INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

POLICY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HOUSING – SoZaVo

SURINAME

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Introduction

This Institutional Capacity Building report is the result of the assessment of the Ministry's capacities to conduct, implement and evaluate results of the social policies and to identify capacity assets and needs within the Ministry in regards to Policy Formulation and Policy Implementation as a basis to develop recommendations for enhancing the use of policy, including human resources management and institutional capacity issues.

The assessment included two workshops, (Scoping and Assessment and Policy Design workshops with near 90 participants from SoZaVo managers and officers and external stakeholders like the UNDP, UNICEF and IDB), meetings with the Task force group (Senior SoZaVo officers related to Policy formulation and implementation), and interviews with key managers and stakeholders (like the Permanent Secretaries of SoZaVo and Ministry of Education, IDB and UNDP representatives, the VPSI or NGO Organization)

In conducting the assessment, we followed the UNDP capacity assessment framework in particular key functional capacities like Policy Design and Strategy Formulation; Planning; resources and budget allocation; monitoring, evaluation and learning among others and considering the evaluation for each one of the four core issues that contribute to capacity namely Institutional Arrangements, Leadership, Knowledge and Accountability.

The objective of this document is to identify gaps in the human resources and institutional capacity and to provide recommendations to strengthen the capacities of the Ministry for Policy formulation and implementation.

The report is organized as follows:

First part: presents the results of the Capacity Assessment divided into assessment of capacities for policy formulation and assessment for policy implementation.

Second part: Is referred to the Capacity Building Plan and is organized in three parts including recommendations for Capacity building in:
- Policy formulation,
- Policy Implementation and
- Policy and Institutional Monitoring and Evaluation.

Each part describes the objectives and the recommended strategies to overcome the gaps and limitations observed through the assessment.

Finally, a conclusion that summarizes the views and results of the consultancy work.

1 Part 1: Assessment

The results of the institutional capacity assessment are summarized in the next sub-chapters that reflect the main findings and observations.

In general we observed a reduced overall planning capacity or poorly implemented results orientation instruments capable of linking all units together toward one common goal; a weak program monitoring, evaluation and related reporting and insufficient provision of advanced training in policy and organizational areas affecting institutional knowledge building, accountability and leadership.

1.1 Assessment for Policy Formulation

The assessment exercise identified the following outstanding findings:

1.1.1 Mandates and regulations don't sufficiently detail the scope of SoZaVo's responsibilities

The current mandate and regulations don't describe in sufficient detail the role and responsibilities of SoZaVo as policy authority of social protection policies, allowing the ministry to directly engage or focus more its efforts on being a service provider. Meanwhile it seems that less efforts or resources are devoted for instance to coordinating policies and actions with other ministries or related public and private organizations.

1.1.2 Targeting Population for Social Programs is not clearly identified

There is a recognized problem of leakage and under coverage of social services mostly originated in a lack of unified criteria of the primary beneficiaries of social policies. The absence of a formal definition of the dimensions of poverty and of the country's poverty line in terms of household income or consumption hinders the focalization of SoZaVo´s policies and programs towards the neediest and most vulnerable.

1.1.3 Shortcomings and difficulties in regard to the use and application of statistics and data

The Ministry faces a shortage of appropriate statistics and data for policy formulation and policy implementation that prevents SoZaVo to have more precise goal indicators for the analysis and evaluation of policy results and impacts. It is noticeable in some cases when reviewing performance or results indicators, that there is not a baseline information that allows the

appropriate measure of achievements in documents like the Policy Note, the Multi-year Development Plan or the Work Plans.

1.1.4 SoZaVo's Information System –SIS- not fully implemented.

The SoZaVo's Information System SIS is still in the implementation stages. At the moment the SIS is capable of compiling information of programs beneficiaries provided through the District offices. However because of the lack appropriate ICT equipment and training the reporting from field offices is still manual and the communications are difficult so the System has failed to provide updated information in real time. Furthermore the System operation faces infrastructure difficulties such as a very limited internet service in some SoZaVo Districts as well as the absence of adequate ICT equipment like servers and computers that prevents the SIS to regularly provide comprehensive reports. So it is still difficult for instance to have a comprehensive and complete electronic database of all current beneficiaries of SoZaVo's social programs or to have immediate access to this information through authorized personnel.

The need of complementing the capabilities of the SIS system has been underestimated among other things because of the weak monitoring and reporting culture within SoZaVo. Another challenge is the lack of appropriate training on Management Information Systems supported by a manual and guidelines that fits SIS's requirements.

1.1.5 Insufficient training in the Results Based Management Approach delivered:

SoZaVo has been doing efforts to provide training in areas related to policy and management control addressed to endow pertinent officers with adequate capacities to manage, analyze and use statistics and data. Such capacities would contribute to enhance their understanding of the problems affecting the poor, and to translate them into policy objectives and goals that can be measured, monitored and evaluated. In fact the Ministry recently organized and delivered training in Policy Formulation and the Results Based Management approach mainly for the policy and planning officers.

However such training has not been translated into new planning methods and procedures within the organization. There are still broad areas of personnel that need to be trained so they can contribute to achieve SoZaVo´s goals and to foster professionalism in social services delivery. It is a must that SoZaVo introduces new planning forms and procedures based on this approach across the entire organization so that each unit can link its activities to the specified policy goals of the ministry and can also monitor and report on the progress made.

1.2 Assessment of capacities for Policy Implementation

Planning is the process of setting policy objectives and goals, developing strategies, outlining the implementation arrangements and allocating resources to achieve those goals. Planning involves looking at a number of different processes:

- Identifying the vision, goals or objectives to be achieved,
- Formulating the strategies needed to achieve the vision and goals,
- Determining and allocating the resources (financial and other) required to achieved the vision and goals,
- Outlining implementation arrangements, which include the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating progress towards achieving the vision, policy objectives and goals.

The planning process should lead to prepare a plan that can be implemented, monitored and evaluated, that translate policy objectives into work plans and budgets with results and performance indicators of outcomes and contribute to build a Results Based Management culture to place the emphasis on development (outputs) rather than organizational (inputs) results.

1.2.1 SoZaVo counts with adequate policy documents

Multi-year development Plan:
This plan is developed every five years when the government changes over, and describes the general goals of the Ministry and the way these goals will be realized. The previous Government developed the Multi-year development Plan 2006-2011- Strategy for Sustainable Development- that, according to the document, constituted the framework for development in the widest sense of the word. It is a state document, a national guideline for the Government, Private Sector, Non-Governmental Organizations and other Social Actors. The Plan provides insight in the long-range policy.

The document is an strategic plan based on policy intentions stated in the policy notes of the 17 Ministries and consultations with the national development partners of the Government (private sector, civil society/NGO's and labor unions) and other relevant social actors

Chapter 5 "Social and Human Development" explain the Government's policy intentions for the period 2006-2011 within the following four policy areas: poverty reduction, education and community development, health care and social protection. For each area the chapter describes the policy, the commitments of the government and the implementation strategies; then an Activity Matrix describes the general objective of the policy area, the Sub-objective(s), Measures Indicators and the Ministry/ Authority in charge.

SoZaVo is the Ministry/ authority responsible along with other ministries like Health and Education for some of the sub-objectives, but in particular the policy area under chapter 5.4 "Improvement of Social Protection" where SoZaVo is the leading authority responsible.

Sub-chapters 5.4.1 "Welfare Stimulation" and 5.4.2 "Housing" reflects the two main areas that the Ministry is divided.

Policy Note:
For the purpose of the Multi-year development Plan 2006-2011, SoZaVo developed the Policy Note of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing that shows the Ministry's organization divided in two directorates, Social Affairs and Housing, and describes for each one policy principles, vision, mission and policy activities, the support or administrative services, the research and planning function and the monitoring and evaluation responsibilities.

1.2.2 SoZaVo has not established an Institutional (strategic) Plan

The Ministry hasn't produced a comprehensive institutional strategic work plan to develop year by year the Policy Note and the Multi-year Development plan 2006-2011, connecting the policy with general institutional objectives, specific objectives per Unit and per program, main activities per program and an estimated budget.

The lack of this key document has created disconnection at the strategic level between the Policies, the General /institutional Objectives (mandate, multi-year development plan) with the Annual objectives and their respective expected results at Ministry level.

The work performed by SoZaVo developing the Policy Note and the content of the policy itself provide the necessary background information to build a robust Comprehensive Strategic Work Plan. Such a Strategic Plan will help in connecting the policy documents with the construction of institutional results and budgets to achieve the expected policy objectives. It will help to identifying the funding sources for the social and housing programs, the amount of money needed or the distribution of resources for every year in a sequence connecting this expenditure vs. expected results every year during the 5 year period (strategic approach).

So it is important to generate a document or Strategic Plan that develop and link the Policy Note, the Multi-year development plan and the funds needed and the sources to execute the policies on a yearly basis during the five year's period of the Multi-annual plan.

1.2.3 SoZaVo has not established an Operational (annual) Plan

SoZaVo hasn't developed an Annual Operational Plan (from the comprehensive –strategic- plan) that links and develop in detail the strategic objectives per unit established in the Policy Note and in the Multi-year development plan, linking them with specific program objectives and their respective activities, results indicators, baseline information, including an overview of the past fiscal year's performance, risk analysis, significant limitations or constrains and relevant achievements.

If the Ministry doesn't have the Operational Plan, the effect is the lack of background information to support the development of annual objectives and activities and the establishment

of appropriate performance /results indicators. Besides, there are not Yearly Operational Plans per division as such.

1.2.4 SoZaVo´s existing Work Plan Matrixes can not sufficiently connect operations with strategic objectives

During the past 4 years, SoZaVo has worked on two annual work plans initiatives at the matrix level: the Policy Note Activities Matrix 2006 – 2008 and the Work plans established in 2008. Reviewing the content of the Work plan matrix in use, it identifies the following key elements:

- Name of the Program,
- Mission (objective),
- results description with indicators and meanings of verification,
- description of the activity,
- who is responsible,
- who carries out,
- the budget allocated for the activity, and
- the quarter of the year where the activity would take place.

The Work plan matrix constitutes a solid base for management control and reflects a positive progress in establishing a results-Based Management approach.

The Work plan matrix is a natural linking point between the Annual Operational Plan and the Budget. However its output indicators are not connected to institutional /annual objectives and there is absence of formal monitoring, evaluation and reporting on performance and achievement of results that indicates the status of the implementation of the work plan.

The Work plan results indicators are not exactly following the SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) affecting monitoring and evaluation actions.

The Work Plan matrix is a good instrument to follow up on annual expected Program results on quarterly basis. However it is still a matrix that needs a text form (Annual Plan) that links the strategic policy and expectations with the annual ones, showing the description of the program, the risks, weakens and successes and an strategy of implementation for the current fiscal year.

1.2.5 Budgeting process basically in compliance with the standard practices:

The Budget is basically in compliance with the standard practices in financial terms, is program oriented and separates the current and investment expenditure.

It's divided in four titles. Title I refers to Administrative expenditure including payroll, Title II refers to Policy Programs (total 16 programs), Title III the Revenue Budget (non-tax revenue, donors revenue and loans), and Title IV Parastatalen, that group the foundations that are

responsible as policy supporting bodies intended to promote the effectiveness and efficiency in policy implementation mostly, like LISP or AOV.

The Budget also presents an analysis per program and includes a table that describes the activities, the total budget allocated per activity and the amounts originated in Local and /or donor contributions.

There is another table that presents a comparative analysis of the expected policy/program outcomes of the previous year (analysis on what was achieved) and the expected policy program outcomes of the current fiscal year.

Budget process: Every year in May, SoZaVo receives a request form the MOF to develop a budget for the upcoming year. The request includes the guidelines for the budget, its formulation process ant the maximum amount available to the Ministry.

Several meetings within the Ministry are organized with the Permanent Secretary, the Deputy Directors and embers of the Research & Planning (R&P) and Financial Affairs departments. In these meetings, the previous year's budget is evaluated and the available budget allocated by the MOF for SOZA is discussed. This budget is then divided among the several sub directorates within the ministry. Sub directorates may submit special requests for the new budget.

All sub directorates use the previous year's budget in combination with current year's activities as the basis for the formulation of the new budget. Representatives of several departments and social services within the sub directorates are involved in the formulation process. Meetings are organized and heads of departments are asked to formulate budgets for their departments. At the end of this process, the Department of Financial Affairs gathers all of the separate budgets and organizes a meeting with the Permanent Secretary and the Deputy Directors to discuss the budgets and to finalize the overall budget. In case of exception more money can be added on the budget.

The Policy Officer and the Research and Planning Division are involved in the process providing assistance and advise respectively.

The budget, as proposed by SoZaVo, contains the funds needed for next year's activities, but also the general policy measures and social services delivered by SoZaVo. [1]

1.2.6 The budget formulation process is not used completely as a planning tool

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[1] *Source: Institutional and Organizational SSN Assessment report – Observatorio Social.*

The budget formulation process is not used completely as a planning tool since SoZaVo doesn't have the Strategic and /or Operational plans, and there is not a formal annual evaluation report on institutional performance.

As a consequence there is not clear link between the Budget and the Multi-annual development plan. The budget focus besides the financial aspect is more Activities (outputs) oriented than outcomes or impacts oriented.

There is no input from official statistical data to be used to budgetary allocations (Kairi Report). It affirms that the delivery systems would be further enhanced if proper budgetary allocations are made based on input from official statistical data.

There is still no clear policy or system of costing of services provided per program and its related responsible unit; the evidence suggested that the amount budgeted is inadequate to cover the demand for services. It can therefore be reasonably concluded that policy formulation is not evidence based. [2] The Ministry is also unable to provide an overview of the costs for Department, unit or service.

The Ministry has not fully developed performance indicators so it is difficult to link the expenditure or revenue in the budget with their respective objective(s), results indicators, activities and the direct person responsible for the program affecting appropriate accountability.

1.2.7 SoZaVo's Monitoring and Evaluation system is not in place.

Monitoring is an ongoing process by which management at the Ministry and other stakeholders obtain regular feedback on the progress being made towards achieving its goals and policy objectives. Monitoring is not only reviewing progress made in implementing actions or activities but also reviewing progress against achieving goals.

On the other hand Evaluation is a rigorous and independent assessment of either completed or ongoing activities to determine the extent to which they are achieving stated policies and objectives and contributing to decision making.

The distinction between the two is that evaluations are done independently to provide managers and staff with an objective assessment of whether or not they are on track. However, the aims of both, monitoring and evaluation are very similar: to provide information that can help inform decisions, improve performance and achieve planned results.

The Policy Note stated that to monitor the implementation of the Policy, it is important that a monitoring mechanism should be established within the Ministry. This mechanism will have to prepare assessments and progression, and should identify bottlenecks. The coordination of the monitoring mechanism is the Director of Social Affairs and the Housing Director. Annual evaluations of the implementation of the Policy are part of the monitoring process. Redirection of policy actions can thus be achieved and adjusting policy actions

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[2] Source: Kairi report

Annual evaluations SoZaVo has not followed the policy note that ask the Ministry to conduct annual evaluations basically related to the extent which expected results stated in the Policy and in the Multi-year Development Plan 2006-2011 has been achieved.

SoZaVo has not yet developed a comprehensive M&E system and procedures to carry out monitoring activities and to conduct periodic (at least once a year) evaluations at the institutional level and at the programs (units) level, and to produce a written report of the results.

This situation leads to face severe difficulties to follow up on achievement of results, consideration of relevant risks that may affect objectives achievement and timely implementation of good management practices. It also involves severe difficulty to assess progress made by divisional level and to determine the quality and impact of delivery services.

External factor: Limitations as to the availability of reliable and pertinent statistics, for instance to establish baselines, or related to measures of poverty, the incidence of poverty among vulnerable population groups (Children/youth, elderly, people with disabilities, women heads of households), etc. that prevent management to follow up on the achievement of their expected results.

Work Plans as they are now don't provide complete information to support a monitoring or evaluation exercise.

The Ministry has been unable to properly assess performance increasing risk of losing control of activities and results. There is a slow movement to increase the knowledge and to deliver training programs to strengthen the Monitoring and Evaluation function of the Ministry.

1.2.8 Reporting: Lack of formal and periodic reporting on results

The ministry doesn't report on its performance on regular basis affecting proper accountability

There are not institutional reports on results per program or unit that should be produced and disseminated on a regular basis.

The lack of proper reporting on performance and results has lead to missing opportunities to enhance policy design and implementation, to improve program delivery and to strengthen the human resources capacities of the Ministry.

The only formal document we review that refers to the achievement of expected results was the Ministry's Budget 2010. We also review the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing Evaluation 2005-2009 document that presents a point-form description of activities performed by SoZaVo during that period and related to Policy Implementation; it is divided in 4 blocks: General Social Policy, Senior Policy, Policy Persons with disabilities and Children and Youth Policy. This is a good effort to compile the achievements of the Ministry but it is not still an evaluation report.

We didn't find reports produced during the period 2009-2010 as a result of audits or evaluations conducted by independent SoZaVo's units or personnel.

2 Part 2: Capacity Building Recommendations

2.1 Capacity Building for Policy Formulation

The assessment allows us to identify areas with different problems related to Policy Formulation and Implementation and to develop appropriate and feasible recommendations to enhance human resources management and institutional issues.

2.1.1 Strategy 1: Develop a detailed description of SoZaVo's scope of responsibilities

There is an absence of a regulation or another formal document that describes in more detail the scope of responsibilities of the Ministry as a Policy Authority as opposed to a service provider and the approach of the State to deliver social services (helping the poor) making use of specialized implementing agencies or through public-private partnerships

Objective(s):

1. A better and more focused description of SoZaVo's scope of responsibilities as policy authority is adopted and published.

2. To strengthen the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry that contributes to enhance its ability to formulate and monitor social policy implementation,

Approach:
SoZaVo will seek to undertake the following actions or activities:

1. To carry out a review / update of its actual mandate addressed to adjusting the Ministry's responsibilities to strengthen its role as policy authority of social security and social protection policies. This initiative may be lead by the Research and Planning Division and can be started as soon as the Division is ready and could take advantage of examples from other countries and Ministries of Social Security and Protection in the region

2. The review /update would consider to see SoZaVo as policy maker and policy facilitator devoted to creating a more enabling environment by way of adequate regulations, coordinating interventions, financial incentives, supervision and oversight and institutional strengthening initiatives that encourage the private sector, NGOs and CBOs to participate in the implementation of social policies and the delivery of social services to the most vulnerable in Suriname.

3. If as a result of the review a substantial change has to be introduced, it should be done through Parliament since it may modify the current legal mandates of the Ministry. Yet, this action may take more than one Parliamentarian period.

4. Therefore we recommend to guide the review in such a way that even though no major changes have to be done, a better and more focused description of the Ministry's mission and responsibilities could be adopted through key policy and planning documents like the Social Policy Note and/or the Institutional Strategic (Multi-annual) Plan of the Ministry.

5. SoZaVo's management will be committed to promote and ensure adherence to mandates and regulations related to Policy formulation and policy implementation (like the Policy Note) or key instruments (like the Institutional Strategic Plan). This action should be done through periodic (twice a year) compliance reviews coordinated by independent units like the Research and Planning Division and /or the Internal Control Unit. The review results would be discussed and reported to the Units' heads involved in the review.

6. Top management should ensure that during the development of the institutional Mission the emphasis will be on SoZaVo's role as a Policy maker, and responsible for policy formulation and implementation

2.1.2 Strategy 2: Adoption and implementation of the Proxy Means Test to improve targeting and screening of beneficiaries of social protection policies.

SoZaVo understands the limitations of the traditional household surveys and the Ministry's need for more complete and objective information of the levels of needs and poverty of householders in order to target better its beneficiaries. At the same time, as it has been described in another part of the Assessment Report on Social Policy, the Proxy Means Test has been recognized as the most suitable targeting tool in a country with no reliable income information and high informality levels.

In this regard, the Permanent Secretary of Social Affairs submitted the proposal for the implementation of the PMT to the approval of the Board of Ministers at the end of 2009 yet it was left on suspension.

Objective(s)
1. To have a complete and pertinent database of SoZaVo 's beneficiaries that fits the needs of the Ministry and allow SoZaVo to better fulfill its mandate and to facilitate the achievement of the purposes of Social policies, in essence prioritizing the poorest among the poor.

2. To obtain the necessary support and approval of this initiative.

3. To reduce /eliminate the risk for leakage and undercover social services

Approach

SoZaVo should promote the approval of the PMT before the new Board of Ministries though clear explanation of the institutional and governmental convenience and advantages of the methodology that also will facilitate the political decision making process for the government in Social Assistance program matters as a technical tool that brings impartial information.

2.1.3 Strategy 3: Improve access and availability of relevant and updated information and statistics

Suriname has been assessed as a country at the early stages in the production and development of official social or otherwise statistics. SoZaVo itself, although one of the three most advanced ministries in the production of administrative information still faces major information deficiencies. Such a limitation of statistics hinders the ability of the Ministry to formulate and monitor implementation of social policies and to assess the impact and efficiency of its services and strategies within the target populations.

Reliable periodic information is key to avail baseline policy and institutional performance indicators that can be measured and monitored in time for better management control. It is also crucial to effect accountability reports on the results and efficiency of the Ministry's social policies.

In addition, SoZaVo's key personnel at the directive and technical positions faces limitations in the appropriate professional background and training to conduct studies, analysis, or research that could feed into the design of social policies. The Housing Directorate for example, has acknowledged the lack of qualified trained personnel capable of gathering and effectively processing information and analysis for useful policy design and targeting purposes of the social housing policies.

While for the most part these shortcomings will only be overcome in due time through consistent government strategies addressed to improve production of statistics and to adopt personnel recruitment policies that target already qualified personnel, there are a few steps that SoZaVo can begin to implement in order to bridge the important information gaps.

In the short run SoZaVo should engage in a three-fold strategy addressed to:
   a) Improve availability of relevant and updated social statistics and analysis from external data providers
   b) Improve and institutionalize its own Social Information System of beneficiaries – SIS -, and
   c) To strengthen the internal capacities of SoZaVo's relevant personnel to make use of information and translate it into situation analysis and policies.

2.1.3.1 Improve availability of required social statistics data from Official data providers.

Objective (s):
1. To have a SoZaVo's required social statistic data from external sources available

Approach:

1. Establish an agreement about an ongoing platform of coordination with Official data providers to ensure the timely production and delivery of reliable and relevant information for policy analysis and evaluation.

2. SoZaVo to develop a plan to conduct research and analysis or studies related to the policy monitoring function with the assistance of the University of Suriname and or other local research groups. Such studies will provide in depth information to support the evaluation of poverty situations, the impact of past policies and the needs for adjustments or design of new social policies.

2.1.3.2 SoZaVo's Information System (SIS) in place

Objective(s):
1. Expanded functionalities of SIS for efficient data collection, reporting and analysis and improved internal efficiency

2. SIS database updated and cleaned.

Approach:

SoZaVo will:
1. Improve the communications network installed and have it operational for all SoZaVo districts to facilitate the full implementation of the SIS utilities in the Ministriy's Districts.

2. Broaden and up-date the actual servers capacity as well as the intranet access to facilitate the capture and processing of pertinent data.

3. Continue the implementation of the SIS Development Plan cleaning up and updating its data-base using mainly the PMT scorecard.

4. Continue development and institutionalization of the SIS to be able to handle the national cash transfer program, health card and other categorical services as well as to enable the Ministry to monitor the allocation and implementation (payment) process.

5. Provide specialized training on SIS to selected staff responsible for the administration of the application as well as the pertinent users at SoZaVo.

6. Develop specific SIS manual and guidelines available to the related users.

7. Establish reporting protocols of the SIS (formats, frequency, timing, users, etc.) to timely produce statistics about beneficiaries and services that support the monitoring and evaluation process on policy implementation and institutional performance.

2.1.3.3 Strengthen capacities through advanced training on Policy formulation and implementation.

Objectives:

1. Increased effective use of official statistics data to enhance evidence based decision-making

2. Strengthening the Ministry's capacities for the production of analytical reports through specialized training.

3. Selected managers and staff trained in advanced statistics data collection, processing and analysis, developing and managing social indicators.

Approach:
1. The report on Development Statistics in Suriname by Vanus in 2010[3], within the context of the need of SoZaVo to collaborate with colleagues in other ministries /entities and to improve the performance of assigned tasks in-house, has identified the following specialized training areas that we agree are important as well to build capacity for Policy Formulation and Policy Implementation as follows:

Statistics area:
Basic statistics; Validation of data using measures of reliability and validity; Questionnaire preparation and the creation of standard forms to be used for application & standard work procedures; Advanced statistics for designing data collection data processing and analysis;

Database and Microsoft programs:
Database construction and management, especially with SQL Server; Basic Microsoft programs (Word, Excel, Access);

Social Programs:
Defining indicators for social programs run by SoZaVo; Poverty measurement – strengthen collaboration with the General Bureau of Statistics GBS to gather information on access to social programs using the tool of Household Budgetary Survey (HBS) or possibilities to execute LSMS

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[3] Vanus, James & The National Statistical System Team. *Social Statistics in Suriname: A baseline assessment*, UNDP, 2010

(Living Standards and Measurement Survey) on a continual basis; Poverty mapping but taking into consideration the divisions used by all actors, e.g. Civil Registry, SoZaVo, Police etc; Assessing housing quality and need, such as through the preparation of a valid housing quality index.

2. SoZaVo should develop a specific training plan to cover the selected areas defining the participants profile and their contribution to improve policy formulation and policy implementation. It is also possible that some initiative has been already taken since these recommendations were made by the Vanus-James report in early 2010.

2.1.4 Strategy 4: SoZaVo Housing to gain ownership of the National Public Housing Policy

The Policy Note of 2006 stated that SoZaVo is "entirely responsible for the formulation and implementation of public housing policy", however the Ministry has not clearly define and widely circulate or enforce a well understood National Housing Policy. It was also observed that a clear interpretation of Housing particular tasks is missing, for instance Housing first task "Promote housing" remains unclear and ill-defined. The task description of Housing should be reconsidered.

The actual design and oversight of housing programs is largely left to the different executing agencies with limited inputs and control from SoZaVo.

Very loose and autonomous monitoring and evaluation systems allows different parties in charge of implementing housing programs to have their own monitoring and reporting design, thus preventing SoZaVo from actually conducting and enforcing policy implementation.

These circumstances has weakened SoZaVo's Housing directorate leadership in relation to the National Housing sector.

Objective(s):

1. SoZaVo Housing Directorate leading and controlling of all aspects of the National Public Housing Policy, including design formulation implementation and M&E

Approach:

To re-gain leadership in the Housing Public Sector, SoZaVo should get a better knowledge and understanding of the Housing Sector. This purpose should be possible through the following suggested actions:

1. SoZaVo should develop a Research and Investigation Plan to improve its knowledge on the housing sector. It should promote through various means the production of specific research reports or studies related to the housing market, the housing status of the poor sectors, the developing of Social Housing, alternatives for financing low income families, etc. Such

investigation areas should in time be reflected in appropriate Terms of Reference and contractual documents to ensure the achievement of expected analysis and information results.

2. This exercise should be done by SoZaVo itself or in active partnership with other entities with similar interest, national or international organizations, the Suriname University; but always strengthening SoZaVo´s position as the focal point of main relevant studies and being the ultimate beneficiary of the processes and results.

3. The studies /reports that should be available to the Housing sector stakeholders national and internationally and other interested groups, will be the vehicle to enrich the Ministry knowledge, statistics and information, and to better re-positioning the leadership of the Ministry among the entities and stakeholders within the housing sector.

4. SoZaVo should organize the provision of special training courses or participation of senior staff in Housing and Urban Development post graduate education. Also it could made available through contracting specialists, contacting Universities or other governments with advanced and successful public housing policies a continuous education program for high level officials and stakeholder within the housing sector. SoZaVo could also send selected outstanding managers /staff to spend some time working along with other peers, and /or to facilitate /promote graduate studies on this matter.

5. SoZaVo Housing Directorate should be actively participating in the development of the Policy Note 2011-2015 leading the formulation and promote and coordinate the implementation of the National Public Housing Policy.

2.2 Capacity Building Plan for Policy Implementation

Due to the nature of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing all of its policies and programs affect one way or another the life, wellbeing and hopes of thousands of people that are in distress, economically and socially. In this regard, it is of extreme importance for the Ministry to ensure that all the expected results and impacts on the targeted population are effectively achieved and that the Ministry has the orientation and meanings to measure and control on its results.

The Results Based Management approach will help the Ministry to improve the successful implementation of program delivery, focusing actively on the population SoZaVo serves. RBM also enhance accountability, strengthening the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation functions.

SoZaVo may take the opportunity to update and strengthen its management capacities (like planning, directing, controlling) considering the development of the Policy Notes government wide and the Multi-year Development Plan 2011-2015 that brings an environment of high level of technical discussions, challenges and adjustments to new and /or better perspectives.

We also have perceived that SoZaVo's management and officers involved in this project through interviews, meetings and during the work-shops were positive to support and participate in the implementation of this RBM approach. In this regard we are suggesting SoZaVo the following strategies that cover key elements of the Ministry's management cycle and strengthen the RBM approach:

2.2.1 Strategy 1: Implementing the Institutional (Strategic) Plan

Planning is a critical component of good management and governance. Planning helps assure that an organization remains relevant and responsive to the needs of its community, and contributes to organizational stability and growth.

Strategic planning is the process by which management of the Ministry determine what it intends to be in the future and how it will get there. They develop a vision for the organization's future and determine the necessary priorities, procedures, and operations (strategies) to achieve that vision. Included are measurable goals which are realistic and attainable, but also challenging; emphasis is on long-term goals and strategies, rather than short-term (such as annual) objectives.

The Policy note constitutes the pillar for the construction of the Strategic Plan, bringing the Ministry's Policy Principles, the Mission and Vision and the main policy programs with their respective objectives, indicators, baseline information and expected goals in five years term and the sources for Monitoring and Evaluation purposes.

The Strategic Plan establishes the road map of the Ministry showing the evolution from the year 2011 to the year 2015 of intermediate objectives and goals towards the expected results in 2015.

Objectives:
1. SoZaVo's Institutional (strategic) Plan established

2. Fulfillment of good management practices to enhance accountability.

3. Management and staff (Task Force Group based) trained and skilled on Strategic Planning

Approach:
SoZaVo will seek to undertake the following actions or activities:

1. Top management at SoZaVo (Ministry, Permanent Secretaries, Directors) providing visible support to the activities that leads to the strengthening of a Results-Based approach through all the management process (Planning, directing, coordinating, evaluating and monitoring, reporting) emphasizing the changes in the development conditions of the beneficiaries of SoZaVo (permanent basis).

2. Creation of a Task Force Group under the leadership of the Permanent secretaries of SoZaVo; the Group would become the center of these activities to facilitate implementation, foster mutual

support and sharing ideas and best practices. The participants would be selected managers and staff involved in Planning, Budgeting and Policy development and implementation areas and some of its members will participate in the development of the Policy Note. The team would be coordinated by the Research and Planning Division Directorate. (To create: February-March)

3.   This selected group should get a very good understanding of the Result-based management approach and the results-based Strategic and Operational Planning through a specific local workshop or in-house workshops with the active contributions of all participants.

The training exercises would cover aspects like how the RBM approach is evolving in SoZaVo from its own actual management practices and what is still missing to have the full implementation; how the Planning function will be improved; the benefits on behalf of service delivery by bringing the actual and potential beneficiaries closer to the Ministry performing proactive actions like identifying potential beneficiaries to bring them into the System or fostering service decentralization; to assess the risks and consequences for not having Monitoring and Evaluation functions properly implemented and expected accountability improvements through evaluation reports on performance and achievement of expected results. (Activities to be organized at the most convenient time this year)

4.   If applicable, SoZaVo will coordinate with MOF /Planning Bureau for the developing of a basic draft regulation for the implementation of its Strategic (multi-year) and Operational (annual) Plans. (February-April)

5. The Task Force Group will use its experience and expertise in developing the Ministry's Policy Note and the Multi-year Development Plan 2011-2015 as a basis to produce the SoZaVo's Institutional (Strategic) Plan 2011-2015. (April, June)

2.2.2 Strategy 2: To implement the Operational (Annual) Plan

The Operational (Annual) Plan is based on the Strategic Plan and the reports on program monitoring and evaluation conducted during the previous year, and brings more detailed information regarding organizational changes, risk issues, challenges and the identification of programs –budget, main activities, results indicators and timing, unit or person responsible-establishing the connection with the Budget. The Operational Plan is produced every year and goes along with the respective Budget.

In 2008 SoZaVo implemented the Annual Work Plan matrix, for all its social programs. The matrix identify among others, the mission or main purpose of the program, results description with indicators and meanings of verification, description of the activity, person/ unit responsible, who carries out the activity, the budget allocated, and the quarter of the year where the activity would take place.

The Work plan matrix constitutes a baseline for management control and reflects a positive progress in establishing a results-Based Management approach. It is also a natural linking point between the Annual Operational Plan and the Budget.

However, as a matrix it doesn't come with background information to support the development of annual objectives and activities and the establishment of performance /results indicators as well as the connection with the strategic objectives and goals and by extension, the social policies.

Objectives:
1. SoZaVo's Operational (annual) Plan established

2. Management and staff (Task force group based) trained and skilled on Operational Planning.

Approach:
SoZaVo will seek to undertake the following actions or activities complemented where applicable with the previous strategy no.1 - Implementation of the Institutional (Strategic) Plan:

1. The Task Force Group will use its experience and expertise in developing the Ministry's Policy Note and the Multi-year Development Plan 2011-2015 as a basis to produce the SoZaVo's Operational Plan 2012. (July- September each year)

2. The Task Force Group will also use the SoZaVo's Work Plan matrices for 2011 as a basis for the development of the Operational Plan.

2.3 Capacity Building Plan for Policy and Institutional Monitoring and Evaluation

2.3.1 Strategy 1: To implement the Monitoring and Evaluation Function

Good planning combined with effective monitoring and evaluation can play a major role in enhancing the effectiveness of SoZaVo's Social and Housing programs. Good planning help the Ministry to focus on the results that matter while monitoring and evaluation help the Ministry learn from past successes and challenges and inform decision making so that current and future initiatives are better able to improve people's lives and expand their choices.

Monitoring is an ongoing process by which the responsible units and interested areas obtain regular feedback not only of the progress made in implementing actions or activities but focuses more on the progress being made towards achieving their goals and objectives.

 Evaluation is a rigorous and independent assessment of either completed or ongoing activities to determine the extent to which they are achieving stated objectives and contributing to decision

making. The Research and Planning Division and the Internal Audit Unit are independent areas that are able to undertake program evaluations.

SoZaVo recognizes the relevance for management to properly implement the M&E function; however the Ministry has not regulated or promoted the implementation of this function as it was stated in the SoZaVo's Policy Note.

Without this key management tool in place, the Ministry doesn't have information that can help inform decisions, improve program performance and achieve planned results.

As immediate consequence, it has been impossible to secure info on: evaluation of poverty over time, poverty and service provision to assess leakage and under-coverage, welfare of age-specific groups, incidence of social expenditure, income distribution, demographic and economic risk that may arise form time to time.

There is also not enough knowledge / training in this matter to start moving into monitoring and evaluation as well as the absence of M&E manual and formal guidelines to support appropriate implementation that suits the needs of the Ministry

As mentioned before, SoZaVo produced a document called "Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing Evaluation 2005-2009" that presents a point-form description of activities performed by SoZaVo during that period and related to Policy Implementation; this is a good effort to compile the achievements of the Ministry but it is not still an evaluation report.

Objective(s)

1. Monitoring and Evaluation System in place fulfilling the related terms and conditions established in the Policy Note.

2. Strengthen the ability and skills of Officers involved in Policy Monitoring and Evaluation

Approach

1. SoZaVo's Ministry will seek to commit itself to fully develop and implement the policy monitoring and evaluation System empowering the Task Force Group headed by the Research and Planning Unit to organize the implementation of the M&E system.

2. SoZaVo (Task Force Group) will develop a training plan that involves management and selected personnel in Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting procedures that fits the Ministry's needs and bringing theory to practice.

3. SoZaVo (Task Force Group) will ensure to provide a Manual / guidelines to support the M&E function.

4. The coordination of the monitoring mechanism would be the Director of Social Affairs and the Housing Director. Monitoring should be organized and conducted based on the contributions of the SoZaVo's Policy Officers.

5. At least an annual evaluation on the overall Policy Implementation will be undertaken by independent SoZaVo units (for instance Research and Planning, Internal Control) and /or external local or international evaluators.

6. As a key element, SoZaVo will seek the fully implementation of the SoZaVo Information System SIS that provides information to the Monitoring and Evaluation function.

3   Conclusions

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing has been doing continuous efforts to improve the results of its service delivery with the support of national and international organizations and consultants through assessments and studies of its institutional and human resources capacities, the review of the execution of social protection programs as well as its management practices and controls.

As a result a number of recommendations have been developed, suggesting for instance a sector and a SSN reform or a comprehensive capacity strengthening plans to help the ministry to address its institutional and human resources weaknesses and undertake actions to put the Ministry in harmony with actual social expectations and align them with the international initiatives like the MDG.

Based in previous studies, workshops and meetings, our project has sought to deliver an assessment report with the findings or the gaps in the human resource and institutional capacity regarding the formulation and application of policy frameworks with recommendations for capacity building. In this regard we have identified the following main areas with their respective implementation strategies:

Capacity building for policy formulation:
The developing of a detailed description of SoZaVo's scope of responsibilities, the adoption and implementation of the Proxy Means Test to improve targeting and screening of beneficiaries of social protection policies, the SoZaVo's Information System (SIS) implemented in all districts, the advanced training on Policy formulation and implementation and the ownership of the National Public Housing Policy gained by SoZaVo Housing.

Capacity building for policy implementation:
The implementation of the Institutional (Strategic) and the Operational (Annual) Plan, and the Monitoring and Evaluation function under the results-based management umbrella and the provision of related advanced training.

Since Policy formulation and Policy implementation have a comprehensive scope, investment will have to be made on the related staff to ensure that all cadres involved are well equipped in terms of technical knowledge and equipment at the same time that commitment is inculcated to results-based oriented services where clients –internal and external- have rights and are empowered to insist on being accorded respect.

With the appropriate implementation of the proposed strategies, we expect a SoZaVo that will have a clear mandate and policy note, strategic and operational plan in place, a budget linked with the Plans and the Policy Note, a strong SIS implemented in every district, and a cadre of selected managers and officers with sufficient related training and experience.

An enthusiastic new government, a stable management and staff, a slow but progressive technical modernization in the field of Information and Communications Technology, a willing to promote and produce changes to improve performance and results, and a number of assessment reports that provide important guidelines and recommendations to overcome identified weaknesses brings SoZaVo a unique opportunity to become an outstanding and effective Ministry recognized nationwide.

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