

ABSTRACT

Regionalism and Social Policy in UNASUR:
Widening the application of the Latin American Model of Conditional Cash Transfer:
A Case Study of Suriname

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Regions and regionalism have grown in importance in global politics, and integration ambitions and initiatives have extended beyond trade and investment to embrace social development. This has created opportunities to explore the extent to which the regional integration initiative, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), facilitates and affects social policies and addresses social ills such as poverty and inequality in member countries such as Suriname. The possibilities for UNASUR as a regional institution – given its increasing experience and regional reach – to provide leadership, direction and knowledge-sharing among member countries, must be considered. How can UNASUR as a regional organisation advocate, mediate, and influence policies with a focus of social justice and equality? This study focuses on Suriname, and the prospects and challenges of the utilisation of the Brazilian Bolsa Familia Conditional Cash Transfer Programme model as a social policy mechanism under the umbrella of UNASUR. The study seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of the position, opportunities and challenges for this small state as it engages a new regional integration process. The study also assesses the interstate collaboration between the small state of Suriname and large South American states such as Brazil in the context of South-South Cooperation (SSC). From a social constructivist worldview and beyond the traditional trade focus and contemporary theoretical construct of post-neo liberal regionalism, a case study is conducted using the qualitative research method to interrogate the interrelations between UNASUR, as a regional space, and social policy in Suriname focusing on the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) as an instrument of social policy.

Keywords: Ruben Soekarmin Martoredjo; Regional Integration; UNASUR; Social Security; Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT); Bolsa Familia; Suriname.