

REPORT
TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS

**29TH MEETING,
HAMILTON, BERMUDA
22-24 November 2004**



SURINAME

General Bureau of Statistics of Suriname

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INTRODUCTION

The 29th meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians is 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 report relates mainly to the work of our Bureau and covers the period October 2003 - October 2004. A "p" after some data indicates the provisional nature of that data!

Since December 2002 a new Statistics Act is in place and since March 2003 the Bureau of Statistics obtained semi-autonomous status as a Government Foundation.

Per 01 October 2003 the ABS had a total staff of 89 (58 female and 31 male), and per 31 October 2004 this was 88 (58 female and 30 male). Apart from 4 field staff (3 for Household Surveys and 1 for Enterprises Statistics) attracted in June 2004, the Bureau did not try to obtain qualified staff during the period considered, because of accommodation problems up to February 2004 and an extended transition period up to 14 September 2004. The staff could opt to retain the civil servant status or to move along with the foundation (see paragraph INSTITUTIONAL for an elaboration).

WORK PROGRAMME 2003.10-2004.10

The period under consideration was strongly dominated by:

- a- Attempts to secure proper accommodation after the horrendous fire of 5 August 2003
- b- Preparations to resume normal activities
- c- Preparations to join the GDDS
- d- Preparations for and execution of the Seventh Population Census to replace the Sixth Population Census of which the base material was destroyed by the fire.

ECONOMIC STATISTICS

National Accounts: GDP in constant and current prices and other Macro Economic Aggregates compiled; available and disseminated up to 2003(p); Index of Building materials (weighted aggregate index, used as deflator for sub sector dwellings) available up to September 2004(p). The Section is busy revising GDP estimates for 2003 and preparing for the first attempt to estimating Quarterly GDP. The complete move to SNA 93 is hampered because of insufficient Source data, but with assistance from Statistics Netherlands it is hoped that the 2004 estimates will be according to SNA 93.

Consumer Price Index: CPI compiled and disseminated up to June 2003, resumed with March 2004 and disseminated up to October 2004. 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 the major victim of the fire. From 5 August 2003 up to 29 February 2004 no prices have been collected, hence no CPI and no corresponding inflation rate is available for July 2003¹ to February 2004.

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). The situation has not changed since last year's reporting, because of crippling non-response.

Index of Industrial Production has data (about: Value and Volume of production as well as quantity and Unit-value indices). Production of this temporarily abolished, because of crippling non-response and priority given to producing Quarterly GDP estimates.

The issue of non-response will be dealt with early next year, as it seems (judging from experience earlier this year) that the new Statistics Act gives sufficient support to persuade people to respond.

¹ Only data for the first 2 weeks of July was keyed in and hence saved from the fire, hence no July index could be produced!

Statistics of Wages and Prices in the Construction Industry; data (self-explanatory) available up to September 2004(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 June 2004 (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. However Custom's move to Asycuda ++ has given us a lot of problems. All the data (ASYCUDA, Mining Companies, Post Office and others) for the first 6 months of 2004 is completely in the system, but we are unable to pull them out.

The GBS is only responsible for Merchandise Trade Statistics and Trade in Services is the responsibility of Central bank. However, Trade in Services suffers from severe under-coverage as Central Bank reported that their only reporters are the Commercial Banks and the Airline Company Surinam Airways.

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 2003 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, especially 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 was something wrong with our unemployment rate and concomitant statistics. Although we had information up to September 2002, these were not disseminated. The corrections suggested by the ILO consultant, used the Census-2003 results to correct the sample inflation factors retroactively, and to improve the sampling frame as well and this resulted in acceptable estimates up to 2002. The provisional 2003 figures were released although the general feeling was that they were too low. It is hoped that the figures for the 1st Quarter 2004 will assist in correcting these figures.

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 2002. This section played 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 played a crucial role in the Census Special Operations so the supervision of and assistance to external data providers resumed only last month, especially with a view to produce the Statistical Yearbook 2003 by the end of this month! This is imperative, as a run from 1995 to 2002 was interrupted in the aftermath of last year's horrendous fire. A draft publication: Statistical Yearbook 2003 is presently with the publications Committee.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND PLANNING (=WOP)

Coordinates the Publications Committee in which capacity it is now screening a draft of Trade Statistics with annual data up to 2003 and a draft of the Statistical Yearbook 2003. WOP is also busy devising a methodology alleviating the problem of (unintended) disclosure when disseminating information, given 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, and which will be issued in November 2004, 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. This publication was scheduled for even years, hence it should have come out in November 2004. Because of the paucity of environmental data it is cancelled for this year and all efforts will be made to improve the data availability. Actually, the situation is so bad that it took ages to fill out the UNEP questionnaire with next to nothing of information.

Notwithstanding the paucity of information, we can also share with this meeting our plans to do some environmental accounting (NAMEA²) with the assistance of Statistics Netherlands.

Finally, it should also be mentioned that another weak area is the area of data availability is the ICT Sector. We had some questions on ICT in Census-6 out they were all left out for Census 2004. We added an extra sheet (on ICT and publicity) to the PES 2004 Questionnaire.

² National Accounts Module for Environmental Accounting

MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING

(Other than SCCS and RCCC activities)

OVERSEAS ACTIVITIES

From 6-10 October 2003 the Coordinator Social Statistics (CSS) and the Head of Electronic Data Processing (HEDP) of the ABS, participated in a Sub-regional workshop on Devinfo and Infolac in Haiti. The CSS participated in module 1 (for users of the system) and the HEDP in module 2 (for database managers).

From 15 March to 4 June 2004, the Deputy Head National Accounts Statistics of the ABS participated in the course: “Statistics for National Accounts” in Germany. With sadness we report that this seems to have been the last regular course of the renowned institution formerly known as CDG and now going by the name InWent. A lot of us have been fortunate to do a course at CDG, which was certainly beneficial to our careers, professionally and personally.

From 22-25 June 2004, the Director of Statistics participated in the Fourth Meeting of the Caricom Advisory Group on Social, Gender and Environment Statistics and Indicators in San Ignacio, Belize.

From 22-25 June 2004 the Deputy Head Population Statistics participated in a Seminar “Populations of the Amazon”, a Base for South-South Cooperation in Belem do Para.

From 24-25 June 2004 the Coordinator Economic Statistics (our alternate as Chair of the SIMDG Committee) participated in a ECLAC/CDCC Seminar on the Social Vulnerability Index in Port of Spain Trinidad and Tobago.

From 21-23 September 2004 a staff member Scientific Research & Planning (also a representative of the GBS in the SIMDG Committee) participated in the UNDP/CDB workshop on “Achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

From 20-24 September 2004 the Coordinator Economic Statistics participated in a CARTAC Eurotrace course in St. Lucia.

IN COUNTRY / IN HOUSE ACTIVITIES

- On 9 July 2004 an informative meeting was held with the Fire Brigade. It was very successful and the participating staff was both delighted and enlightened regarding different types of fires requiring a different type of attack.

- As of 1 October 2004, two members of staff of the EDP Section are being trained in Windows 2000 Network Administration. Needless to say that everybody being trained from the GBS budget or from donor funding needs to sign a declaration to the effect that he/she will remain with the foundation for at least 3 more years.

INSTITUTIONAL

In the aftermath of the fire, Parliament decided that it was justified to grant an extension to the staff of the GBS to decide whether they would move along with the Bureau in its new status or whether they would prefer to remain civil servants.

The situation after the ultimate choices in September 2004 is as follows:

Choice	Number	Percent
Foundation ABS	71	79.8
Civil Servant Status	18	20.2
Total	89	100.0

The situation seems OK, but in practice we are also losing some experienced field staff, while Public Relations and Information, the showpiece of the IDB Project: “Institutional Strengthening of the GBS” will be totally depopulated. In fact Management has to deal with the following matrix:

	GBS wants to retain	GBS doesn't want to retain	Total
Chosen Foundation ABS	66	5	71
Chosen Civil Servant Status	13	5	18
Total	79	10	89

With the help of the Commission for Statistics and the Ministry of PLOS we have embarked on a mission to try to convince people in the Grey cell that it would be wiser to stay with the Bureau, while we have agreed to keep those in the hatched cell for another year and watch if they make any progress.

After the fire, through the Ministry of PLOS, structural cooperation between GBS and Statistics Netherlands has been sought and while we are speaking the 2nd mission is taking place. The priority areas identified are: National Accounts, Quarterly GDP estimates, other Economic Statistics, Trade Statistics, Imputations for non-response and Environmental Accounting.

MISCELLANEOUS

On 5 August 2003 a fire, started in the vacant building next doors, almost completely destroyed the premises of the ABS. From 18 August 2003 to 13 February 2004, parts of the ABS operated from the premises of the Supreme Audit Institution (i.e. Rekenkamer) of Suriname. The destroyed building had circa 1100 m² floor space, while the 4 rooms we were obliged to use from Rekenkamer totaled 82 m².

In February 2004 we were able to obtain a new building and on 17 February 2004 we started therein. This building has circa 1250 m² floor space, sufficient for regular Statistical activities and the Census.

After the fire of 2003 the Bureau received material, financial and logistical support from several quarters, most notably: the City of Amsterdam and the IDB, which were the greatest outside contributors to furnishing the new office of GBS. Central Bank of Suriname also made some computers available. Major contributions to rebuilding the libraries of the GBS have come from: the American Statistical Association, Statistics Canada the British Society for Population Studies and the Erasmus University.

In June 2004, Suriname (lead by the GBS) finally joined the GDDS of the IMF. After we restarted on 17 February 2004 and after resumption of all our regular activities on 1 March 2004, we had several missions to Suriname, most notably the GDDS mission of IMF during 9-23 March 2004. We consider the fact that: GBS, Central bank and Ministry of Finance getting their Meta data ready, in time to join the GDDS in June 2004 as indeed a major achievement.

WORK PROGRAMME 2004.11-2005.10

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 year 2005 was supposed to be the year for presenting a full-fledged advance release calendar, but we do not feel strong enough, hence this will be postponed to next year.

The work programme is summarized in the tables below.

Work programme 2004.11 to 2005.03

Division / Project / Programme	November 2004- March 2005
Economic Statistics (ES)	Continue regular activities; Produce and disseminate Quarterly Trade Statistics; Update Register of Enterprises; Release CPI and BPI and try to 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 SIMDG (SS)	Continue regular activities and issue "Statistical Yearbook 2003"; Collaborate with ES to prepare for mini household budget survey; Continue SIMDG activities, particularly the production of Suriname's Baseline Report. All statistics have to be advanced as applicable. (Monthly, Quarterly or Annually)
Scientific Research & Planning and Environment Statistics	Continue regular activities, in particular checking the Methodologies of the Statistics Sections and Screening of draft publications; Supervise publication of Basic Indicators; Issue Statistical Papers 3 and 4.
Population Census Project	Continue processing of data, Preliminary Analysis of PES, produce report with Provisional Census 2004 data and launch report on 17 December 2004. Organize Closing Photo Session.
Training Activities	Train staff in the fields of: ICT; PR and Publicity; Human Resource Management; Logistics and Statistics.
Miscellaneous	Finalize Meta data updates for all relevant ABS Statistics for the GDDS; Liaise with Finance and Central Bank to produce remaining Meta data for GDDS; Re-establish collaboration with "De Ware Tijd" and extend cooperation with Conservation International Suriname

Work programme 2005.04 to 2005.10

Division / Project / Programme	April 2005 – October 2005
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 SIMDG	Continue regular activities and issue “Household Surveys up to 2004”; Collaborate with ES to execute mini household budget survey; Continue SIMDG activities and publish “Selected Gender Statistics 2”. 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; Update Environmental Statistics
Population Census Project	Continue processing for the benefit of final Census results, Produce additional publications and monographs, 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 GBS Statistics regarding participation in the GDDS; Elaborate the collaboration with Conservation International Suriname and “De Ware Tijd”.