The criminal court case regarding the Moiwana massacre in 1986 has not yet started.

Theme: D23 The death penalty

Suriname has abolished the death penalty from its penal code in 2015.

Theme: D25 Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and Punishment and Theme: D26 Conditions of detention

Main issues/gaps: Prison conditions generally met international standards, but prisons are still understaffed, with high prisoner-to-guard ratios. Overcrowding is still a problem in the temporary holding cells connected to police stations and operated by police. Older holding cells lack adequate lighting and ventilation, with limited functioning sanitation facilities.

Recommendation:

- Accede to the Convention Against Torture.
- Adopt measures to ensure that the conditions of detention respect the dignity of prisoners, particularly in line with the revised United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment

⁵ Linked to recommendation 133.83 A/HRC/33/4 (Netherlands) UPR 2016

of Prisoners.

Theme: D 27 Prohibition of slavery/trafficking

Achievements/Best practices: Legislation exists to combat trafficking with prescribed penalties of up to nine years' imprisonment and a fine of SRD 100,000 Surinamese dollars (\$13,300) for offenses involving a victim 16 years of age or older, and up to 12 years' imprisonment and a fine of SRD 100,000 (\$13,300) for those involving a victim under the age of 16. Suriname ratified the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (the Palermo Protocol)* in 2007 and adopted a *National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking* in April 2014.

Additionally, the Government implemented an awareness campaign, including putting up anti-trafficking posters and flyers at schools and police stations, points of entry into the country, and billboards, as well as broadcasting radio and television anti-trafficking sketches in languages of the most vulnerable populations including Sranan Tongo, Chinese, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Finally, the Government has taken very positive steps that reduce trafficking in persons and sexual and labour exploitation of particularly vulnerable populations, through the creation of an avenue of legal residency for refugees and asylum-seekers.

Main issues/gaps: Reported cases of trafficking in Suriname's remote jungle interior have increased in recent years and limited Government presence in the interior makes it hard to quantify the full scope of the operations. The trafficking of persons, particularly women and children, remains a concern since a coordinated approach to prevent and protect trafficking victims has not been fully developed in the region.⁶ Suriname is a source and destination country for women, men, and children who are subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour. Local women and girls and those from Brazil, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Venezuela are known victims within the country.

There is no shelter dedicated to trafficking victims—a domestic violence shelter accepted female and child trafficking victims but did not accept male victims.

Recommendations:

- Train and support all officials in contact with vulnerable individuals to implement the victim identification and referral protocol to identify trafficking victims, as well as those who may also have international protection needs, especially among children, migrants from Cuba, Venezuela, Haiti, and other countries;
- Increase efforts to investigate, prosecute, convict, and sentence convicted traffickers, including officials complicit in sex or labour trafficking;
- Train judges at all levels of the judiciary in human trafficking and the trafficking law and sensitize judges and prosecutors to the issue of secondary trauma.

⁶ Linked to recommendation 133.80 A/HRC/33/4 (Canada) UPR 2016

- Additional training of police and border control personnel on human trafficking, strengthening of the laws and policies around participation in human trafficking and enforcement of the laws resulting in higher conviction rates.

Theme: D29 Domestic violence

Main issues/gaps: Domestic violence has been a pervasive problem for Suriname. Suriname has adopted laws that provide specific protections for Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) including the 2009 *Domestic Violence Act* and the 2012 *Law against Stalking*. Additionally, following the revision of the Penal Code in 2009, rape within marriage is now defined as a criminal offense. However, implementation of these laws has been stymied by lack of training and tools at the operational level to ensure proper recording and tracking of cases, lack of social services to support survivors, and inefficient and ineffective criminal justice systems to hold perpetrators accountable.⁷

Available data on Gender based violence (GBV) does not provide total representation of this type of violence as there often is underreporting. However, even the data which is available is not readily usable for it is not timely accessible nor is the data streamlined among all collecting sources. Furthermore, the structure for collecting, recording and keeping the data needs strengthening.

The National Council Domestic Violence (NCDV) was installed in June 2017 by the Minister of Justice and Police for a period of 3 years. The main task of this council is to update the National Policy Plan Structural Approach Domestic Violence and to formulate a Work plan for the integral approach of domestic violence; the monitoring of the implementation of all the activities mentioned in these documents. The NCDV consists of representatives of the Ministry of Justice and Police (The Public Prosecutor's Office, the Bureau Victim Aid, the Bureau Women and Child Policy and the Police Corps of Suriname), the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Regional Development, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing (MSAH), the Ministry of Education Science and Culture (MINOWC) and the Ministry of Health.

Masculinity Training was held in collaboration with Stichting Man' Mit Man (Foundation Man' mit Man) in 2017. Men with different social backgrounds and different occupations (taxi drivers, government officials, barbers, fire men) were trained. The purpose of this training was to stimulate discussions regarding masculinity in relation to GBV.

Recommendations:

- Continued capacity strengthening and support of officials in contact with vulnerable individuals to conduct referrals and/or provide available services;
- Increase efforts to improve data collection;
- Continue support to NCDV for implementation of interventions.

Theme: D51 Administration of justice & fair trial

⁷ Linked to recommendation 133.68 A/HRC/33/4 (Namibia) UPR 2016

There is a shortage of judges to hear both criminal and civil cases. Justice sector organizations have very little budgetary independence while budgets for the courts, prosecutor, police and prisons are administered by the Ministry of Justice. ⁸

Theme: E21 Right to an adequate standard of living-general

In 2019, a Law for Minimum Hourly Wage was updated by the National Assembly which set the minimum wage at 8.4 SRD per hour, which is set to come into effect this year. However, this law applies to the formal sector whereas the largest group in the informal sector (consisting of young adults and women) does not benefit from this.

Theme: F31 Children: definition;general principles, protection

The minimum age of marriage is 15 for girls and 17 for boys. Therefore, according to the matrimonial law, a woman may marry at the age of fifteen years with a man who has reached the age of at least seventeen years. ⁹Child marriage is a grave threat to the lives and prospects of young girls. It violates their rights, denies them of their childhood, disrupts their education, jeopardizes their health, and limits their opportunities and prospects.

Recommendation:

- Increase the minimum age of marriage to 18.

Theme: F33 Children: protection against exploitation

Achievements/best practices: Suriname passed the Law Workers and Children Youth Act in 2018 in its efforts to eradicate child labour and to bring domestic legislation in line with the ILO conventions to harmonize the Surinamese labour law concerning child labour. Suriname ratified the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) in 2018.

The national strategy to combat trafficking in persons, 'Roadmap Suriname Combating Trafficking 2014-2018', was approved by the Council of Ministers on April 16, 2014.

Main issues/gaps: About 6.1percent (7.5 percent boy and 4.5 percent girls) of children age 5-17 years in Suriname are engaged in child labour. Legislation with regards to child labour is approved by Parliament and there is a national plan of action to eliminate all forms of child labour development (2019-2024).¹⁰

Trafficking remains a problem, although the Government has taken steps to address this. The Public Prosecutor works closely with the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit of the Police, and the Multidisciplinary Commission Anti-Trafficking in Persons.

⁸ Linked to recommendation 134.3 A/HRC/33/4 (Australia) UPR 2016

⁹ Linked to recommendation 135.39 A/HRC/33/4 (Slovenia) UPR 2016

¹⁰ Linked to recommendation 135.36 A/HRC/33/4 (Belgium) UPR 2016

Recommendation:

- Continue working towards the eradication of child labour.

Theme: F34 Children: Juvenile justice

Main issues/gaps: Suriname has established Opa Doeli, a male correctional holding institute for youth 12-18 years. Girls, however, are still held together with the (adult) female prisoners.¹¹

The Government is making efforts to develop child-friendly procedures for dealing with children suspected or accused of an offense or as a witness to or victim of an offense. More consideration can be given to alternative sentences and support systems for child offenders.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that juveniles in detention are housed in separate facilities from adults.
- Ensure that there are child-friendly procedures in place for dealing with child offenders.

Theme: F4 Persons with disabilities

Achievements/best practices: Suriname ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on 29 March 2017. States must report initially within two years of accepting the Convention and thereafter, report every four years. The Committee examines each report and makes such suggestions and general recommendations on the report as it may consider appropriate and shall forward these to the State Party concerned. Suriname's report was due on 29 April 2019.

The draft Equal Treatment bill will also address protection of persons with a disability in the labour market.

Main issues/gaps: No laws specifically prohibit discrimination against persons with physical or mental disabilities.¹² Persons with disabilities experience discrimination when applying for jobs and services. No laws specifically provide that buildings be built according to accessibility codes.

Recommendation:

- Prioritise the passage of the draft bill on Equal Treatment.

Theme: G3 Indigenous peoples

Main issues/gaps: People living in the interior of Suriname still suffer the negative impact of mining on the environment.¹³ Indigenous and Tribal peoples (ITP) are continually complaining about the fact that their rights to the lands where their villages are situated are not respected by the Government nor by the private sector. There are still complaints regarding the fact that the government gives out permits to

¹¹ Linked to recommendation 133.84 A/HRC/33/4 (Trinidad and Tobago) UPR 2016

¹² Linked to recommendation 133.42 A/HRC/33/4 (Haiti) UPR 2016

¹³ Linked to recommendation 133.102 A/HRC/33/4 (Costa Rica) UPR 2016

private sector entities for natural resource mining and logging. Although the Constitution recognized the individual rights to land for all Surinamese, there is still a discussion on recognition of collective rights to land. While the Government is in dialogue with indigenous and tribal peoples regarding land rights, the regulation of the land rights is still a pressing matter. The Government has not yet taken steps to establish a formal platform to guarantee and protect the rights of indigenous people and Tribal peoples.

As of February 2021, the judgements of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights regarding the Moiwana community and the Saramakka people have not been fully implemented.¹⁴ On 28 January 2016, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights made public its judgment in the case of the Kaliña and Lokono Peoples v. Suriname. This case was first submitted to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in January 2007, by the chiefs of the eight Kaliña and Lokono villages of the Lower Marowijne River and the Association of Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname (VIDS). The Court found Suriname responsible for multiple violations of the American Convention on Human Rights due to its failure to recognize and guarantee the legal personality and territorial rights of the Kaliña and Lokono, as well as active violations of those and other rights in connection with bauxite mining, grants of individual titles to non-indigenous persons and both the existence of and restrictions imposed in two nature reserves. The Court adopted a series of orders with associated deadlines to remedy these violations.

In general, the Court's orders are positive and respond to many of the measures requested by the Kaliña and Lokono peoples. The Court, for instance, required that their territory be delimited, demarcated and titled, including the completion of formal processes to decide on restitution of lands affected by third parties and the nature reserves, all within three years. In addition, it ordered that Suriname rehabilitate the "serious damage" caused by the bauxite mining. This mining was done by subsidiaries of Alcoa and BHP Billiton, without any participation by the Kaliña and Lokono and without any form of impact assessment, even though it was both within an indigenous territory and a nature reserve. Recognizing that "repeated violations of the human rights" of indigenous peoples have been committed in Suriname, the Court also ordered the State to implement a series of "guarantees of non-repetition," requiring the legal recognition of the territorial and other rights of all Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Suriname.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that the judgements of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights regarding the Moiwana Community and Saramaka people are swiftly and completely implemented;
- Respect and ensure the rights of indigenous peoples related to the preservation of their land, culture and resources;
- Adopt measures to reduce the negative impact of mining on the environment and the rights of indigenous peoples and their lands, in conformity with international standards.

Theme: S01 SDG1-poverty

Main issues/gaps: The IDB's 2017 Survey of Living Conditions for Suriname estimated an overall poverty headcount rate of 26 percent . However, poverty in the country's interior was much higher, at 47.9

¹⁴ Linked to recommendation 133.101 A/HRC/33/4 (Germany) UPR 2016

percent , with almost one in every two households being classified as poor.

The Development Plan 2017-2021 identifies key areas necessary in efforts to reduce poverty, including the need for timely and qualitative disaggregated data on the population, a national poverty reduction strategy and indicators to monitor the effects of poverty alleviation measures and programmes.¹⁵

Recommendation:

- Pursue measures to eliminate poverty, through implementation of comprehensive public policies with a human rights-based approach
- Establish a poverty line to guide targeted interventions.

Theme:S03-SDG3-health

Main issues/gaps: Inequitable access to and use of essential health services caused by inequalities in gender, geographic location and socio-economic status remain evident.¹⁶ Access to specialized care for those living in the interior remains limited, with people there in need of care, having to travel to Paramaribo.

The Government formulated a Policy Plan Mental Health 2015-2017 to work towards the strengthening of the mental health system. Unfortunately, the Mental Health Plan for Suriname was not executed according to the work schedule. Further, the National Suicide Prevention Plan 2016-2020 was not effectively implemented and suicide remains a major concern. The country has the highest score on the world ranking of deaths by suicides and suicide attempts; there were 26 deaths by suicide per 100,000 inhabitants.¹⁷

The Ministry of Health has developed significant policies and plans of actions, including the National Strategic Plan Renewal and Strengthening of Primary Health Care 2014-2018, Safe Motherhood and Neonatal Health Action Plan, based on the Safe Motherhood Needs Assessment 2014 and the National Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Policy of Suriname, 2020-2030. However, the effective implementation of national plans does not always occur as expected due to limitation of resources.

A third HIV National Strategic Plan (NSP) for the period 2014-2020 was undertaken and a new plan developed for 2021-2026. ¹⁸The biggest challenge lies in increasing awareness and establishing responsible behavior in general, but particularly in identified vulnerable groups such as youth, men having sex with men, and sex workers. To guarantee good health, the emphasis in the general policy will be on behavioral change and integration of HIV in the general communication to stop the alarming rise of chronic diseases.

The National Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Policy of Suriname 2020-2030 and the Maternal and Newborn Health Strategy 2021-2025 have the potential to considerably contribute to the

¹⁵ Linked to recommendation 133.85 A/HRC/33/4 (Ecuador) UPR 2016

¹⁶ Linked to recommendation 133.86 A/HRC/33/4 (Honduras) UPR 2016

¹⁷ Linked to recommendation 133.89 A/HRC/33/4 (Jamaica) UPR 2016

¹⁸ Linked to recommendation 133.88 A/HRC/33/4 (China) UPR 2016

improvement of these essential health care services. However, there is no budgeted action plan to secure financing and steer actions towards the necessary changes. The need for family planning has increased and it reflects ethnic, educational, geographical and income disparities.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Surinamese Government continue to make efforts to maintain the essential health services and systems.

Recommendations:

- Establish a new National Mental Health Plan and implement the new HIV National Strategic Plan.
- Continue effective promotion of the consistent use and sufficient availability of affordable condoms, strengthen care for persons living with HIV, and improve access by marginalized and vulnerable populations to quality sexual and reproductive health-care services and commodities.
- Work towards the implementation of the National Suicide Prevention Plan 2020-2024.
- Suriname should explicitly take action regarding the inequalities in access to and use of services for persons in vulnerable positions.
- Integrate comprehensive sexuality education in the curriculum.

Theme: S04-SDG4-education

Achievements/best practices: The educational status of children fluctuated in 2020 because of COVID-19 and subsequent school closures. Education expenditure accounts for 2.6 percent of GDP in Suriname, falling below the 4–6 percent recommended by the Education 2030 Framework for Action. The attendance rate of children in primary schools is high – 97 percent. However, a decrease in attendance was shown at lower-secondary school level (64 percent) and further down at upper-secondary school level (31 percent). About 10 percent of children are at risk of dropping out, which is corroborated by the primary completion ratio of 85 percent (87/female, 83/male). The main concern within upper secondary level are the following statistics: 28 percent out-of-school children, 31 percent attendance and 24 percent completion rate. The Ministry of Education is working on improving the curriculum for children with disabilities (started in 2017 and 2021). UNICEF will be supporting the further development and piloting of the curriculum adaptations to improve the alignment of the curriculum to the needs of the children and labour market.

Main issues/gaps: Children with disabilities (particularly girls and women) may be at heightened risk due to inaccessible information about prevention and assistance, barriers to accessing social services. Furthermore, persons with disabilities may be disproportionately affected by social and economic impacts due to a reliance on service providers for daily tasks of living, a lack of access to remote / distance-learning options, and pre-existing isolation and marginalization. Students with disabilities start school later, have difficulty in accessing higher education, and exhibit the highest drop-out rate.¹⁹

Recommendations:

¹⁹ Linked to recommendation 133.94 A/HRC/33/4 (Maldives) UPR 2016

- Improve access to primary and secondary education for all children, including those with disabilities.

Theme: S05-SDG5-gender equality and women's empowerment

Achievements/best practices: After elections held in May 2020, a percentage of 29.4 of women are now Member of Parliament.

Suriname has signed and rectified all major treaties and agreements committing to eradicate gender inequality and gender-based violence (ICPD PoA, CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration, the Convention of Belém do Para, SDGs of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, Montevideo Consensus).

Main issues/gaps: Although disaggregated data on jobseekers is incomplete, from what is available the most vulnerable are young people and women who have a disproportional higher unemployment rate. In addition, the available data is not collected nationally, but only for the districts of Paramaribo and Wanica, therefore, vulnerability and impact in all ten districts cannot be assessed. No specific action was taken by the local government to empower women to compete in the labour market on an equal footing with men. Unemployment increased due to the COVID-19 regulations mainly in sectors in which women and young people participate for example, restaurants and casinos. No specific legislation was passed to tackle both inequality and unemployment. People working in the formal sector, who could provide evidence that they lost their job due to COVID-19, did qualify to receive government support.

The Government established the Bureau Gender Affairs (Nationaal Bureau Genderbeleid - NBG) in 1998 as a Department within the Ministry of Home Affairs. The NBG's responsibilities have been formulated as advising the Government on women's rights and gender issues and monitoring the implementation of related activities. The Government moved towards establishing a Gender focal point in every Ministry, but at this point it is unknown whether that system is still functioning and whether it is still effective.²⁰

The National Development Plan 2017–2021 states that, "laws and regulations and policy principles of private and public organizations guarantee the right to personal safety and freedom of men and women such that the chances of realizing their ideals and talents are not adversely affected by gender stereotypes."

The Ministry of Home Affairs offers training on gender, women's rights, violence and other gender-related issues to various Ministries, religious organizations and NGOs; these trainings are also conducted in the different districts. Since 2016, gender is included in the curricula of the annual courses of the Civil Servants education of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Different topics such as gender stereotyping, gender discrimination, gender equality, violence against women are addressed in these courses.

In November 2018, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (MINOWC) started with an analysis of gender inequality within the current curriculum of primary education to develop curricula based on

²⁰ Linked to recommendation 133.45 A/HRC/33/4 (Cuba) UPR 2016

gender equality.

Recommendations:

- Continue working towards the passage of the draft law on sexual harassment/intimidation and the draft law on equality of treatment in employment and the draft law on privacy and personal data.
- Continue awareness building, capacity strengthening and support to establish mechanism (like gender focal points) to ensure gender mainstreaming and effective combat of Gender based violence.

Theme: S08 SDG8- economic growth, employment, decent work

Main issues/gaps: According to the IMF, Suriname's GDP grew by 2.3 percent in 2019, driven mainly by public investments, chiefly in infrastructure and health. The updated IMF forecasts from April 14 2020, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19, predicts that GDP growth is expected to fall to -4.9 percent in 2020 and pick up to 4.9 percent in 2021, subject to the post-pandemic global economic recovery. The economy remains heavily dependent on mineral sector exports, and the oil sector could attract new foreign investors due to the discovery of new oil fields offshore.

Alumina, bauxite, gold and oil have historically accounted for approximately 75 percent of total exports. These factors make the economy vulnerable to shocks from changes in world commodity prices. The Government plays a large role in the economy by employing over 50% of all workers. Challenges include a weak fiscal situation, rising public debt, an underdeveloped monetary policy framework and a vulnerable banking sector, as well as rapid currency depreciation, poor tax collection, corruption in public officials, high rates of inflation, and reduction of foreign aid.²¹

The IMF expects the unemployment trend to be affected by the negative economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rate being currently estimated at 8.6 percent in 2021.

Recommendations:

- Work towards the economic recovery from COVID-19 pandemic.

Theme: G5 Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Achievements/best practices: UNHCR welcomes the policy decision by the Government of Suriname, through ministerial decree, to issue residency permits to refugee and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR. Although Suriname lacks its own national asylum and refugee status determination procedures, the grant of a residency permit to refugees admitted to Suriname is set out in the *Aliens Act 1991*.

Through this process the Government of Suriname has enabled refugees and asylum-seekers to access a legal status, and formal labour markets with the work authorization which comes with the residency permits. With greater access to formal markets and the assurance of legal status, individuals are more likely to locally integrate, engage with authorities for their protection, including police and justice

²¹ Linked to recommendation 133.26 A/HRC/33/4 (Malaysia) UPR 2016

institutions, and are less likely to resort to desperate measures which leave them vulnerable to trafficking schemes for the purposes of sexual and labour exploitation.

Main gaps/issues: Suriname acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol in 1978 (hereinafter jointly referred to as the 1951 Convention). Suriname is not yet a State party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (the 1954 Convention) nor to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (the 1961 Convention). Suriname has not yet developed national asylum and refugee determination procedures, though the admission of refugees is foreseen in Aliens Act 1991, Law of 16 January 1992 concerning the Admission and the Expulsion of Aliens where refugees may be granted residency permits. Refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR can apply for the residency permit through an online portal, with the provision of their passport and UNHCR issued documentation and the payment of a reduced fee, making the process accessible and affordable. The permit is valid for one or two years depending on whether they apply having the status as an asylum-seeker (one year) or as a refugee (two years), with the possibility for extension.

This move reduces the likelihood that persons in need of international protection may fall victim to trafficking for the purposes of sexual and labour exploitation, as a result of their irregular immigration status or the lack of national asylum and refugee determination procedures.

Despite acceding to the 1951 Convention in 1978, the country lacks its own national asylum and refugee legislation and procedures. Therefore, through its Multi-Country Office in Panama, UNHCR conducts registration of asylum-seekers and refugee status determination in the country, in the absence of national systems. UNHCR also undertakes the search for durable solutions for recognized refugees which are not able to locally integrate.

As of June 2020, Suriname hosted 47 refugees and 1,852 asylum-seekers.

Recommendations:

- Facilitate access to asylum procedures for persons who have expressed a fear of returning to their country of origin and uphold the principle of *non-refoulement* of all persons in need of international protection;
- Develop, enact and implement refugee legislation consistent with international standards, which would include fair and efficient procedures for conducting refugee status determination, and guaranteeing the rights of all recognized refugees in Suriname;
- Review national legislation and take the necessary steps to harmonize national legislation with the 1951 Convention.
- Sign and ratify the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.