

Saba

post-hurricane
Irma assessment

Education and Child
protection sectors

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ACRONYMS

ASC	After School Care program
BES	Bonaire, St Eustatius, Saba
CF	Child Focus Foundation
CoG	Court of Guardianship
COPI	Command at the Place of Incident
CCRIF	Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance Facility
CYF	Center for Youth and Family
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EBT	Eilandelijk Beleidsteam
ECE	Expertise Center Education Care
GBV	Gender based violence
IAP	Information and Advice Point
IASC	Interagency Standing Committee
INEE	Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies
IND	Immigration and Naturalisation Office
LLDC	Laura Linzey Day Care Center
MHC	Mental Health Caribbean
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCW	Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science
PES	Public Entity Saba
RCN	Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland
SCS	Saba Comprehensive School
SHCF	Saba Health Care Foundation
SHS	Sacred Heart Primary School
SSP	School Safety Plan
SZW	Netherlands Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VWS	Netherlands Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports
Winair	Windward Islands Airways

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BACKGROUND

During the month of September 2017, the resilience of Saba residents, along with residents of St. Maarten and St. Eustatius, was severely tested after the islands were either heavily impacted or threatened by three consecutive major hurricanes within the timespan of two weeks. On September 6th, the extremely powerful and catastrophic category 5 Hurricane Irma made landfall on several of the northern islands of the Lesser Antilles chain including the aforementioned Dutch Caribbean islands. Shortly after, on September 8th, affected residents of these islands were immediately forced into preparations for category 4 Hurricane Jose which ultimately diverted northwards and spared the islands. On September 19th, however, category 5 Hurricane Maria passed just south of the Dutch Caribbean islands; the islands endured tropical storm winds and residents remained under curfew for about 36 hours.

Hurricane Irma caused physical infrastructural damage on Saba having severely damaged 37 homes¹ of which 12 families had to be (temporarily) relocated. More houses sustained minor damage such as leaking. The Laura Linzey Day Care Center was severely damaged resulting in the need to relocate some of the classrooms to a second facility. Playground damage at the Sacred Heart Primary School and the Child Focus afterschool activities center hindered children's ability to resume their regular play. Infrastructural damage at the Saba Comprehensive School was the most severe amounting to an estimated \$100,000 for repairs. A number of staff members at each of the formal and non-formal education organizations were among those with severe damage to their homes.

The harrowing impact that Hurricane Irma has left on St. Maarten has also had an indirect effect on Saba. For one, shortly after the storm, dozens of informal evacuations from St. Maarten to Saba on Saba fishing boats were organized for families and unaccompanied children with Saba relations. In most cases, registration systems and border control mechanisms were either not in place or not adhered to. Secondly, the regular import of supplies from St. Maarten was stalled compelling residents to rely on military rations and arrange the alternative shipment of supplies from St. Kitts until the end of September. Additionally, St. Maarten's dilapidated hotels, inoperative Princess Julianna International Airport, and consequent shattered tourism economy made it ever clearer how fragile and dependent Saba's tourism sector and its related jobs are on St. Maarten's market. With the Windward Islands Airways (WINAIR) dysfunctional for weeks, Saba's residents remained landlocked and became increasingly frustrated with the preparations and aftermath of the hurricanes.

These tangible and intangible effects of the storms have taken a toll on Saba residents' mental health and sense of socio-emotional well-being. After each of the storms the community bounced back and demonstrated resilience by uniting in prompt clean-up efforts in order to restore an immediate sense of normalcy. Local and national governments collaborated to facilitate speedy social services for those most affected and in need. Impoverished families have added to their financial struggles by welcoming and providing shelter for the children of their disaster stricken close friends and family on St. Maarten. Professionals working directly with children at schools, the day care center, and after school programs disregarded their own fatigue and well-being in order to get back to work and put the continuation of education first. While things appear to be returning to normal, the lingering effects of the storms are still having an impact on families, professionals, and indirectly, the islands' children. Many professionals recognize that the well-being of children depend on the adults meant to support them; as such the well-being of adults has to be adequately tended to. Additionally, professionals also recognize that mitigating the risks to children's well-being in future disasters depends on making the right preparations now.

¹ This amounts to 5% of buildings on Saba.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

On September 18th, the Public Entity of Saba submitted a request to UNICEF Netherlands to assist with facilitating extra capacity in recognition of the sudden need for professionals on the island to be supported with or temporarily relieved of their duties as a result of the pressure and stress of the storms. The request was as follows:

- Education professionals to support at the schools where and whenever necessary; 2 at the Sacred Heart School and 2 at the Saba Comprehensive School.
- 2 pedagogic workers to support at the Laura Linzey Daycare Center where and whenever necessary.
- 2 pedagogic workers to support at the After School Care program where and whenever necessary.
- 2 Social Workers to support the post-disaster work of the local government's Social Affairs Domain.
- Support at Child Focus' after school activities based on their needs.
- 1 Social Worker to support the work of the Court of Guardianship with regard to the families and unaccompanied children who were informally evacuated from St. Maarten to Saba.

In order for UNICEF Netherlands to determine to what extent this request was substantiated and could be accommodated, a post disaster needs assessment was conducted on the island from October 11th to 13th. The UNICEF team comprised two persons: Bart Vrolijk - education in emergencies advisor and La-Toya Charles – child rights in the Caribbean specialist. The assessment consisted of discussions with relevant stakeholders and visits to facilities. The assessment was broadened to assess other possible education and child protection needs in view of children's rights in post-disaster situations.



Bart Vrolijk - education in emergencies advisor, visits a daycare center.



ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

- i. Request from the Public Entity of Saba (see above)
- ii. UNICEF’s Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action² (as relevant – see below)

Education - Priority Core Commitments and Benchmarks	
<p>Commitment 1: Effective leadership is established for education cluster/ inter-agency coordination (with co-lead agency), with links to other cluster/sector coordination mechanisms on critical intersectoral issues.</p>	<p>Benchmark 1: Coordination mechanism provides guidance to all partners on common standards, strategies and approaches, ensuring that all critical education gaps and vulnerabilities are identified, and provides information on roles, responsibilities and accountability to address all gaps without duplication.</p>
<p>Commitment 2: Children, including preschool-age children, girls and other excluded children, access quality education opportunities.</p>	<p>Benchmark 2: Schools are reopened, and child- and adolescent-friendly emergency non-formal programs, including play and early learning for young children, are established for affected communities.</p>
<p>Commitment 3: Safe and secure learning environments that promote the protection and well-being of students are established.</p>	<p>Benchmark 3: Schools are safe and free from violence, and children, including girls, can safely move between home and school.</p>
<p>Commitment 4: Psychosocial and health services for children and teachers are integrated in educational response.</p>	<p>Benchmark 4: All education-related humanitarian response integrates appropriate psychosocial, health and nutritional interventions.</p>
<p>Commitment 5: Adolescents, young children and caregivers access appropriate life skills programs and information about the emergency, and those who have missed out on schooling, especially adolescents, receive information on educational options.</p>	<p>Benchmark 5: Relevant education programs are implemented, including for adolescents and young children.</p>

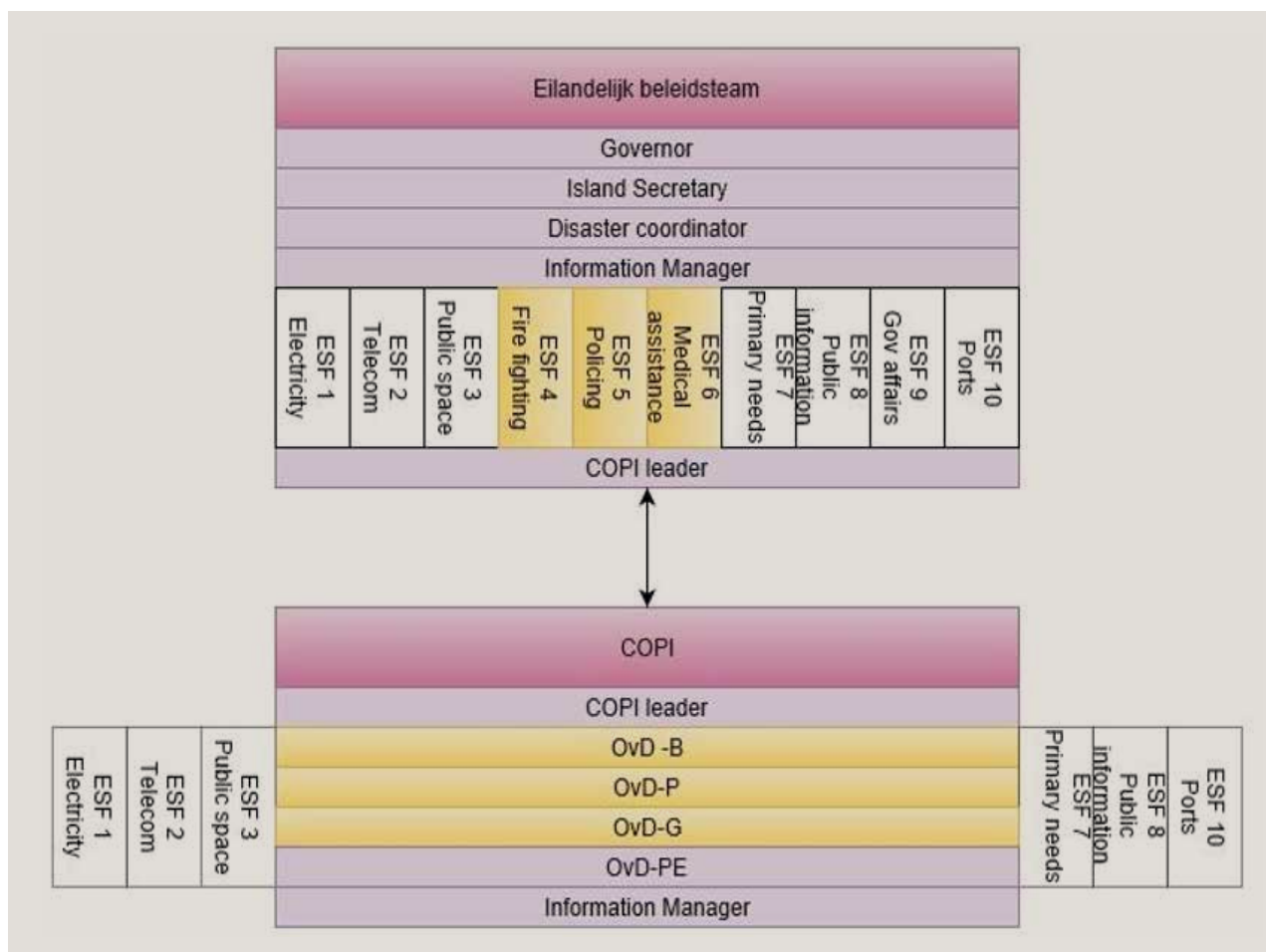
² https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/CCC_042010.pdf

Child Protection - Priority Core Commitments and Benchmarks

<p>Commitment 1: Effective leadership is established for both the child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) cluster areas of responsibility, with links to other cluster/sector coordination mechanisms on critical inter-sectoral issues. Support is provided for the establishment of a mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) coordination mechanism.</p>	<p>Benchmark 1: Both child protection and GBV coordination mechanisms provide guidance to all partners on common standards, strategies and approaches, ensuring that all critical child protection/GBV gaps and vulnerabilities are identified; information is provided on roles, responsibilities and accountability to ensure that all gaps are addressed without duplication. MHPSS coordination mechanisms are established, with linkages to relevant clusters.</p>
<p>Commitment 3: Key child protection mechanisms are strengthened in emergency-affected areas.</p>	<p>Benchmark 3: A plan is in place for preventing and responding to major child protection risks, building on existing systems; safe environments are established for the most vulnerable children.</p>
<p>Commitment 4: Separation of children from families is prevented and addressed, and family-based care is promoted.</p>	<p>Benchmark 4: All separated and unaccompanied children are identified and are in family-based care or an appropriate alternative.</p>
<p>Commitment 5: Violence, exploitation and abuse of children and women, including GBV, are prevented and addressed.</p>	<p>Benchmark 5: Affected communities are mobilized to prevent and address violence, exploitation and abuse of children and women; existing systems to respond to the needs of GBV survivors are improved.</p>
<p>Commitment 6: Psychosocial support is provided to children and their caregivers.</p>	<p>Benchmark 6: All child protection programs integrate psychosocial support in their work, in line with the IASC MHPSS guidelines.</p>

SITUATIONAL REPORT – GENERAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT COORDINATION AND RESPONSE

Saba has a crisis team at two levels: strategic and tactical decisions are taken in the eilandelijk beleidsteam³ (EBT) and operational decisions are taken in the Command at the Place of Incident (COPI).



The response phases were demarcated from August 31st until September 13th (Irma) and September 16th until the 21st (Maria). The focus in the response phase was saving and sustaining life: ensuring drinkable water, shelter, and food. The focus in the recovery phase was restoring essential services and livelihoods for which several sub-projects were initiated. PES disaster management coordination was responsible for the distribution of relief supplies which was executed throughout the community with the help of volunteers. Priority areas for the supplies from most to least were: those most affected; the elderly living solely on their pension; single parents (moms specifically); and other people who needed support. In general, communicating updates was prioritized by PES before, during, and after the storms. PES developed a disaster preparation app⁴ which was widely downloaded and used. Information flyers were also produced as a means to most effectively disseminate information throughout the community and distributed at the hospital, police station, and grocery stores. There was also an island-wide WhatsApp group. Use of a bullhorn was also considered if necessary.

³ Island Policy Team
⁴ Disaster Prep Saba

There were two shelters open from before the storm; one in The Bottom at The Sunny Valley Youth Center, and another in Windwardside at Child Focus. Villages St. Johns, which was along with The Bottom the most severely impacted, and Hell's Gate had no shelter. Residents are advised to make use of either of the two shelters if they are uncertain about the safety of their homes,

After Irma, electricity was restored within 24 to 48 hours. Debris was cleared shortly after. The military was the first lifeline via the Pelikaan vessel. The water bank started on the 13th. There had been concerns that the cistern water was contaminated.

EDUCATION SITUATIONAL REPORT

Saba has 1 day care center, 1 primary school, 1 secondary school, 1 education care center, 1 after school care program, and 1 after school activities organization.

The day care center is a division within PES and is also managed and financed by PES. The After School Care is managed by a foundation and is subsidized by PES. The primary and secondary schools and student care center are all financed by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (OCW) and subject to the same education inspectorate system. Maintenance of the school buildings is the responsibility of PES. The after school activities organization is financed by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sports (VWS). Maintenance of the after school activities center is the responsibility of PES.

1.1 Leadership and coordination mechanisms

Particularly with regard to education, the PES governor, island secretary, Government Information Services, and the information manager were in communication with the schools about the incoming hurricanes and closing before the storms and opening after. PES is also responsible for assisting schools and non-formal education facilities with boarding up preparations. The schools were responsible for communicating education related information to staff, students, and parents.

1.2 Re-opening and safety of schools and non-formal education centers

The Laura Linzey Day Care Center (LLDC) is managed by PES. LLDC has 54 children enrolled, 11 caregivers, and opens from 7:00 – 5:30 with caregivers working according to shifts. Warm meals are provided on a daily basis at 11:45. Parents pay \$140 per month for full-day enrollment and \$83 for half-day. Discounts are arranged for families with more than one child. After the storms, fee waivers were arranged for parents with storm related financial burdens (e.g. damaged homes or unemployment) allowing all children previously accessing the daycare services to continue doing so⁵. Due to a prior waiting list of 7 Saban children, LLDC could not accommodate requests for enrollment for children relocated from St. Maarten after the storms; it remained unclear how many requests were received.

Due to severe roof damage to one section of the center's building, LLDC resumed regular services 1 week after Hurricane Irma and 2 days after Hurricane Maria. The delayed opening frustrated parents but PES and management wanted to ensure the children's and caregivers' safety. Thanks to basic preparation procedures, including covering all valuables and storing in the center of the rooms, LLDC did not lose much supplies despite the damage. A second temporary facility has been arranged at the Center for Youth & Family (CYF) office as covering the damaged area with tarpaulin would not have been child-friendly and relocation would have eventually been necessary for reconstruction. The CYF is temporarily housed at the RCN⁶ office. While caregivers like the new building, the two separate locations are proving to be an operational inconvenience.

The Sacred Heart Primary School (SHS) consists of groups 1 – 8 (kindergartens 1 and 2, and grades 1 to 6). SHS reopened six days after Hurricane Irma on Tuesday, during the initial response phase on September 12th. After Hurricane Maria, SHS opened two days later directly after the second response phase on Friday, September 22nd. At the time of the assessment meetings, there were 169 students enrolled, including the remaining 14⁷ out of 21 children who relocated from St. Maarten after the storms, and 26 staff members including teachers and auxiliary. The school has a basic disaster preparedness procedure which includes covering valuables, storage in the center of rooms, and boarding windows. The school's damage was minimal but management expects damage to be worse after a next forceful storm because of the weakened infrastructure. Due to damaged fences, the play area is limited. Although the gym was recently repaired it had sustained substantial flooding.

⁵ Prior to the storms, PES was already in preparations to initiate a project that would offer ongoing fee waivers to disadvantaged families.

⁶ Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/>

⁷ It was later reported on November 8th that 4 of the 14 children had since returned to St. Maarten.

The secondary Saba Comprehensive School (SCS) has 5 forms with academic, vocational, and practical education streams. Like SHS, SCS re-opened on September 12th and 22nd after the storms. At the time of the assessment meetings, 107 students were enrolled, including the remaining 2 out of 9 children who relocated from St. Maarten after the storms, and 23 staff members including teachers and auxiliary. Based on preliminary damage assessments conducted by PES, the school damage amounted to about \$100,000 and included broken air conditioners, windows, and fencing. Materials and teaching supplies remained in good condition because they were covered and placed in the center of the classrooms. Temporary cosmetic repairs have been arranged until major repairs can be organized. Other minor adjustments are needed to ensure that the school building is up to par with the BES building code. The school has reviewed and evaluated their school closing protocol after hurricanes Irma and Maria and made necessary adjustments.

The Expertise Center Education Care (EC2) supports the primary school and secondary school by offering a coherent system of care that guarantees uninterrupted development for all students. The EC2 office sustained minor damage during hurricane Maria which would amount to about \$500.00 in repairs. Like SHS and SCS, EC2 resumed their services on September 12th and 22nd. At the time of the assessment meeting, EC2 had a 45 student caseload; 3 of which relocated from St. Maarten in connection with the storms⁸. On a regular basis, EC2 assists with in-class observations and provides consequent advice. Before the storms, EC2 distributed hurricane preparedness flyers to all of its students. Before and after the storms, related articles were also shared on their Facebook page.

The After School Care (ASC) program offers uninterrupted care for children ages 4 – 12 with working parents on a daily basis from 12:30 – 6:00. At the time of the assessment meeting, 49 children were registered of which 25 – 29 were present on a daily basis. Staff includes 4 part-time staff and one voluntary director. Parents contribute \$85 per month based on their child's attendance. Some parents of relocated children were unable to pay the fee and were assisted with the payments by the CYF. The Sunny Valley Youth Center where the ASC is housed functioned as a shelter. A few families stayed at the center. Children were allowed to remain in the center and use materials. Children were excited about staying at the center. Marines and local red cross also remained at the center. The center was left in good condition and ASC programming could resume consistent with the reopening of schools. However, extra wood arrived to the island and is being stored on the nearby sports field which prevents children from being able to play there as they were used to before the storms. As a result they have to spend most time in the center area.

Child Focus Foundation (CF) provides after school activities for children ages 4 – 18. At the time of the assessment meeting, there were 200 regular registrations plus 15 children relocated from St. Maarten; more registered relocated children had already returned to St. Maarten. CF has 3 full-time staff, 36 volunteers, the majority of which are locals, and 6 youth leaders. The amount of leaders typically depend on the amount of students; 1 adult for every 4 children registered in an activity. CF activities were scheduled to start for the school year on September 4th but did not due to preparations for Hurricane Irma. The CF facility was used as one of the two shelters on the island where 2 families and 13 marines lodged; reportedly, there would have been no more room to accommodate additional people. After both storms, CF could not start activities consistent with the schools as hoped because the marines were still lodging there and the playground had to be cleared of debris. Activities eventually resumed on September 25th. However, at the time of the assessment meeting, the playground was still badly damaged and unsafe for the children to play. Repair investments were expected to amount to \$30,000 but there had not been a technical assessment as yet.

⁸ It was later reported on November 8th that 1 of the 3 students had returned to St. Maarten after participating in just 3 sessions at EC2.

1.3 Relevant education programming & information

Because schools re-opened shortly after the storms, there was no need to adjust the regular programming. However, schools and PES recognized the added value in a life skills and socio-emotional learning program that could be integrated within school curriculum that would teach children healthy coping strategies and how to deal with stress.

Schools, non-formal education centers, and PES also expressed an interest in developing systematic School Safety Plans and integrating disaster risk reduction and environmental education within their curriculum and activities.

A matter of concern was that all children who relocated to Saba from St. Maarten did so without accompanying documentation on their education history. Students were placed in schools based on information provided by their parents or (informal) guardians. With regard to students' return to St. Maarten: SHS has provided information on material covered upon request from one school; SCS has not provided information because most students who returned did so without notification; EC2 intends to provide reports to students for their respective schools.

CHILD PROTECTION SITUATIONAL REPORT

1.4 Leadership and coordination mechanisms

Youth policy in the Dutch Caribbean is the responsibility of two governments: the local governments are primarily responsible for prevention and the Netherlands/VWS (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport) is responsible for the more severe youth care and the implementation of the family guardianship.

The PES Social Affairs consists of a team including one coordinator, a social worker, assistant social worker, project coordinator, a community coach, and project assistant⁹. The team is responsible for social work to support adults and, indirectly, their families, low-level support to ensure mobility within society, assistance with housing, mental health and financial assistance referrals. Additionally, the team promotes children's rights on the island and raises awareness of domestic violence and violence against children. The team also organizes recreational and sports activities.

On Saba, from a positive vision on parenting, aimed at prevention and early intervention, CYF offers parents and other educators support with knowledge, information, and advice about childhood development and parenting and provides help for children with social-emotional and behavioral problems. CYF has a staff of two social workers and a behavior psychologist. CYF reports concerns about child development to the Court of Guardianship (CoG) who may carry out an investigation on the safety of the child. Based on their investigation, the CoG reports and gives recommendations to the court on a child protection measure. If the judge decides that the child needs to be under supervision, the child will be assigned a family guardian via the CYF.¹⁰

At the outset of the recovery phase, PES initiated the subproject 'Restoring livelihoods, shelter, and social care' (with a focus on people) represented by the Social Affairs out of which the Information and Advice Point (IAP) was formed for everyone on the island who had questions related to the hurricanes. The IAP targeted affected Saba residents and individuals who had relocated from St. Maarten. About 40 individuals visited the IAP; PES estimates that amount to be 75% of the total amount of people who relocated to Saba in connection with the impact of the storms on neighboring islands. The IAP was a joint effort and professional representation included CYF personnel, Public Health, PES social workers, and SZW¹¹ (the Dutch Social Affairs and Labor Ministry) social workers. Several services have been provided to families via this mechanism including subsidy arrangements for those who lost their roofs, relocation to temporary housing and rental payments, and the provision of food and support packages to 24 families. The CoG was not a part of this structure. There was no meeting between CoG and PES before the hurricanes to discuss preparations and agreements. At the time of assessments, there had been one meeting since the hurricane but follow-up was pending.

⁹ The team will be expanded by two social workers in connection with an upcoming project.

¹⁰ Information retrieved from <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/en/youth-care-and-family-supervision> on October 31st, 2017.

¹¹ Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/sociale-zaken-en-werkgelegenheid>

1.5 Strengthening of child protection mechanisms and GBV prevention

The PES Social Affairs team is currently functioning as a crisis social team coordinating the post-Irma support mentioned above to the community through the IAP. Based on this engagement, the team has observed a raising number of struggling families as a result of the hurricane impacts, particularly unemployment due to the weakened tourism economy¹², and unfavorable housing conditions have been exposed. The team anticipates increased cases of child neglect, domestic violence, substance abuse, and youth unemployment. This concern was shared by all other stakeholders interviewed. There were much needed domestic violence, substance abuse, and positive parenting programming being planned but that had been put on hold given the circumstances and other storm related priorities. The new coordination of storm related PES social services and work in the IAP are extra tasks in addition to the team's regular case load so the team feels overworked.

After the storms and upon request of PES, SZW offered additional assistance as a result of Hurricane Irma up to January 1st 2018. The additional assistance was intended for people already receiving financial aid, residents who became unemployed as a result of the storms, and evacuees from St. Maarten. In order to be eligible persons had to be legally residing on the island on the island for at least 5 years or born, or with parents born, on the BES islands¹³. Additionally and exceptionally, all children who relocated would be eligible for child allowance. However, the process is bureaucratic as applicants are required to fill in a form so they tend to avoid it. Two SZW social workers from the head office on Bonaire temporarily relocated to Saba until October 13th to support with the extra administration and reached out to ensure that those eligible for the aid were aware and requested it. Within the IAP structure, families in need were referred directly to the social workers for further assistance.

A major child protection concern for the CYF after the storm was the non-functioning of the civil court on Sint Maarten which is also responsible for Saban cases. This prevented the CYF from adequately protecting a child in at least one particular case and caused a delay in the handling of other cases. The lack of a foster home on the island reportedly exacerbated the issue. At times people can only accept a child for one night and the child has to change housing every night which is not favorable for children; in some cases, the child has to be left at home in the risky environment. A foster home and halfway house is, however, in the planning for 2018; it will be financed 50% by PES and 50% by VWS as a part of the government accord for domestic violence and child protection.

1.6 Separated and unaccompanied children

The entry point for incoming children from St. Maarten was the harbor. Many children arrived on Saba with little. It was widely reported that children were evacuated to Saba on a whim without documentation on fishing boats with Saban fishermen. Some children were accompanied by their parents and others were sent alone to family, close friends, or just acquaintances. Some families and children registered at immigration upon arrival but it is suspected that many boats arrived informally and privately. The border is a national responsibility, those responsible had reportedly been notified but no exceptional steps were taken.

All relocated families and host families have been invited to register at the IAP. At the time of the assessment meetings, 25 relocated children had been registered at the IAP. However, at the time of the assessment meetings, the IAP had compiled a total list of 41 relocated children from St. Maarten through information gathered at the IAP, border control, immigration (IND¹⁴), school registries, and the baby clinic¹⁵. The list was helpful in ensuring that all relocated children were enrolled at school while on the island. CYF has also been in contact with the census office on St. Maarten, parents, residential and foster homes, and civil court for the legal route with regard to the evacuated children. Clarity on the exact amount of children out of the 41 who were on Saba without their parents could not be provided.

¹² Protective labor laws do not always apply in most cases because a lot of people in the industry work based on no work no pay zero-hour contracts.

¹³ <https://www.rijksdienstcn.com/nieuws/q-as-extra-hulpverlening-szw-als-gevolg-van-orkaan-irma-voor>

¹⁴ Immigratie & Naturalisatiedienst <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/immigratie-en-naturalisatiedienst-cn>

¹⁵ It was later reported on November 8th that the list had since been updated to approximately 15 children remaining from St. Maarten.

None of the 25 children registered at the IAP had reported to the Court of Guardianship. As the CoG cannot make approaches to (host) families, several requests through different channels have been made to PES to share the information gathered at the IAP. PES has maintained that it will not share the information for the reason that people are invited to voluntarily register at the IAP which is meant to be a safe and trustworthy place for families and host families. PES suspected that families were not reporting to the CoG out of fear that the children would be removed from their care. There had been 3 voluntary approaches at the CoG by families of relocated children which did not require further action or investigations. Related risks if host families do not formalize their guardianship include ineligibility for insurance and other services. Temporary guardianship takes time because of lengthy court processes. Communication between CoG Saba and CoG St. Maarten is usually smooth but, at the time of the assessment meetings, it had not yet been necessary after the hurricanes.

Only 20 of the 25 children registered at the IAP had eventually been registered after arrival at IND. IND requested excerpts from relocated children which would have indicated that they had written out of their addresses on St. Maarten before relocating to Saba. As most children arrived without documentation, the excerpts could not be provided. IND has a relaxed system in place for newcomers of up to 4 months; after this period they are expected to formalize their stay on the island. Apart from that, it was uncertain how long newcomers would be allowed to remain on the island. It had been reported that many of the children remaining on the island had parents who lost their homes or jobs on St. Maarten. Many of the remaining unaccompanied children were taken in by lower income families who were already struggling, with e.g. purchasing healthy food, prior to their new situations. Additionally, the overcrowded housing situation could also have a negative impact on the children involved. Many of the households where the relocated children currently reside are questionable; normally CYF would organize prior screening before placement but could not in these cases given the circumstances. These are also financially dire times. The families were very accommodating but it was a general concern among professionals that the extra burden was becoming stressful. It is expected that coping and the host families' generosity will eventually wear out. Frustrated hosts had already been threatening to return children to their affected families on St. Maarten if they did not receive support.

The families are receiving assistance from PES through a food program. PES considered it ideal for family reunification visits to be organized for the children but was uncertain as to how far the local government should and could go with taking the responsibility of providing that level of post-Irma support especially since there was still no clarity about what level of relief aid could be expected from the national government nor what the conditions to receive it would be.

As mentioned above, PES has also arranged with SZW for families who relocated from St. Maarten to be eligible for financial aid and all children who relocated to be eligible for child allowance. However, only newcomers with a Dutch passport or ties to Saba would be eligible for the aid. In those ineligible cases, PES was prepared to provide support instead. Exact figures on how many families and children were accessing the available aid could not be provided. The Lions Club Meals on Wheels program is also providing meals. There is a breakfast and lunch program at schools that the relocated children are making use of.

According to reports from the schools and after school centers, the children were able to integrate easily with the rest of the students. Increased bullying, which is typically associated with children displaced in emergency situations, had not been observed.

There had been reports that some relocated children were already undocumented while living on St. Maarten. There were also reports about histories of sexual abuse, hunger situations, and non-responsive behavior among the children. The school nurse observes the children's behavior on the playground and has received referrals from concerned teachers; the children started to open up about after one week.

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SITUATIONAL REPORT

1.7 Leadership and coordination mechanisms

During the response phase the psychosocial care fell under ESF 6 (medical services: public health and hospital). After the transition into the recovery phase, psychosocial care fell under the subproject, 'Psychosocial assistance and Public Health' represented by Saba Health Care Foundation's (SHCF) Family Physician, the Public Health doctor and nurse, Mental Health Caribbean¹⁶ (MHC), the Center for Youth & Family (CYF), and Saba Initiative.

1.8 Integration into education response and provided to children and caregivers

After both storms, there were joint clean-ups of the debris around the LLDC where all of the day care center caregivers got to share their experiences. The director, the leader of the team with 21 years in her post, had lost her roof. There had been an observed energy drop among caregivers. It was also reported that the older children tend to cry when it rains. The children also cry when they're separated at drop off at the different locations.

After the storm, there was a sense of urgency from PES to reopen the schools. At SHS, teachers returned to the schools the day before re-opening to clean-up, but they felt tired and then disappointed at not having received support in the effort from government or parents. Getting the gym ready was most important so that children could resume physical activities immediately. When the children returned, the focus was on trying to resume the regular routine to ensure the children's well-being. Children were affected differently by the two storms; in the most severe case, 2 children living in the St. Johns village lost their roofs and had a bad experience seeking shelter elsewhere. During the first days of school, educators observed that children behaved wilder than usual and their attention and focus was limited; their behavior gradually returned to normal, however. They were given time to express themselves and share their experiences. It proved difficult, however, for staff to get back on track, fearful of the next storm given the duration of the hurricane season. The homes of 1 teacher and the coach sustained severe damage.

SCS organized post-Irma activities to address student and teacher well-being. This was organized in collaboration with MHC, EC2, and CYF prior to the re-opening after Irma followed by a debriefing for teachers. When the teachers returned for clean-up on the day before re-opening, there was a sense of unity as everyone participated. Students and parents were invited to join the school clean-up but did not show up; marines and medical students did help. When students returned to school, the staff ensured that it was a positive experience for them. At the time of the assessment meeting, however, staff were experiencing a general feeling of fatigue and anxiety as everyone needed a break. Two teachers, including the gym teacher shared with SHS, had sustained severe damage at their homes. A month had passed without opportunities for mobility between St. Maarten and Saba which had a toll on teachers' stress level. MHC and EC2 had offered support in student care and that was considered enough external support in that department.

The public health nurse had been providing counseling to children at the schools upon teacher referral. She had also been observing the newcomer children's behavior in the play grounds for which teachers had made referrals. EC2 staff is communicating with teachers on a daily basis about possible extra support for students in connection with the storms but none had yet been requested. This was identified as a possible result of the cultural taboo on the issue of mental health for which an awareness campaign to counter the taboo and promote socio-emotional well-being and resilience is desired. For staff, EC2 will organize a mentor for the organization who everyone can rely on for socio-emotional support. The director of the After School Care program had severe damage to her roof. One care-taker from Dominica was troubled

¹⁶ MHC organizes the psychiatric care and addiction care for the Caribbean Netherlands on behalf of the Zorgverzekeringskantoor (health insurance). <https://www.mentalhealthcaribbean.com/>

by concerns about her family after two weeks without communication. Based on the team's observations, the children for the most part were coping well.

When activities finally resumed at Child Focus, children were unusually rowdy and hyperactive; e.g. they were showing up to activities they hadn't signed up for and mixing up bus schedules. After the first week, things settled down, and into the third week, things were back on track and back to normal; the children had adjusted to their routines and things were normalizing. The CF director organized individual debriefing sessions with youth leaders who were worried about the children's conduct. There were concerns that the youth leaders would stop volunteering because of the students' behavior; the quality and continuity was the utmost concern. No concerns had been brought forward about newcomer children. At the IAP, CYF did an initial screening of the 25/41 relocated children registered based on their intake forms and interviews to ensure a low level of referrals. 12 cases were referred for further assessments by MHC with support of the William Schikker Groep¹⁷. MHC met with all parents and relations. Assessments of children and (informal foster) families were done on October 11th and 12th. 9 children were a cause for concern; it had yet to be determined whether the children had pre-existing psychiatric conditions rather than storm related. In some severe cases, pathology was evidently already present and became more severe due to the storms and the stress of separation. At least one case was already clearly an issue prior to the storm. MHC will be providing treatment where necessary. The age of the 9 children range from 4 months and 11 years.

MHC made a (temporary) change to their procedures after the storms to allow more direct referrals. In MHC's view, the care that was currently in place seemed to be sufficient as no other children were then in need of clinical PTSD care. A child psychologist is a part of the MHC team that visits the island every other week/twice per month. After the storms, MHC planned weekly visits with school directors; there had been no observations of children with stress and this information had been corroborated by other professionals. Here as well, the lack of referrals were identified as a possible result of the cultural taboo surrounding mental health. On the surface, the community seemed to be moving forward favorably, but MHC expected increased levels of stress stemming from different factors including the weakened hospitality sector. MHC also recognized the value of community-based psychosocial support as a first-line referral system explaining that if less severe cases are treated, the risk is that mental health issues are induced or the individual's resilience is removed. MHC had planned to provide information to the public via a radio interview about the inevitability of stress and coping skills.

The PES social worker and the public health nurse recognized a need for care for professionals working with children and host families but supported a community-based approach to psychosocial support. They viewed community one-on-one support, such as the early system of community leadership present on the island up until decades ago, as most effective in line with local sensitivities and the reluctance to receive formal support. Similar to MHC, they identified risks in providing interventional support to children as additional interventional support might be too much and create unnecessary risks. A concern that too many stakeholders were offering services to the children at the same time was also expressed. Church leaders had also reported a need for psychosocial support within the education sector after observations of children expressing fear and anxiety during religion classes SHS. Church leaders recommended that, given the vulnerability of the region to various natural disasters (e.g. flooding, landslides, hurricanes, earthquakes, and volcanoes) disaster preparedness should be an ongoing discussion not limited to the hurricane season. They added that understanding the inevitability of natural disasters was a form of spiritual preparedness and that churches and other community based NGOs should be a part of disaster preparedness teams.

¹⁷ William Schikker Groep geeft gespecialiseerde jeugdzorg aan kinderen met een beperking en/of kinderen van ouders met een beperking. <https://www.williamschikkergroep.nl/>

CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

UNICEF recognizes the efforts of all the stakeholders interviewed, among others, to adequately prepare for and respond to the recent storms. In line with one of UNICEF's most essential principles in humanitarian action, 'Education Cannot Wait', UNICEF also commends the professionals involved for positioning education as an immediate priority and, in so doing, securing safe spaces for children to continue to develop and learn despite possible adverse societal circumstances resulting from the passing hurricanes Irma and Maria. Additionally, UNICEF highly regards the initiative of professionals to collaborate in targeting and providing support to the most vulnerable and affected people and their families.

With that said, please see below UNICEF's recommendations (in bold) based on the information gathered during the assessment meetings are as follows.

PES request to UNICEF18

- UNICEF confirms the need of 2 pedagogic workers to offer support to staff at LLDC in carrying out their tasks.
- Based on the responses of SHS, extra support with the organization of recreational activities would be valuable and welcomed. UNICEF confirms the need of 1 temporary support staff to provide this service.
- Based on the responses of SCS, the 2 remaining children from St. Maarten were enrolled in form 1; a class of initially 24 children which was already overcrowded. Extra support with teaching would be valuable and welcomed. Given the fact that the 2 relocated children have added to the already overcrowded class, UNICEF confirms the need of 1 temporary teacher to offer support at least until the two children return to St. Maarten.¹⁹
- UNICEF confirms the need of 2 pedagogic workers to offer support to staff of ASC in carrying out their tasks.
- Based on the response of CF, extra support with providing swimming lessons as a form of disaster preparedness would be valuable and welcomed. UNICEF confirms the need of 1 support staff to provide this service.
- UNICEF confirms the need of 2 Social Workers to support the post-disaster work of PES' Social Affairs domain based on the extra responsibilities of that team since the initiation of the IAP.

Education

Consideration: On the matter of disaster preparedness, the day care center, schools, and after school care centers all employed some basic procedures; e.g. covering and gathering all valuables to the center of the room, boarding windows, and disseminating relevant information. Yet, there were reports that new teachers did not know how to prepare and not all organizations were equipped with information flyers.

Additionally, article 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) gives children the right to have a say in matters affecting their lives, to prepare for their responsibilities in adulthood. This article is applicable to all children in all emergency situations. Children must be trained in practices that help to protect them and other children in their community. Training should emphasize their capacity to participate constructively and initiate positive change, e.g. suggesting improvements in school activities or reporting and preventing abuse within the learning environment.

18 Important to note here is that the EC2 Social Worker, the Public Health Nurse, and the two Mental Health Caribbean Nurse Practitioners will be leaving the island by the end of the year.

19 During the assessment meeting, SCS had indicated that OCW had reached out to provide support as needed.

Recommendations:

1. Develop and implement 'School Safety Plans' (SSPs) involving students, youth, teachers, school directors, caregivers, youth workers, parents, and other relevant community members including hazards/vulnerabilities and community resources mapping and provide training and capacity building for such. Include psychosocial elements within the SSP; e.g. staying calm, identifying teachers who are able to remain calm and controlled in emergency situations. Include procedures on the preparation and distribution of education booklets in collaboration with PES. Involve parents (e.g. participation councils or associations) and the broader community to ensure their participation in disaster and response situations.
2. Integrate Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and emergency preparedness & response, environmental education (e.g. impact of global warming, health hazards, water, sanitation, and hygiene) and life skills education into daycare, schools, and after school curricula and provide training and capacity building for such.
3. Provide capacity building of teachers, non-teaching staff, directors, school boards, and students on INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises, and Early Reconstruction.

Consideration: Saba follows the BES building standards which appear to be systematically and strictly enforced. However, PES anticipates increased infrastructural damage in the future as storms continue to strengthen and become more frequent and building structures gradually deteriorate unless reinforced. Educational facilities sustained damage to varying extent; repairs are planned for the short-term and regular reinforcement is necessary in preparation of future storms.

Recommendations:

4. Rebuild educational facilities according to resilient and hazard resistant standards.
5. Prioritize the repair and accessibility of playground spaces to ensure that children can resume safe play as soon as possible after disasters.

Consideration: While PES disaster management was in contact with the schools, an interest for more procedural contact with and support from PES was expressed; i.e. not limited to notifications about when the educational facilities should close and re-open.

Recommendation:

6. Include education in the national disaster preparedness framework and secure resources to provide an effective and timely education response; such as clean-up support and support with education focused disaster preparedness information (e.g. an adaption, if necessary, of the PES Information Booklet for school staff, students, and parents).

Child Protection

Consideration: UNICEF recognizes that inter-island/country ‘voluntary separation’ has a long history in the region, with families temporarily separating for children’s educational opportunities, family economic opportunities, as well as protection in disaster situations. As mentioned above, UNICEF also highly regards the efforts of PES and partners in organizing the swift IAP response to provide support and information to those in need; including (host) families with relocated children from St. Maarten. With regard, to the response to children in need of protective measures and unaccompanied children relocating from St. Maarten to Saba, there appeared to be several bottlenecks, not merely with the IAP, but in the entire child protection system. For example, collaboration between PES and CoG, the non-functioning of the civil court on St. Maarten, information on the amount of children on the island without their parents or receiving the social aid could not be readily provided, the lack of alertness of border control for the informal entries of unaccompanied children, and IND’s request for official census office excerpts indicating relocation. This gives an indication of how a lack of a strong inter-agency child protection system with a robust information management system, established protocols and inter-country agreements creates the potential for child protection violations in an emergency.

Recommendations:

7. Conduct an in-depth independent evaluation of the entire process (i.e. addressing the needs of the unaccompanied children) including roles and responsibilities of the PES and the national government from the lens of an objective assessor. Identify lessons learned, best practices, and areas in need of strengthening toward standardizing the mechanism.
8. Based on the evaluation conclusions, work with the relevant entities to develop an inter-agency/country registration system, protocol and standard operating procedures for the large-scale movement of unaccompanied children between islands/across borders (include immigration, justice, social affairs, etc.).
9. Provide relevant training to immigration officials, airport/airline personnel, and others who come into contact with children crossing borders.
10. Develop a public information campaign promoting the protection and well-being of children during emergencies, and raising awareness of the vulnerabilities of displaced and unaccompanied children during emergency situations. Engage youth to develop appealing messages for children and youth using appropriate media.
11. Ensure that a broad-based inter-sectoral system is in place to register and address the expected increase in cases of domestic violence and child abuse as a result lingering social and economic effects of the storms.
12. Closely consult the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children²⁰ in considerations to initiate a halfway house for children in need of protective care. The availability of shelters limited to The Bottom and Windwardside puts families with children in St. Johns and Zion’s Hill at risk.
13. Arrange shelters for St. Johns and Zion’s Hill; keeping in mind that the use of the schools would not be ideal given the location of the restrooms and need to resume education as soon as possible.

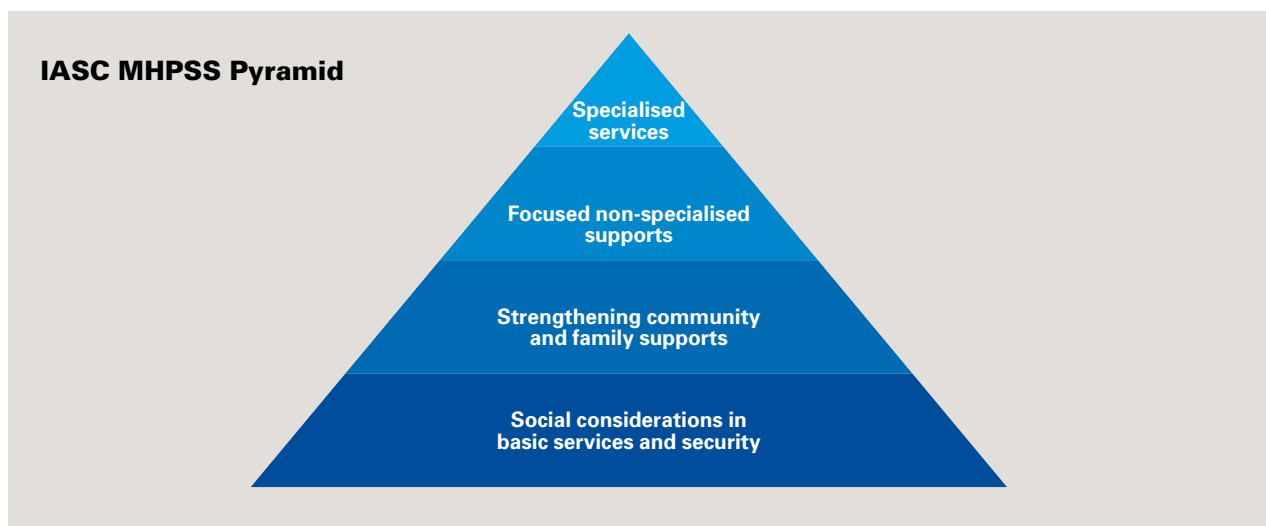
Consideration: Many parents on the island employed in the hospitality sector on zero-hour contracts have lost their jobs after the storms.

14. Promote the availability of accredited, lifelong learner programs in tertiary education and re-train hospitality workers and others in other necessary fields (masonry, carpentry, welding, plumbing, electric, agriculture). Explore entrepreneurial skills training and microfinancing possibilities.
15. Provide cash grants to families until they can seek alternative employment or until the hospitality sector is fully operational again.

20 https://www.unicef.org/protection/alternative_care_Guidelines-English.pdf

Psychosocial support

There are ample psychosocial support services available on the island, however, it appears that the emphasis has been of a predominantly clinical nature which may be in conflict with cultural preferences and inhibiting those in need to get support. UNICEF programming (direct and through partners) in emergencies is not usually engaged in specialized services, but more community-based and some specialized services (layers 1 – 3 on the IASC 'pyramid'):



Recommendations:

16. Provide training and implement a long-term broad community-based psychosocial support program benefiting children, youth, their families, teachers, non-teaching staff, school management and boards, caregivers at the day care center, after school care and activities centers, relevant PES staff, religious leaders and other psychosocial professionals. For professionals working directly with children, training should focus on identifying extra vulnerabilities of children during and after disasters; e.g. families with financial constraints and drug or alcoholic addictions. Where possible, link PSS skills and approaches with methods already used within the schools, e.g. Conscious Discipline at SHS.
17. Develop a well-coordinated identification and referral system engaging relevant actors (formal and informal) to establish a continuum of care in culturally relevant and appropriate means, with a strong information management component. Link this system to the SSPs (see above).
18. Disseminate information and implement an awareness campaign in response to the apparent local taboo surrounding mental health. Involve community groups such as faith leaders.

Other

Consideration: The delay of the national government's response to provide emergency financial aid to the island impeded PES' flexibility to provide the immediate and extensive social support deemed necessary.

19. Ensure an appropriate response before, during, and after disasters and implement a pre-existing policy that would apply regardless of government transitions. Consider BES island membership in (or something similar to) the Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF)²¹ which ensures immediate cash distribution for short-term needs which islands like Dominica and Antigua have been able to tap into.

21 <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PROJECTS/Resources/Catastrophicriskinsurancefacility.pdf>
<http://www.ccrif.org/>

ANNEX 1 SOURCES OF INFORMATION: MEETINGS AND INTERVIEWS²²

Public entity saba

- Island Governor Jonathan Johnson
- Commissioner of Social Affairs Rolando Wilson
- Social Affairs Domain Coordinator Krijn Pons
- Disaster Prevention & Crisis Management Advisor Fanny de Swarte
- Public Health Dr. Koen Hulshof
- Public Health Nurse Jetty Martens
- Social Worker Marva Simmons
- Assistant Social Worker Cadella Martin
- Project Coordinator Lincoln Charles
- Island Councilman Members Ishmael Levenstone, Carl Buncamper, Vito Charles, Monique Wilson, and Griffier Akhilah Levenstone

Education

- Sacred Heart Primary School Director Diane Wilson
- SHS Care Coordinator/Acting Director Jarmila Berkel
- Saba Comprehensive School Board President Franklin Wilson
- SCS Director Anton Hermans
- SCS Management Team member Tracey Zagers-Johnson
- SCS Care Coordinator Carole Irvine-Skinner
- Expertise Center Education Care Director Jet van Heijnsbergen
- Laura Linzey Day Care Center Director Margaret Childs
- LLDC Project Manager Floor Burghgraef

Non-formal education

- After School Care Director Elca Charles
- ASC Youth leader Tammy Valmond
- ASC Parent Henrietta Hassell
- Child Focus Director Caroline van Teeuwen
- CF Board President Jet van Heijnsbergen
- NATIONAL GOVERNMENT
- Center for Youth & Family Behavior Psychologist Sander Ulehake
- CYF Social Worker Tessa Alexander
- Court of Guardianship Yamila Bulos

Mental health caribbean

- Mental Health Caribbean Nurse Practitioner Mental Health Care Roy Le Doux
- MHC Child Psychologist Sanne Greytens

²² A more triangulated report would have included interviews with children, more parents, border control, SZW and IND.

Religious leaders

- Catholic Church, Father Simon Wilson
- Wesleyan Holiness Church, Pastor Vernon Liburd
- Seventh Day Adventist Church, Pastor Mervin Alexander

ANNEX 2 POLICY AND GUIDANCE DOCUMENTATION

Child Protection Working Group. (2012) *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*. CPWG.

INEE. (2004) *The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crisis and Early Reconstruction*.

Inter-agency Standing Committee. (2006) *Protecting Persons Affected by Natural Disasters: IASC Operational Guidelines on Human Rights and Natural Disasters*. IASC.

Inter-agency Standing Committee. (2007) *IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings*. IASC.

UNICEF. (2013) *Kind op Saba: Kinderrechten in Caribisch Nederland*. UNICEF.



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