

# **Observance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Suriname**

**NGO Report by the Foundation for Human Development (BKO)  
for the International Committee on the Rights of the Child**

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## Foreword

The Foundation for Human Development, with the BKO as its implementing office, has carried out activities with regard to child rights promotion and advocacy since its founding in August 1989. These include information distribution via the media, activities with children, education activities in schools, organization of discussion days and research activities.

With a children's Ombuds bureau lacking in Suriname, many complaints about violations of the rights of children are being reported to the BKO office.

In this report an overview of the complaints and a short description of the present situation of the victims, the reporters, government policy and the legislative measures will be given, based on cases reported to BKO in the year 1999.

We do, however, realize that the findings of this report are not complete, since they are only based on the cases that reached the BKO office. Many cases go on unreported, and many children are still not reached by services of the Government or NGOS.

We hope that through the intervention of the International Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Government of Suriname will give greater priority to improve the situation of children.

Paramaribo, 3 January 2000



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**Cases reported to the BKO office in 1999**

<b>Individual Cases</b>				
<i>Age group</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Problem area</i>	<i>Causes</i>	<i>Number</i>
1. 18 +	M	Wanderer	Neglect and maltreatment	2
2. 13-17 years	F	Runaways	Sexual abuse	6
			Physical maltreatment	3
			Drop out	2
			Prostitution	3
			HIV	1
			Teenage pregnancy	2
			Neglect	2
3. 12- 16 years	F	Sexual Exploitation	Sexual Abuse	10
12- 16 years	F	Preparation for trial	Sexual Abuse	4
< 10 years	F	Behavior problems	Sexual Abuse	3
"	M	"	Supposed sexual abuse	1
4. < 5 years	F	Physical Abuse	Violence in the family	1
6- 10 years	M	"	"	2
5. < 8 years	F	Neglect /No education	Extreme Poverty	3
	M	"	"	1
6. < 5 years	M	Behavior Problems	Bad Parenting	2
	F	"	"	4
	M	"	"	5
7. 3-15 years	M	Guardianship	Divorce	6
	F	"	"	
8. 8-16 years	F	No Family reunification	Parent in the Netherlands	5
	M	"	"	1
<b>Total</b>				<b>70</b>

## Comments

### Ad.1

There is no Government policy to render shelter to the homeless. Only some religious institutions offer services, but most of these are too full. For young ones over the age of 18 there is no shelter.

### Ad.2.

The home for girls, formerly run by the Ministry of Social Affairs, was closed in 1994 for renovation purposes and since then there has been no alternative for the placement of girls. As a consequence girls that ran away of home due to different causes are left to wander in the streets or are sometimes kept in one of the police stations.

Besides shelter the girls need professional counseling to recover from trauma they suffered in the home environment.

No initiatives have been taken by the responsible Ministry to render assistance to these girls.

### Ad.3.

The problems as a consequence of all forms of sexual abuse are manifold. The Youth Department of the Police, in cooperation with the NGO Foundation for Children handles most cases that are reported. The children are offered some form of counseling.

The NGO, do not receive sufficient support from the Government to be able to give full professional assistance to the victims and their families.

The Ministry responsible for social youth protection measures (Ministry of Social Affairs) is at present setting up a child monitoring system with the help of UNICEF, to register cases of child abuse. But it is not clear if assistance will be given to victims, and what kind of service this will include.

Up till now government services includes a lot of paper work, little flexibility of work styles and little capacity to render qualified services, making crisis intervention hard to achieve.

Although NGOS are able to assist the Government in developing a policy in case of abuse, the subvention the Government provides to the NGOS is far from sufficient for office management costs.

### Ad.4.

The National Gender Bureau of the Ministry of Home Affairs is in the process of setting up and strengthening a network for the eradication of domestic violence and violence against women. NGOs, government institutions and the police attend the meetings and have participated in the trainings offered with the help of UNIFEM. This network will try to achieve satisfactory and more efficient ways of assisting victims of violence.

Ad.5.

Although several studies have been performed, accurate data on how many people live in poverty are still not available.

The Government provides some assistance (allowances) to people in need but the amounts are much too low to guarantee an adequate standard of living.

Ad.6 .

Due to the lack of parent support programs, education of parents and continuous information to families the behavior of children is often misunderstood as "deviant".

The Government has no parent- support programs to deal with behavior problems of children.

The Child Guidance Clinic (Ministry of Health) and 2 departments in the Ministry of Education are the responsible Government departments in dealing with behavior problems. There are long waiting lists and many families do not receive adequate assistance.

There are no facilities for those in the rural areas and in the interior.

Ad.8.

Many families are disrupted, with one of the legal guardians living abroad. Some parents left (mostly to the Netherlands) to seek better financial possibilities for their family. When they are able to be reunited with their children in the Netherlands they often have enormous problems in receiving visas or permits for their children. Although the Netherlands has also ratified the CRC, the Dutch policy regarding foreigners is given higher priority. The Government of Suriname has not undertaken efforts to deal with this issue, as a result of which many children have been separated from their parents for years.

### Reports about Institutions

1. Day Care Centers	F +M	Physical abuse and neglect	No legislation, no supervision	4
2. Children's homes	F	Sexual Abuse		1
	M	Physical abuse		3
	M	Extreme disciplinary measures		2
	M	No education, no freedom		1
	F + M	Neglect		2
	F +M	Supposed illicit transfer of children		1
3. Schools	F + M	Physical abuse and extreme disciplinary measures		5
	F + M	Violation of privacy		2
4. Police	M	Physical Violence		10
		Other extreme disciplinary measures		6
Total				37

### **Comments**

Ad.1 and 2.

Although a draft legislation on child day care services was offered to the Ministry of Social Affairs in March 1996, there is no actual supervision of day care facilities and children's homes. This leaves many children unprotected in day care and in institutions.

Ad.3.

The education system is experienced as unfriendly by many children, and there is little room for participation of children and little respect is shown for the views of the children.

The educational process has been interrupted many times by teacher strikes. Moreover the low income of the teachers places them under an extra amount of stress.

Many children become the victim of hostile activities from the teachers. Not many dare to report it for fear of repressive measures against them.

Ad.4.

According to the results of the latest BKO survey in the youth detention homes, the rights of the children in conflict with the law are still far from met.

Most of the complaints had to do with physical violence and extreme disciplinary measure.

The Ministry of Justice has not developed a policy that focuses on sustainable rehabilitation, counseling, vocational training and education of children in conflict with the law.

### **Reporters**

parents

neighbors

school directors

teachers

daycare workers

school nurses

pediatricians

church members

radio stations

children (aged 12- 18 )

BKO volunteers

other institutions : Maxi Linder, Moi Wana

### **BKO procedure**

All cases are registered by BKO workers. If necessary, further inquiries into the case were made. Then the responsible government institution was contacted to see if services could be given and how, or to what extent. BKO, however, followed the case to see what assistance was given by the government institutions. In case of lack of satisfactory services BKO tried to interfere and seek assistance as an institution or tried to advise the government in taken structural policy measures to be able to render satisfactory assistance. Government staff, however, showed reluctance to change and the use of innovative methods.

**Most common bottle necks of the Governmental services were :**

No service rendered ( mostly cases of crisis intervention and reception centers for girls)

No qualified assistance given ( lack of counseling and professional legal advise)

Lack of transportation and lack of funds to offer satisfactory assistance

No legislation or no observation of institutional care.

Protection of governmental workers or institutions ( in case of violations in schools and of the police).

Not enough trained personnel and use of old, inefficient methodologies.

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