

**CARIBBEAN**

**COMMUNITY**

**SECRETARIAT**

**TWENTY -EIGHTH MEETING OF THE  
STANDING COMMITTEE OF  
CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS**

**RESTRICTED**

**SCCS/2003/28/23**

**Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands**

**3-5 November 2003**

**3 November 2003**

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**COUNTRY REPORT -SURINAME**

**Attached for the attention of the Meeting is Suriname's Country Report.**

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## INTRODUCTION

The 28th meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians provides yet another opportunity for Suriname's **General Bureau of Statistics (ABS)**, which comes under the **Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation of the Republic of Suriname** to participate in a distinguished regional activity .

There are other producers of data and statistics in Suriname's National Statistical System, hence it is explicitly stated that this reRort relates only to the work of our Bureau and covers the period October 2002- September 2003. A "p" after some data indicates the provisional nature of that data!

Thanks to the Census Project (see Census Report to the RCCC), solutions to some of the problems threatening the ABS to fulfill its duties to the fullest, viz.

- An Obsolete Statistics Act (dates back to 1954 and relates only to Economic Statistics)
- Institutional weakness of the ABS

were mainly achieved, because the Bureau obtained a semi-autonomous Status in March 2003, we may look back on the period under consideration as fairly successful.

**On 5 August 2003, havoc struck! Because of arson in the vacant premises next doors the Offices of the ABS were almost completely destroyed by fire. Of the two Computer Networks with 58 computers, only 4 complete systems were salvaged. It turned out that the heat might still have damaged the machines as they perform unreliably. Most of our other equipment, as well as most of Census Questionnaires were also destroyed.**

**Per 01 October 2002 the ABS had a total staff of 92 (59 female and 33 male), and per 30 September 2003 this was 89 (58 female and 31 male).** The Bureau did not succeed in obtaining qualified staff during the period considered. In fact, several qualified staff members have already given notice that they prefer their status as a civil servant to a status as staff member of Foundation ABS. Most likely, the way the Bureau is being treated after the fire has influenced their decision.

## **WORK PROGRAMME 2002.10-2003.09**

The period under consideration was strongly dominated by Population Census Activities. As the Census was a matter of all hands on deck, many sections were downscaled to the bare minimum staff necessities. Still, the Bureau succeeded in keeping selected other statistics up-to-date as much as possible.

### **ECONOMIC STATISTICS**

National Accounts: GDP in constant and current prices and other Macro Economic Aggregates compiled; available and disseminated up to 2002(p); Index of Building materials (weighted aggregate index, used as deflator for sub sector dwellings) disseminated up to May 2003(p).

Consumer Price Index: CPI compiled and disseminated up to June 2003(p). The section did succeed most of the time in releasing the CPI-information (5 sheets) within at most 21 days after the end of the reference month. The CPI Section is a major victim of the fire. Since 5 August no prices have been collected, hence no CPI and no corresponding inflation rate will be available for August, September and October 2003.

Enterprises Statistics: Besides the annual survey conducted for the benefit of National Accounts; Enterprises Statistics is engaged in compiling inter alia: Selected Indicators from Large Enterprises {i.e: Turnover, Labour Cost and Number of employees in ISIC 2-9 /last publication is of November 2002 with annual data up to 2001 and Quarterly data up to the second Quarter of 2002(p).

**Index of Industrial Production** data (about: Value and Volume of production as well as quantity and Unit-value indices), available up to 2001(p);

Statistics of Wages and Prices in the Construction Indus~; data (self-explanatory) available up to May 2003(p).

Trade Statistics: Imports, Exports and Re-exports by various points of view, (e.g. SITC; Country/Region of Origin and Destination) compiled up to 1995 (according to our old system) and as of 1996, up to February 2003 (sometimes provisional) data available in the new format. There are still some problems with the data. The relationship between our sections of Trade Statistics and EDP on the one hand and the Customs Office on the other hand, which had improved since 1998, can still be coined positive. Trade Statistics is

also a major victim of the fire. Our tailor-made software (ABSAS) is a network version and cannot run on stand alone computers, so for the time being ABS cannot address any Trade Statistics queries.

## **SOCIAL STATISTICS**

Population Statistics: Because of Population Census activities, this section does not perform any regular activities, but plays a central role in the Census Project execution. However, the section has population estimates, up to 2000 by various points of view. Because of the Census pressure, the duties of this Section in the CIMS/MNSDS programme were taken over by WOP.

Household Surveys (HHS): Is another major player in Census activities in the areas of Cartography and Field Operations in the Coastal Domain. As was reported earlier, household surveys information has been disseminated with information up to June 1999. As we noticed some problems with the results we sought and obtained an ILO intervention. The diagnosis was that indeed there is something wrong with our unemployment rate and concomitant statistics. Although we have information up to September 2002, these are not disseminated. The corrections suggested by the ILO consultant are waiting for the Census results to correct the sample inflation factors retroactively, and to improve the sampling frame as well.

Traffic and Transport Statistics: Compiled statistics about International Passenger traffic; Road, Air and Water traffic and transport; Infrastructure and Communication. The last publication with data up to 2000 was issued in December 2001, but data is available up to 2001. This section plays a crucial role in the Census Special Operations (Enumeration of Institutional Populations and Special Groups)

Social and Cultural Statistics: The Statistical Yearbook for 2001 with a variety of statistics ranging from Area and number of inhabitants to Government Finance was issued in November 2002. This section also plays a crucial role in the Census Special Operations so no external data providers are being supervised and assisted for the time being.

## **SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND PLANNING (=WOP)**

Coordinates the Publications Committee in which capacity it is now screening a draft of Trade Statistics, is busy revising the methodology on "imputations for non-response", as well as alleviating the problem of (unintended) disclosure when disseminating information, given the Suriname's small Economy and Society. WOP also plays a leading role in the activities towards implementation of SNA 93, and collaborates with subject-matter sections in carrying out special studies. WOP spearheaded the half-yearly publication: Basic Indicators (issued in December 2002 and in June 2003), containing information on Economic Indicators, Financial Indicators, Monetary Indicators and Social Indicators. In November

2002, in collaboration with Conservation International Suriname: Selected Environmental Statistics was produced.

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## **MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING**

(This paragraph is hampered by hard copies destroyed by the fire)

### OVERSEAS ACTIVITIES

In October 2002, the Coordinator Economic Statistics and a Programmer of the Bureau of Statistics participated in a seminar (on Database of External Trade and Transport Statistics) at the ECLAC Offices in Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago.

In October 2002, the Coordinator Social Statistics (and an Official from the Ministry of . Social Affairs and Housing) participated in a Workshop on Evidence-based Social Policy Formulation for Caribbean Sills in Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago

From the end of March 2003 to the beginning of July 2003, a senior staff member of WOP participated in the "Course on Statistics for Environmental Policy" at INWENT (Formerly CDG) in Germany.

### IN COUNTRY / IN HOUSE ACTIVITIES

-The internal (statistical and general training) presentations for selected members of staff, coordinated by WOP, was continued, be it on a lesser frequency than monthly. Interestingly, the GBS had held two sessions on Fire prevention (and Fire combating), with the Fire Department, during March 2002, and was continuously in contact with this Department in Planning for a. Building Evacuation Plan and a Fire Attack Plan. In the first Quarter of 2003 written advice was received from the Fire Department and in the second Quarter some measures were taken (inter alia purchasing fire extinguishers), but as we now know to no avail.

-From the 3rd Quarter of 2002 up to the 2nd Quarter of 2003 selected members of our EDP- section attended various training courses including: Advanced MS-Office Applications and Intermediate to Advanced Network Administration.

-On 5 and 6 November 2002 a Workshop on Environmental Statistics was held in the Krasnapolsky Hotel in Paramaribo. Ms. Reena Shah of the UNSD attended and made a presentation. The Workshop, which may be coined very successful (inter alia judged by newspaper headlines, by the comments of the participants and by the Resolution moved and adopted) was jointly organized by the ABS and Conservation International Suriname.

## MISCELLANEOUS

On 5 August 2003 a fire, started in the vacant building next doors, almost completely destroyed the premises of the ABS. As of 18 August selected Sections and Officials {Financial Affairs and Personnel, Part of National Accounts plus part of WOP, Part of EDP , the Director and his Secretary) were housed in 3 little rooms and 1 large room provided by the Auditor General in his Offices. ABS also obtained five Pentium 2 computers from Central Bank of Suriname and with 10,000 US\$ direct aid from the IDB some more equipment {Fax machine, Photo copier, three Pentium 4 computers) could be acquired. The IDB also promised (in writing) 200,000US\$ to furnish the new Offices of the ABS, provided the Government provides the ABS with permanent suitable (i.e. preferably concrete) accommodation. So far several options have been evaluated, but up to the end of September 2003 no decision was taken yet. However, preparatory to being furnished with proper accommodation, the ABS started the bidding process for computers, air-conditioning units, office and computer furniture and the likes.

By the end of September 2003 the Government had not yet decided whether there is going to be a new Census in 2004 or whether the results salvaged from the fire will suffice.

In December 2002 the National Assembly approved the Statistics Act 2002 {SB 1997,2002) which changed the Status of the General Bureau of Statistics to a Government Foundation, with more administrative and budgetary autonomy. On 14 March 2003 the regulations of the Foundation were published and from 14 March 2003 to 14 September 2003 the ABS was in transition. However, because of the fire, through the Statistical Commission, we have asked for an extension of the transition period up to 14 March 2004. As we understood the draft to amend the Statistics Act is now with the State Council, pending submission to Parliament.

In March 1996 the contract for the Technical Cooperation Agreement between the Government of Suriname and the Inter-American Development Bank was signed. It was only in January 1997 that we could satisfy the last precondition, hence the Project that commenced administratively on the date the contract was signed, actually commenced on 18 February 1997 when the Project Coordinator began his duties. The components of this project .{training and equipment) are: Statistical Organization and

Management. National Accounts and Consumer Price Index. **The material achievements of this very successful project, were all lost after the fire, but the knowledge and the spirit that this project added to the ABS can never be lost. Interestingly, the IDD has proposed to alleviate the effects of the fire with funds (200,000\$) remaining from this TC.**

**The Process of subscribing to the IMF's GDDS**, which, was initiated in March 1998, was picked up again this year. However, this initiative was also severely hampered by the fire and thus we were forced to ask IMF to postpone a mission scheduled for November 2003 to March 2004. In the meantime, under difficult circumstances we are working on our Meta data.

**From August 2002 up to June 2003, the Bureau of Statistics collaborated with the (most popular) Daily Newspaper "De Ware Tijd" (DWT)** and issued several newspaper articles<sup>1</sup> on Statistics. After our contact at DWT left the newspaper for greener pastures, this very useful instrument that was also used to promote Census Activities, ceased to exist. It is envisaged that next year we shall try to re-establish and restructure the links.

From 3 to 5 July 2003, two members of Caricom's Statistics Programme visited Suriname to establish the SIMDG-committee. Because of a mishap, the activities of the very useful workshop were caught in a time-squeeze and the committee was not established. On Monday 28 July 2003, we finished the job and instated the committee on behalf of Caricom. The first meeting of the SIMDG-committee was planned for Thursday 7 August (as it was decided that the committee should meet every 1st Thursday of the month), when havoc struck on 5 August. Since the Bureau of Statistics is more or less disorganized after the fire, no meeting was held in September 2003 and none scheduled either for October 2003. However, on 6 November 2003 the first SIMDG-meeting will be held in the Conference Room of the Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation. The meeting will be chaired by the ABS CIMS/MNSDS Coordinator who is our alternate in the SIMDG/committee.

Finally, it should be mentioned that as a major image-building effort since 1999 the ABS successfully participates in the Annual Trade Fair organized in November 1999 by the Chamber of Commerce and Industries, needless to say, that this year ABS will be absent.

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<sup>1</sup> Topics dealt with include: Statistics: Importance for Policy and Planning, as well as principles and guidelines; Population Censuses in General, Population Censuses: Planning and Budgeting; Population Census 2003 Questionnaire; Consumer Price Index for the layman; Trade Statistics; The Poverty Gap.

## WORK PROGRAMME 2003.10-2004.09

It is worth noting that so far, the ABS only had a Release/Publications Calendar for selected sensitive statistics most notably the CPI, and has experimented with a complete Release Calendar. The Work Programme October 2003 to September 2004 and the Budget Proposal 2004 have been approved by the Statistical Commission. Subsequently the budget proposal was submitted without any cuts by Finance, to Parliament. The faith of ABS is in the hands of the members of Parliament.

**Subject to proper accommodation and concomitant provisions, the work programme is summarized in the tables below.**

Division/Project/Programme	October 2003 – March 2004
Economic Statistics (ES)	Restart regular activities; Produce and disseminate Quarterly Trade Statistics; Update Register of Enterprises; Release CPI and BPI and find solution to data gap problem; In collaboration with SS, prepare for a mini household budget survey to check on the basic basket and the weights of the present CPI. All statistics have to be advanced as applicable. (Monthly, Quarterly or Annually)
Social Statistics and SG/MDG (SS)	Restart regular activities and issue "Statistical Yearbook 2002; Issue Annual Statistics of Traffic and Transport; Collaborate with ES to prepare for mini household budget survey; Continue SG/MDG activities. All statistics have to be advanced as applicable (Monthly, Quarterly or Annually)
Scientific Research & Planning and Environment Statistics	Restart regular activities, in particular checking the Methodologies of the Statistics Sections and Screening of draft publications; Supervise publication of Basic Indicators; Issue Statistical Papers 2 and 3 (Collection of newspaper articles).
Population Census Project	Elaborate the PES+ sample so that if the decision is taken <u>not to redo the Census</u> some additional tabulations can be produced from the sample; Prepare for the replacement Census, either in March 2004 or April 2004; Issue 2 <sup>nd</sup> Preliminary Report with information at the Ressorten level and also information on Dwellings and Households;

Training Activities	Train staff in the fields of: ICT; PR and Publicity; Human Resource Management; Logistics and Statistics.
Miscellaneous	Finalize Meta data for all relevant ABS Statistics to enable participation in the GDDS; Liaise with Finance and Central Bank to produce remaining Meta data for GDDS; Extend or re-establish collaboration with Conservation International Suriname and “De Ware Tijd”.

Division/Project/Programme	April 2004 – September 2004
Economic Statistics	Continue regular activities; Produce and disseminate Quarterly Trade Statistics; Update Register of Enterprises; Release CPI and BPI and find solution to data gap problem; In collaboration with SS, execute a mini household budget survey to check on the basic basket and the weights of the present CPI. All statistics have to be advanced as applicable. (Monthly, Quarterly or Annually).
Social Statistics and SGE/MDG	Continue regular activities and issue "Household Surveys up to 2003"; Collaborate with ES to execute mini household budget survey; Continue SG/MDG activities. All statistics have to be advanced as applicable. (Monthly, Quarterly or Annually).
Scientific Research & Planning and Environmental Statistics	Continue regular activities, in particular checking the Methodologies of the Statistics Sections and Screening of draft publications; Supervise publication of Basic Indicators; Issue Selected Environmental Statistics.
Population Census Project	Based on the Government's decision either execute Replacement Census Fieldwork activities or produce publication based on PES+ sample; Assist Ministry of Agriculture with Cartography preparatory to the Agricultural Census.
Training Activities	Train staff in the fields of: ICT; PR and Publicity; Human Resource Management; Logistics and Statistics.
Miscellaneous	Update Meta data for all relevant ABS Statistics regarding participation in the GDDS; Liaise with Finance and Central Bank to update remaining Meta data for GDDS; Elaborate the collaboration with Conservation International Suriname and "De Ware Tijd".