

IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE CHILD MINDERS INITIATIVE



**Conducted under the auspices of the
Ministry of Education in cooperation with UNICEF**

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

The Child Minders Initiative was an idea of tribal communities living in the hinterland of Suriname. It is an innovative project initiated by the Ministry of Local Development (MINRO) in close collaboration with UNICEF and the villages. The first Child Minders were trained in 1997 in the village of Gunsu in the Sipaliwini District. In 1998 the project was expanded to the following 6 other villages in the Marowijne District: Oviaolo, Krabuolo, Petondro, Bernarddorp, Alfonsdorp and Mungotapu. The village of Galibi received only a playground because it already had a pre-school.

CMI is one of the development strategies of the Amazon Programme, known in Suriname as **Suriname Integrated Area Based Programme (SIABP)**. In 1994 Suriname was included in the UNICEF Amazon Programme for technical assistance. Through this programme UNICEF provides support to the governments of the 8 Amazon countries in the development of poverty alleviation programmes for isolated Indigenous and tribal communities. Eligible for support are those communities which lack adequate basic facilities. In the interior of Suriname many villages lack education, health and employment opportunities. Besides, the transforming economy and the introduction of restructuring programmes result in impoverishment, while non-regulated economic activities threaten the maintenance and sustainable use of scarce natural resources and the living environment of tribal communities.

One of the most underdeveloped sectors in the interior of is education. A survey recently implemented in the interior with the support of UNICEF showed alarming signs of early school dropout in primary education. In the Upper Suriname River area 61% of the children were dropouts. In some areas, for example the Marowijne District, a whole generation of children was deprived of education during and after the 6 year lasting the war in the interior (1986-1992). The war destroyed most of the infrastructure in the interior from which the country continues to suffer, while the local population has economically and socially not yet recovered from this terror.

Because of the absence of pre-school facilities children the age group of 3-6 year are those most deprived of education. The problem was worsened by the serious shortage of teachers as a result of migration and the shift to better paid labor. For MINRO and UNICEF, the complex problems were the motive to jointly initiate the Child Minders project within the framework of the "Early Childhood Education" (ECE) project. In this way the Surinamese Government and UNICEF contribute to the expansion of pre-school education for children of poor tribal communities, who face higher risks of doubling classes and/or becoming early school dropouts.



1.2 Purpose of the Child Minders Impact Assessment

The main purpose of the assessment is to determine which impact the training of Child Minders had on their performance and on the performance of children at school and at home. The assessment focused on:

- the status of affairs and functioning of the pre-school facilities;
- the percentage of children between 3 and 6 year per village that benefit from the activities;
- the performance of the Child Minders;
- the performance of children at school and at home;
- the impact on utilisation of labour-saving devices (cassava mills) in 2 villages in particular on income generation for payment of child minders;
- the challenges encountered and ways they were dealt with.

1.3 Methodology of the Assessment

The methodology used for assessing the impact of the Child Minders Initiative (CMI) consisted of the following steps:

- review of the proposal and project reports;
- orientation visit to the villages in Marowijne where the project was implemented;
- preparatory meeting with the inter-sectoral District Team¹;
- structured individual and group interviews with Child Minders, parents and members of the Village Council² through a standardized questionnaire³;
- focus group interview with Child Minders of different villages;
- interviews with the project coordinator (implementer) and persons working at policy level of the Ministry of Education;
- personal observations.

The questionnaire was designed based on information collected from project reports and the orientation visit. In the villages individual interviews were as far as possible combined with group interviews to obtain a deep insight into the situation, challenges, successes and failures using discussion techniques. The interview with the local representative of the Ministry of Education was necessary to determine how the Child Minders concept fits into Government's policies and which opportunities exist for the integration and expansion of CMI in formal or non-formal education. The interviews were held in the Dutch and Sranan Tongo (Creole) language.

Furthermore, the state of affairs of the school facilities and playgrounds were observed during site visits.

¹ Team consisting of the local representative of MINRO, heads of different governmental sectors, and NGOs.

² Appendix A: list of interviewees.

³ Appendix B: questionnaire.



1.4 Limitations of the Assessment

The execution of the impact assessment had a few limitations which may have affected the final results of this report. The limitations experienced were as follows:

- 1) the consultant had no copies available of the approved project proposal and project reports of CMI⁴ and could therefore not adequately verify the implemented activities and the status of affairs, compare the actually achieved results with the expected results. Because MINRO and UNICEF could not find the proposal and reports, it was not possible to track the project's budget and how this was spent (on the purchase of playground equipment, bicycles, cassava grinders, and other material), although the consultant was asked to include this aspect of the project in the assessment.
- 2) It was also difficult to receive accurate information about the several stages and aspects of the project because the UNICEF consultant in charge had meanwhile left the country and was replaced.⁵ The representative of MINRO who coordinated the project was also replaced, but continued providing assistance during the preparation and execution of the assessment, although with a limited mandate.
- 3) Due to the isolated location of the villages the consultant depended on others for the arrangement of fieldvisits. The communication infrastructure appeared to be challenging and was the cause of cancelled interviews. The arrangements were sometimes made through 2 or more messengers and obviously not properly communicated, reason why the child minders were not present for the interview in some villages.
- 4) Besides the arrangements with the child minders, MINRO was also responsible for the transportation to the villages. This was poorly organized and caused loss of time, while it forced the consultant to reschedule her interview arrangements which in turn created confusion among the interviewees.

⁴ The plan, report and manual of the CMI training were available.

⁵ The current UNICEF consultant made much effort to fill in lacking information and critically guide the implementation of the impact assessment.



2. THE CHILD MINDERS MODEL

2.1 Justification of the Project

Pre-school prepares children to be able to adequately participate in primary education. Children who have lacked this stage of preparation are more likely to double classes and eventually become early school dropouts. For many Surinamese children the official Dutch language is the second language because at home children learn to speak their mother tongue. It is understandable, therefore, that pre-school education has the important role of introducing children in a playful way to the Dutch language. It also introduces children to the discipline of school and helps them to understand the rules and what is expected from them at school.⁶

Because of the absence of pre-school education in most of the interior, children in this area have a higher risk of doubling classes and/or becoming an early school dropout. This risk is further being increased because the mother tongue dominates in the village while parental guidance is almost non-existent due to high rates of illiteracy and functional illiteracy among adults.⁷

Early child care and education is one of the spearheads in MINRO's and UNICEF's development programme as it increases the survival opportunities of the individual. It is widely known that the most important part of an individual's intellectual education is shaped in the earliest stages of life. In compliance to their mission and based on the ideas of local communities, MINRO and UNICEF designed the model of child minders in Suriname to increase the opportunities and performance in school of children from isolated communities. With this, the Government of Suriname with the support of UNICEF fulfilled one of the highest needs of its Indigenous and tribal population.

2.2 Purpose, Design and Methodology of CMI

Purpose

According to the proposal and the training manual, the purpose of CMI is *"to train a selected group of women to take care of the children from their villages that do not attend school yet (age group 4-6 year)⁸ in an educational way and prepare them for school"*.

⁶ According to information obtained from the Kenki Skoro 'Manual for Child Minders'.

⁷ The illiteracy rate in the hinterland of Suriname was roughly estimated at 60%.

⁸ Kenki Skoro's workplan mentions children 3-6 years while its training manual indicates 4-6 years.



Design of the Model

The design of the low-cost Child Minders Model is integrated within the framework of SIABP and simultaneously executed with health related and economic activities. As such the model consisted of a total of seven steps, which were as follows:

- 1) identification of models for resolving the existing problems in preschool education;
- 2) recruitment and selection of candidates for the training;
- 3) training of young school dropouts as Child Minders;
- 4) establishment of the pre-school facility using an existing building;
- 5) establishment of the playground;
- 6) construction of a water and sanitation device;
- 7) labour saving and income generation devices for women

Step 1: Identification

The initial identification of the project took place during a meeting organized by UNICEF for representatives from different villages in Marowijne. Among the many problems and needs summarized by the participants, the poor conditions of education for children stood out as a top priority. The participants in particular emphasized the lack of pre-school facilities and education for children, which was identified as the main cause of the poor performance of children in primary school. The Surinamese Government and UNICEF sought the support of the NGO "Kenki Skoro" to develop the Child Minders Initiative (CMI) in close collaboration with the inter-sectoral District Team of Marowijne and the village communities.

Step 2: Selection of Candidates

The recruitment and selection of potential candidates was a matter of the village communities themselves. It was agreed that early school dropouts, preferably young women, would be approached to consider participation in the training. There were, however, also two highly motivated male candidates who participated. One of the conditions for participation in the training for child minders was that the candidate should have adequate knowledge in reading and writing of the Dutch language, and be familiar with the mother tongue of their village. After selection, the candidates received an invitation to participate in the training for child minders.



Child minders of 4 villages together during the focusgroep interview in Abadukondre



Step 3: Training

The intensive training course lasted 6 days (in total 40 hours) and intended to prepare the participants for starting up a two-year programme for children of pre-school age. The training was divided into two parts with a duration of three days each and an interval of one month in between. During this month the trainees had the opportunity to exercise and increase their practical experience during a so-called experimental phase .

Step 4: School facility

After the first part of the training, the Child Minders were supported to start up the experimental phase of the pre-school facility. Because most villages had no specific building (yet) available, the preschool started in an existing building. In many cases this was the recreation building of the village which is normally being used for village meetings and celebrations. Some villages received elementary material, such as roof material and nails, to improve the physical condition of the recreation building.

To promote the own contribution of the village community as well as ownership and sustainability of the initiative, the villagers and village council were required to take charge of school furniture and the management of the facility. An agreement was signed between the Ministry of Local Development and the Captain⁹ of each village.

Step 5: Playground

Six of the eight villages received material for a playground, consisting of a seesaw, climbing rails, swing and slide. One condition for choosing the location for the preschool facility was the availability of sufficient space around the building to set up the playground.

Step 6: Drinking water and Sanitation device

To educate the children from a young age in hygiene practices, a water and sanitation device was installed annex the preschool facility in two villages.

Step 7: Economic Empowerment and Labour Saving Devices

In two villages where the initiative did not work out very well, the villagers were asked to provide ideas for the compensation of the Child Minders whether in cash or in kind. Women in the villages came up with the idea of a cassava mill which would allow them generate incomes by renting the mill to women in the village. The earnings and/or part of the grinded cassava would be utilised to compensate the Child Minders, whereas the women of the village could benefit by saving labour time.

Fourteen Child Minders from 4 villages also received a bicycle as a present with the intention to increase their motivation and participation. The bike was likely to also contribute to labour and time saving of the Child Minders.

⁹ Official title for the head of an village.



Methodology

Kenki Skoro developed the methodology for the training of Child Minders and drafted a detailed "Manual for Child Minders in Marowijne". The methodology of Kenki Skoro includes a daily school programme consisting of four learning components:

- 1) Language activities.
- 2) Games/movement and singing.
- 3) Working with material.
- 4) Making a workpiece.

The content of the learning programme for 3-4 year olds is slightly different from that for 5-6 year olds. Language activities receive most attention because the school language, which is Dutch, is a strange language for the children. Therefore, the Child Minders were trained to explain words in the mother tongue first, and then translate these in Dutch for the children. In this way the children are made familiar with the Dutch language.

The themes of the school programme are tuned to the environmental and cultural reality of the children which receive special attention. An one-year programme consists of the following 8 themes divided over different months¹⁰:

Period	Thema
1) October	Habitat
2) November	School
3) December/January	Agricultural Plot
4) February	Food
5) March	Health
6) April/May	Hinterland
7) June	Hunting and Fishing
8) July	Celebrations

Each individual theme is guided by a list of 12 words that are taught to the children. The Child Minders use the complete list for the 5 and 6 year olds, while they choose a list consisting of six words for the 3 and 4 year olds. The themes are each also visualised by an illustration that is used to trigger discussions with the children.

Together with games, songs and creative expression activities which are taught to the children, the learning programme stimulates the intellectual development and logical thinking of the child.

¹⁰ In Suriname the school year starts in October and ends in August of the following year.



3 POLICY FOR PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

3.1 Ministry of Education

With the establishment of a 4-year Kindergarten Teachers College in 1953, the Government shaped a policy for preschool education in Suriname which includes the preparation of the young child for school.¹¹ In a playful way the child is introduced to school discipline, sitting quiet, listening and to concentrate on a task. An important goal is also to promote a smooth transition in the language situation of the child. The low performance of many children in the first grade of primary school is often the result of their poor knowledge of the Dutch language.

Preschool education is not (yet) obligatory in Suriname and the reason why preschools are lacking in certain parts of the country. With assistance of UNICEF, the Ministry of Education initiated a curriculum for 4 year olds in 1999, while a curriculum consisting of 12 themes is underway for 5 year olds.

3.2 UNICEF's Contribution to the Educational Development in Suriname

UNICEF's technical assistance to the Government for the promotion of the intellectual development of the child takes place at different levels and through a series of integrated programmes. These programmes are geared towards strategic interventions based on the needs of children. The programme with most emphasis on education for children is entitled "*Education for Child Development and Participation*" (ECDP).

ECDP aims at increasing (equal) education opportunities for children through quality improvement of the education system and increasing childrens' access to primary school. This vision directed UNICEF's support to the Government towards the development of:

- a) **Policies for early child care and development;**
- b) **Systems for early child development (ECD), such as daycare and preschool facilities;**
- c) **New curricula and learning material for formal and non-formal education at preschool and primary school levels.**

¹¹ See Training Manual of Kenki Skoro.



4 IMPACT OF THE CHILD MINDERS PROJECT

4.1 Main Findings

The results of the project in Gungsi and the little successes gained in Marowijne indicate that the Child Minders Initiative has a potential value for the sustainable development of the children and local communities involved. The two main causes which led to halting the activities in the villages were the absence of (a) a suitable preschool building and (b) a regular supply of school material.

Gungsi would have been a complete success model if MINRO had supported the local community with the construction of a facility, and the provision of water and sanitation, and school material.

In Marowijne the project could have achieved better results if the project was continued¹² and more attention was given to the school facilities and provision of school material. After a short functioning of approximately 3 to 9 months, the activities ceased in all involved villages of Marowijne. In three villages the preschool had not or hardly functioned. The facility in Gungsi also shut down for a short while, but after 1998 it functioned without disruption. According to the childminders positive changes in the attitude of children were visible in the two villages Krabuolo en Oviaolo, where the activities lasted longer time. This proves the viability and potential impact of CMI.

The project disruption caused a negative impression among the child minders and the villagers. The interviewed villagers reproached MINRO and UNICEF of the discontinuation of the activities due to the lack of school material and a suitable building. From the information received it appeared that MINRO and UNICEF had taken insufficient precautions for the long term continuation of the preschool activities. The recommendations of Kenki Skoro were not followed (yet).

In order to secure the success and continuity of the project outcomes, Kenki Skoro advised MINRO and UNICEF in its final report to undertake the following three actions:

- 1) To ensure the regular provision of school material to the villages;
- 2) Close collaboration with and support to the communities to improve the current preschool facilities. Kenki Skoro offered its guidance for the purchase and/or production of school furniture for the children because this furniture requires certain standards so as to promote the healthy physical state of the children.
- 3) Follow-up training of the child minders on the subject introductory reading and arithmetic.

¹² According to the current UNICEF consultant for SIABP, the implementation of the project was disrupted in Marowijne after the departure of the previous consultant. Because of the absence of a copy of the proposal and accurate information about the planned activities, it was not possible to review the project planning more properly and to check which planned activities had not been executed yet.



4.2 Functioning of the Preschool- and Playground

Before the war in the Hinterland, most villages had a primary school or had reasonable access to formal education. It is, therefore, understandable that the villagers had difficulty coping with the current poor education infrastructure. Though they were grateful for MINRO's and UNICEF's support, the villagers claimed entitlement to better facilities for the children and their right to a new school. They had the feeling that they were constantly "being put off with fair promises".

With the exception of Gunsji, the preschools were not operational in the villages because the minders had not received the material they were promised. They assumed that UNICEF was responsible for the regular provision of material as they were told. In 4 vilages the minders indicated that they could restart immediately upon receipt of school material, including a blackboard, glue, coloured paper, etcetera, but that on short term investments should be made in another building.

Preschool facility

In nearly each village the preschool facility was accomodated in the *krutu-oso*¹³, of which the roof was repaired with the materials provided by MINRO and UNICEF. According to the child minders this building became unsuitable because they had to close the school during village activities. Also, rainwater was coming in because the buildings had no walls (with the exception of the newly built facility in Alfonsdorp). The minders claimed that a school should meet certain requirements so as to at least protect the children and school material against rain. It appeared that parents prefer to send their children to an 'official' preschool if this opportunity exists and if the school is close to home. This was one of the reasons for the poor functioning of the initiative in at least two villages (Bernarddorp and Krabuolo which are nearest to the District's town, Mungo). A great advantage of CMI is that parents want to be ensured of the safety of their little child, who should not be too long and too far from home as was mentioned in Gunsji, Alfonsdorp, Oviaolo and Petondro.



Playground in Adjumakondre

Playground

The playgrounds were operational in three of the seven villages (including Galibi). In one village the playground was never installed. The iron equipment functioned very short because children over 10 years also used it. There were no persons with the required technical skills present in the vilages to install or repair the equipment.

¹³ The building where village meetings and community activities are being held.



4.3 Performance of the Children in School and at Home

Except a few shortcomings in the implementation of the project and continued guidance of the child minders there are several indications that the project had a positive impact on the development of the children. To measure this impact, the interviewees were asked to indicate the **changes** they had observed in the behaviour and performance of the children. The question was asked to the child minders and parents. The results were surprising and had within short time become visible in some villages, for example:

- 1) Two child minders from Gunsij and Krabuolo, respectively, indicated to have heard from the teacher of the 1st grade of primary school that a noticeable change had been visible in the behaviour of the children who had visited the preschool facility. The children were less shy, more disciplined and they participated more active in the classroom.

"The children have become more active and assertive than before."
- 2) The children had learned different words in their local language and in Dutch, and in Gunsij they could count to 10. Many were still shy to speak Dutch.
- 3) Parents and minders in Gunsij, Oviaolo and Krabuolo observed that the children played (games) with each other more often, they sang songs and had become more attached to each other.

"The children walked around in the village singing and clapping songs in their hands. They fought less."
- 4) Children of nearly all ages participated in the activities, particularly when these were held in the afternoon as was the case in Krabuolo and Alfonsdorp¹⁴ during two days a week. In Krabuolo also 2 year olds and older children from primary school visited the afternoon activities.

In Alfonsdorp the minders also assisted the children with their homework and gave extra lessons to older children.
- 5) Parents in Gunsij could better communicate with their children and had a useful subject (the school) to talk about at home.

"Now I can ask my daughter everyday what she has learned at school or to sing a song for me. It gives me a pleasant feeling to be able to talk with her about all this. She also understands many things better now". (Father from Gunsij)

It was striking that virtually 100% of the children aged 3 to 6 years participated in the activities in the villages.

¹⁴ Child minding activities in Alfonsdorp already existed long before the implementation of the project.



Success Story Gunsí



Ingrid Linga closed her school today because she has to take her baby for consultation to the neighbouring village Nieuw Aurora

"Every morning the parents bring their children brunch at school, and than we all eat together", says Ingrid. "It is just like a real kindergarten. I have not received the training from Kenki Skoro, but as a graduated 'Infant and Youth Assistant' from the technical school I am qualified to work in a nursery facility. The Ministry of Local Development employed me as development worker to run the pre-school facility. Because I earn a salary, I can make myself daily available between 08-12 hour. My major concerns are the regular provision of school material and the poor condition of the building. The children know all books by head and can repeat the stories precisely. They need new story books. They also get wet when it rains; we need another school building. There are no water and sanitation facilities for the children. We can improve all facilities, if only we could receive some materials. Through persons we know in the city, we received some second hand school furniture, but all have become old and must be replaced. Anyway, it goes one way are the other"

Ingrid Linga replaced Trees Majana and Emile Majana who were the first persons trained as Child Minders by Kenki Skoro in 1997. Trees Majana now works for the Ministry of Local Development as the coordinator of the local radiostation 'Radio Muje' (Women's Radio). Emile was inspired by the Child Minders training to obtain a 'Hinterland Teaching Degree' in Paramaribo which allowed him to teach in primary school in the Hinterland (only). He returned to Gunsí to set up the first primary school in his village, for which he received support from the Moravion Education Organization. Emile established a small school for only the 1st and 2nd grade, using the building of the Child Minders facility. When the children reached the 3rd grade, he moved with them to the primary school of Nieuw Aurora, where he still teaches. Since 1997, the school in Gunsí was continued by an external teacher, for whom the village community built a house near the school building.

Ingrid started in 1998, when the pre-school facility was still being shared with the 1st and 2nd grade. Because it caused too much noise, the community decided to move the facility and build a new camp (photo). The reopening of the facility took place in June 2000. Young children from Nieuw Aurora also visit the pre-school facility in Gunsí. Ingrid registers all children and can exactly indicate the number of pupils, their sex and ages. Nineteen children visit the facility among whom 11 boys and 8 girls. Seven children are from Nieuw Aurora. In Gunsí, children from the age of three are allowed to visit the facility, but the requirement for children from Nieuw Aurora is 5 years because of the long walking distance through the forest between both villages. It appears that 100% of the 3-6 years old in Gunsí annually visit the facility. The pre-school facility and the primary school are just like the emerged collaboration between the two villages and the support gained from third parties, the result of a seed that MINRO and UNICEF once helped to sow in 1997.



4.4 Performance of the Child Minders

Twenty-five (25) child minders from 8 villages attended the complete course of Kenki Skoro, and 8 attended half of the course. The distribution of the 25 fully trained candidates per village was as follows:

Table 1: Number of trained child minders per village, by sex

	Full		Partial*
	F	M	
Gunsi	1	1	0
Petondro	6		0
Krabu Olo	1		0
Ovia Olo	2		0
Bernarddorp	8		0
Alfonsdorp	0	1	4
Mungotapu	3		2
Adjumakondre	2		2
Total	23	2	8

* only women

It was virtually impossible to measure the performance of the child minders in the villages because all, but the one from Gunsi, stopped functioning shortly after they had started. Besides, it was on average nine (9) months ago that they had performed their last activities. Three villages (Bernarddorp, Adjumakondre and Mungotapu) had hardly functioned because of the lack of a suitable space. The facility used in Bernarddorp had no roof, while the location was shared with refugees from the civil war who lived there. In Mungotapu the facility never functioned because the villagers did want to use the *krutu-oso* for this purpose and because the playground was never installed. Child minding in Adjumakondre lasted less than three months as all school material had been used and because of the incoming rainwater from beside and through the roof of the temporary (tiny) camp. Also in this village the playground had not been installed.

The child minders could not remember all details anymore and there was no documentation available, for example, registration lists of the children. However, it was obvious that differences existed in the performance of the child minders. These differences could be rooted in one or more of the following 4 causes:

- Difference in expectations. In its report Kenki Skoro mentioned that during their fact-finding trips to the villages they found out that "sometimes the women had the wrong idea about the content of the training. The women had expected that they would also be trained in daycare skills for children aged 0-3." This was confirmed by child minders during the interviews in which they indicated to have expected to be able to earn money as daycare workers. The absence of an expected compensation for their work turned out in a low input of some child minders.
- Unequal education. An important indicator for the performance of the child minders was their educational background. Half (50%) of the interviewed child minders had a 6th grade level. It appeared that those with 8th grade or higher education had a



better understanding of and opinion about their task, and a better knowledge of the Dutch language as well, which was required.¹⁵

- Unequal interest. Already during the training Kenki Skoro noticed a limited participation from some villages, mainly Krabuolo and Oviaolo, and concluded that these villages had a small population, whereas "Moreover, it turned out that the Krabuolo children attend a Kindergarten, that is the one in Pelgrimkondre. So in fact Krabuolo does not need facilities for alternative nursery school activities, some care in the afternoon at most". During the second course, held for Alfonsdorp, Mungotapu and Adjumakondre, 6 of the 14 participants attended the complete course while 8 participated in either the first or the second part of the training.
- Unequal reward. Fourteen (14) child minders from 4 villages received a bicycle, while two (2) villages received a cassava grinder. This led to dissatisfaction within and between the villages. Many assumed that the child minders from Krabuolo and Oviaolo were compensated with the incomes generated from the cassava grinder, which was denied by the minders. The child minder from Gunsu was the only one who confirmed to receive a compensation (salary from MINRO).

Addressing the needs of the children

In the villages Oviaolo and Krabuolo the preschool functioned 2 or 4 days per week, sometimes in the afternoon. During the afternoons there were many children because also older children (1st to 6th grade) participated in the activities. The older children nearly had an equal educational level as the child minders. Therefore, some child minders mentioned their need for upgrading training. However, it was not the intention that they would teach children above the age of 6. The existing situation did express the great need for out-of-school activities for children, as well the willingness of the child minders to satisfy this need.

Motivation

The village community from Gunsu was highly satisfied with the performances delivered by the successive child minders. The present minder is highly motivated and shows initiative by undertaking all sorts of activities with the children, such as studying the environment, grow flowers on the school yard, etcetera. Every morning she starts on time and also the children have learned to keep themselves to the starting time of the school. The preschool facility receives material from Paramaribo and sometimes from neighbouring schools.

In the other villages most child minders had given up the hope to teach. They were disappointed by, as they said, the fact that MINRO and UNICEF had not kept their

¹⁵ This was easy to measure this because the higher educated were mainly the ones who spoke during the group interviews, while the lower educated could hardly contribute to the group discussion.



promises, which had led to the disruption of the activities. After the interview most of them regained some of their trust, and the majority indicated to be ready to restart without payment, but to do expect a small compensation from the Government. In their opinion, the villagers should not be asked to pay for the education of their child since education in Suriname is free of charge, which was also the opinion of parents and village authorities.

According to the child minders compensation is an important aspect of the project because the time being spend (from 08.00 to 12.00 o'clock daily) is normally used for performing reproductive¹⁶ or productive activities. They depended on those activities for food security and incomes. This was the reason why some child minders had left their village (2 from Adjumakondre), while others were frequently absent because they depended on hussle activities (some from Bernarddorp and Mungotapu who worked in French Guiana). These child minders were not available for the interview because they than were working.

Expectations

The child minders had expected to receive regular guidance and upgrading. Also that they would be symbolically 'presented' to their village after the training, and that the community would be formally informed about their increased capacity. In two villages, the villagers were sceptical about the 6-day training. They questioned the teaching capacity of the child minders, asking themselves how school dropouts could be capable of teaching after such a short training. The villagers were aware of the non-formal status of the preschool facility.

The trained child minders dream of an opportunity to upgrade their skills. If they had the chance, they would benefit from the opportunity to attend the Teachers Training for Hinterland Education. They had already communicated their wish to MINRO and UNICEF.

¹⁶ Activities concerning the reproductive function of women, such as child rearing, household duties, food production, etc.



Success Story Alfonsdorp



The pre-school facility



The playground

"I don't have to be paid persé, because I received the training free of charge and work in the interest of my own community", says Tarzan. "I am proud of the school we built with the support of others and the labour of the village people themselves."

"We received support from the Ministry of local Development, UNICEF, the Suriname Aluminium Company and from our own village purse. Furtherly, the village community supplied the required construction materials and labour. The playground is frequently used by the children. We have installed bathroom and water facilities in the school. The only things we need to start now are furniture and school materials. We can immediately start as soon as we receive a blackboard, some books and the rest of the required materials. I am a little disappointed with the response of some parents in the village towards the Child Minders. They believe that we are incompetent because we are school dropouts. They have no trust at all in the six-days training we received, which they believe is too short. We could overcome this problem if someone would explain to them how much the Child Minders learned and are capable to do."

Tarzan is the only male Child Minder in Marowijne. Hij is from Alfonsdorp, an Indigenous village located at the East-West Connection road. He and his three younger sisters have very idealistic and refreshing thoughts about voluntarism. Long before the Child Minders Initiative started, they already used their parents' home and yard to educate children from the village and help them with their homework. These activities continue and attract children of all ages. Some are Junior Highschool students who receive assistance from Tarzan's sister who herself is a dropout from Junior Highschool.

The children from Alfonsdorp visit the school in Albina, a small city located at about one hour driving with the school bus. However, the travel is too tiring for the toddlers. Therefore, the pre-school facility will be fulfilling an important need of the community of Alfonsdorp.



Benefits of the labour saving devices

MINRO and UNICEF donated a cassava grinder to the villages Krabuolo and Oviaolo when it appeared that the preschool facilities were not functioning according to expectations. In Krabuolo the child minders indicated that they had tried to establish a women's organization in order to provide for an organizational structure for the management of the grinder and other fundraising activities. Since this initiative was not successful, the management of the grinder was delegated to the women Basya's¹⁷ of the village council. The purpose was:

- a) That the village would generate money with the grinder to compensate the child minders in cash or in-kind;
- b) That the grinder would save labour for the village women, also for the child minders.

Indeed the grinder fulfilled an important need of the village women, but the child minders never received a compensation. There seemed to be some unclarity about the destiny of the generated resources. The incomes were saved for maintenance of the grinder. In one village the grinder had been out of order for some time. Because the women who managed the grinder depended on others, it took long to repair.

Part of the child minders received a bike, which was purchased to increase the motivation of the minders.¹⁸ The bike would also increase the workload of the minders and allow a few of them to work in another village. Trained child minders from Bernarddorp would teach in Krabuolo, Oviaolo and Petondro. The child minders indicated that they used the bike for shopping and incidentally to help out other villagers.

4.5 Benefits for the Parents

Asked about their benefits of the project, parents answered that they were happy with the preschool facility because it gave them the comfort to know that their little children were attended during certain time. During this time the parents were carefree and could easier attend their own work without troubling their mind about what the child was doing, where it was or with whom to leave it behind. In Gunsu, the parents noticed a positive change in the children. The children had become more obedient and disciplined. Also it was a pleasant experience for parents to hear the child singing songs, play games and tell stories. The children could better play amongst each other at home. In this way, the project had also contributed to a more positive family life.

4.6 Responsibility

¹⁷ Assists to the village Captain.

¹⁸ There was no accurate information available about the number of bikes purchased and distributed. The representative of MINRO could remember that 14 bikes were distributed among 4 villages.



Village

The responsibility for the management of the preschool facility was not adequately organized in the villages. Nobody knew exactly whether the village captains or child minders carried this responsibility. In this context the village Captains had signed an agreement with MINRO and UNICEF which more or less mentioned the Captain to be responsible for the continuation of the facility and for the compensation of the child minders. None of the captains could recall the agreement arrangement. There was no copies of the agreement available. That the Captains did show great involvement was demonstrated by the participation of two Captains in the training, and their active participation during the assessment of the CMI impact.

Government

It was also unclear which Government sector carried responsibility for CMI. Originally the Ministry of Education (MINOV) was asked to coordinate the project. However, the representative of MINOV in the Marowijne District asked MINRO to coordinate CMI because it did not fit within the formal educational structure. The responsibility of early childcare and child development has been a long lasting dispute within Government. The Ministry of Social Affairs coordinates the programmes in this area because MINOV has no focal point for the development and education of children under 4 years. CMI, therefore, functions in a vacuum with respect to its ongoing coordination and management, which fact can be pointed out as one of the causes for its weaknesses and discontinuation in Marowijne. The salary being paid by MINRO to the child minder in Gunsu was an ad hoc arrangement.



5. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Relevance

CMI appeared to be an adequate alternative to preschool education in isolated areas which lack access to Kindergarten. In villages where this access did exist in one way or the other, parents inclined to send their child to a formal school. The project was educationally justified and relevant for the most isolated villages given their limited opportunities for early child development and because of the proven potential of CMI.

5.2 Design

The CMI model appeared to be suitable for isolated areas because of its potential to integrate various development aspects, such as early child development, upgrading of early school dropouts, empowerment of women and health education (water and sanitation). The model was to such an extent flexible that it could easily be tailor-made designed so as to fit the specific conditions in a village, while it could also be used as a growth model, as demonstrated by the table below.¹⁹

Table 2: Steps implemented in the different villages

Villages	Training	Playground	Construction material	Cassava grinder	Bike	Water and sanitation
1. Gunsu	X		X			
2. Krabuolo	X	X	X	X	X	X
3. Oviaolo	X	X	X	X	X	
4. Petondro	X	X	X		X	
5. Bernarddorp	X	?			X	
6. Mungotapu	X	X				
7. Adjumakondre	X	X				
8. Alfonsdorp	X	X	X			X
9. Galibi		X				

The CMI model gives an experimental impression, judging from the activities that were implemented so far and in the sense that:

- a) As far as known, no existing model or methodology was used. The model was entirely developed in Suriname and requires perfection. In a sense it has an ad hoc nature which is being confirmed by the way the project was implemented in Gunsu, where it was not integrated with other development activities for the village;
- b) In spite of several positive indications, the impact of CMI is yet unpredictable and cannot yet technically be compared to the impact of Kindergarten. Moreover, the initiative has functioned too short and more or less observational to provide a solid model for analysis and comparance of the effects of its methodology on changes in the behaviour and development of children. Undoubtedly, the model does provide an adequate basis for further shaping and refining;

¹⁹ This was merely an assumption since the proposal was not available.



- c) There were organisational shortcomings which impeded the adequate functioning of the child minders and the preschool facilities.
- d) The CMI conception and model do not (yet) fit within a policy, structure or program of the Government. CMI is merely being implemented as an isolated initiative.

That several positive results were gained within relatively short time, in spite of the shortcomings, indicates that the CMI development conception responds to the needs of children in disadvantaged situations, as it also promotes the educational development of these children.

5.3 Playground and Donated Devices

The equipment for the playground was of poor quality, while the iron construction was in sharp contrast with the natural habitat of the villages. **There would have been multiple advantages if the creative capacity of the inhabitants was utilized to design the playground and to construct this from locally available material (wood).**²⁰ Firstly, this approach would increase the ownership and responsibility of the community for maintenance, while the use of wood material would harmonize with the natural environment. Secondly, the costs for purchasing the playground, and the transportation and maintenance costs, all spent in Paramaribo, could be replaced by low-cost investment in local entrepreneurs. Thirdly, the use of wood would enhance local maintenance and therefore promote sustainability. The "Pater Ahlbrinck Stichting" (local NGO in Marowijne) has a woodprocessing workplace, which provides opportunities for training as well renting the fully equipped workplace.

The donated bikes met the personal needs of the minders, but have not (yet) proven to be beneficially to the child minders' work, at least, this has not convincingly been proven. Otherwise, the cassava grinder was successful for it saved women not only labour, but also hard work. A disadvantage of the mobile grinder is its heavy weight, which makes it difficult to move from one place to the other for renting purposes. Moving the grinder requires male labour. Also for repair of the grinder, the women depend on men, which has so far been a disadvantage since men do not feel the same involvement.

5.4 Genderanalysis and Community Participation

The project has not intended and, therefore, not promoted a break-through in traditional gender roles. Mainly women were approached as volunteers to perform the responsible and time consuming, but unpaid, task of child minder. The child minders received only little support from men in the villages who asked payment for even cleaning the schoolyard. For this reason all schoolyards looked very neglected. Otherwise, the involvement of both men and women in the different stages of the project has reasonably

²⁰ This method was very successfully applied by the Municipality of Belém (Brazil) when introducing the Government financed 'Bosque Environmental School' for indigenous communities in the Bosque region. The model was adopted by UNICEF in Brazil.



promoted ownership in the communities. In the villages Gunsij and Alfonsdorp men and women together took the initiative to establish a preschool facility. Whereas the criticism on CMI and the passivity from many other villagers are an expression of lack of ownership, they are also an expression of great dissatisfaction about the continuing poor functioning of the education system in Marowijne as a result of the absence of interventions from the authorities, whether governmental or non-governmental.

5.5 Expectations

The expectations of the villagers and child minders were not fully met. They had counted on further support and material in order to eventually set up a better facility that would minimum requirements. The child minders had also expected regular supervision and guidance.

Also the expectations of the Government and UNICEF were not fully met, because they had anticipated more initiative from the village councils and villagers themselves. The project was initiated in such a way, so as to avoid the "dependency syndrom". The agreement with the Captain, the responsibility of the villagers for school furniture, the compensation of the child minders and similar provisions were for the account of the villages.

5.6 Sustainability

The reasonably operating preschool facility in Gunsij shows that sustainability can be secured if the basic conditions are met. Among these conditions are the provision of material, a compensation of the child minder, professional guidance, involvement of the village council, ownership of the community and a functional preschool facility.

The sustainability of CMI was at risk, because the majority of villages had not lived up to the agreement, while MINRO and UNICEF had insufficiently utilised local human and natural resources. Furthermore, one of the most important aspects that was overlooked, was the appointment of a committee responsible for the management and maintenance of the preschool facility.

5.7 Monitoring and Evaluation

MINRO and UNICEF paid insufficient attention to the regular monitoring and evaluation of the project. MINRO was responsible for this, but it was not clear who the designated person was. The delegated project coordinator for MINRO cannot concurrently be responsible for project monitoring and evaluation which would be a conflict of interest. It was not clear whether resources had been budgeted for travel costs to the villages which were relatively high.



6. LESSONS LEARNED

The project stakeholders mentioned the following lessons learned²¹:

- a. The success of CMI depends on the participation of the main stakeholders (village council, villagers, parents and child minders) in all phases of project implementation and decision making.²²
- b. A good division of tasks and duties, as well a written record of the arrangements agreed upon are required to avoid confusion and misinterpretation.
- c. Two village Captains indicated that one should avoid demanding too much (own contribution and voluntary work) from women and the villagers, and becoming dependent of their voluntarism, because people are not willing or just cannot give or do it.
- d. Ongoing guidance, monitoring and evaluation are required during the implementation of the project.
- e. It is necessary to incorporate a consolidation (aftercare) phase in the proposal including the professional guidance/supervision of the child minders and extended monitoring.
- f. The availability of school material and a suitable facility are indispensable for assuring the continuation of the preschool.
- g. There is a need for daycare (2-4 year) and for out-of-school activities for older children.

²¹ The interviewees were asked to describe what the project had taught them and which points they would want to bring to the attention of others who like to copy the initiative. In two group interviews, the child minders were asked to think of themselves as the implementer and give a detailed description of how they would have implemented the project. Striking was their emphasis on community involvement throughout the process and that they would supply the communities with a chain saw to construct the facility, playground and school furniture. The exact words of the interviewees have been paraphrased.

²² Most interviewees were satisfied with the way this was taken care of during the planning and implementation of CMI.



7. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

During the implementation process, the project partners encountered a few challenges which determined the final shape of the project, for example:

- a. Not all child minders were prepared to work during 5 days a week without a reasonable compensation. To overcome this weakness in the project, 4 villages were given bikes for the child minders, while two villages received a cassava grinder so as to reduce the workload of women and generate incomes for the compensation of the minders;
- b. Many people ask a compensation for their services because of their worsened economic conditions. Consequently, one could not fully rely on the in-kind contribution of the villagers. This problem could not adequately be resolved because neither MINRO nor UNICEF have resources to pay the villagers, while both try to avoid a donor-dependency. Therefore, the villages received basic construction material to upgrade the preschool facility.
- c. It was not possible to find a person in Marowijne for the construction of the playground equipment. Therefore, the equipment was purchased in Paramaribo, about 70 km from Marowijne. This means that the maintenance and repair could not be guaranteed at low-cost, which is a challenge that needs to be solved soon.
- d. Occasionally issues between the Government and village representatives interfered with the project implementation. This affected the response of villages to the initiative. Villagers will talk about the 'UNICEF' rather than 'MINRO' initiative. During the impact assessment MINRO took a leading role in order to emphasize its role in the initiative.
- e. A continuing challenge is the low interest and involvement of the Ministry of Education (MINOV) in the CMI project. Although, the local representative of MINOV in Marowijne became more convinced of the value of CMI during the impact assessment and indicated some actions for MINOV's future support.



8. CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A distinct has been made between conditions and recommendations, respectively, in the proposed measures for the improvement of CMI. The conditions indicate the required measures to be undertaken, while the recommendations are more advisory. They are divided as follows:

Conditions

- a. Concentrate only on the villages where children have no access at all to preschool education;
- b. Optimally utilise the potential of the local human and natural resources for the design and implementation of CMI.
- c. Introduce training for daycare workers given the need for this type of services and for diversification of income sources among young women;
- d. Introduce a shift system to reduce the workload of the child minders and/or a system to secure their compensation;
- e. Guarantee the regular provision of school material;
- f. Extend the duration of the project from 4 months to 18 months (covering the 2-year school programme developed by Kenki Skoro) to include ongoing guidance, supervision and upgrading of the child minders, as well to consolidate the results gained;
- g. At any cost, provide all preschool facilities with adequate water and sanitation, which is a basic requirement;

Recommendations

- h. Extend the training programme with upgrading training which is implemented within the lifetime of the project;
- i. If possible, introduce additional selection criteria including the selection of candidates with a higher education (than the 6th grade) and pay more attention to the selection of interested male candidates;
- j. Develop a training for trainers for graduated Kindergarten teachers, preferably from the local region, in order to build and utilise their capacity as trainers and supervisors;



- k. Utilise the creativity and inventiveness of the villagers for the design and construction of the preschool facility and playground;
- l. Promote the in-kind contribution of the villagers for the delivery of the preschool, playground and school furniture by assisting them with the necessary tools and material (saws, nails, etc.), a limited compensation for their labour and the drafting of a management plan for maintenance;
- m. Install a village committee for the management and maintenance of the facility (consisting of representatives of the village council, the child minders and parents);
- n. Train keypersons (men and women) in organisational skills, (financial) administration, and maintenance and repair of the cassava grinder).



APPENDICES

A. List of interviewees

Child Minders

- 1) Amuveri Judith
- 2) Ansoe Shakelien
- 3) Apueke Sherida
- 4) Bron Jolanda
- 5) Damba Sonja
- 6) Djoey Joyce
- 7) Harderwijk Gwendolyn
- 8) Hunswijk Susan
- 9) Karwafodi Tarzan²³
- 10) Karwafodi Joan
- 11) Karwafodi Mercelin
- 12) Kastil Esselin
- 13) Kuma Rosa
- 14) Linga Ingrid
- 15) Marca Carmen
- 16) Tuinfort Elizabeth

Villagers (Village council and parents)

- 17) Donoe Gionoe – Kapitein Gunsij (m)
- 18) Pinas Baja – Kapitein Petondro (m)
- 19) Prika Wilma – Kapitein Adjumakondre (f)
- 20) Riebeek Gerarda – Basja Mungotapu (f)
- 21) Antonius Joe – Basja Oviaolo (m)
- 22) Ajaiso Waldo – Gunsij (m)
- 23) Bron Hugo – Voorzitter Ressor Raad Mungotapu (m)
- 24) Longswijk Bonafacius – Voorzitter Ressor Raad Patamacca (m)
- 25) Toi Florine – onderwijzeres Gunsij (f)

Project Partners

- 26) Simon Monique – District Secretary of Marowijne, Project Coordinator (f)
- 27) Krishnadath Ismene – Chairperson Kenki Skoro, Technical Consultant (f)
- 28) Verwey M. – Inspector Primary Education in Marowijne (m)

²³ The only male child minder in the group.



B. Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

Village

1. NAME
2. EDUCATION
3. INITIATIVE TO PROJECT
4. LOCAL IMPLEMENTERS
5. DATE OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION
6. NUMBER OF CHILDREN 3-6 YR WHICH ANNUALLY VISIT FACILITY: F M
HOW MANY ARE FROM OTHER VILLAGES?

IMPLEMENTATION

7. TELL ME STEP BY STEP HOW THE PROJECT WAS IMPLEMENTED.

	WHAT	WHO
STEP 1		
STEP 2		
STEP 3		
STEP 4		
STEP 5		
STEP 6		

EXPECTATIONS

8. A) WHAT WERE YOUR EXPECTATIONS RE THE TRAINING AND HOW WERE THEY MET?
B) ID. RE THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE COMMUNITY?



C) ID. RE COMPENSATION (CASH/IN-KIND)?

9. (IF APPLICABLE) ANY RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT HOW EXPECTATIONS CAN STILL BE MET?

10. FOR WHAT PURPOSES HAS THE BIKE BEEN USED?

11. HOW WAS THE CASSAVA GRINDER USED?
WHAT ARE ITS ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES?

IMPACT

12. WHICH IMPORTANT CHANGES HAVE YOU NOTICED AS A RESULT OF THE PROJECT?
IN A POSITIVE SENSE

AMONG CHILDREN	AMONG PARENTS

13. IN NEGATIVE SENSE

AMONG CHILDREN	AMONG PARENTS

14. WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE SITUATION IF CMI WAS NOT IMPLEMENTED?

OWNERSHIP & SUSTAINABILITY

15. HOW ARE PROBLEM BEING SOLVED?



16. WHAT HAVE THE VILLAGERS DONE TO MAINTAIN THE PRESCHOOL FACILITY: (INPUT CASH, MATERIAL, LABOUR, OTHER)

17. WHAT HAVE THE CHILD MINDERS DONE IN THIS RESPECT?

18. SHOULD PARENTS PAY A CONTRIBUTION FOR THEIR CHILD’S PRESCHOOL EDUCATION?

WHAT KIND OF CONTRIBUTION?

19. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE FACILITY?

– DON’T KNOW - Captain - CHILD MINDERS -(OTHER)

WHO SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE?

– DON’T KNOW - CAPTAIN - CHILD MINDER -(OTHER)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

20. WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY IF YOU WERE THE IMPLEMENTER?

A) THE PLAYGROUND

B) THE TRAINING

THE PRESCHOOL FACILITY

D) MAINTENANCE OF THE SCHOOL, PLAYGROUND AND YARD

E) SCHOOL MATERIAL AND OTHER COSTS/NECESSITIES

21. WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN TO MAKE FACILITY WORK?