



INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT BUREAU

**WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT
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COMMITTEE A

Suriname

CONTRIBUTION ON GENDER ISSUES

Firstly, we commend the ITU-BDT for not hesitating to follow the United Nations and many of its specialized agencies in examining the imbalance between genders on all fronts.

The initiatives of the United Nations agencies should serve as an important impetus for us to strongly support and enhance the possibilities those telecommunications facilities and services provide for men and women.

Being aware of the need to address gender issues more specifically, has been a matter which has started to evolve in Suriname some time ago.

In Suriname with a population of about 400 000 people, there are about 20 institutions and/or organizations, for years now very actively dealing with gender issues. These organizations could be categorized as follows: interest groups, production development and expertise development groupings.

The issues which are dealt with could be identified as follows:

- economic empowerment and independence or self-sufficiency, focusing on the enhancement of the position of women in the labour market;
- participation in politics, in order to be able to take part in the local, national and international decision-making process, focusing on getting more women in more positions where policies are being made and end decisions are being taken;
- legal empowerment, focusing on the awareness of women's rights issues.

To achieve the aforementioned goals, these organizations and institutions are continuously striving to empower women by organizing training, round-table meetings, radio and TV programmes, newsletters, workshops, seminars and exhibitions with themes such as "women in business" and "women in technical jobs".

In addition, women's groups and also governments have placed many efforts in implementing the action plan of the 1995 UN Conference on Women's Rights, held in Beijing.

Also our Government has recently established a bureau for gender policies/affairs, headed by a woman, in its Ministry of Internal Affairs, as a follow-up to preparation that started in 1995.

As far as the telecommunication sector is concerned, we feel that there is much to be done to further enhance the position of women as users, as well as providers of telecommunication facilities and services.

Therefore we must make telecommunication facilities and services available to all of mankind and in doing so support the efforts of implementing universal service.

Additionally, these services are to be made accessible for all women, meaning at affordable prices.

In this framework, let us exchange views on how community telecentres in rural areas could be made more readily and easily available to women for women. And in doing so making the centres a medium for empowerment of women to address issues such as women's rights, health care, education and leadership.

These telecommunication facilities and services will provide additional opportunities for women, which in turn will contribute to closing the existing gap between genders.

Telecommunications as a vehicle for sustainable development will be better served if all inequalities in gender is eliminated, as much as possible.

Suriname has mandatory schooling for all, up to 15 years so there is equality as far as schooling is concerned. Women head many households, still at the decision-making level the inequality exists.

Suriname would therefore urge the BDT to address, through its programmes the stimulation of gender equality in all fields as part of its human resource development efforts, through education and assistance for women.

With the help of existing and emerging technologies, we believe that in empowering women, the gap between the rich and poor can sooner be narrowed if not closed.

Finally, we would like to quote the following statement of Mrs. C.J. Walker "Don't sit down and wait for the opportunities to come; you have to get up and make them".
