

# Consolidating a Sustainable Energy Sector (SU-L1055)

A Gender Perspective

SURINAME

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## ACRONYMS

BACIS	BIO-AGRICULTURE COOPERATIVE OF SURINAME
CEDAW	CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
CEPAL	COMISIÓN ECONÓMICA PARA AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE
CIA	CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
EBS	ENERGIEBEDRIJVEN SURINAME
GDP	GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT
GINI	DEVIATION OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME
GNI	GROSS NATIONAL INCOME
HDI	HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX
ICCPR	INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS
ICERD	INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
ICESCR	INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS
IDB	INTERAMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
IICA	INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE
ILO	INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION
MW	MEGA WATT
NGO	NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION
OEA	ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS
PAHO	PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
SHS	SOLAR HOME SYSTEM
SRD	SURINAME DOLLAR
SUNRWP	SURINAME NETWORK OF RURAL WOMEN PRODUCERS
UNDP	UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
USD	UNITED STATES DOLLARS
WB	WORLD BANK
WEF	WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM
WWF	WORLD WILDLIFE FUND

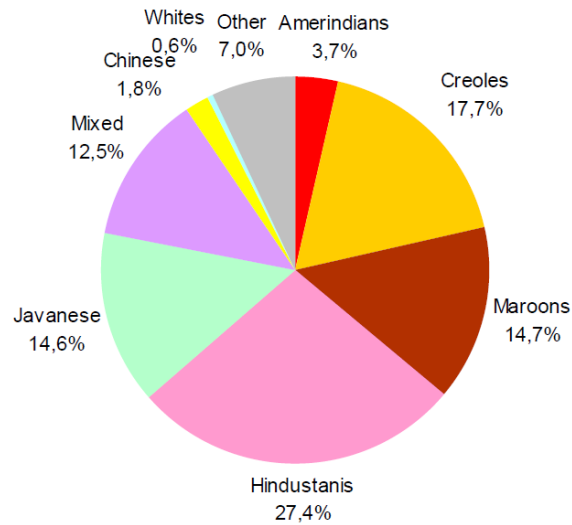
# CONSOLIDATING A SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SECTOR

## A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

### SURINAME

#### 1. BACKGROUND.

The Republic of Suriname, generally referred to as Suriname, is located along the northern coast of South America, between French Guiana to the east, Guyana to the west, Brazil to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the north; it has an area of 163,820 km<sup>2</sup> with 386 km of coastline (CIA, 2018). Suriname has an estimated population of 573,085 (Worldometers, 2019) of which 66% lives in urban areas (UNDP. 2018), mainly in the country's capital Paramaribo. It a plural society that includes indigenous people and descendants from Europe, Asia and Africa. The former Dutch Colony was granted its Independence in 1975 and is the only Dutch speaking country in South America; it is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, combining a variety of culture into one: the Hindustani from East India consist of 27.4% of the population, originally contract workers from British India; the Creoles, which consist of mixed African and European descent and account for some 17.7% of the population; the Maroons, of African slave descent, which account for 14.7%; the Javanese, descendants of contract workers from the Dutch East Indies from the Indonesian island of Java which account for 14.6%; the Amerindians, original inhabitants of Suriname at 3.7%; Chinese, mainly descendants of the earliest 19th-century contract workers at 1.8%; Europeans, mostly of Dutch descent from the 19th-century immigrant farmers at 0.6%; Levantines, primarily Maronites from Lebanon, and Jews, mainly descendants of Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews at 7%; and a group of multiracial people accounting for 12.5% (Office of the President of the Republic of Suriname, 2016), as illustrated in Figure 1. Several communities living in remote areas live in villages only accessible by boat or plane, which contribute to their slower development.



*Figure 1 Cultural diversity of Suriname people. Office of the President of the Republic of Suriname, 2016*

Rural Suriname is mainly inhabited by Maroon and indigenous people, where the population is lagging behind in infrastructure, and in basic services such as drinking water, sanitation and education. Each ethnic group continues to live according to its traditions and customs while all citizens share the Dutch traditions around the country. The coexistence of the various cultures is well represented by the side-by-side Mosque and Synagogue in the center of Paramaribo, as shown in Figure 2.

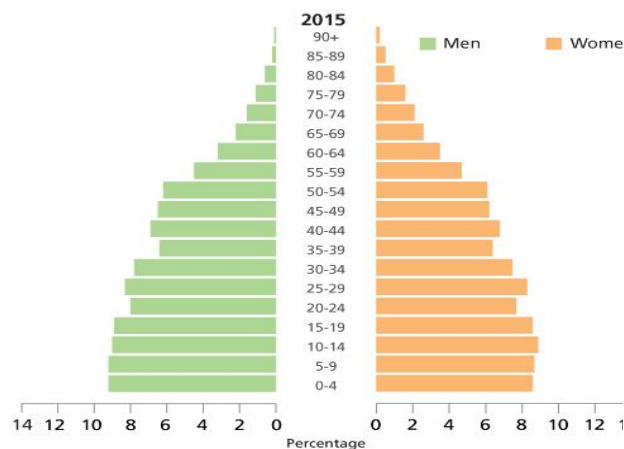


*Figure 2 Synagogue and Mosque side by side in Paramaribo, 26 January 2019.*

Between the years 1990 and 2015, the population increased some 33% while the main age group shifted to over 55 years, showing a regression in the age groups younger than 15 years; this is due to the decrease in birth rate and mortality rate during the past 20 years (Pan American Health Organization, 2015) as shown in Figure 3. The proportion of men and women is almost equal although in rural areas, according to the visited communities, there is generally a higher number of women.



Some 350,000 people of Surinamese descent currently live in the Netherlands, its former colonial ruler (CIA, 2018), which represents more than half the total population currently living in Suriname. The country has a Human Development Index value of 0.720, ranking 100 of 189 countries; as for many developing and emerging countries, there are very wealthy people in the country contrasting with high levels of poverty. Although education is free until completion of high



*Figure 3 Population structure, by age and sex, Suriname, 1990 and 2015. Pan American Health Organization, 2015.*

school, people still need to pay for uniforms, books and supplies. The official literacy rate for women is 98.3% and for men 98.1% with an average of 92.9 %; an estimated 58.2% of the population has some secondary education (UNDP, 2018); currently, many women in rural Suriname can hardly read and write. In remote communities, children have access to primary school and must travel to other towns or urban centers such as Pokigron and Paramaribo to pursue their studies, meaning that their attending secondary and tertiary education depends mostly on family members living in urban areas if they are to study at secondary and college levels; there are boarding schools but these require additional financial resources that are not available for everyone. According to the interviewed women, most school age children do in fact leave the community to go and live with family members and pursue their studies in other localities, and this applies to girls and boys indiscriminately.

There are some incoherencies in the income of the population: according to UNDP (2018) the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita per year is estimated at USD 13,306, while the WB (2018) is placing the GNI at USD 5,150, which appears more realistic based on the enquiries and information collected during meetings; according to officials from the Gender Bureau, the average income per capita can be estimated at USD 4,000 per year. The GINI index confirms the problem of inequality with a relatively high 52.9% (UNDP, 2013). As for

gender inequality, Suriname ranks 99 with a slightly higher number of adult women over 25 years of age holding some secondary education (58.7% women and 57.8% men); there is a significant gender difference between the labor force participation with 41.8% for women and 65.3% for men (UNDP, 2018).



*Figure 4 Street in the center of the country's capital Paramaribo. 26 January 2019.*

Living conditions in urban and rural settings are quite different: The country's capital does not have modern high rises, its low-level structures emulate those of European cultures where at the moment the highest building is three stories high with a government building of 10 stories is under construction, and all people have electricity, running water and sewage services.

For most Hinterland communities and all Upper Suriname people, the river is the source of life where people bathe and socialize, and where women wash their clothes and dishes, children enjoy the refreshing water, women and young girls fish.

Suriname ratified several main conventions that affect women directly and indirectly, as seen in the following table:



*Figure 5 Young girl fishing on the river banks in Upper Suriname. 30 January 2019.*

*Table 1 International Conventions ratified by Suriname*

<b>CONVENTION</b>	<b>DATE OF RATIFICATION</b>
ICERD: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965	1984
ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966	1976
ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966	1976
CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979	1993
ILO: Ratification of ILO Convention 100	2017
ILO: Ratification of ILO Convention 111	2017

Source. UNDP, 2018. ILO, 2018b

Populations living in rural areas are, as always, those with higher needs for modern infrastructure, basic services and technology. Access to drinking water and improved sanitation facilities data shows that most people have access to basic services at 94.7% and 79.2% respectively. In remote communities, wastewater sometimes goes through a septic tank to often end up in the river, the same river water that is used for washing and cleaning; for drinking water, people use rain water or somewhat cleaner water from the nearby creeks. As of 2016, it is estimated that 69.3% of the rural population has access to electricity (UNDP, 2018) with all people having electricity in urban areas. It is unclear how this ratio was calculated but most probably this number considers the generators installed by the Ministry of Natural Resources in the remote communities, assuming that these generators are all in good working condition and that they are providing few hours of energy every day. Unfortunately, the regular break-downs and long periods of time between repairs, which can go for months and even years, leave populations living in the dark; it is expected that these problems would modify the statistics.

In Suriname, electricity is mainly generated from fossil fuels (61%), hydroelectric plants (38%) and from alternative renewable energy sources (2%) (CIA, 2018); some solar plants

have been recently installed or are in project thus this ratio is currently modifying the energy matrix.

Considering the Suriname population of 563,402 (WB, 2018) of which 34% (UNDP, 2018) live in rural areas and of these 69.3% (UNDP, 2018) have access to electrical energy, one can conclude that some 58,808 persons in Suriname are living without access to electricity, with women accomplishing their daily tasks without any electrical appliances, with girls and boys obligated to study and do their homework at night using candles, oil lamps or flashlights; the lucky ones have a small SHS in their homes. Fortunately, this small unserved population raised concern within the IDB that decided to contribute to the universal electrification in Suriname with electrification projects.

Studies show that there is a direct correlation between poverty and access to electrical energy (BID, 2015). Moreover, women are the ones who mainly use electricity in the management of their homes and family, as such, access to electricity not only contributes to development but also allows for the generation of additional income and improves the quality of life of women and their families.

Based on a study by Jimenez (2017), experience and results of other similar projects have shown that by facilitating access to electricity, the beneficiaries of an electrification project such as the number of children attending school can increase by 4% to 7%, open employment opportunities by 20% to 25%, and income within the community can be raised by 18% to 39%; with access to electricity, small rural industries have shown an increase in their activities by up to 200% and individual income can be improve by 20% to 70%, depending on the activity or the product. (Kiribu et al, 2009).

This study aimed at reviewing the current situation of electrically served and unserved communities and verified the needs and requirements of people living in communities without access to electricity and those communities that recently have access to electricity, as to identify opportunities for the development of income generating activities with the productive use of electricity in their daily life, collecting their ideas and initiatives aimed at personal and community development, in such a way as to ensure an improved the quality of life for women, men, girls and boys in the communities.

## 2. OBJECTIVES.

### 2.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVE.

Prepare a Gender Analysis study and propose specific income generating activities that can improve the quality of life of women and their families in communities where electricity has recently been provided and in remote communities without electrical energy as part of the Consolidating a Sustainable Energy Sector Project, in order to answer the present and future necessities.

### 2.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES.

- Establish the current situation of women and their social and economic status.
- Identify economic, social and development opportunities and relations to women, men, girls and boys.
- Propose activities and strategies to maximize the benefits of access to electrical energy in relation to gender equity.
- Verify how access to electrical energy has an economic and social impact on the lives of women and their families.
- Define how access to electrical energy will contribute to reducing gender gaps in the project intervention areas.

### 3. METHODOLOGY.

#### 3.1 DATA COLLECTION.

For the collection of data, the following methods were used:

##### 3.1.1 Review of literature and recollection de related data.

The literature, documentation and reports of several national and international institutions were reviewed in order to collect as much specific data about the current conditions of women in Suriname, along with their rights and obligations, in order to establish the causes of the existing gender gaps and inequalities.

##### 3.1.2 Meeting with social and women organizations.

Meetings were organized with women's groups, officials from the Gender Bureau, with the President of the Maroon Women Association, and with officials of the Electricity Company Energie Bedrijven Suriname (EBS) in order to verify and complete the data and information obtained during the field visits.

##### 3.1.3 Field visits and interviews.

The interviews were conducted using a questionnaire to interact with people in a systematic yet interactive way; the observation method was also applied to verify the accuracy of the information in order to obtain a baseline and understand the current situation, the needs of the people and to evaluate the impact of access to electricity on the lives of rural populations.

Annex 1 shows a copy of the questionnaire that was used as a guide to obtain the information during the field visits.

Visits were made to the communities benefited by the project, in order to collect the data for the gender analysis, and also to remote rural communities. It is important to note that due to the long distances and difficult access to reach the remote communities, only few communities could be visited and shall serve as a reference for the neighboring communities.



*Figure 6 Large rocks making access to remote communities difficult and dangerous. Upper Suriname 30 January 2019*

## 4. CURRENT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SITUATION.

### 4.1 ECONOMY

In Suriname the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has experienced a steady growth from 2006 to 2014 with an average of 4% yearly increase, due to the high commodity prices for gold, lumber, oil and bauxite (UNDP, 2016); starting 2015, the increase started slowing down until 2018 with a GDP per capita of USD 13,767 with an annual negative growth of -0.8%. (UNDP. 2018); the various sectors that contribute to the GDP can be summarized as follows (Office of the President of Suriname, 2016):

- Primary sector: agriculture, hunting, forestry, fishery, mining, quarrying.
- Secondary sector: manufacturing, electricity, gas and water supply, construction.
- Tertiary sector: wholesale and retail trade, hotels, restaurants, transport, communication, financial intermediation, real estate, renting and business activities, other community, social and personal activities.
- Government: public administration, education (government), health and social work (government).

The main economic indicators including income and sectors of activities and their evolution over time can be seen in table 2.

Table 2 *Suriname: Main Economic Indicators*

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 a/
	Annual variation rates b /								
<b>Total gross domestic product</b>	<b>3,0</b>	<b>5,2</b>	<b>5,8</b>	<b>2,7</b>	<b>2,9</b>	<b>0,3</b>	<b>-2,7</b>	<b>-5,1</b>	<b>1,5</b>
<b>Gross domestic product per inhabitant</b>	<b>1,9</b>	<b>4,1</b>	<b>4,8</b>	<b>1,6</b>	<b>1,9</b>	<b>-0,7</b>	<b>-3,5</b>	<b>-6,0</b>	<b>0,6</b>
<b>Sectoral gross domestic product</b>									
Agriculture, livestock, hunting, forestry and	30,5	2,9	4,3	10,1	-8,7	3,5	4,2	1,8	...
Exploitation of mines and quarries	-13,3	5,3	13,7	3,1	-2,6	-5,9	-14,6	-9,7	...
Manufacturing industries	-11,5	12,0	1,8	-18,1	8,7	-8,2	1,1	3,8	...
Electricity, gas and water	-1,3	2,2	14,4	-0,5	7,5	-1,1	-3,5	-2,5	...
Construction	6,7	-9,1	11,3	-0,1	4,7	19,4	16,3	-13,5	...
Restaurants and hotels	17,7	6,3	3,0	7,9	2,7	-1,6	-10,8	-34,1	...
Transportation, storage and communications	0,2	3,6	4,3	4,6	0,2	4,1	6,1	6,2	...
Real estate and services provided to companies	2,7	2,7	7,1	8,1	21,0	-11,2	-2,5	-1,8	...
Community, social and personal services	-0,1	1,9	4,5	14,6	-4,8	18,4	-4,2	-9,2	...
<b>Balance of payments Millions of dollars</b>									
Balance of current account	111	2192	431	162	-196	-416	-798	-102	258
Balance of goods	11	686	968	707	243	133	-375	243	566
FOB Exports	1402	2084	2 647	2 700	2 416	2 145	1 652	1 440	1 464
FOB imports	1391	1 398	1 679	1 993	2 174	2 012	2 028	1 197	898
Balance of services	1	-18	-362	-425	-374	-550	-470	-335	-273
Income balance	5	-104	-262	-192	-131	-69	-27	-111	-108
Balance of current transfers	94	87	87	73	67	71	65	102	74
<b>Balance of capital and financial c /</b>	<b>-73</b>	<b>-616</b>	<b>-307</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>-540</b>	<b>-107</b>
Net foreign direct investment	-93	-248	73	173	188	163	276	127	-66
Other capital movements	21	-368	-380	-155	-140	102	265	-666	-42
<b>Global balance</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>-149</b>	<b>-150</b>	<b>-266</b>	<b>-78</b>	<b>-14</b>
<b>Variation in reserve assets d /</b>	<b>-39</b>	<b>-35</b>	<b>-124</b>	<b>-180</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Other indicators of the external sector</b>	<b>-68</b>	<b>-720</b>	<b>-569</b>	<b>-175</b>	<b>-84</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>-651</b>	<b>-216</b>
Gross external public debt (millions of dollars)	269	334	601	707	878	942	1 156	1 869	2 034
Net transfer of resources (millions of dollars)									
Wholesale and Retail,									
<b>Financial establishments, insurance, goods</b>									
<b>Prices Percentages per year</b>									
Variation of consumer prices	1,3	10,3	15,3	4,4	0,6	3,9	25,2	49,2	9,3
(December to december)									
Nominal exchange rate variation (annual average)	0,0	0,0	19,0	1,0	0,0	1,8	2,5	82,1	19,3
Nominal passive interest rate e /	6,4	6,2	6,4	6,8	7,1	7,4	7,6	8,1	9,1
Nominal active interest rate f /	11,7	11,7	11,8	11,7	12,0	12,3	12,6	13,5	14,4
<b>Central Government GDP Percentages</b>									
Total income	27,7	21,7	24,5	24,5	23,3	21,7	20,6	16,7	17,4
Tax revenues	17,2	15,7	18,5	18,4	18,5	16,5	16,5	12,4	12,6
Total expenses	26,9	24,6	24,6	26,8	27,8	26,4	30,4	25,8	24,7
Current expenses	21,2	20,0	19,7	22,4	23,4	21,2	27,7	23,1	21,3
Interests	1,3	0,9	1,0	1,0	1,3	0,9	1,5	1,8	2,5
Capital expenditures	5,7	4,6	4,8	4,4	4,5	5,2	2,6	2,7	3,3
Primary result	2,1	-2,0	0,9	-1,4	-3,2	-3,8	-8,2	-7,3	-4,8
Overall result	-2,1	-2,5	-2,0	-2,7	-6,0	7,1	-10,6	-10,8	-8,0
Public debt of the non-financial public sector	27,6	27,5	26,8	27,3	35,6	33,3	52,3	57,5	69,8
<b>Currency and credit Percentages of GDP,</b>									
<b>balances at the end of the year</b>									
Internal credit	26,6	27,1	25,0	25,8	32,5	38,9	54,3	51,4	47,4
To the public sector	1,5	2,4	0,4	0,6	3,8	8,1	17,0	13,1	16,5
To the private sector	24,6	24,2	23,8	24,3	27,9	29,9	36,1	37,2	30,2
Others	0,5	0,5	0,7	0,8	0,8	0,9	1,2	1,2	0,7
<b>Monetary base</b>	<b>13,9</b>	<b>14,1</b>	<b>12,9</b>	<b>15,4</b>	<b>14,1</b>	<b>12,7</b>	<b>15,8</b>	<b>14,7</b>	<b>11,8</b>
Money (M1)	15,8	16,4	14,4	15,9	16,2	16,2	17,9	16,1	14,9
M2	24,8	25,6	22,9	26,0	27,7	28,6	30,6	27,8	25,0
Deposits in foreign currency	21,6	19,8	22,8	22,8	25,2	26,2	33,8	51,3	43,9

Source. CEPAL Estudio Económico de América Latina y el Caribe. 2018

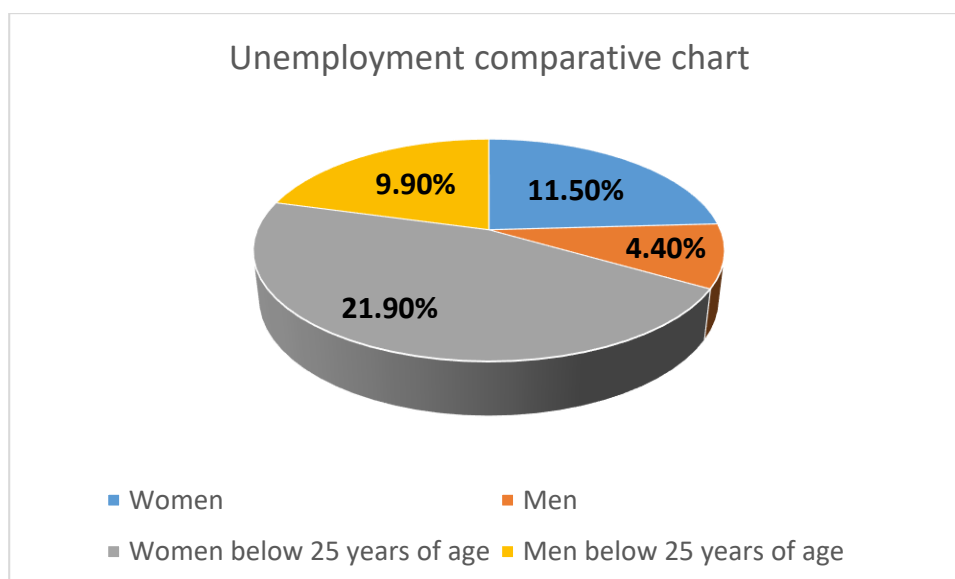


## 4.2 EMPLOYMENT

Access to decent employment is key for any country's development and towards the lowering of crime and corruption. In Suriname, the percentage of women working in nonagricultural employments is estimated at 37.9% while the total unemployment female to male ratio is calculated at 2.36, confirming a greater unemployment rate for women (UNDP, 2018). According to ILO (2018), in the year 2015, the Labor Force Participation was at 60% of which, 72.6% men and 47.7% women; the employment to population ratio was much lower for women than for men with 42.2% to 69.4% respectively. This could be a reason for the high number of Surinamese people living abroad.

In terms of distribution of employment per sector, the share of Services in total employment shows the highest rate at 70.8%, followed by the Industry with 42.2% and Agriculture with a low 2.4% (ILO, 2018). Important sectors of activities such as Trade and Hospitality, Agriculture, Fisheries and Construction generate some 37,638 jobs of which 31% (or 11,552) in agriculture and fisheries; the informal market has a 20% share of the informal sector, showing the resilience and creativity of the Surinamese people (Office of the President of Suriname, 2016). It should be noted that agriculture activities in the Hinterland and in the Interior Upland are dominated by Maroon and Indigenous communities with shifting crops on a 15 years' rotation of 16,500 hectares over a land surface of about 247,000 hectares. There, land is cleared by men and cultivated by women, mainly with subsistence agriculture; processing is conducted by women (Office of the President of Suriname, 2016); this information was confirmed during the field visits in Upper Suriname.

Unemployment remains at 7.2% with a marked difference between women and men with unemployment rates of 11.5% and 4.4% respectively; these numbers become more important with unemployment rates of young women below 25 years that raise to 21.9% compared to young men at 9.9% (ILO, 2018).



*Figure 7 Unemployment comparative chart. Adapted from ILO 2018 data.*

The number of adolescent pregnancies aged between 15 and 19 years has drastically reduced over the last three decades, reducing from 77.8 per 1,000 during the year 1980 - 1985 down to 48.1 per 1,000 pregnancies during the years 2010 – 2015 (PAHO, 2018) placing Suriname in 10<sup>th</sup> position out of 21 countries of adolescent mothers in South America and Caribe. This is certainly a contributing factor for the interruption of studies and training abilities after which, these young women need support towards social and labor reintegration, considering the fact that they may be left without work, have little resources and generally lack personal and professional skills. This support could be done through specific life skills development and job training programmes.

#### 4.2.1 Productive activities.

In Suriname, as in many countries, women are involved in various sectors of activities, depending on their level of education and socio-economic position. Nevertheless, women's access to higher decision-making levels remains a challenge in most if not all government and private sectors.

Women living in rural areas encounter additional challenges such as a lower level of education with limited employment opportunities in their community, and where they are responsible for the establishment of their home and the care of their children and their family.

In fact, majority of the Surinamese woman's activities in Suriname lie in agriculture with a low 37.9% of the total employment in nonagricultural activities (UNDP, 2018), thus confirming that women are the ones who are responsible for agriculture activities in the country, as mentioned during the interviews in the visited rural communities. In rural areas, land belongs to the communities and therefore, it is the families that influence the implementation of homes and the construction of houses, considering that ownership of land is irrelevant. Therefore, the house belongs to the spouse whose family has arranged for the construction on the community land.

The main activities in rural communities include boat making and house construction for which men are responsible, and where some women are responsible for the fabrication of handicraft, agriculture and agro-processing. Agriculture activities are mainly subsistence agriculture and include the following produce: vegetables, rice, cassava, sweet cassava, sweet potatoes, *napi* (yam), *pomtayer* (the root of the arrowleaf elephant ear plant), *chinese tayer* (taro), dry land rice, pepper, plantain, ginger, *antroewa* (African eggplant or gboma), bitter eggplant, okra and cucumbers. Other activities include hunting (although very little wildlife remains) and fishing: animal husbandry is rare in the communities of Upper Suriname.

The lack of identified markets for the commercialization of the products and the absence of electricity for food preservation have caused losses in products and fresh foods. Other factors that inhibit the expansion of productive activities for community women is the lack of administration and entrepreneurship, the unawareness of new production techniques and of local, national and even more so, international markets for the sale of the products. Pricing is also an issue where some products are currently sold at high prices even within the remote communities. The transition from a subsistence economy to a competitive world requires tools and knowledge that can be acquired through training and planning programmes, and with the organization of small cooperatives and networking within organizations as to increase volumes that are required to enter into larger markets. Moreover, women need to learn about developmental strategies to improve the implementation and management of their productive activity.

Several rural producer groups and agro-cooperatives in Suriname received training and support by IICA as to strengthen, establish and /or register their cooperatives in 2016. These

groups consisted mainly of women farmers and agro-processors of cassava, spices and acai (local palm fruit). (IICA, 2017). Moreover, also in 2016, the Suriname Network of Rural Women Producers (SUNRWP) was revived representing over 200 rural women farmers, processors, and traditional craft and clothing wear through seven cluster groups (Agro cooperative Wi Uma fu Sranan, Agro cooperative Tranga Naki oema foe Marwina, Agro cooperative Tranga Naki Kwakoegeon, Agro cooperative Woko Makendi Oviaolo, Foundation Jepi Makandra Apoera, Klein Powaka, Agrocooperative Lelydorp). A major conference was then hosted by SUNRWP for rural women producers as to show the contribution of rural women in the economy of Suriname and to create visibility for these women and their products (IICA, 2017).

In the year 2016, women cooperatives were involved in the following activities (IICA, 2017):

- *Training workshop in theory and practice of Organic Farming - twenty-five (25) members of the Bio-agriculture Cooperative of Suriname (BACIS), who are focused mainly in the cultivation of chili peppers, were trained in the practices of organic farming, organic inspection and certification, soil fertility and organic fertilizers, prevention and maintenance and control of pest and diseases.*
- *Plant propagation and nursery setup – Fifty (50) participants of two (2) rural Agro- Cooperatives in the Maroon communities of Ovia olo and Moengo (District of Marowijne) and Creola and one (1) rural youth group from the district of Saramacca were able to improve their knowledge and skills in plant propagation and nursery setup. In collaboration with a local expert on plant propagation the group was trained on two different occasions in nursery setup and management and the propagation of citrus and mango.*
- *Cost of Production and Production Planning - Members of three rural farmer organizations received training in cost of production and production planning. Forty-five women and men from the districts of: Saramacca, Marowijne, Wanica and Para participated.*

In 2017, IICA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries capacitated ten agro-cooperatives representing 520 members in increased knowledge, capacities in leadership, and organizational governance, skills training

management and operational procedures (IICA, 2018), abilities that are highly needed in all of the visited communities.

Additionally, tourism aimed at local and international clients, and especially with Dutch nationals, has become an important source of income in Suriname, with tourists seeking adventure and experiences traveling through the Amazon, thus potentially generating important revenues. This is especially true for ecotourism which offers tremendous opportunities for a country that is virtually unknown for so many people and still natural. Special training would also be required as to prepare infrastructure and service to answer to the European needs.

### 4.3 EDUCATION.

Access to education is offered equally for girls and boys even in the most remote communities with 58.7% women and 57.8% men of the country's population with at least some secondary education (UNDP, 2018). One can observe an almost equal pre-primary and primary school enrolment a female to male ratio of 1.04 and 1.00 respectively, and a slightly higher enrolment of girls in secondary school with a ratio of 1.32 (UNDP, 2018).

Expected schooling for girls is currently 13 years while for boys it is 12 years; current years of schooling for adults is 8.3 for women and 8.6 for men, showing a shift in priorities and opportunities for young women and men. According to the interviews, majority of children complete their primary and secondary schooling and many continue to study at college level; there is an 8.7% dropout rate at primary level (UNDP, 2018).

Literacy rate in Suriname is currently at 92.9% (UNDP, 2018), showing no difference whatsoever with the 2008 numbers at 93% for which when disaggregated by urban, rural coastal and rural interior presented 96.2%, 94.2% and 45% respectively (Ministry of Health, 2011); this coincides with the visits to the rural communities where women, when asked to sign their names, could only accomplish this task with lots of efforts and time.

#### 4.4 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT).

Access to information and communication in Suriname is well established in the cities but remains problematic in rural areas where the lack of access to electricity generates a delay in the distribution of information and technology for these communities. Less than half the population of Suriname has access to internet with a percentage of 45.4% (UNDP, 2018); this percentage is much lower if not inexistent in rural areas. Nevertheless, as witnessed in remote communities, most if not all people have a mobile phone with 144.5 phones per 100 populations (UNDP, 2018), which allows to conclude that majority of the population of the country has a cell phone, which requires electrical energy for its recharge, whether from the grid or from an alternative energy source such as solar photovoltaic systems or with the use of diesel generators.

The use of ICT is necessary in the XXI century and can contribute to the reduction or elimination of the gender gap offering a source of information and communication to women regarding their rights and obligations as well as for topics such as health, education, technologies and access to new markets, contributing as active participants to the country's economic and social development.

#### 4.5 ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY.

In Suriname 87.18% of the population has access to electrical energy, however the disparity between urban and rural is important with 69.45% access in rural areas compared to 96.36% in urban sectors; almost 40% of electricity is produced from fossil fuel and 60% from hydroelectric plants (WB, 2018b, EBS, 2016, UNDP, 2018) and some 1% is using solar PV systems (EBS, 2016). This translates in the fact that most people living in the city have electricity while many people in rural areas do not. However, as to remediate to this problem, the Ministry of Natural Resources implemented a plan to provide diesel generators to remote communities as to allow them access to the benefits of electricity. Nevertheless, this implicates many additional problems such as shortage of fuel due to transport difficulties, breakdowns due to lack of maintenance, and long waiting time for repairs due to shortage of qualified technicians available locally and to the remoteness of some of these communities. In Suriname, the Energie Bedrijven Suriname (EBS) is the only electricity utility service

company in the country and is 100% government owned. In rural areas where grid electricity is not available, the Ministry of Natural Resources (NH) through its Department of Rural Electrification (DEV) is bringing development into the interior through the installation of diesel generators that were installed in some 130 villages with a total capacity of 4.5 MW, most of them are running from 4 to 6 hours in the evening providing free electricity for the local community; there are currently no small, mini or micro hydro plants in operation although several projects have been studied; the potential for wind energy is very limited (Energy and Economics Consulting, 2015). Some households, schools and health centers have SHS or use a small diesel generator to ensure their access to electricity.

#### 4.6 GENDER.

Suriname has demonstrated its will to improve the situation of gender equity over the past 10 years (CEDAW, 2018); this was demonstrated through the adoption of important legislative reforms that have already been adopted:

- a) Laws amending the Penal Code by defining discrimination and including sexual orientation and gender identity as prohibited grounds of discrimination; prohibiting and expanding the definition of trafficking; criminalizing marital rape, obstetric violence, and battery and assault leading to death (femicide); and, in 2015 and 2009, removing restrictions on access by adolescents to sexual information and contraceptives;
- b) Amendment to the Law of 1975 on Regulation of the Surinamese Nationality and Residency, 2014, removing discriminatory provisions regarding the acquisition and loss of nationality in the context of marriage and divorce;
- c) National Pension Benefits Act, Minimum Hour Wage Act and National Basic Health Insurance Act, 2014, establishing a national social security system, which promote women's economic empowerment, in particular female heads of households, and increase their access to health care;
- d) Law on stalking, 2012, prohibiting stalking and allowing for preventive measures to be taken by the public prosecutor to protect possible victims;

- e) Law on Combating Domestic Violence, 2009, containing penal provisions and defining domestic violence and granting victims of domestic violence the ability to request restraining orders.

The government also improved the institutional and policy framework aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, according to the following:

- a) National development plan, 2017–2021, which requires all projects developed by the Government to include a component for mainstreaming a gender perspective;
- b) National strategy and national plan of action to combat trafficking of persons, 2014, which includes strategies for reaching out to women and children from rural areas;
- c) Gender work plan, 2013, which is focused on improving the situation of women with regard to decision-making, education, health, labor, income and poverty and violence;
- d) National Steering Committee on Domestic Violence, 2008, and the National Platform on Domestic Violence, 2010.

Noteworthy achievements and concerns towards the attainment of Gender Equity (CEDAW 2018) can be summarized as follows:

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has been incorporated in the Constitution of the country under article 106.
- Indigenous and tribal populations are recognized as distinct, persons and especially women from disadvantaged groups including rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons; they are still experiencing discrimination.
- Free legal aid and services are now available for women through the legal Aid Bureau (Bureau Rechtszorg) of the Ministry of Justice and Police.



- The implementation and strengthening of the Bureau of Gender Affairs and the provision of financial support to non-government organizations working towards the promotion of women's rights.
- The National Human Rights Institute was established in 2016.
- The National Action Plan includes actions towards mitigating the consequences of mining activities including pollution from mercury and the mainstreaming of gender issues.
- The implementation of training activities conducted by the Ministry of Home Affairs towards the elimination of discriminatory stereotypes.
- The Penal Code includes provisions to prohibit human trafficking.
- The presence of women in political activities at district and local levels, and in the diplomatic service.
- The Regulation of the Surinamese Nationality and Residency aims to promote gender equality in the transfer of nationality with safeguards to prevent statelessness.
- Improved access to education including the removing of entrance fees and improving accessibility for girls with disabilities (*note should be made that the entrance fees were changed for utilities and materials fees, but the fees still exist*).
- Improved health insurance coverage for women including women with disabilities and from disadvantaged groups.
- The Ministry of Regional Development established a policy to empower and engage women in the planning of agricultural activities in the interior, and the establishment in 2016 of two directorates to improve assistance to the Maroon and indigenous communities.

- The Constitution, in its article 35, recognizes the equality of husband and wife before the law, the extraordinary value of motherhood and the protection of children without discrimination.
- The strengthening of data collection systems on the participation of women in public life, and the establishment of a gender monitoring database.

There is a significant difference between men's income and that of women; an estimated average annual income for women is \$US 9,132 compared to \$US 17,449, for men (UNDP, 2018), a difference in wages for men of almost twice that of a woman. Currently, within government employments, there should be equality of wages, but the fact is that there are still differences in the working conditions such as a nicer car or better office. There is currently a concept law for labor force non-discrimination in the civil code elaborated by the Ministry of Labor, nevertheless the concept law has yet to be approved, especially if it is to be applied in the private sector as to ensure equal pay for equal work.

While in the city the responsibilities and roles of women are increasingly interchanged with those of men, in rural areas, these roles and responsibilities are still traditional and very clearly defined based on years of tradition and culture. Suriname ranks 99 of 189 countries in gender inequality (UNDP, 2018), largely reflected in the existing cultures and traditions witnessed in rural communities. The Gender Development Index of 0.975 places Suriname in group 2, where all countries are divided into five groups by absolute deviation from gender parity in the Human Development Index, and group 2 comprises countries with medium to high equality in HDI achievements between women and men. (UNDP, 2018). This classification is certainly true in urban centers but does not reflect the reality in rural communities. On the public scene, women hold 25.5% of the seats in parliament (UNDP 2018), showing the advancements of women in politics but where the higher positions aimed at decision making continue to be held mostly by men. As mentioned previously, in rural areas, men are dominant, heads of households and decision makers.

Violence is still problematic in many countries in Latin America and Suriname is no exception. However, it is interesting to note that 13% of women ages 15 - 49 say it is justifiable for a husband to hit or beat his wife for at least one of the following reasons: if his

wife burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses sexual relations (UNDP, 2018); there are no statistics on the points of view of men regarding this issue. This reflects the culture and tradition in the country and may not reflect the reality considering that many cases remain undeclared. The number of cases of violence and feminicides remain low in Suriname but it is unclear if it is because of the lack of cases or if the cases of abuse and feminicides remain hidden because of shame or lack of support especially for those cases occurring in rural areas; according to the Gender Bureau, during the year 2018, only 8 cases of feminicides were reported.

The maternal mortality ratio remains quite high in Suriname with 155 deaths per 100,000 live births, much higher than the average Latin America and Caribe of 67 deaths per 100,000 live births (UNDP, 2018), demonstrating a problem that needs to be addressed locally. The number of births to women ages 15 - 19 in Suriname is 46 per 1,000, a much lower number than the regional Latin America and the Caribbean estimated at 61.5 per 1,000, demonstrating greater awareness of young girls and their increasing concern and interest in studying and earning a decent living.

## 5. VISITS TO THE BENEFICIARY COMMUNITIES - RESULTS OF VISITS AND INTERVIEWS.

### 5.1 POWAKKA.

Households: ~100

Population: 639

Number of women and girls: 280

Powakka is located about one hour from the country's Capital city Paramaribo. It is a rural community where the electrification project has already been implemented with the extension of electrical lines. People in the community of Powakka now have access to electricity 24 hours per day where before the implementation of the project people had electricity from 19h00 till 00h00 with the use of a community generator. The cost of electricity is currently at about SRD 0.35/kWh (USD 0.05/kWh). The representative and member of the Women's Organization of Powakka committee, Mrs. Lucienne Sabajo, says she is now paying some SRD 26 per month (USD 3.46 per month) for 24 hours of electricity service.



*Figure 9 Meeting with the president of the Women's Organization of Powakka (center) along with EBS Chiquita Resomardono (right) and Dr.-Eng. Johanne Hanko (left). Powakka 29 January 2019.*

People in the community are now using freezers and refrigerators to keep food, and have access to information and communication with the use of television, radio and cell phones. Before the line connection people had problems with damages to their television and freezers because of the instability of the electrical current produced from the diesel generator. People

can now charge their mobile phone any time of the day. There is currently no internet or Wi-Fi access in the community.

People generally use propane and sometimes wood for cooking. The community has running piped water received from the water company and the wastewater water goes through a septic tank that is then channeled to the forest.

There are street lamps at the entrance of the community along the main road but no lighting for the inside roads, a concern to women and children that need to travel at night or in the early mornings to go to school or to their workplace such as to Paranam, Lelydorp or to travel to the city.

There is only one school in Powakka, St. Wilhelmus School. That offers kindergarten and primary school levels; most children go to school by bus. The school has computers and prepares students that wish to pursue their schooling at secondary levels and then to college. Women have a strong say regarding the children's education in Powakka. The community has one health center that offers all basic needs including vaccines.

The main crops cultivated in the community are pineapple, watermelons, cassava, vegetables, pumpkins, okra, bitter melons and peppers; all cultivation is made manually. Crops are used mainly for self-consumption and the excess is processed and sold.

There are no local agriculture cooperatives but some pineapple farmers belong to the pineapple production organization. Note should be made that in 2019, the agro-cooperative Redi Doty and Pierre Kondre offered capacitation in increase production for pineapple producers under IDB's Suriname Business Climate and Innovation Program (SUBCIP-I; SU-L1049) which was implemented by the Competitiveness Unit Suriname (CUS) of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism -HI&T (GFC Nieuws, 2019). Such training should reach other communities such as Powakka. Politics are very strong in the region and therefore there are several political organizations in the community; Mrs. Sabajo is a member of the district board for the local political party.

Decision making is made at community level through a village committee that consists of two women, of which one is the community Captain (leader of the community), and three

men. Although the people from the older generation consider that women should be at home taking care of the house and children, the new generation is aware that women and men must work together and that changes are necessary. It is interesting to note that considering the low number of women captains in the various communities, the perception remains that “if the Captain is a woman and she is a good Captain, it is because she has the capacity, if she is not a good Captain, it is because she is a woman”.

In Powakka the land belongs to the community. The assets and finances are usually managed by both men and women; although officially, men are head of the family, women have a very strong influence on decision making which translates in discussions between women and men before making a final decision. Both men and women share the responsibilities of the home and children.

Women easily spend half the day cooking, washing and taking care of the house. This limits the possibilities for women to have formal employment and generate income. The main sources of income in the community are from working as an employee in a company or government organization, or work as independents in activities related to agriculture, hunting, fishing and part time jobs; most if not all income generating activities are performed manually. The average income for women and men in Powakka ranges from SRD 1,250 to 1,500 per month (USD 167 – USD 200 per month). Expenditure for daily living mainly includes the purchase of rice, meat and spices; these costs can reach SRD 1,250 to 1,500 per month leaving little possibility for savings. For additional income women develop activities such as the baking of sweet cookies or other foods that are sold within the local or neighboring communities. Several women and men have bank accounts.



*Figure 10. House in Powakka. 29 January 2019.*

There are currently no agriculture extension services nor training programmes offered in Powakka. The Uribana Foundation in Powakka is involved in cultural activities for youth focusing mainly on cultural dances. There is also a sports' association in Powakka.

The main social and productive activities in the community include:

- Use of non-electrical sewing machines to make traditional clothing
- Homemade ice-cream
- Storage of meat from hunting using refrigeration
- Vacation resorts.

The productive activities identified as needed for the community include:

**Productive activities identified:**

Now that the community has electricity, the various productive activities that were identified as needed within the community are:

- Internet café – Especially for youths.
- Daycare – To allow mothers that want to work to seek employment.

As land belongs to the community, there is land available for the implementation of both projects.

## 5.2 POKIGRON.

Households: ~100

Population: 716

Number of women and girls: 330

Pokigron is a town located some 3 hours by road from the country's Capital city Paramaribo.

In Pokigron a Solar photovoltaic system of 500 kW was installed in February 2018

equipped with a diesel generator backup system. As such, the populations of Pokigron now have access to electricity 24 hours per day; before the project, the community had electricity from 19h00 till 23h00. The community is very pleased with the now accessible electrical energy plant. According to the people of Pokigron, the most important benefit from electricity is that now when harvesting vegetables or when hunting and fishing, people can keep the products in the refrigerator or freezer for conservation allowing more time for their use or subsequent sale.

The chair of the Women of Pokigron Organization registered as the Akata Foundation, Mrs. Nancy Jonathan, says that she is now paying about SRD 53 per month (USD 7 per month) for her electricity bill, with a minimum of SRD 28 (USD 3.7) per month. People in the community now use refrigerators, freezers, television, blenders, rice cookers and washing machines, reducing the time to accomplish daily tasks for all women in the community. Most people in the community have mobile phones, and some have laptops; there is Wi-Fi in the community at a cost of SRD 150 per month (USD 20 per month).



*Figure 11 Solar PV plant in Pokigron. 30 January 2019.*



*Figure 12 Solar PV plant Inverter and batteries. Pokigron, 30 January 2019.*



People in the community have piped water that comes from the river; the water connection was done by the government but the water is not drinkable; for drinking water people use rain water. During the dry season, water from the creek is used for drinking. Sewage generally goes to septic tanks – some is discharged directly into the river.



Pokigron has a primary school, a secondary school and a special secondary school. Many children travel by boat to go to school from rural communities, some travel by bus.

*Figure 13 Chair of the women of Pokigron Organization (left) with EBS Chiquita Resomardono. 30 January 2019.*

There is a boarding school in Pokigron for those who live too far away in the villages to travel to school on a daily basis, both parents deciding on the education of their children. Pokigron also has a health center that is equipped with vaccines.

People in Pokigron cultivate different types of crops including: Vegetables, rice, cassava, sweet potatoes, *napi* (yam), *pomtayer* (the root of the arrowleaf elephant ear plant), Chinese *tayer* (taro) and more. It is mainly the women that are responsible for the planting, harvesting and processing of crops while men ensure land clearing; all activities are done manually.

There are no cooperatives or other forms of sociopolitical organizations in Pokigron. All community decision making is done through community meetings where more women generally attend the meetings since they are the ones living in the community while men often leave the home to go work in mines or other occupations outside the community. According to the women in Pokigron, there are no definite stereotypes associated with women in the community.

All land belongs to the community, there is no private land. Within the household, the women are working in the house while men work in the fields; women can easily spend half their day to wash, clean and cook. Whereabouts of women are agreed with the husbands.

Sources of income come working as an employee for companies, for government organizations, and some have their own private enterprise. Some sell products from their farm; all work is performed manually. Most households do not consider any economic planning and therefore, there is no data on income or expenditures; people tend to live day by day. Both women and men have bank accounts.

There are currently no agriculture extension services in the community. There was a three-days training programme for clothes making some time ago. Several NGOs have been and are still present in Pokigron. For example, WWF had projects for the production of oil from nuts, CELOS (Centre for Agriculture Research in Suriname) had a two-years project on oil extraction from *maripa* (local palm, scientific name: *Attalea*



Figure 14 Electricity distribution lines in Pokigron. 30 January 2019.

*maripa*) and also a project on oil extraction from the flesh of the *amana* fruit. Both projects were not sustainable and are now shut down, mainly for lack of marketing strategies and absence of buyers' market. There is a clear need for training in marketing and sales which could be conducted with the support of agro-cooperatives.

One of the existing productive activities in Pokigron is a guest houses mainly catering to local tourists or people in transit.

#### **Identified productive activities:**

The women in Pokigron are very concerned about the wellbeing of their children. As such, the proposed productive activities aim at improving the quality of life and education of community children while facilitating working opportunities for the women in the community. The productive activities proposed by local women are:

- A playground for local children
- A daycare center

- A kindergarten

These activities imply the need for training of local women regarding the management of the playground, of the daycare center and of the kindergarten and will contribute to the integration local women in the labor market.

Additional productive activity proposed:

- Establishment of a group of women offering maintenance and repair in electrical systems following the training of women on the operation and maintenance of electricity facilities (basic electricity knowledge and understanding of the operation and maintenance of the solar photovoltaic plant installed in Pokigron to include their participation).

## 6. VISITS TO NON-BENEFICIARY COMMUNITIES IN UPPER SURINAME - RESULTS OF VISITS AND INTERVIEWS.

The Upper Suriname region is mainly inhabited by Maroon populations. These communities are located along the river banks, some hours by boat along the Suriname River.



*Figure 15 Boat service to Upper Suriname from Pokigron. 30 January 2019.*



*Figure 16 Life on the river banks. 30 January 2019.*

Communities living on the riverside are living like what seems another era, with children playing in the river and women washing themselves, their clothes and their dishes; very few men are seen along the river as men are mostly working on clearing land, some as boats' men and other go to work in the mines.

The river water offers beautiful sceneries and white waters that are ready to swallow the boats on which people travel, yet, this is a commercial, domestic and touristic river way, busily traveled on a daily basis. An experienced guide is required to pass between the rocks and through the rapids.



*Figure 17 Beautiful landscapes on the river. 30 January 2019.*



*Figure 18 An experienced boats' man guides the travel between the rocks. 30 January 2019.*



*Figure 19 Crossing one of many rapids along the river. 30 January 2019.*

None of the visited rural communities were included in the IDB electrification projects. However, there is a future project with the European Union that is to include the electrification of some of the villages from the Upper Suriname region.

It should be noted that considering the already existing diesel generator in most communities, the installation of a solar mini-grid in each community could take advantage of the existing distribution cabling network within the communities and the installed generator as a back-up, thus potentially reducing implementation costs, obviously subject to the verification of the condition of the existing material.



## 6.1 COMMUNITY OF PIKIEN SLEE.

Households: ~300

Population: 1647

Number of women and girls: 831

The Community of Pikien Slee is located some 2 hours by boat from Pokigron, some 5 hours from the country's capital Paramaribo.

There is currently no electrification project in Pikien Slee. The Government, through the Ministry of Natural Resources installed several diesel generators in the various communities of Upper Suriname, including the 192,5 kVA in Pikien Slee, however, the generator in the village has been broken for the past two years and therefore people do not have electricity; some people installed their own private diesel generator to continue to use television, sewing machines and recharge their cellular phones. Other members of the community living without electricity pay SRD 1.00 (USD 0.13) to the owners of the private generators to recharge their cell phones; most if not all members of the community, both women and men, have cell phones.



Figure 20 Meeting venue with women of the community of Pikien Slee. 30 January 2019.

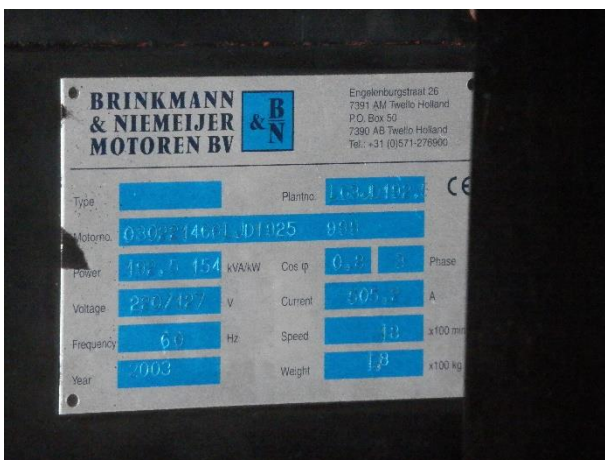


Figure 21 Diesel generator in Pikien Slee. 30 January 2019.

There is currently no water distribution system in the village, water is fetched from the creek and the river. When there was electricity, an electrical water pump was used to bring water to the village, but no more. Consequently, women currently need to fetch water some three times per day; women also need to fetch wood for cooking about once a day, both activities requiring much time every day. There is no wastewater network as such, sewage is channeled into a hole in the forest.

The community has a kindergarten and a primary school. There are about 440 students attending the schools; the infrastructure is currently too small with classes from kindergarten up to grade six of primary level having to cater to some 30 students per class. Following completion of their primary level, both parents decide whether their children should pursue their education to secondary and college levels. Generally, if the parents have family in Pokigron or in Paramaribo, children are sent to study at secondary level; if there are no family members, children just stay in the community; few parents can afford to send their children to the available boarding schools.

The community also has a health center which uses a solar PV system. It is not clear whether the system is working properly nor if the health center has refrigeration for keeping vaccines.

Agriculture is a main source of income for community members. Crops cultivated in the community include dry land rice, sweet potatoes, cassava, *napi*, banana, okra, bitter melon, bitter eggplants and peppers. There



*Figure 22 Tradition method of carrying things in the village. Pikien Slee, 30 January 2019.*

are no cooperatives or sociopolitical organizations formalized in the community. The creation of a local cooperative and its association to the Suriname Network of Rural Women Producers (SUNRWP) could well facilitate the marketing and sales of local produces and contribute to the expansion of the local productive activities.

Life is traditional in the village, with women carrying everything on their heads, as it was decades ago, as shown in Figure 22. As land is community property, everybody has access to a piece of land to build their homes. Houses are private properties and ownership depends on the supporting member of the family, for example, if the uncle supporting the new family is on the woman's side, then the house will be in the name of the woman, if the uncle is on the husband's side, then the house will be in the name of the man. In most cases, it is generally the husband that makes the decision for all family matters including the house.



*Figure 23 Boat making in the village. Pikien Slee, 30 January 2019.*

There is a clear division of labor in the community; men cut the forest for plantation, build the houses, build the boats, work as boatmen, and beats the rice for de-husking. Women are responsible for cultivation, harvesting of crops including work in the rice the fields, clean and wash the harvested crops, grate cassava, make *maripa* oil; women are also responsible for all household chores and for taking care of the children. Most agriculture activities are subsistence crops where only the excess is being sold.



*Figure 24 Handcrafted lampshade made with a calabash. Pikien Slee, 30 January 2019.*

The Captain of the village is the Chief of the village and as such oversees all agricultural projects in the community, for example, there was a calabash project but the product was difficult to sell and therefore was stopped. People in the community generally do not have bank accounts, however, the village women's organization has a bank account for its income generating activities.



As income is irregular and depends on the harvest, no specific income could be determined. Household expenditures include the charging of cell phones at SRD 1.00 per charge, the purchase of telephone card credit, the purchase of cooking oil, spices, clothing, the payment for the school of SRD 250 per year (USD 33 per year), and the purchase of school uniforms and materials.

The Ministry of Agriculture offers agriculture extension services and some training in agriculture techniques for community members that wish to learn. In Pikien Slee, the Comandi Foundation from Holland implemented a sewing project with training for the local women, and the BFM Foundation implementing the calabash lampshade project, example of product shown in Figure 24.

Aside from the local women's organization, there are no other women's organization in the community, whether local, national or international. The main activities of the local women's organization are the making of calabash lampshades that sell for SRD 70 (USD 9.33), the sewing project for making local clothing, for which the women have difficulty selling their products, and the preparation of special foods that are sold mainly locally.



*Figure 25 Pikien Slee village structure and distribution electrical wires. 30 January 2019.*

Women in the Community of Pikien Slee have very low education levels, they can hardly sign their names. As such, the marketing and sales of their product has become a very significant challenge; they seem to understand that it is better to sell at a higher price rather than sell in large quantities; in fact, they cannot sell so much and have little sales network outside the community. For example, at a cost of almost USD 10.00 for the lampshades when sold directly within the community makes the product almost inaccessible considering the add-on costs for product resellers. Similarly, as mentioned in the case of Pokigron, specific training in Sales and Marketing is needed for the women in the organization so they can learn

about pricing and entrepreneurship as to make sure they understand and develop a marketing strategy for the sale of their products.

**Productive activities that would benefit the communities should they have access to 24-hours electricity**

The identified income generating activities can be summarized as follows:

- Expansion of their existing activities (handicraft such as calabash lampshades, clothing, special foods) with the support of a capacity building programme in marketing and sales to help women develop entrepreneurship skills such as market identification, pricing, product sourcing, and even basic profit and loss balance.
- Rice milling services.
- Payable public toilets (It should be noted that this activity was never discussed during the meeting but was suggested during the open floor on potential productive activities).
- Water distribution system.
- House construction (although this is generally done by local men and therefore should be investigated)
- Establishment of a group of women offering maintenance and repair in electrical systems. Some women have expressed their interest and capability to train in the repair and maintenance of electrical systems such as the capability to repair the existing but not working generator; this could generate income for these capacitated women and would certainly contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of the community and especially of the women in the community.

## 6.2 GODO AND SOLANG

Households: ~100

Population: 762 (Godo 569; Solang 193)

Number of women and girls: 403 in both communities (Godo 304; Solang 99)

The communities of Godo and Solang are located at some 4 hours' boat from Pokigron, over 7 hours from the country's



*Figure 26 Meeting venue with women and men community leaders from Goda and Solang at the*

Capital city Paramaribo. Once known as only one community, that is Godo, the communities divided as to allow separate administrations, although they continue to share almost everything. There is no electrification project in the communities for the moment. The communities have electricity on a daily basis from 19h00 till 23h00, provided by a diesel generator that was installed and is managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources. Some two weeks before the visit, there was a short circuit and some of the distribution cables in Solang stopped working. Members of the community requested that the government send someone for repairs but the person responsible for repairs lives in Godo where there is still electricity and as such, at the moment of the visit, the problem still had not been resolved. Consequently, people in Solang were living without electricity for lack of prompt repair and attention.

Although there is electricity for only a few hours a day, people in the community use electrical appliances such as rice cooker, refrigerator, television, radio, washing machine, mixer, blender, sewing machine and even microwave. Cooking is still done using wood and as such, women walk some 3 hours to fetch wood almost every day; women complained about this daily task saying it is very heavy and gives women severe backaches. All members of the community use cell phones and those living in Solang now must go where there is electricity and pay to recharge their cell phones; they also cannot use their household appliances.

Households in the communities do not have piped water; women must carry water from the creek for drinking and generally use the river water for everything else. Some people installed water tanks as to collect rainwater during the rainy season.

There is a kindergarten and primary school in Godo and one also in Solang; there are 164 students attending school in Godo and 36 in Solang; both schools have access to electricity, nevertheless, because of the short-circuit problem in the electrical wires, and since it is provided only during the night, there is basically no electricity in the schools and therefore the schools have no ICT rooms or computers. Once the students finish their primary school where they can attend just by walking to school, both parents must decide to send their children to study in Pokigron or in Paramaribo where students must stay in boarding schools or with family members. There is no health center in either community; in case of need, the closest health center is in the Djoemoe village located across the river from both communities.

The main crops cultivated in the communities include dry land rice, cassava, sweet cassava, *napi*, sweet potatoes, pepper, plantain, ginger, *pomtayer*, *antroewa* (African eggplant or gboma), bitter eggplants, okra and cucumbers. There are currently two privately owned rice mills in the community. Women process some food for use and sale such as the preparation of cassava bread and also pickles.

There are no cooperatives and only some small political organizations. As for other communities. the creation of a local cooperative and its association to the Suriname Network of Rural Women Producers (SUNRWP) could facilitate the marketing and sales of local produces and contribute to the success of the local productive activities.

All land belongs to the village and therefore everybody has access to land. The house will belong to the husband or wife depending on which family arranged for the land. Although the home may belong to the wife, once a month during her menstruation period, the woman is sent away in a special community house to sleep and stay as not to touch any food or do anything in her home. Once concluded her period, which generally lasts for about three days, she is required to clean herself and can then return to her home.

There is a clear division of labor between women and men in the community. The latter builds the houses, cuts trees to build, clears land to cultivate, makes boats and rows for transportation. Women are responsible for all the cooking; as a member of the community said, “the woman cooks until she dies”, which certainly reflects the importance of food and the role of the woman in the community. Men are definitely the heads of the families and make all the decisions in the community.

The main sources of income come from the making and selling of fried bananas, chips, and ice-cream. In Solang, men are also making bricks for construction as shown in figure 27. A group of women had established a restaurant for local people and tourists; it was active for 2 years and then had to close for lack of electricity since all the food, especially the meat, had to be bought in Pokigron, and not having a refrigerator to



*Figure 27 Brick making in Sola. 31 January 2019.*

preserve the food made it impossible to sustain the restaurant. Also, a group of 50 women implemented a small soap industry, but this enterprise also proved unsustainable and had to shut down two years ago; according to the local women, the main reasons for shutting down were the unavailability of caustic soda required in the process, and poor marketing strategies, a current weakness in the region. Most activities are done manually in the community, except for the rice husking that uses the two diesel rice mills.

Income is directly dependent on the yields and market price of the local production for example, the women’s group could get SRD 4,500 (USD 600) from one plantation but other times would get very little because of low production. Expenditure varies from one family to the other, depending on their agriculture activities considering they must buy what they cannot grow. Some but not all people including women have bank accounts,

There are no agriculture extension services but the Ministry of Agriculture did offer training in the planting of vegetables and peanuts. There are currently no NGOs, cooperatives or UN agencies working in the communities. The local women’s organization is involved in all

productive activities mentioned earlier such as fried bananas, production of ice cream and chips.

The lack of infrastructure, including electricity and access roads to the plantation are slowing down local development and jeopardizing the sale of crops because of poor accessibility. Moreover, there is a need for a local secondary school that would facilitate the access to education for local children as they could remain home until they complete their secondary studies. Women and men of the community consider a



*Figure 28 The Tapa Watra Waterfall in Godo, a touristic venue. Godo, 31 January 2019.*

priority the preservation of the land and forest. In fact, the Godo *Tapa Watra* Waterfall is a beautiful site, as shown in Figure 28, which offers touristic potential that has yet to be exploited.

Currently, the main productive activity is the development of agricultural products in the community; people consider that “if there is investment in agriculture the village can move forward”. As such, the following productive activities have been identified as relevant and of interest to the local population, in the event of access to electricity.

**Productive activities that would benefit the communities should they have access to 24-hours electricity**

- Cultivation and processing of rice and cassava.
- Training in the processing of ginger, *por tin*, oranges and cacao using electrical processing equipment.
- Implementation of a bakery to cater for both communities (electrical oven, refrigerator for conservation of ingredients, etc.). At present the bread is brought from outside, as far as Pokigron, some 4 hours by boat, and costs SRD 1 (USD 0.133) per small piece.



- Child day care that would facilitate the work of women in the plantations.
- Although not requested by the women, considering that women already have the expertise and experience in soap making, this activity could be reactivated in association with a training course in sales and marketing and with the identification of reliable suppliers and markets.
- The restaurant experience was also not identified by members of the community, most likely for the important losses associated with this enterprise. Specific training would be required as to well prepare the women in catering to international customers in terms of quality of food, type of food and hygiene. Currently, there are few international customers and therefore the majority of clients would be locals, thus reducing the potential for the restaurant business.

### 6.3 FUTUNAKABA

Households: ~ 120

Population: 131 (more than 200 people live in Paramaribo).

Number of women and girls: 60.

The community of Futunakaba is located some 2 hours from Pokigron, about 5 hours from Paramaribo. There is currently no electrification project in this rural locality. The community has a diesel generator that was

installed by the Ministry of Natural Resources which runs from 18h00 to 00h00, and sometimes only from 19h00 till 23h00 when the community runs low on diesel.

As there is some electricity, people in the community use electrical appliances such as refrigerator, freezer, blender, mixer, television, washing machine, sewing machine and iron; everybody has a cell phone.



*Figure 29 Women in Futunakaba, 31 January 2019.*

Households use river water for cleaning and washing and use creek and well water for drinking, which they have to fetch some 10 minutes away from their homes; women fetch water 4 times per day. Some houses send sewage water through septic tanks while others just send it into the forest or directly into the river.

There is one kindergarten and one primary school in the community that caters to some 60 children that walk to school on a daily basis. They used to have a few computers in the school but now only one is left. After completing their primary school, children must go to the community of Pokigron or to Paramaribo to pursue their schooling. All girls and boys continue their studies at secondary level, and this is decided by both parents. Parents pay some SRD 100 (USD 13) per year for primary school. For secondary school, there are private and public institutions with a tuition of SRD 250 (USD 33) for private schools and SRD 70 (USD 9) for public schools.

There is no health center in this community but there is a health center some 3 km away that is using a solar PV system for its electricity needs, which ensures health services for the people from Futunakaba.

Agricultural activities in the community include the cultivation of rice, *tire*, peanuts, chives, sweet potatoes, pomtayer, pepper, *oerdi* (mung bean), *napi*, plantain, cassava and ginger.

There are no local cooperatives nor sociopolitical organizations in the community. Here in Futunakaba, the creation of a local cooperative and its association to the Suriname Network of Rural Women



*Figure 30 Rice and cassava, mills in the community. Futunakaba, 31 January 2019.*

Producers (SUNRWP) could certainly facilitate the marketing and sales of local produces and contribute to the expansion of the local productive activities.



Futunakaba is a very religious community with religious ceremonies in the village every morning and evening joining together all community members.

Both women and men participate in the decision-making process. The land belongs to the community, not the government, while the houses belong to the local people individually. According to tradition, men build houses for their wife and children while keeping their own house in addition to the family house; the man's house is not necessarily for him to entertain other women but rather to keep his personal belongings and as storage for goods and materials the family home may need. The head of the family is the man.

There is a clear division of labor where men hunt, cut the forest, help women do the planting of crops, build houses and boats and make beaters. While men clear the forest, it is the women who collect wood for cooking; some women use propane gas for cooking. Women are responsible for washing, which is generally done in the river, they do the planting and go to work in the plantation on a daily basis; they fish, clean the house and take care of the children who eventually help their mothers in her daily tasks.

Some women live alone and therefore, in this case, all decisions are made by her, while when she has a husband, discussion is needed and permission is asked to the husband before traveling or making any decision. A typical day for a woman in the village could be summarized by her waking up at 5h00 in the morning to prepare breakfast and then at 8h00 she goes to work in the plantations until about 15h00. She then returns to the house to fetch water, collect wood and cook food for the family. Sometimes the woman stays home for a day in order to do the house work she had no time to complete during the rest of the week.

The main sources of income come from crops harvested and sold in Paramaribo. Most work is done manually except for the use of a diesel rice mill and a gasoline cassava mill, a donation received by the women's organization of the community. Income depends on the harvests, some time there is no daily income, as such, income is calculated on a monthly or yearly basis and is constantly fluctuating. The household expenses are estimated at SRD 500 (USD 67) per month per person. As there is little steady income, some women and men have bank accounts but not all.

The Ministry of Agriculture gave training on the cultivation of vegetables and some capacity building was organized by the National Women Movement, in collaboration with the Medical Mission, that trained local women on how to make mosquito nets. No NGOs, UN or other organizations have projects within the community.

Currently, the community is involved in the cultivation of agriculture products such as peanuts. One woman is raising chicken but as there is no 24-hour electricity, the meat cannot be kept in the refrigerator so the activity is not sustainable on a commercial basis; the women of the village said they were afraid to raise cows because those animals are too big. A tractor was donated to the local women's organization but none of the women learned to drive it. Now some women are considering that it would be useful for them to manage the tractor instead of waiting for men to do the work and as such, they would need driving classes. Moreover, a back hoe installed on the rear of the tractor would facilitate the women's work in the plantation; as the tractor has not been used in a while, it needs maintenance such as new tires and an engine overall.

The community Captain, a man, has a plan to build a loading dock in order for the crops to be loaded directly onto the pier. This would help women in their harvest and facilitate the transport of produce. This project could then be replicated in other villages says the captain.

Women are currently making mosquito nets, table cloths and some clothes with manually operated sewing machines. Production could increase significantly with the use of electrical sewing machines.

Most women admitted they were afraid of electricity and never even considered learning about this subject. However, some women said they would like to learn about electricity as to ensure the maintenance of the street lamps, the house lamps and the community generator. At present, men are responsible for changing the street lamps, women change the house lamps, and the generator is maintained by the people of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

**Productive activities that would benefit the communities should they have access to 24-hours electricity**

- Establishment of a group of women offering maintenance and repair in electrical systems with the training of 6 women who confirmed their interest in learning about basic electricity and maintenance of the generator.
- Mosquito net production using electrical sewing machines to increase and improve the production as to sell nationwide.
- Maripa oil production with the identification of a stable and reliable market and improved production technique.
- Improved production of agriculture crops and its processing through training and with identified sales markets.
- Ice-cream making to be preserved and sold on the local markets.

## 7. MEETINGS WITH THE BUREAU GENDER AFFAIRS AND THE MAROON WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION

### 7.1 BUREAU GENDER AFFAIRS

The Bureau Gender Affairs was established in 1997 in Paramaribo, initially named the National Bureau for Gender Policy, under the Ministry of Home affairs; it is responsible, among other things, for the monitoring of the implementation of the Belem do Para Convention, (Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women). The bureau has a staff of 7 persons including administrative staff and two officials in its branch office located in Nickerie district, which has been operating since 2006 (OEA – mesecvi, 2017). The Bureau Gender Affairs formulated the Gender Work Plan 2013 involving civil society in the development and implementation of the plan.

The meeting included the following officials from the Gender Bureau Affairs:

1. Judith Karijodrono; Head of Bureau Gender Aangelegenheden (Head Office Gender Affairs)
2. Sharon Saridjan; Beleidsadviseur Gender (Policy Advisor, Gender)
3. Melisa Deel; Stafmedewerker HBO (Staff member, HBO means the education level)
4. Lesley Karijoatmo; Hoofdbeleidsmedewerker, (Head policy staff member)

The officials at the meeting stated that gender is very closely related to culture and therefore, each community is different and requires its specific assessment as to determine the roles of women and men.

Policies on Gender are currently under development and the Bureau is preparing an action plan. Under the Workplan of 2013, the following priority areas were identified:

- Education
- Health

- Decision making
- Labor, income and poverty reduction
- Environment and climate change
- Gender, equality and empowerment

Moreover, according to international agreements, all projects must now take gender into account and include gender mainstreaming.

Obviously, the topic of gender does not involve only women but also men and as such, men must be part of all gender related activities. Moreover, in order to operate and implement programmes access to resources is required and is often difficult to identify.

Some training on gender was provided by the Gender Bureau Affairs for companies as to train volunteers on gender issues, more specifically in the following sectors:

- Gender and climate change
- Gender, biodiversity and resilience building
- Gender and environment
- Gender and land degradation
- Gender and chemicals

Additionally, gender training was conducted for NGOs, local governments, the Fire Departments, and for the development of Special Forces in the Police Department.

The Ministry of Justice and Police has a Bureau of Women and Child Policies responsible for mainstreaming gender within the policies. Since 2009, there is a law against domestic violence and a law has now been approved on sexual harassment and stalking.

Currently there is no paid maternity leave in the private sector but it is respected in the public sector; a law on paternal leave is under discussion. There are no lactation laws; some

companies like hospitals have day care but most companies do not have this service; daycare is expensive in Suriname.

The rate of femicide as of November of 2018 was 8 women with the highest level being in 2016 with 16 cases. Moreover, the definition of violence in the law has been changed and is now broader and includes physical, psychological, emotional and economical violence. In the civil code, there is a concept law for non-discrimination in the labor force. The Ministry of Labor concept law has yet to be approved for the private sector as to ensure equal pay for equal work.

In the public sector FISO calculation is a system for the public servant, and was implemented to ensure equal income for equal work. Nevertheless, the public sector is still very political and as such, there is a difference in opportunities. Some women are working in decision making positions and at top management levels but there are still very few. Some companies make rules for restrictions as there are no general laws for equal opportunity. One can see the difference for a same job, for example for a policy adviser, the men have larger and more luxury cars compared to women in the same position. The middle management has many women but in upper management positions are mainly held by men. There are no general laws that restrict women in certain jobs but the companies have the right to decide whether to hire a man or woman.

From 2010 until 2015, primary and junior secondary schooling was free. Now parents must pay for material fees, that is, SRD 75 (10 USD) per year. Senior secondary levels and college is not free; parents must pay SRD 300 (USD 40) for senior secondary school while college becomes more expensive.

The law on minimum wage says a worker should receive a minimum of SRD 6.25 (USD 0.83) per hour in the private sector; the minimum monthly salary is SRD 750 (USD 100) per month with an average income of SRD 1,500 to SRD 3,000 (USD 200 to USD 400) per month; top management receives SRD 25,000 to SRD 30,000 (USD 3,333 to USD 4,000) and a CEO can receive up to SRD 300,000 (USD 40,000) per month.

Women have equal rights to land and to hold bank accounts; before 1980, married women were considered as children and needed permissions from their husbands. Nowadays, women can request a personal loan without the consent of their husband while the mortgage on the house must be co-signed by both husband and wife. Marriage implies community law but most people have a prenuptial agreement for separation of assets, which also means that whatever one buys under their own name remains theirs.

In rural areas the land generally belongs to the community but there are some private properties, and government properties where there is a 40 years' lease agreement.

In case of death, the spouse has the right to 50% and the other 50% goes for the children while the spouse is also included as holding one part with the children; all children have equal rights to inheritance.

Electricity offers a good quality of life and is especially necessary to help children study and do their homework in the evening by extending the number of hours of light in a day. It also allows women to do other things during the evening such as develop income generating activities, for example in the preparation of fruit juices, various dishes or in the making of cassava bread; it also allows the conservation of food with refrigeration. For the schools, electricity allows the use of ICT, a necessary tool in today's world; the Bureau of the First Lady received computers from China, India and other different donors to be distributed to the various schools around the country. Electricity also allows the charging of mobile phones that are needed for communications. Moreover, electricity contributes to the security of people: in some rural areas snakes, caimans and other animals can be found on the roads especially at night, resulting in bites, attacks or accidents because of the lack of illumination associated with the absence of street lamps.

## 7.2 MAROON WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION OF SURINAME

The meeting was held with the president of the Maroon Women's organization, Dr. Cynthia Allendy, with Mrs. Sylvia Jacobi (Co-Chair) and Mrs. Tinza Pansa (Secretary) of the organization.

The organization is national and is open as a birth right for any Maroon women who wants to become a member or who wants to ask for any kind of assistance. Established in 2001, the board members comprise of 19 women elected from the Maroon network, and 6 persons from various NGOs. The organization includes women from the 6 different Maroon tribes and networks, including women and men from various organizations.



*Figure 31 Meeting at the Clinic of Dr. Cynthia Allendy, president of the Maroon Women's Organization. Paramaribo. 28 January 2019.*

Dr. Cynthia Allendy is a medical doctor and runs a Health Clinic in Paramaribo. Dr. Allendy mentioned that in fact, very few women seek assistance related to violence or abuse, and those that do, it is because they reached a very critical and threatening situation. The cases of violence are not always physical, in fact more often than other they are emotional and involve women with higher education coming from higher economic backgrounds: these abused women do not seek assistance for violence but rather stress the fact that they have health problems. Unfortunately, people surrounding the abused women often do not support the victims and tell them they should tolerate the situation because maybe they deserved it. Few cases came to the Clinic in need of a doctor; two of these women have finally decided to separate from their husbands and are living in a safe house. The police generally do not receive the complaints of violence and discard the situation as a temporary or minor problem.

In the interior, women and men are responsible for different, specific and pre-established traditional tasks and obligations. Women go to the fields to work, look after the children, prepare dinner, keep the house: very few men cook, this is also true in the city. Women in



the city now work hard having their own career, but in addition to their profession, they are also responsible for the cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children at home. Currently, more women are studying, and in fact Dr. Allendy admitted that she was the first Maroon women to become a medical doctor; currently there are about 10 Maroon women studying medicine in Paramaribo. Overall, all children, whether they are girls or boy, go to school equally; all must complete primary school and some manage to continue their study to secondary and even college. More women are studying as professional and when they graduate, they work in their field of specialty. There is no reinforcement of the law regarding the completion of primary school although there are inspectors from the Ministry of Education that should be monitoring the situation as to ensure that all children go to school: secondary school is not mandatory in Suriname.

In rural areas, children attend school within their community, nevertheless, as there are no high schools in various community, they must move to the town such as Pokigron or go to Paramaribo where students must stay in a boarding school or with family members.

The Stichting Medische Zending is a Medical Mission Foundation with health workers living in the interior, with some local and foreign doctors attending patients from the Hinterland. The health workers are in fact well trained and the system works very well, however there is still a shortage of doctors to cater to all needing populations. In fact, the fight against Malaria was won because of the Medical Missions in collaboration with the professional attention of the health workers. Most health centers have electricity, such electricity generated by community generators or with the use of solar PV systems.

The main activities in rural areas include cassava flour making, cassava bread, soap making, dry land rice cultivation, rice milling and the drying of peppers. The soap made in

these communities is a medical soap that is made from Jathropha oil, which is sold locally and also sent to Paramaribo: target market identification remains a challenge. Some



*Figure 32 Jathropa soap.*

<https://www.facebook.com/PharmportNV/photos/a.1653994818145583/1902689276609468/?type=3&theater>

communities have solar systems and others have small diesel generators for electricity production as to be used in the operation of machinery and appliances. Several communities apply and in fact received grants from various organizations for the implementation of special projects.

Access to electricity has become a necessity for all people, and should be available 24 hours per day as to allow the use of electrical machines and appliances. Because of the constant problem related to the supply of diesel and gasoline in the remote villages, communities sometimes must go for months without fuel for their generator and therefore must live without electricity during that time. Moreover, the reduction in the use of oil lamps and candles helps improve the health of women and children that spend time accomplishing household chores; electricity is a human right and as such, everybody should have access to electricity. It should be noted that some communities were displaced for the construction of a large hydroelectric dam and its reservoir, and now these people are living near or under the power lines but are still living without access to electricity.

Most rural communities have electricity through the Government programme of the Ministry of Natural Resources that installed electrical generator in the villages. However, the maintenance of such generators and its distribution network is not reliable. Moreover, men leave the villages to work in boat transport, in mines or other activities while women remain in the villages and must wait for a man to maintain or repair the electrical system as to ensure electricity supply for their family. Women can and should be trained in basic electricity and in the maintenance of the electrical generators, and where applicable, in the maintenance of solar PV systems. According to Dr. Allendy, women have the capacity to learn about basic electricity and in the maintenance of electrical systems. The Maroon Women's Organization, through its local partners, could organize and offer technical training for specific projects. EBS confirmed its willingness to participate in such training for rural women; it could be a training of the trainers' project on basic electricity and maintenance of electrical systems. "The women in the interior want to learn, they are independent" added Dr. Allendy.

The Maroon Women's Organization arranged the visit programme and interview to the various Maroon communities in Upper Suriname for the three-day programme. The boat's

man was to accompany the visits for the full three days, and was in fact the Captain of Futunakaba, which certainly made everything easier when visiting the various villages.

## 8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 8.1 CONCLUSIONS

#### 8.1.1 Current situation of women in Suriname.

Suriname is a country with a population of little over half million people that includes a multiethnic community that merges a variety of customs and traditions that have learned to cohabitate side by side. Rural communities are decentralized with some located in remote areas that do not always have access to basic services such as water and electricity, and can only be accessed by boat, making their developmental progress more difficult. In several areas of the country, people are still living in the past century where there is no electricity, and where women must confront daily challenges in order to survive and ensure the wellbeing of their family. Unfortunately, development often implies environmental degradation associated with the accumulation of solid waste and an increase in soil and water contamination levels associated with industrial, commercial and touristic activities. Nevertheless, along with the negative environmental impacts associated to the advancements of a community there is a necessity for proper infrastructures in order to ensure the development of a country and its population. Considering the low population of Suriname, it is possible to remediate the increasing needs in energy in a reduced timeframe, as to ensure a good quality of life for all its population. In order to ensure the sustainable implementation of developmental actions and the integral development of the country, the participation of all people, women and men, is required. Unemployment and the lack of qualified personnel associated with the lack of training and capacity building for those persons that need the infrastructure in their daily life, especially women, inhibit the technological advancements necessary for the country's sustainable development.

The inequality of gender in Suriname remains prevalent and dependent on the elimination of socio-educative, generational, territorial, ethnic, cultural and economic gaps, thus the need to

remove societal preconceived roles for women that often imply the postponement or restriction of their professional and personal fulfillments and success. This is even more evident for rural women where the lack of opportunity associated with family pressure or for lack of financial resources impedes her personal development towards income generation activities for her family. Within the productive sector, women are often limited in their selection of activities and are frequently restricted because of their responsibilities for their children and their homes, working without remuneration and as such, seen as not contributing to the generation of income for the family, and to the accumulation of assets during her married life, discarding the importance of the woman's management and administration of the household as a valuable contribution. The high level of teenage pregnancies and the existence of single mothers entails the need for strengthening of personal and professional abilities in this especially challenged group, in both soft and technical skills, as to ensure access to decent jobs with a remuneration that allows these young women to live with dignity and independently. Electrification offers numerous opportunities towards the implementation of new and additional productive activities and ventures in the beneficiary communities, thus facilitating additional income and contributing to a better quality of life.

#### 8.1.2 Identified economic, social and developmental opportunities.

Subsistence agriculture ensures food for all family members, but in rural areas, women work in the field and plantations with the additional responsibility of children, household and family. Women are the ones that oversee the home and as such should have the opportunity to develop productive activities in order to generate income, whether as a main source of income or additional, in order to improve the quality of life of their family. In rural communities, the need for better infrastructure is evident and women should be the ones capacitated in the implementation and maintenance of these infrastructures as to ensure a good quality of life.

During the visits to the communities and interviews, it was possible to identify some specific needs that include, the use of machines and appliances such as washing machines to reduce the time associated with the house work, grain grinders, refrigerators that would allow the conservation of fresh products, and the use of electrical appliances in the household. In one community, a locally established restaurant had to close because there was no electricity to

allow the preservation of food in a refrigerator; with the increasing touristic activities, the issue of food conservation and preparation is even more necessary and offers future opportunities for sustainable income generating activities.

### 8.1.3 Proposed strategies and activities

Considering the low population density in Suriname, the extension of electrical lines may not be the most feasible solution for rural electrification. As such, the development and proliferation of new electricity generation infrastructure from renewable energy sources (IDB, 2016) such as solar PV off-grid plants and micro hydro plants along with the use of the existing diesel generators as backup systems may be feasible solutions.

As a result of the field visits and interviews, it is possible to confirm that each community has a community women's organization, whether formalized or not; the formalization of these organizations could facilitate their access to local, regional and international markets. In the two project beneficiary communities, that is in Powakka and Pokigron, the following productive activities have been suggested and could be replicated in other communities, or adapted according to local necessities and requirements and to market demand; all projects would be implemented and managed by the community women's organization.

#### Powakka

The implementation of an internet café as a pilot project within the community would allow access to internet as a community service and access to information and communication for the community youths, local women and local residents. This project could be replicated in other communities.

As to facilitate the employment of women with young children a daycare center was proposed, nevertheless, a more detailed investigation on the needs for a daycare center would be required as to confirm the number of women with employment that could benefit from this yet unavailable service, and the training required to those women responsible for the implementation and operation of the daycare.

### Pokigron

In Pokigron, there is currently no facilities for children and as such, a pilot project to support local children could be implemented, with facilities that could include a playground for local children, a daycare center and a kindergarten. Women from the community women's organization would need to be trained as to ensure these services thus creating local employment and facilitating the care of children for other working women.

### Upper Suriname rural communities

Communities in the rural communities of Upper Suriname have yet to benefit from an electrification project. Women in these communities have a low education level and even less information regarding potential income generating activities. All communities visited know the benefits of electricity as they currently have electricity a few hours every day with the use of community diesel generator. However, they need access to electricity 24 hours per day and organize their life with the use of sustainable and reliable electricity. Based on access to electricity 24 hours per day, the following productive activities have been identified and could be implemented and managed by the local women's organization.

### Pikien Slee

Rice and cassava milling services could offer local income for women. Training of some women of the community in repair and maintenance of electrical systems and also of the rice and cassava mills could also offer income to these women and more importantly, would ensure electricity services and uninterrupted processing services for the whole community. Moreover, training in Sales and Marketing of handicraft and of agriculture produce would help women establish a market which would allow the expansion in sales of their products towards higher income generation.

### Godo and Solang

Considering the size of both communities, the development of food processing capabilities with an identified market would allow women to development their processing skills and generate better income. Moreover, there are no nearby bakeries and as such, the implementation of a bakery could benefit both communities. A daycare center could also be

beneficial for the women of the community as to allow them to go work in the field without having to bring the children, which in turn would benefit the children through early learning and skills training; capacity building be required for the women responsible for the daycare.

#### Futunakaba

In Futunakaba, six women expressed their interest in learning about electricity and maintenance of electrical systems. This could be done by implementing some kind of small enterprise with these women that could offer electrical repair and maintenance services, in their community and in neighboring villages. Training could be ensured by EBS.

Currently the women of Futunakaba are making mosquito nets using manual sewing machines but could increase their production with the use of electrical machines as to open the sales of these nets to other communities around the country.

Last but not least, as mentioned in other communities, food processing is an important activity where women can give added values to agriculture products such as in the preparation of Maripa oil, or for ice-cream making, among others. The community also has processing machines such as rice husking mill and flour mill, which are not used to their full capacity. Agricultural and processing activities could be expanded further with the identification of new markets and could then invite the processing of food from nearby villages as to increase the quantity of processed foods sold on the market. In this case, a better and larger dock would be required to facilitate the loading and unloading of products.

#### 8.1.4 Economic and social impact of electrification.

Access to electrical energy certainly produces an economic and social impact on the lives of women and their family. Considering the direct correlation between access to electricity and development, and seeing that women are the main users of electricity in their homes, multiple benefits can be identified in relation with the implementation of electrification projects, including the extension of working hours in a day that will allow the accomplishment of more daily chores especially for women, facilitate studying and the completion of homework for school aged children using electrical lamps, access to information with radio and television, communication with the charging of cell phones and internet, improvement of health

especially for women and children with the elimination of oil lamps and candles, environmental protection with the elimination of batteries used in radios and lamps that are generally thrown away in nature following their useful life, implementation of productive activities for women through the development of additional income activities such as fabrication of handicraft, selling of prepared foods and more. Considering women need about half a day to complete their daily chores that include washing clothes, cooking and caring for the children, access to electricity also allows the use of household appliances such as washing machines, thus reducing the number of hours required on a daily basis, allowing women to develop parallel productive activities that can generate additional income, and also participate in training programmes that can suggest new income generating options in the near future and open opportunities to improve their professional and personal lives.

Moreover, electricity contributes to the security of women, girls and boys with the installation of street lamps along the roads, pathways and within the community. In this XXI century, the use of computers is compulsory in almost all sectors of activities and employment, as such, it is very important that children learn at an early age the use and applications of computer technology, which is only possible with access to electricity. Finally, access to reliable and accessible electricity will help promote and develop small businesses, better infrastructure and access to local and regional markets for the sale of their products whether fresh, processed or fabricated.

#### 8.1.5 Contribution to the reduction of gender gaps.

The Constitution of Suriname in its Article 35 confirms the concept of no discrimination for women and the protection of her employment with paid maternity leave for working women (Republic of Suriname, 1987). In reality, according to the interviews, women in the city know about their rights but those in rural areas are totally unaware of the existing legislation, they just continue living following their customs and traditions. Article 35 further recognizes that “Husband and wife are equal before the law”. However, it was reported that often the situations of family violence, whether physical, emotional, psychological or economical, are discarded by law enforcement agencies and as such, these cases remain quiet and not reported.



With access to electricity, one can assume that women will listen more to the radio and watch television where they will be informed of their rights and obligations, information that will serve the whole family. Moreover, television programmes offer advices on the importance of cleanliness in the household and proper food conservation and hygiene techniques which are directly linked to family health, proper care for the children, strategies to improve the quality of life in the household, cooking and processing techniques that can eventually be used as a source of income, and much more. Additionally, the woman's economic empowerment will contribute to the reduction of violence and abuses. Women need to be prepared to access or develop proper employment and income generating activities according to their interest and individual capabilities, thus allowing a reduction if not elimination of gender, social, economic and ethnic gaps by demonstrating their potential, abilities and creativity.

Finally, but not least, with access to electricity comes access to Internet, and therefore women of Powakka and Pokigron, and other rural communities could participate and benefit from a capacity building project similar to the one implemented by IICA in 2017 in association with Suriname Network of Rural Women Producers (SUNRWP), as to improve Women Producers' knowledge, capacity and skills in the use of Web. 2.0 tools for the online promotion and marketing of their products and services and networking among various clusters of the SUNRWP, and with other women organizations towards access to mainstream marketing and distribution channels (IICA, 2017), a necessity that was witnessed in all visited communities and that will have a direct impact on income and therefore improve the quality of life of all community members.

## 8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Access to reliable and accessible electrical energy in rural communities offers new opportunities for the development of productive activities especially for women in their communities, while various considerations must be taken into account:

- Encourage the participation of women in the implementation of an electrification project as to obtain their points of view and share their insecurities and concerns.
- Invite women to participate in especially designed training programmes in basic electricity, maintenance and solar photovoltaic systems as to involve them during and after the implementation of the project as to ensure continuous energy supplies especially in rural communities where maintenance is neglected and repairs may take months because of the remoteness of the location.
- Incorporate legally binding protection clauses for the local populations within the contracts of the contractors and subcontractors as to ensure the security of women, girls and boys during the implementation of electrification projects considering the high number of men involved in the construction and installation of electricity plants and extension systems that take this opportunity to abuse women and youngsters in the beneficiary communities.
- Disseminate information regarding special training courses in different professional or vocational sectors, especially in rural communities as to promote income generating activities and better professional development.
- Ensure that projects implemented in rural communities consider the local culture and tradition as to ensure their social, cultural and environmental sustainability.
- Develop empowerment and appropriation strategies that specifically include women as to facilitate the sustainability of the implemented projects.

- Implement productive activities in selected communities as to demonstrate the productive use of electricity with practical applications according to their geographical location and their local necessities, as to improve the quality of life of the local populations in general and of the women in particular.
- Take advantage of the existing women's organizations in the various communities as to facilitate the implementation of projects, training, and the sustainability of the projects.
- Invite the participation of the Associate local women's organization to the Suriname Network of Rural Women Producers (SUNRWP) and consider the establishment of local cooperatives as to access mainstream marketing and distribution channels and facilitate the sale of products.
- Review the situation of the displaced communities living near or under the power lines near the hydroelectric dam as to ensure their access to electricity.
- Encourage the use of electrification proposals in IDB and other organization projects, for example IDB SU-L1009 project: Powaka area electrification and Pokigron/Atjoni solar plant; SU-G1001: solar mini grid in Godo Olo; EU-CIF grant project: Upper Suriname electrification.

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ANNEX 1. Questionnaire used as a guide during the visits and interviews.



**CONSOLIDATING A SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SECTOR**

**Project Suriname SU-L1055**

**GENDER AND ENERGY**

**Interview questionnaire**

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ community:  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Population: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Number of men / Women: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of girls /  
boys: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Number of households: \_\_\_\_\_ Average number of persons per household:  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What do you know about the project in your community? How did the project affect or help you, your family and the local population?
6. Do you have electricity? How many hours a day is the electricity available? Do you have every day? How reliable is the electricity? How much is the light bill every month? What is the cost of electricity per kWh? Do you use your own electric generator to compensate the electricity shortages (if applicable)? If yes, for how many hours a day? How much do you spend on fuel? Do you use fossil fuels for anything else? What do you use it for? How much does it cost? How much do you use?

7. What household appliances are used within the household? (refrigerator, stove (electric, gas, wood), oven, blender, toaster, microwave, washer, dryer, vacuum cleaner...) What do you use for cooking (gas, wood...)?
8. Do men and women use electronic and communication devices? (radio, television, computer, laptop, mobile phones, internet...). Both equally?
9. Did you ever experience any damage to household appliances because of the instability of the electricity?
10. Do you have indoor plumbing? Is the water potable? Where does it come from (well, treatment station, river...)? Do you have sewage systems or septic tanks...?
11. How many schools are around here? Do they all have electricity? Is it reliable?
12. How do children go to school, by bus, walking...? How far is the school? Do children use computers in school? Is there a government programme that gives computers to schools? How much does it cost to go to school?
13. Who decides on the education of children? What are the levels of education for girls and boys?
14. How many hospitals/clinics/health posts are around here? Do they have electricity? Do they have refrigerators and vaccines? Is the electricity reliable 24 hours per day?
15. Do people cultivate any crops? If yes, what type of crops or in what part of the agricultural value chain (agro-processing) do women and men occupy (if any)? What kind of tools are used for the work? Are they manually operated or electrical or gas or other? Portable or stationary equipment.
16. Do women and men belong to cooperatives or other forms of socio-political organizations?
17. How do women and men participate in community decision-making?
18. What are some of the common beliefs, values or gender stereotypes about women and men that are common in the community?
19. What is the status of land tenure by gender? Who controls the access or owns the land? What other assets do women and men have? Who decides on the economic activities (what to buy, how to manage the assets)? Who manages the finances in the family?
20. Who would you say is the head of the family?
21. What is the division of labor between women and men, young and senior citizens in the house? On the farm?

22. Are there any restrictions on the whereabouts or outings of the woman?
23. How much time do women, men and children spend on housework (washing, cooking, cleaning, taking care of the children...)?
24. What are the main sources of income / productive activity or occupation (for women and men)? How do women and men participate in the economy, formally or informally?
25. What kind of tools are used for your income generation or work? Are the tools operated manually, or using electricity, gas or other?
26. What are the income and salary levels for women and men? Are they equal (same salary for same work?)
27. What are the main expenditures for women and men in the household (groceries, water, electricity, gas, gasoline, alcohol...)?
28. Do women and men have bank accounts or other types of financial services?
29. Do women and men have access to agricultural extension services, training programs, etc.?
30. What NGOs, local associations, women groups, cooperation's, UN agencies, etc., exists in the communities? What do they do or in what type of projects are they involved in?
31. What kind of social and productive activities are being developed by the women's organizations?
32. Is there some kind of enterprise you or your organization would be interested in developing or wanted to develop but could not for some reason or any current economic activity that you would like to upgraded or improve? In which way? Please explain.