UNDP and the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Tourism (TCT) presented the 20 of May to different stakeholders the project “Reducing disparities in access to information and services among hinterland communities in Suriname through the use of ICTs”. Over 20 representatives from NGOs, the Government and the private sector participated in the meeting. UNDP Country Director, Thomas Gittens, and the Minister of TCT, Falisie Pinas, addressed the audience at the information session.

Under this project, information and communication technologies (ICTs) will be used to bridge the gap in access to information and services between the urban coastal areas and the interior. The aim of the presentation was to inform the stakeholders about the project and request their comments and suggestions on the project details.

To facilitate access of information and services to benefit inhabitants in the Interior Districts, the Ministry of TCT and UNDP will identify five pilot communities to implement the project. These communities will have ICT access points equipped to inform and educate the community with
basic information on education, sanitation, health and government services.

Service providers in health, education, sanitation and government services will be trained in packaging the information for transmission through ICTs. Also community members will be trained in using ICTs. Ultimately, 50 hinterland communities will be benefitting from improved access to health, education and public information services through the use of ICT.

“By implementing this project, we hope to make the access to information easier for students living in areas which were not “connected” before”, said Minister Pinas. “Students, teachers and policy makers will benefit from the access to the internet and the access to information”.

In his remarks the UNDP Country Director noted that “In Suriname there is still a significant gap in children living in the coastal areas and those living in the interior regarding education. Adults still need to travel to Paramaribo for basic government services such as registering births, information regarding voting and permits. To participate in the systems and decision processes that affect their lives, people need relevant, timely information on the issues at stake and how to get involved. To protect their interests, people require the tools including information, to formulate and express their ideas, and in a manner understood by those that affect their livelihoods.

Improved delivery of education services and access to information will help the rural Surinamese defend their interests, participate meaningfully in the processes that affect them, and sustainably improve their livelihoods.” This pilot project is scheduled to run for two years.