Thirty-eighth meeting of the Presiding Officers
of the Regional Conference on Women in
Latin America and the Caribbean

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REPORT PREPARED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES
Report
Netherlands Antilles
XXXVIII Meeting of Presiding Officers of the
Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and
the Caribbean

Review and analysis of activities carried out by the
government of the Netherlands Antilles during the period
November 2004 – July 2005
Within Framework of Mexico City Consensus

Directorate of Social Development
August 2005
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1 Introduction

The political structure of the Netherlands Antilles comprises a National or Central government and 5 island or local governments.

At the central government level, the Directorate of Social Development is directly charged with the development of a National Gender Policy and with executing gender mainstreaming at national level throughout the government apparatus.

The government of the island territories of the Netherlands Antilles is the executing counterparts of the National government per island. The Directorate of Social Development works closely with the Women’s Desks on St. Maarten and St. Eustatius and the Women’s Bureau in Curaçao.

The other two islands, Saba and Bonaire, do not have an agency as focal point yet but have appointed one person as liaison to the Directorate.

In the following some of the more salient issues dealt with in the aforementioned period of time will be highlighted.

2 Human trafficking

In the second half of 2004 an exploratory research project was carried out in the Netherlands Antilles by the IOM (international Organization of Migration) on human trafficking with special emphasis on women and children.

The government of the Netherlands Antilles is greatly preoccupied by the findings and has committed itself in combating human trafficking. To this end a committee consisting of government agencies, the police and immigration services, women’s NGO’s, immigrants organizations, consular bodies and other relevant organizations was set up to develop and implement a national policy to combat human trafficking. The IOM is also working directly with the government and the committee and has held several targeted training and capacity building sessions with government officials and other professionals.
The training and capacity building sessions focused on awareness raising, information campaigns, counter-trafficking and the development of practical response to networking, and national action planning.

3 Poverty reduction programme

The government of the Netherlands Antilles has secured funds from the government of the Netherlands to undertake a poverty assessment in order to develop a comprehensive and structured poverty reduction strategy for all the five islands of the Netherlands Antilles. Poverty reduction has been a priority for the Netherlands Antilles for some time and several programs and projects executed by the government and NGO’s focus on different aspects of poverty. It is clear though that there is no comprehensive program or strategy yet that looks at the problem in a structured and holistic manner although per island several plans and projects have been presented and implemented. But still a nationally synchronized programme is necessary to achieve overall effectiveness. Therefore the national government has chosen to focus on a Poverty Reduction Strategy that will be carried out with the support of the World Bank and the UNDP. The Minister of Health and Social Development has been appointed the coordinator of this poverty reduction programme.

The program is divided into the following five phases:

1. Pre-survey/quick scan
2. survey
3. Poverty profiles
4. Poverty Assessment and Poverty Reduction Strategies
5. Action Plans over a twenty four month period

As of date the first phase, the quick scan has been carried out and the results are being presented on the five islands for feedback.

It is already clear from this and other studies and data that also in the Netherlands Antilles poverty has a female face. Most of the persons on welfare (70%) are women and forty percent of households are female headed households.
4 Ageing

What increases the relevance of ageing from the perspective of gender is the fact that comparatively the category of the elderly comprises more women than men. In 2004 the Commission to study the Livability of Old Age presented its findings and recommendations to the National Government.

The task of the Commission was stated as follows:

A. Discuss and produce concrete proposals concerning among other things the following subjects:
   1. Solidarity with the elderly under the subsistence level,
   2. Restructuring pension system,
   3. Restructuring health care insurance;
B. Review these proposals with representatives of social partners and grassroots groups;
C. Supply the Minister of Public Health and Social Development with a final proposal concerning the livability of old age in our society.

The recommendations of the commission:

Objective 1: Solidarity with olds below the existence minimum

Recommendations for action:

a) The Commission advises emphatically that attention should be paid to the fact that by law children are obliged to take care of their aging parents.

b) The Commission proposed that the Central Office for Statistics in cooperation with e.g. the University of the Dutch Antilles perform rationally sound studies and calculations of the minimum needed for adequate living standard.

Objective 2: Restructuring the pension system

Recommendations for action:

a) Introduce a mandatory supplementary pension of insurance for employees in the private sector, so that everyone that works can build
up and finally enjoy a reasonable pension from former labour activity in addition to the General Old Age pension (AOV)

b) Gradually increase the age of retirement from 60 to 62 years over a transitions period of ten years.

c) Impose:
   • **Stringent control on premium payment.**
   • **Abolish the release possibility for ex-patriates.**
   • **Introduce an extra fund formation through a 10% turnover tax for casinos.**
   • **Structure the control of the destination of the General Old Age pension payments.**

**Objective 3: Restructuring health care insurance**

Recommendation for Action:

1. Introduce a General Health insurance Program.

A number of components need closer research and calculations which could not be performed by the Commission. The Directorate of Social Development is in charge of guiding the process of getting the experts necessary to carry out these and other recommendations.