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THIRTY FIRST MEETING
OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
OF CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS

RESTRICTED

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Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

6-8 November 2006

6 November, 2006

SURINAME COUNTRY REPORT

Please see attached Paper entitled “**Suriname’s Country Report**”.

REPORT
TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS

31ST MEETING,
Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago
6-8 November 2006



SURINAME

General Bureau of Statistics of Suriname

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INTRODUCTION

The 31st meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians is another important and valued 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 predominantly to the work of our Bureau and mainly covers the period October 2005 – September 2006. A "p" after some data indicates the provisional nature of that data!

As of December 2002 a new Statistics Act is in place, in March 2003 the Bureau of Statistics obtained semi-autonomous status as a Government Foundation and since June 2004 the GBS subscribed to the GDDS of the IMF. Clearly we are taking small but noticeable steps towards improvement.

Per 01 October 2005 the ABS had a total staff of 92 (59 female), and per 31 October 2006 this was 90 (57 female).

In June 2006 the Bureau was shocked by the unexpected and untimely death of its Manager Census Office, also the Deputy National Census Officer, Ms. B. Soedhwa (a.k.a. Meena). For 2 weeks the GBS was more or less paralyzed.

WORK PROGRAMME 2005.10-2006.09

The period under consideration was strongly dominated (in order of importance) by:

- a- Post Census Activities of the Seventh General Population and Housing Census**
- b- Continuation of the Human Resources Management Interventions**
- c- Producing as much as possible regular statistics in a timely matter**
- d- Expanding scope and coverage of the statistical activities of the GBS
- e- Streamlining the participation in the GDDS of the IMF

ECONOMIC STATISTICS

National Accounts: GDP in constant and current prices and other Macro Economic Aggregates compiled; available and disseminated up to 2005(p) since July 2006; Index of Building materials (weighted aggregate index, used as deflator for sub sector dwellings) available up to September 2006 (p). The Section is busy revising GDP estimates for 2000-2004 and wrestling with the preparation of the first Quarterly GDP estimates (years 2003-2005). For the classification of value added ISIC Rev. 3 is used (as recommended by SNA 93), but only at the highest level of aggregation. The complete move to SNA 93 is hampered by insufficient source data, but with some assistance from Statistics Netherlands the 2004 and 2005 estimates are a little closer to SNA 93 than their predecessors. Also noteworthy is the fact that in the process of producing Quarterly GDP estimates a SUT is being compiled. This exercise also suffers from poor availability of source data! It is to be expected that provisional results of the SUT exercise will be available by the end of November 2006. At that time, after not being available since 1996 (estimates up to 1994), the GBS will resume producing and disseminating expenditure on GDP estimates. No Satellite accounts are being produced or are envisaged in the short run by the GBS. (We want to support but not lead herein)

Consumer Price Index: CPI compiled and disseminated up to September 2006. The section did succeed so far in releasing the CPI-information (5 sheets) within at most 21 days after the end of the reference month. Lately we have been using both a press release as well as paid advertisements to disseminate the CPI as some newspapers repeatedly produce improper versions of our CPI press releases. Because of very high costs for advertising, the frequency of paid advertisements has been reduced from Monthly to Quarterly.

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 (SIFLE, comprises: 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). Even with a new Statistics act, non-response is still crippling. The section has partial data available up to June 2006 (p).

For Statistics of Wages and Prices in the Construction Industry; data (self-explanatory) is available up to August 2006(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 2006 (sometimes provisional) data available in the new format. There are still some problems with the data. The problems are the familiar ones: Customs not filling out the special measures (liters, pairs, number etc.) so we end up with kilos of shoes or cars or even beer! The Statistics Sub Directorate of the Bureau, supported by Scientific Research and Planning, is still studying possibilities of releasing detailed trade information to CARICOM whilst preserving confidentiality of traders, as we are legally obliged to do this!

The GBS is only responsible for Merchandise Trade Statistics and Trade in Services is the responsibility of Central Bank. Although the situation has improved since last year, Trade in Services still suffers from under-coverage. Previously Central Bank reported that their only reporters were the Commercial Banks and the Airline Company Surinam Airways. They now have (a lot) more reporters and have data available up to the 2nd Quarter of 2006.

As regards Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), responsibility is shared by the Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation (inclusive the semi-autonomous National Planning Office) and the Ministry of Finance. Apart from the projected share (circa 47%) of FDI that the Government wants to attract for co-financing the Multi-Annual Development Plan (MAD), the GBS has no information on this item.

SOCIAL STATISTICS

Population Statistics: Because of the 7th Population Census activities, this section has only resumed its regular activities in September 2005. However, the section has population estimates, up to 2005 by various points of view. Because of the Census pressure, selected duties of this Section were taken over by WOP. Also since the GBS has instated a permanent Census Office (since June 2005), a proper division of labour between Population Statistics and the Census Office resulted in a more efficient and effective operation of both units. Population Statistics is also crucial in assisting the Household Surveys section with

producing inflation factors for the Household Survey estimates. The Section also took the lead in producing a life table-2002 for Suriname, which is being vetted by selected Actuaries.

Household Surveys (HHS):

Is another major player in Census activities in the areas of Cartography and Field Operations, especially in the coastal area. As was reported earlier, household surveys information has been disseminated regularly 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 provisional 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 (covering the first half of the year) were released although the general feeling was that they were too low. However, there are now figures for the 4th Quarter of 2004 and the 1st Quarter of 2005, which more or less corroborate the 2003 figures! It should be emphasized that unemployment figures in Suriname only pertain to the District of Paramaribo (capital) and the District of Wanica. These districts are considered urban, albeit that Wanica certainly has some rural centers, and together they contain circa 67% of the total population of Suriname as at 2 August 2004. From mid October to mid November 2005 the section conducted an extended Household Survey with an expanded Questionnaire and covering one extra District, namely the District of Commewijne. The section has selected labour force information available up to the 4th Quarter of 2005. Since, together with the Coordinator Social Statistics, this section played a crucial role in the preparation and execution of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2006 (MICS-2006, as part of the worldwide MICS-3 round), there is no data available for the 1st Quarter of 2006 so the annual data for 2006 will only comprise three quarters.

Traffic and Transport Statistics: Compiled statistics about International Passenger traffic; Road, Air and Water traffic and transport; Infrastructure and Communication. This section played a crucial role in the Census Special Operations (Enumeration of Institutional Populations and Special Groups). A publication with data 1995-2004 was produced in February 2006 and issued in March 2006

Social and Cultural Statistics: The Statistical Yearbook for 2004 with a variety of statistics ranging from Area and number of inhabitants to Government Finance was issued in November 2005. A draft publication: Statistical Yearbook 2005 is presently being finalized and will be issued, as usual, by the end of November 2005 at the Annual Trade Fair of the Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND PLANNING (=WOP)

Coordinates the Publications Committee in which capacity it is now screening several draft publications. WOP is still busy finalizing 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, in June 2003, in November 2004, in October 2005 (supposed to be June 2005), and in June 2006. This (intended semi-annual) publication contains 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 was cancelled for 2004 and all efforts were made to improve the data availability. In May 2006 (after a consultation 1-day Workshop was held 31 March 2006) the second issue of Selected Environmental Statistics was produced and disseminated.

Gender Statistics seem to have a slightly better fate than Environment Statistics. The second publication for this topic, with most data up to 2004 (and some e.g. on election results, even up to 2005) was indeed released in early December 2005.

The Section is also very busy, together with a local consultant and the Ministries of Labour and Planning to prepare for the first large-scale (covering 6 of the 10 Districts) Informal Sector Survey of Suriname, of which the fieldwork will be conducted between 27 November and 16 December 2006. The final results have to be available by January/February 2007.

Finally, it should also be mentioned that another weak area is the area of data availability in the ICT Sector. We had some questions on ICT in Census-6 but they were all left out for Census 2004. We added an extra sheet (on ICT and publicity) to the PES 2004 Questionnaire. The information regarding publicity and ICT has not been processed yet as understandably priority is given to substantive Census Publications and to the Census Technical Evaluation Report.

CENSUS OFFICE:

Please see our: Report to the Regional Census Coordinating Committee (14th Meeting, Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, 9-10 November 2006), which will be made available later.

MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS, TRAINING, etc.

(Other than SCCS and RCCC activities)

OVERSEAS ACTIVITIES

From 24-28 October 2005 the Deputy Head of the Section of National Accounts participated in a meeting on “1993 System of National Accounts Update”, held in Caracas, Venezuela.

From 21-22 November 2005 the Deputy Director of Statistics participated in a meeting on “Assessment of Vital, Morbidity and Health Resources Statistics for the countries of the Americas, held in Argentina.

From 28-29 November 2005 a Staff member Scientific Research and Planning (WOP) participated in a meeting on “Environmental Information and Decision Making”, held in Cancun, Mexico.

From 8-9 February 2006 the Deputy Director of Statistics participated in a CARICOM-WIPO experts meeting on “Creative Industries and Intellectual Property”, held in Georgetown, Guyana.

From 7-10 March 2006 the Director of Statistics participated in the 37th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, held in New York, USA

From 27 April to 7 May 2006 the Deputy Director Research, Planning and Data Dissemination paid a Working visit, within the framework of the Collaboration between GBS-Suriname and CBS-Netherlands, to Statistics Netherlands.

From 1-2 May 2006 the Deputy Director of Statistics participated in a Workshop “Achieving the MDG’s and Human Development Objectives for the Caribbean Region – Making the NHDR and MDGR complementary processes”, held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

From 29-30 June 2006 a Staff member WOP and the Head of Population Statistics participated in a CARICOM Regional Workshop for Writers of National Census Reports and Directors of Statistics, held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The Head of Population Statistics represented the Director of Statistics in Suriname.

From 3 July to 11 August 2006 a Statistical Assistant of the Section of Population Statistics participated in the “Regional Workshop on Demographic Analysis, held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. We are grateful to CARICOM for this opportunity.

From 12-20 July 2006 The Coordinator Social Statistics (equivalent of a Divisional Head), also being the MICS Survey Coordinator, and the Head of Electronic data Processing, participated in a MICS-3 training Workshop, held in Panama City, Panama.

From 18-22 September 2006 a Programmer and the Assistant Network Administrator participated in a workshop on DEV Info 5, within the framework of MICS-3, held in Bridgetown, Barbados.

From 15-20 October 2006 the Head of Household Surveys (also in charge of Census Field Operations) and the Cartographer had a marvelous attachment in GIS/Cartography at the CSO of St. Lucia.

From 22-27 October 2006 the Head of Traffic and Transport Statistics, a member of the core Census Team, responsible for Special Operations and a statistician working in the Census Office, also a member of Census Special Methodology staff had a fabulous attachment in Special Operations and Training at CSO Bahamas.

The GBS wishes to express its sincere gratitude and thanks to both Mr. St. Catherine and his staff and to Mrs. Dorsett and her staff for these opportunities offered and hopes that other members will follow suit in offering attachment opportunities.

IN COUNTRY / IN HOUSE ACTIVITIES

From October to December 2005 the Human Resource Manager attended a training provided by Ernst & Young, on “Human Resources Instruments in Practice”.

From 1-9 December 2005 a Staff member WOP attended a Workshop/Training on “Health Sector Reform and Public Policy in Health and their implications for women’s Comprehensive Health”, provided by Pro-Health Suriname.

From 9-13 January 2006 the Deputy Director of Statistics, the Acting Coordinator Economic Statistics and the Head of National Accounts Statistics attended a CARTAC Training: “Macro-Economic Statistics for Economists”.

From 23-24 May 2006 the Coordinator Social Statistics and a staff member of Budget and Finance attended a Workshop offered by the Inter-American Development Bank on “The Bank’s Procurement Policy”.

From 21-24 August 2006 a team comprising the Deputy Director of Statistics, the Human Resources Manager, the Head of Enterprises Statistics and the Head of Traffic and Transport Statistics went to the District of Nickerie to provide training to the staff of the Branch Office of the GBS. The very intensive program of training is summarized below:

- a) Introduction to Ethics and Ethical Codes
- b) Basic Statistics (Definition, Objectives, Terminology, Types of Data collection)
- c) Instructions for interviewing (Preparation, introduction, Conduct of interview, etc.)
- d) Regular Household Survey (Background, Objectives, Survey Design, Cartography)
- e) CPI (CPI in general and Corrections for quality)
- f) Enterprises Statistics (Various data collection efforts, forms used, definitions)
- g) National Accounts (Transactions and Economic sectors, Economic Subjects, SNA-68, SNA-93 with its various accounts, problems in adhering to SNA-93)

INSTITUTIONAL

As of December 2002 a new Statistics Act (which still needs further refinement) is in place. In March 2003 the Bureau of Statistics legally obtained semi-autonomous status as a Government Foundation and formally concluded the transition period in September 2004. Some changes were carried through: creation of a Section of Internal Control, Splitting up Finance and Personnel into two Sections: Budget and Finance and a section Personnel Affairs, which was gradually upgraded to Human Resources Management. A permanent Census Office and a permanent Cartography Unit were created. The field force for household surveys was significantly improved and also transportation capacity was significantly increased. To attest to the success, response rates of the household surveys are now persistently over 70% (compared to below 50% before). Furthermore, because of the semi-autonomous status, also some other vacancies could be filled easier. During transition the Bureau was able to let most of its undesirable staff go, but also lost some desirable staff.

In May 2005 we signed a contract with a consultancy Bureau for Human Resources Management Interventions, covering: **Career Planning, Performance Evaluation and an Employment Package based on function description, function appraisal and a salary structure aimed at retaining good staff and being able to attract good/better staff**. The process was supposed to be concluded in December 2005, but it was only on 24 October 2006 that we received the stipulated final results in hard and soft copy. It is sad to say that we are still awaiting Cabinet's approval of the proposed salary structure, though all documentation was submitted in August 2006.

In September last year we signed the first Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Trade Union representing the majority of personnel at the GBS. In August this year, after some labour unrest and after having to appear before the Mediation Board for Suriname a few times the 2nd Collective Bargaining Agreement was signed with the GBS Trade Union.

On 1 January 2007 the GBS will celebrate its 60th anniversary. For this joyful and memorable event a year-program of activities commencing on 19 November 2006 and hopefully to be concluded in November 2007 with the organization of the 32nd SCCS has been developed.

MISCELLANEOUS

In March last year, Central Bank of Suriname initiated monthly "interdepartmental" meetings, comparable to the SIMDG meetings, but focusing on selected economic statistics. The aim is to improve cooperation and to harmonize statistics of all actors. Participating organizations are: Central Bank, GBS, Planning Office, PLOS, Supreme Audit Institution of Suriname, Government Debt Management Office and Ministry of Finance. This initiative, has improved the information flow from Government institutions to the GBS somewhat.

WORK PROGRAMME 2006.10-2007.11

Again, it is worth noting that so far the ABS (GBS) only has a Release/Publications Calendar for selected sensitive statistics most notably the CPI, and has experimented with a complete Release Calendar. Initially the year 2005 was supposed to be the year for presenting a full-fledged advance release calendar to all stakeholders. This was postponed to 2006, but we still do not feel strong enough, hence this will be postponed to the jubilee year of the GBS 2007. 01 January 2007, marks the 60th birthday of the GBS. Please note that internally we do use a complete advance release calendar, which is used to evaluate performance of individual sections and of individual staff.

The work programme is summarized in the tables below.

Work programme 2006.10 to 2007.03

Division / Project / Programme	October 2005- March 2006
Economic Statistics (ES)	Continue regular activities; Produce and disseminate Quarterly Trade Statistics; Update Provisional Register of Enterprises; Release CPI and BPI and try to find solution to data gap problem; In collaboration with WOP, prepare and execute an Enterprises Census. All statistics have to be advanced as applicable. (Monthly, Quarterly or Annually)
Social Statistics and SIMDG (SS)	Continue regular activities and issue "Statistical Yearbook 2005; Collaborate with WOP to finalize MICS-2006. Continue SIMDG activities, particularly the production of Suriname's MDG Report. All statistics have to be advanced as applicable. (Monthly, Quarterly or Annually). Assist Ministry of Agriculture with preparation and execution of the next Agricultural Census.
Scientific Research & Planning and Environment Statistics (WOP)	Continue regular activities, particularly checking the Methodologies of the Statistics Sections and Screening of draft publications; Supervise publication of Basic Indicators and Statistical Papers; In collaboration with inter alia Ministries of Labour and Planning prepare and execute an Informal Sector Survey in 6 of the 10 Districts, Support SS in finalizing MICS-2006; Support ES in preparation and execution of Enterprises Census. Conduct 2 nd Customer Satisfaction Survey. Coordinate the implementation of the Regional Statistical Programme
Population Census Project and/or Census Office	Finalize cleaning database, finalize reports with final results: District Results Vol. V, Technical Evaluation Report, Archive Population Census procedural history, finalize Admin Report, Continue with Post Census Strengthening (training, internships, etc.)
Training Activities	Train staff in the fields of: ICT; PR, Customer Satisfaction and Publicity; Human Resource Management; Cartography follow-up: Data collection, Logistics; Sampling and Statistics.
Miscellaneous	Prepare and execute activities within the framework of the 60th Anniversary of the GBS Update Meta data updates for all relevant ABS Statistics for the GDDS; Liaise with Finance and Central Bank to produce remaining Meta data for GDDS.

Work programme 2007.04 to 2007.11

Division / Project / Programme	April 2006 –September 2006
Economic Statistics	Continue regular activities; Produce and disseminate Quarterly Trade Statistics; Update Register of Enterprises (based on results of ES-Census); Release CPI and BPI and find solution to data gap problem; Prepare and Execute Household Budget Survey in collaboration with SS and WOP All statistics have to be advanced as applicable. (Monthly, Quarterly or Annually)
Social Statistics and SIMDG	Continue regular activities; Collaborate with ES and WOP to prepare and conduct Household Budget Survey 2007/2008; In collaboration with Census Office produce Population Projection 2004-2024. All statistics have to be advanced as applicable. (Monthly, Quarterly or Annually)
Scientific Research & Planning and Environmental Statistics (WOP)	Continue regular activities, in particular checking the Methodologies of the Statistics Sections and Screening of draft publications; Supervise publication of Statistical Papers and Basic Indicators; Advance information on Gender and Environmental Statistics. Collaborate with ES and SS for Household Budget Survey; Coordinate the implementation of the Regional Statistical Programme
Population Census Project and/or Census Office	Produce Census monographs; In collaboration with SS produce Population Projection 2004-2024; Archive Population Census procedural history.
Training Activities	Train staff in the fields of: ICT; PR, Customer Satisfaction and Publicity; Human Resource Management; Cartography follow-up: Data collection, Logistics; Sampling and Statistics.
Miscellaneous	Continue and conclude activities within the framework of the 60th Anniversary of the GBS Update Meta data for all relevant GBS Statistics regarding participation in the GDDS; Look for other partnerships comparable to the one with Conservational International Suriname;

CLOSING REMARKS

CARICOM was founded in 1973 and celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2003. Assuming the SCCS was indeed held in each and every year, it can be inferred that SCCS-meetings commenced in 1976, hence it seems to have taken the region's Policy Makers circa 3 years to realize that **policy without sound statistics is impossible**. A concerted effort to undertaking Population and Housing Censuses is even a more recent phenomenon. The counter stands at 14. However, we strongly feel that harmonizing Statistics and Integrating our Societies is the way to go.

In 1997, when I attended my first ever SCCS in St Lucia, I said **"I'm here to stay"**. Since then I have missed the SCCS only once! In my opinion it is clear that the Statistics Programme of the CARICOM and the SCCS are here to stay.

Finally, I'd like to say: God willing, I'll See you all next year in Paramaribo-Suriname for SCCS-32.