

# LOCAL CAPACITY INITIATIVE (LCI) PROJECT

## SUCCESS STORY



### SURINAME

**Government commits to enacting legislation to protect and recognize the rights of differently-abled people to health, social protection, housing, and justice**

*The Local Capacity Initiative (LCI) project funded by PEPFAR/USAID and implemented by the PANCAP Coordinating Unit in collaboration with University of the West Indies, Health Economics Unit worked to build the policy advocacy capacity of local civil society organisations (CSOs) that specifically focus on key populations to become more sustainable as they continue to support the overall goal of reducing transmission of HIV in the Caribbean.*

Double Positive Foundation is a civil society organisation in Suriname that works primarily to promote the interests of women and girls living with HIV/AIDS in order to improve their quality of life.

To address the issue of vulnerable groups (particularly; boys and girls, the elderly, and those with impaired hearing) access to health, social protection, housing, and justice, the Double Positive Foundation with support from the Ministry of Public Health, led advocacy efforts which resulted in government agencies providing their commitment to review/reform existing policies and legislations.

The Double Positive Foundation, with support other CSOs providing services to vulnerable groups finalised and presented three petitions to the following government agencies: The National Assembly, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Public Health. Through these petitions, Double Positives and the supporting CSOs received commitments from the following:

1. His Excellency Minister Soewarto Moestadja viewed the petition as a support for Ministry's policy for equal treatment of all persons in the labor market. The Minister assured the foundation that Ministry of Labour is working to align the Surinamese labour legislations with legal conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO), aimed at providing equal opportunities without discrimination.
2. Her Excellency Ms. Christien Polak supported the petition which requested that health care workers and other service providers be provided with capacity building training for delivering inclusive service to vulnerable groups. -The petition requested that social laws be reviewed to ensure people who are able to work, regardless of their illness, should have the opportunity to do so.
3. Her Excellency Dr. Jennifer Geerlings-Simons informed Double Positive representatives and the media that this issue is receiving the attention of the National Assembly and the relevant legislations will be tabled for review in 2018. The petitions received a total 1,049 signatures in support of the elderly and 1,098 in support of the hearing impaired.



*His Excellency Minister of Labour Soewarto Moestadja receiving the Petition from a Double Positive representative (picture courtesy of Double Positive Foundation)*



*Her Excellency Ms Christien Polak - Minister of Social Affairs and Housing, with Double Positive representatives at the presentation of their Petition (picture courtesy of Double Positive Foundation)*



*Her Excellency Dr. Jennifer Geerlings-Simons - Chairman of the National Assembly, with Double Positive representatives and the media at the presentation of their Petition (picture courtesy of Double Positive Foundation)*

In summary, Double Positive was able to achieve the following:

- Increased awareness of PLHIV and differently-abled people's rights and the responsibilities of government
- Government's commitment to enacting legislation to protect and recognize the rights of PLHIV and differently-abled people

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