

Situation Analysis Children and Adolescents in the Caribbean Netherlands

Since the 2013 situation analyses on the rights of children in the Caribbean Netherlands, children's rights have remained on the political agenda. The Dutch government and the public entities have administered many policy reforms and programs toward improving the situation of children on the three islands. Examples of progress are the achievement of the basic quality standard at all schools, attention to poverty alleviation and developments and investments in the quality of and access to early childcare and after-school care.

On the basis of the 2019 situation analysis, the following three key critical issues have been identified :

- (i) It is difficult to ascertain which children are being deprived of their rights or what the impact of all initiatives since 2013 have been on the lives of children due to limited or inadequate data; for example, without a baseline and trends, it is unclear whether less children are victims of child abuse or whether less children struggle with deprivations related to poverty;
- (ii) Coordination between ministries and between the ministries and the public entities could be more aligned toward determining island-specific priorities and achieving cross-sectoral objectives;
- (iii) There are several gaps in the legislative and policy environment. In the area of child protection, for example, definitions of child abuse, specification of the responsibilities of different actors in the child protection system, and stipulation of services that should be provided to victims of domestic violence are not legally enshrined in the Caribbean Netherlands. In the area of education, no standards have been set for the Caribbean Netherlands for education results.

On the basis of the 2019 situation analysis, 30 recommendations have been formulated toward the Dutch government and public entities. Once applied, actions stemming from the recommendations can ensure that in the future, the impact of initiatives meant to improve the well-being of children will be measurable and equitable, all efforts will be well-coordinated, and the necessary legislative framework and policy environment will be intact. The 7 recommendations that should be prioritized as a first step are highlighted per duty-bearer in this fact sheet.

BZK : strengthen coordination in the field of children's rights in general, but especially on child protection, and before new initiatives are introduced on the islands.

VWS & J&V : (i) conduct a legal gap analysis in the area of domestic violence and child abuse and clarify how and when the Istanbul Convention will be ratified for the Caribbean Netherlands; and (ii) put in place a comprehensive legislative framework.

Public entities : develop and/or finalize a coherent, integrated and coordinated youth policy with a corresponding monitoring and evaluation framework.

SZW : conduct a child poverty analysis to fill the gap in data on child poverty rates.

OCW : accelerate development of a joint vision and action plan on measuring and interpreting learning outcomes for Dutch, Papiamentu, English and arithmetic, and routinely report to stakeholders about progress and results.

Ministries and public entities collectively : strengthen the role of CBS and increase their resources to build capacity within the public entities to systematically generate necessary data and to continue expanding the Caribbean Netherlands Youth Monitor on a long term-basis.



Factsheet

Listed below are the remaining 23 recommendations which are all relevant to improving the situation of children in the Caribbean Netherlands. All recommendations formulated relate to either (i) the legal and policy environment, (ii) government coordination, (iii) evidence generation, data collection, monitoring and management, (iv) service strengthening and capacity building, and (v) awareness raising and participation.

VWS :

- Conduct research on adolescent well-being, behaviors, mental and sexual health.
- Provide guidance to professionals on how to engage in conversation with abused children.
- Look into whether a child check, among other steps, could be introduced in the reporting code so that the 5-step plan also considers the best interest of the child in domestic violence cases.
- Raise the standard of services for child protection and monitor regularly; stimulate cooperation between Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire, and St. Eustatius, Saba and St. Maarten.

J&V :

- Ensure that young detainees are (i) held separately from adult criminals; (ii) receive guidance, education, and skills training; and (iii) have contact with their parents.
- Implement steps toward adopting a legal ban on corporal punishment in close consultation with the public entities and in regular dialogue with the Caribbean Netherlands island communities.

SZW :

- Carry out a multidimensional poverty study to gather baseline information on poverty and deprivations, including the underlying causes.
- Strengthen multidisciplinary approaches to address and monitor poverty reduction.
- Ensure that the public entities have sufficient capacity to implement poverty reduction strategies.

OCW :

- Support secondary schools to scale up guidance for students transitioning to tertiary education and the labor market and to implement a graduate tracking system.
- Support schools with integrating children's rights education and participation activities into their curriculum.

Public entities (with the support of relevant ministries):

- Develop a tracking and monitoring coordination mechanism on the wide range of actions being undertaken in the area of child protection.
- Conduct a baseline survey of attitudes on violence against women and children.
- Facilitate discussions to build consensus on defining cases of different forms of abuse.
- Make use of compulsory education registration systems to report on the number of dropouts.
- Consolidate parenting programs.
- Bring early stimulation to the household and engage parents to complement what is being done in day care.
- Implement a sustained media initiative targeting parents on the importance of early stimulation/ childcare.

All relevant ministries, including BZK, and the public entities collectively :

- Empower local governments to be more effective policymakers by decentralizing authority to make key decisions.
- Conduct skills/team/trust-building exercises between the layers of government and non-state actors that will foster participatory policy development and program design, cultivate island ownership and motivate the mutual accountability required for long-term planning.
- Collaborate on strengthening data collection, sharing and use; build on outcomes and recommendations of the situation analysis; include information on the Caribbean Netherlands in national publications; and use data for effective communication.
- Facilitate consistent consultation mechanisms with civil society, communities, children, and adolescents.
- Invest in good baseline measurement, a monitoring and evaluation framework, and regular reports for all initiatives introduced to improve the situation of children in the Caribbean Netherlands.