



**THE GLOBAL
MECHANISM**
United Nations Convention
to Combat Desertification

REPUBLIC OF SURINAME

Land Degradation Neutrality High-Level Note



May 2020



The Government of Suriname is pleased to announce the conclusion of its Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Target Setting Programme. The LDN Target Setting process has provided us with an opportunity to analyze land use and land management issues which continue to degrade our land resources. A platform is provided to identify and seek to address the underlying factors that affect land use and land cover changes, which is a precursor to declining soil quality and fertility and land's productive capacity. A national LDN Working Group, comprised of key technical representatives from government departments, private sector and academia has been established to guide the country through this process.

Suriname has articulated its commitments to achieving LDN through its national sub-targets and associated measures. Targets were developed considering the analyzation of the LDN Baseline, while measures are set to address the direct and indirect drivers of these changes based on the LDN response hierarchy.

Suriname hereby affirms its commitment to achieving LDN to the UNCCD as it offers executive political support throughout this process and the proximate stages. We also thank the UNCCD Secretariat and the Global Mechanism for its financial and technical support throughout the target setting process.



Cabinet of the President – Coordination Environment
Mrs. Ivette Patterzon LLM,
Senior Legal and Policy Advisor

INTRODUCTION

At just under 165000 km², the Republic of Suriname is the smallest sovereign state in South America with a population that live mostly on the coast of the country (80%), where the capital Paramaribo is located. The country has a tropical weather with abundant rainfall, an uniform temperature, and high humidity. Suriname is divided into five main geographical regions identified from north to south as the Coast, the Young Coastal Plain, the Old Coastal Plain and the Savannah Belt. Each of these regions has a unique ecology with different economic development issues and land degradation processes. Furthermore, the major sectors of Suriname's economy that contribute to land degradation are mining, agriculture and to a lesser extent forestry. The country's economy is highly concentrated in the extractive industries (gold and oil), which play a dominant role in driving growth, employment, and government revenues while also exposing economic performance to commodity price fluctuations¹. Moreover, goldmining is contributing to higher rates of deforestation than any other activity. Small and medium -scale mining presents a severe threat to Suriname's forests and its biodiversity. Hydropower development, sand digging and shifting cultivation have also resulted in forest conversion. Nonetheless, the Government of Suriname (GoS) has expressed the intention to keep the country's High-Forest and Low-Deforestation (HFLD) status, while not compromising the needs for economic and social prosperity².

Beside the causes explained above, years of inappropriate land use and unsuitable land use management practices have increased the problem of land degradation in the country. In the hinterland land degradation is mainly the result of timber logging and small-scale gold mining.

In addition, Suriname is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the impact of flooding as the country has poor drainage in the relatively highly populated urban areas on the coast. Furthermore, climate change has intensified disaster risks like flooding as tropical climate brings potential for extreme rainfall, and severe wet and dry periods from an intensified hydrological cycle.

Coordination of project activities is crucial to achieve successful project results from start to an end, while there are good environmental initiatives under implementation by a variety of stakeholders, a coordinated approach is needed. Furthermore, the country is currently in a position where strategies must be developed, and actions must be taken to address land degradation. Projects are being undertaken by various government agencies and funded by national government and international development partners, which contributes to combating land degradation and the achievement of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN). The work of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) supports any action and a way forward to achieve LDN, which will enhance economic development and the accomplishment of sustainable land management goals for the country.

Sustainable development is a principle that applies to numbers of sector ministries in Suriname. Coordination Environment at the Cabinet of the President is the national focal

¹ Country Partnership Framework (CPF) FY2015–2019 - Report No: 91238-SR and Performance and Learning Review (PLR) of the Country Partnership Strategy for FY15–FY19

² More information on the "Mid-term review Strengthening national capacities of Suriname for the elaboration of the National REDD+ strategy and the design of its implementation framework project" (2016)

point for the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and UNCCD as well as for Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions.

In addition to maintaining or enhancing the natural capital of the land and associated land-based ecosystems services, one of the key goals of LDN is avoiding further future loss of the land-based natural capital relative to a referenced state or baseline. The three indicators for calculating the baseline and tracking progress towards LDN targets have also been recommended as sub-indicators to compute the SDG indicator, “*Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area*”. This indicator was adopted to measure progress towards the SDG target 15.3³. The indicators used for tracking progress towards LDN are land cover or trends in vegetative land cover, land productivity dynamics (LPD) and carbon stocks or soil organic carbon (SOC) stock).

From the assessment of this national baseline, the results showed that the proportion of degraded land, which encompasses the results for the three indicators, the country presented degradation in 15.9% of the total land area.

ACHIEVING LDN AS A NATIONAL PRIORITY

A considerable percentage of the total land mass is susceptible to land degradation that could result from eventual mining, forest exploitation and within the limits of shifting cultivation (slash and burn). Land degradation has been limited over the country due to low population density of 3.3%. Nevertheless, strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities that have been impacted by recent environmental threats through the assurance and advancement of vital ecosystem services will help to achieve LDN on a national scale. Moreover, these measures will generate communal environmental and social benefits that are key in addressing poverty, food security, availability of resource and income equality. The availability of both human and financial resources, in collaboration with institutional strengthening and capacity building, will contribute to sustainable land management and the achievement of LDN on a national scale and as a national priority. The Republic of Suriname is therefore committed to LDN as it underpins the value and magnitude of natural land-based resources for sustainable socio-economic development.

To achieve this vision, the Government of Suriname provides significant baseline investments in support of the management of protected areas, sustainable land and natural resource management activities.

The country has an Environmental Management Structure that responds to the national environmental policy that is written on the Constitution of Suriname. Coordination Environment at the Cabinet of the President is responsible for the Environmental Policy and The National Institute for Environment and Development (NIMOS) is the technical body of Coordination Environment.

The Coordination Environment from the Cabinet of the President of the Republic of Suriname is responsible for the only regional Global Environment Facility (GEF) project that is currently in process, which is the “CReW+ project: An Integrated Approach to Water and Wastewater Management Using Innovative Solutions and Promoting Financing

³ More information on UNCCD’s 2016 “Land degradation neutrality target setting - A technical guide’

Mechanisms in the Wider Caribbean Region”. This project seeks to address the challenges of waste management through small scale solutions in most of the Caribbean countries.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been supporting large projects on a national scale. The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) along with NIMOS is responsible for the GEF project “Improving Environmental Management in the Mining Sector of Suriname, with Emphasis on Gold Mining” (EMSAGS). NIMOS is also an executing agency for two other national projects: “Artisanal & Small-Scale Gold Mining National Action Plan” and “Mainstreaming global environment commitments for effective environmental management”. These national projects have a clear emphasis on the impact that mining has on the country and the initiatives to account for this issue on the environment.

Through GEF’s Small Grants Programme, there are two projects being developed in the country. The first project is the “Right Bank of Commewijne River and Riverbank Protection”, it aims to increase mangrove resilience in that area and is being executed by Stichting Warappa Conservation. The other local initiative is “Improved cultivation of cassava, processing and marketing of cassava related products in the Tapanahony Region”, which seeks to train women in alternative means of cultivating and processing of cassava and is executed by Wan Mama Pikien.

Over the recent years Suriname has worked with other relevant international organizations. The World Bank through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) is supporting the project for the Saramacca Canal System Rehabilitation. This project seeks to reduce flood risk for the people and assets in the greater Paramaribo area and improve the operation of the Saramacca Canal System.

Another financing agency that helps developing countries in the region is the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). There are currently a series of projects intended for energy generation, distribution, and efficiency along with education initiatives to improved learning outcomes for students in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) at the Lower Secondary School level.

The European Union (EU) through the Global Climate Change Alliance+ (GCCA+) Flagship initiative has also been a strong supporter for improving Suriname’s current climate change adaptation capacity and mitigation efforts. The project “Contributing towards the provision of new climate information and institutional governance to help support sustainable agriculture productivity and mangrove protection” ended in 2019. The project’s objective was to reduce the country’s vulnerability to negative effects of climate change through sustainable water resource management and developing capacity and the framework for mangrove conservation and management⁴.

Suriname is known for being a country with high forest cover and low deforestation rates (HFLD). This provides an opportunity to maintain some of the world’s most important biodiversity and freshwater resources while simultaneously avoiding significant greenhouse gas emissions⁵. Thus, the country is currently in the REDD+’s Readiness Phase in which

⁴ More information about Suriname’s GCCA+ on the project “Contributing towards the provision of new climate information and institutional governance to help support sustainable agriculture productivity and mangrove protection” (2016)

⁵ See <https://www.surinamredd.org/en/reddplus-suriname/> for the country profile on REDD+

there is capacity building and stakeholder engagement, formulation of the national REDD+ strategy for sustainable development, and implementation of a framework and tools.

SURINAME LDN TARGETS AND ASSOCIATED MEASURES

Suriname has agreed that “*LDN will most likely be achieved by 2030*”.

LDN Sub-targets

- LDN is achieved in the district of Saramacca by 2030, compared to the 2015 baseline plus an additional 15% has improved (net gain). [*Challenging approach*] This corresponds to the areas where there is not much degradation and the stable and improving conditions are one of the best on the country.
- LDN is achieved in the districts of Coronie and Commewijne by 2030, compared to the 2015 baseline plus an additional 10% has improved between the two districts (net gain). [*Challenging approach*] This corresponds to the areas where there is not much degradation and the improving condition is one of the best on the country.
- Improve productivity and Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) stocks in cropland and grasslands for the entire country by 2030, compared to the 2015 baseline, through
 - Sustainable land management practices and soil erosion prevention methods.
 - Increase institutional capacity for SLM in key institutions
 - Support an integrated information system on land use (National Planning Office, MI-GLIS, NIMOS, SBB, CELOS-NARENA, Central Bureau of Statistics etc.)

LDN Measures

- Rehabilitate 10% of the degraded land in Sipaliwini with 1700 km² for crop production in other parts of the country by 2030 (based on the results for percentage of land degradation per districts).
 - Improve information gathering techniques on productivity data and agricultural land use.
- Improve productivity of the land by restoring 2.5% of the total degraded areas with 650 km² of cropland in the district of Saramacca destined to achieve respective targets (gains) (based on the results for percentage of land degradation per districts).
 - Encourage mechanisms to prevent conversion of farmland to residential land
 - Improve information gathering techniques on productivity data and agricultural land use.
- Improve productivity of the land by restoring 5% of the degraded areas of Nickerie with 60 km² of cropland through sustainable land management practices (based on the results for degraded state productivity areas).
- Reduce the conversion of forest with the restoration and rehabilitation of 102 km² to other land use classes on the country through (percentage and figure based on tree-covered loss in Suriname):
 - Improve land use planning practices, particularly within the mining/extractive sector.
 - Enforcement of existing land management legislation, update of formulation of land use policy and inter-agency cooperation

- Build consensus among stakeholders in the forest sector.
- Establish a national strategic land use plan that incorporates LDN as a planning principle.
- Maintain percentage of the land cover category of forest cover from 2015 by 2030.
- Halt the conversion of wetlands to other land cover classes by 2030 (category of land cover loss from the land cover transitions table in Suriname) through:
 - Sustainable wetland management and access to knowledge/technology

LEVERAGING LND TARGETS THROUGH THE NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Sustainable development is about integrating sectors that have so far been treated as independent and separate development components. There are numbers of challenges to be faced as an integrated sustainable development vision, strategy and programme. Unfortunately, Suriname has not formulated a clear, long-term vision on national sustainable development. Instead, five-year development plans are produced, which coincide with an administration period of each new government coming to office after general elections⁶. Moreover, some of the challenges to sustainable development that Suriname faces have been identified as follow:

- Lack of clear policies and therefore it is difficult to formulate goals and plans, and monitor implementation or progress towards achieving goals
- Decision-makers should comprehend that sustainable and equitable development is a process with a long-term vision and goals, which require patience and investments in time and money
- There is a lack of legislation and outdated legislation that hinders actions and decision to develop an integrated development agenda. There are institutional and financial constraints to support sustainable development programmes.
- More collaboration and integration are needed at all levels- international, national, and local

As it was mentioned above, it is set by law from Suriname's Constitution that the country must set every five years a Development Plan. Therefore, the current Development Plan from 2017 to 2021 (OP – Dutch abbreviation) formulates the development goals and outcomes for the present period and states the principles that will be followed in the development process⁷. The main goals for the OP 2017-2021 are:

- Strengthening the development capacity of the country
- Achieving sustainability.
- development by combining economic and social development in such manner and harmonizing it with such responsible use of the environment, that current growth does not restrict the future development opportunities or makes these impossible.

As part of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Suriname is signaled with the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) and its Mauritius Strategy for the Implementation

⁶ More about Suriname's development agenda on the National Report in preparation of the Third International Conference on SIDS (2013)

⁷ More information on the Policy Development Plan 2017-2021, part 1, Developing Priorities in Suriname (2017)

(MS) as it addresses important elements that cover the sustainable development of SIDS. Suriname is still working on meeting the goals to achieve these international initiatives in the upcoming years.

In relation to fulfilling international commitments, numbers of policy documents, action programmes and legislations have been developed to address the issues covered by the main international conventions. Likewise, the Directorate for Environment of the Ministry of Labour, Technological Development and Environment (ATM) was responsible (until March 2015) for the development of an overall environmental policy and the coordination and monitoring of all activities regarding these policies, including the implementation of the major environmental conventions: UNFCCC, UNCBD and UNCCD. In 2009 the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) project was implemented with the focus to identify priority issues for action within the thematic areas of biodiversity, climate change and desertification/land degradation; find synergies among capacity needs across the three thematic areas; catalyze targeted and coordinated actions and requests for external assistance; and link country actions to protect the global environment to the broader national environmental management and sustainable development framework. This resulted in a report that includes a strategy to implement the three Rio Conventions as well as an Action Plan which identify capacity building on institutional and sectoral level. The NCSA Report was guided by three conventions, UNCBD, UNFCCC and the Convention UNCCD. This was done in collaboration with government and nongovernment bodies and institutions. Such proactive actions place the country in a path of achieving its national goals in addressing sustainable development through ecosystems-based approaches and land degradation neutrality. In this case, one of the most relevant initiatives is the National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) that ensures the conservation of Suriname's rich biological diversity, foster the sustainable management of its natural resources, and support the equitable sharing of the biodiversity related services and benefits. The NBAP was prepared for the UNCBD. Additionally, the Forest Policy Paper of the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Land and Forest Management along with the National Forest Policy is another initiative that addresses land management concerns. Likewise, the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan has a strong relation with SLM as it elaborates information on practices that cause land degradation. In addition, a National Climate Change Action Plan (NKAP, 2008 - 2013) was developed to create a framework for better guidance, coordination and implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures through participatory processes⁸.

Suriname is member of the Guiana Shield Initiative (GSI), a long-term eco-regional partnership for the sustainable financing of conservation and sustainable development of the unique intact ecosystems of the Guiana Shields. Moreover, the Guiana Shield Facility (GSF) partnered with the UNDP Suriname to support the implementation of REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP)⁹. This was an important effort for the country as the inclusion of reducing emissions from land use change is considered essential to achieve the objectives of the UNFCCC. For the UNFCCC, Suriname prepared the First (NC) and Second (SNC) National Communications that addresses among other topics the issues of SLM in the country.

⁸ More information about the Environmental Management Structure of Suriname on the Second National Communication to the UNFCCC (2016)

⁹ See <https://www.guianashield.org/> for more the country profile and current projects in Suriname

COLLABORATIVE ACTION TO ACHIEVE LDN IN SURINAME

National Environmental Policy Coordination is with the Office of the President of the Republic of Suriname. NIMOS is an executing foundation from the government. Many environmental projects are executed by researchers from the Anton de Kom (AdeKUS) University of Suriname as well as the Centre for Agricultural Research in Suriname (CELOS), the National Herbarium of Suriname, the National Zoological Collection of Suriname and its Center for Environmental Research at the AdeKUS, the Foundation for Forest Management and Production Control (SBB) as well as the Medical Science Institute of the AdeKUS (with regard to research on medicinal plants). In addition, the Ministry of RGB also conducts research, education, and awareness projects. Suriname Forest Service also conducts environmental research. Furthermore, the several NGO's and individuals also conduct environmental research¹⁰.

Furthermore, the direct link between land degradation and development practices fosters synergies between the physical development and the infrastructures sector to become partners in the efforts to achieving LDN as a major contribution to the sustainable development agenda of Suriname. The support provided by international development associations/donor agencies in conjunction with all policies and frameworks serve as a solid base for improving the leveraging of relevant resources and achieving a greater impact in a synergistic manner.

For this purpose, it is important to foster collaborative action among national, regional, and international partners to achieve LDN. The GoS is implementing a few projects geared towards mitigating land degradation issues and the achievement of LDN. Such projects have received financial assistance from both bilateral and multilateral funding agencies which include, UNCCD, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Global Environment Facility (GEF), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), European Union (EU), World Bank Group (WGB) and Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) amongst others. Likewise, the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP), continues to fund numbers of projects on a national and community-based to enhance sustainable management goals and livelihoods.

Suriname's engagement with all stakeholder agencies including public and private sectors strengthens collaborative effort towards mitigating future land degradation and support the achievement of LDN and sustainable development goals. Further efforts must be placed on public outreach and broader awareness of the LDN amongst educational institutions, voluntary groups, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to promote wider participation and co-operation.

¹⁰ More information about Suriname's GCCA+ on the project "Contributing towards the provision of new climate information and institutional governance to help support sustainable agriculture productivity and mangrove protection" (2016)