



Situation Analysis Children and Adolescents in the Caribbean Netherlands

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Situation Analysis Children and Adolescents in the Caribbean Netherlands



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
LIST OF TABLES & FIGURES	7
LIST OF ACRONYMS	8
FOREWORD	11
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	12
1. INTRODUCTION	18
1.1 INTRODUCTION TO BONAIRE, ST. EUSTATIUS AND SABA	18
1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION ANALYSIS	19
1.2.1 Purpose	20
1.2.2 Methodology	20
1.2.3 Data usage and limitations	21
1.2.4 Key informant interviews and focus groups	23
2. THE CONTEXT OF THE CARIBBEAN NETHERLANDS	26
2.1 LEGAL AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT	26
2.1.1 International treaties	26
2.1.2 National law	27
2.2 GOVERNANCE AND EXPENDITURES	27
2.3 POPULATION, SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT AND DEMOGRAPHICS	28
2.4 ECONOMIC SITUATION	31
3. ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS	34
3.1 THE PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT: EVERY CHILD IS PROTECTED FROM VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION	34
3.1.1 Children in need of care and protection in the Caribbean Netherlands	35
3.1.2 Legal framework: implementation and supervision	38



CONTENTS

3.1.3	Preventive and responsive services: a state and local responsibility	43
3.1.4	Emerging challenges and recommendations	48
3.2	POVERTY AND INEQUALITY	53
3.2.1	Recent legislative and policy developments	53
3.2.2	Expenditures on social services	55
3.2.3	Environment and household vulnerabilities	56
3.2.4	Multidimensional poverty	59
3.2.5	Emerging challenges	60
3.3	THE LIVING AND NURTURING ENVIRONMENT: EVERY CHILD LEARNS AND PARTICIPATES	62
3.3.1	Legislative and policy environment	62
3.3.2	Expenditures	63
3.3.3	The spectrum of learning opportunities in the Caribbean Netherlands	63
3.3.4	Educational reforms	72
3.3.5	Emerging challenges	78
3.4	HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: THE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS	87
3.4.1	Legislative and policy environment	87
3.4.2	Services and expenditures	87
3.4.3	Health status of the population	88
3.4.4	Adolescent health	92
3.4.5	Emerging challenges	97
4.	<u>GOVERNMENT COORDINATION, COLLABORATION, AND COOPERATION</u>	<u>102</u>
5.	<u>SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS</u>	<u>110</u>
	<u>LIST OF REFERENCES</u>	<u>117</u>

List of tables

Table 1.	Summary of interviews by category
Table 2.	National government budget overview for the Caribbean Netherlands 2015 to 2023
Table 3.	Number of children and adolescents in the Caribbean Netherlands in 2019
Table 4.	Country of birth of residents of the Caribbean Netherlands on 1 January 2017
Table 5.	Juvenile crime in the Caribbean Netherlands: cases processed from 2013 to 2018
Table 6.	Overview of caseloads for JGCN 2018
Table 7.	Baseline for the social minimum (in dollars)
Table 8.	Household labor participation
Table 9.	The average disposable and standardized incomes of different households per island, 2016
Table 10.	Basic data on day care in the Caribbean Netherlands
Table 11.	Primary school population (4 to 12-plus years old)
Table 12.	Secondary school students in the Caribbean Netherlands in 2018
Table 13.	Indication of the number of children with disabilities (minimum estimate)
Table 14.	Key data on afterschool care services in the Caribbean Netherlands
Table 15.	Health and disorders, personal characteristics, Caribbean Netherlands, 2013 and 2017
Table 16.	Infant vaccinations in the Caribbean Netherlands 2014–2018
Table 17.	Number of children born alive, age of the mother, Caribbean Netherlands
Table 18.	Exercise and obesity in the Caribbean Netherlands, ages 12 to 17, 2017
Table 19.	Smoking behaviour in the Caribbean Netherlands, 12 years and older, 2017
Table 20.	Alcohol use in the Caribbean Netherlands among people aged 12 and above, 2017
Table 21.	Cannabis use in the Caribbean Netherlands among people aged 12 and older, 2017
Table 22.	Exposure to tobacco smoke from others in the Caribbean Netherlands among people aged 12 and older, 2017

List of figures

Figure 1.	The Kingdom of the Netherlands
Figure 2.	Youth unemployment and NEETs in the Caribbean Netherlands

List of acronyms

AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
AOV	Old Age Pension
ASC	After School Care
AWW	Widowers Pension
BES	Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba
BZK	Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations (in Dutch: Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties)
CAPE	Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CCSLC	Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CJG	Center for Youth & Family (in Dutch: Centrum Jeugd & Gezin)
CN	Caribbean Netherlands
CNCD's	Chronic non-communicable diseases
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualification
CXC	Caribbean Examination Council
DSN	Domestic safety network
EC2	Expertise Center Education Care
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Expertise Center for Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Development and Care
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FKPK	Fundashon pa Kuido Personanan Desabilita
GDP	Gross Domestic Product

GED	General Educational Development
GGD	Municipal Health Service (in Dutch: Gemeentelijke of Gemeenschappelijke Gezondheidsdienst)
HAVO	Academic secondary education (in Dutch: Hoger Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs)
I&W	Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management
IDO	Interdepartmental Consultation (in Dutch: Interdepartementaal Overleg Jeugd)
ILO	International Labor Organization
J&V	Ministry of Justice & Security (in Dutch: Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid) (in Dutch: Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid)
JGCN	Youth Care & Family Supervision Caribbean Netherlands (in Dutch: Jeugdzorg & Gezinsvoogdij Caribisch Nederland)
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
MAVO	General secondary education (in Dutch: Middelbaar Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs)
MBO	Tertiary vocational education (in Dutch: Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs)
MDG's	Millennium Development Goals
MHF	Mental Health Foundation
MPM	Multidimensional poverty measurement
NATCOMs	National Committees
NCDs	Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NCF	New Challenges Foundation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCW	Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (in Dutch: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur, en Wetenschap)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
OLB	Openbaar Lichaam Bonaire
PAHO	Pan-American Health Organization
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission

PrO	Practical Education (in Dutch: Praktijk Onderwijs)
RCN	Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland
RIVM	National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (in Dutch: Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGB	Secondary School community Bonaire (in Dutch: Scholengemeenschap Bonaire)
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SitAn	Situation Analysis
SKJ	Social Opportunities for Youth (in Dutch: Sociale Kanstrajecten Jongeren)
SLP	Special Lesson Places
SZW	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (in Dutch: Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNICEF NL	UNICEF Netherlands
US	United States
VMBO	Preparatory secondary vocational education
VSO	Secondary Special Education (in Dutch: Voortgezet Speciaal Onderwijs)
VWO	Preparatory scientific education (in Dutch: Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs)
VWS	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (in Dutch: Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport)
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
10-10-10	Dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles on October 10th, 2010



Foreword

The Convention on the Rights of the Child consists of many agreements about what a child's life should look like. From protection, care, education, proper nutrition: every detail has been considered and discussed. Almost all countries in the world have ratified and promised to adhere to the treaty, including the Netherlands.

Children who grow up in the Caribbean part of the Netherlands, on the islands of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, are entitled to the same opportunities as children in the European part. The rights that apply to children in the European Netherlands in the field of safety, protection, education and health naturally also apply in full to the children in the Caribbean Netherlands.

Yet, there is still much room for improvement in the situation of children in the Caribbean Netherlands. This was revealed by the first study by UNICEF Netherlands in 2013 into the situation in which children grow up in the Caribbean Netherlands. This study was one of the reasons for the Dutch government to take serious steps to improve the opportunities and position of children in the Caribbean Netherlands. As the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations Plasterk stated in 2013: "the structural improvement of the position and rights of children has the government's attention. The basic principle is that the voice of children is heard so that they can grow up healthy, safe, pleasant and with good future prospects."

This 2019 situation analysis into the state of children's rights in the Caribbean Netherlands provides insight into how the government and its partners have taken up this challenge at the local level and how this commitment can be strengthened. UNICEF has the unique assignment from the Convention on the Rights of the Child to monitor and support governments in their work to improve the well-being of children. With this new situation analysis, we hope to inspire the various responsible parties in The Hague and on the islands to further improve the situation of children in the Caribbean Netherlands.

Suzanne Laszlo
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Executive summary

Background and purpose of the situation analysis

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. When Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba became public entities of the Netherlands on October 10th, 2010, the Government of the Netherlands became the primary duty bearer for the implementation of the CRC on the three islands. UNICEF is mandated in the CRC to monitor implementation of the convention by governments. To this end, in 2013, UNICEF Netherlands completed its first round of situation analyses on children's rights in the Caribbean Netherlands to highlight the needs of the children to the Dutch Government. This 2019 situation analysis stems from a request from the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, with the commitment of each of the public entities, for UNICEF Netherlands to conduct a follow-up study to monitor progress since 2013. The analysis focuses on children's and adolescents' rights to protection, an adequate standard of living, education, participation and health. Apart from assessing progress, the objective of this study has also been to engage with various key stakeholders to identify and build consensus around remaining or new challenges pertaining to the realization of children's rights and to collectively formulate recommendations for actions that can further accelerate progress towards optimal fulfilment of rights obligations. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 also gives particular importance and relevance to this situation analysis in current debates about the direction of development for children and adolescents in the Caribbean Netherlands.

Limitations

Regarding the scope and function of the situation analysis, the study is not intended to comprehensively assess and analyse the situation of children in relation to all articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, or in relation to all SDGs and their corresponding targets. Rather, it is meant as an advocacy tool that will provide an overview of the most critical challenges affecting children and adolescents, make suggestions that can be used for policy decisions, create a platform for discussion and position children at the forefront of planning for sustainable economic and social development. Regarding reporting on progress since 2013, an important limitation of the study is that reporting on progress is, in most cases, limited to mention of outputs, that is, what has been done, rather than mention of what has been achieved in terms of the impact of activities on the lives of children which would be the ideal longer-term form of reporting. This limitation is due in part to the lack of systematic and up-to-date data on the situation of children and, relatedly, the limited use of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks by program developers and implementers across the social sectors in The Hague and on the three

islands. Furthermore, the limited availability of statistical data was uneven from island to island and almost always gender-blind. Additionally, reporting on outputs related to certain issues has been further complicated by the fragmented nature of program implementation on the Caribbean Netherlands.

Structure of the report

After an introduction to the islands, their context, and the situation analysis in chapters 1 and 2, the report continues to chapter 3 with an analysis of children's rights to protection, an adequate standard of living, education and participation, and health. These thematic sections are introduced with a reference to the related articles of the CRC and SDGs, followed by accounts of the legal and policy environment and services and expenditures. These sections conclude with a reflection on issues raised in the 2013 situation analyses, acknowledging progress, and presenting remaining or new bottlenecks to progress along with, in most cases, corresponding recommendations. The report then proceeds to chapter 4 with a brief review of the national and local governments' ability to work together effectively across sectors to advance children's rights on the islands. Chapter 5 brings an end to the report with a brief recap of the main points, overview of the recommendations, and suggestions for priorities.

Analysis of children's right to protection

The 2013 situation analyses indicated that many children in the Caribbean Netherlands did not grow up in a safe and protective environment due to adverse child rearing practices, exposure to violence in the home and community, and a lack of social safety-nets for struggling families. The study also pointed out the gaps in related legislation and the lack of data on child abuse and juvenile crime. Since then, several other sources and studies, including this situation analysis, reiterate the view that domestic violence and child abuse pose significant threats to women and children in the Caribbean Netherlands. While the national government and public entities are collaborating through the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Agreement to advance necessary improvements in the system, a complete legislative framework for enhanced regulation, a comprehensive availability of services, and more capacity building for practitioners is needed. Additionally, although corporal punishment appears to be a less practiced form of discipline among younger parents, the practice continues to be used, especially among older parents, and accepted within the broader community. It is therefore recommended to consolidate positive parenting programs and campaigns and to take gradual steps toward explicitly prohibiting in legislation corporal punishment of children in all settings, in close dialogue with the local communities. Another recommendation addresses consideration of the appropriate treatment of adolescents in detention. Emphasis is also placed on the remaining need for an integrated data management system on child abuse, domestic violence, and children in contact with the juvenile justice system.

Analysis of children's right to an adequate standard of living

The 2013 situation analyses estimated that many children grow up in poverty in the Caribbean Netherlands which may limit their access to basic needs such as food and proper clothing. The studies reported that parents must combine different jobs which limited their time with their children and that limited funds also meant that access to childcare and after-school activities remained a privilege for many. Since then, poverty remains an issue for many families on the islands, but recent statistical evidence, suggesting for example that low-income single-headed

households are the most vulnerable, has propelled the national government to take several poverty alleviation measures. These include among others, the establishment of a benchmark for a social minimum, i.e. the amount of money a person needs to get by, and improving the quality of childcare and making it more affordable for low-income families. The national government intends to use the benchmark as a reference point for targeted measures to incrementally increase benefits and the legal minimum wage in the coming years. The national government and the public entities are encouraged to strengthen efforts by adopting evidence-based multidimensional approaches to poverty that consider the various deprivations experienced by the poor apart from just income; e.g. poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standards, disempowerment, among others. The lack of data on child poverty is also highlighted.

Analysis of children's rights to education and participation

While there are many notable advancements in the education system since 2013, several issues remain or have surfaced. Regarding the quality of education, all schools on the three islands have achieved basic quality standards based on inspections by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education. While the language of instruction on St. Eustatius and Bonaire was highlighted as a major issue, St. Eustatius transitioned from Dutch to English in 2015. Learning in Dutch remains a challenge for many Papiamentu speaking children in Bonaire, however. Relatedly, efforts to develop context appropriate learning outcomes for language and arithmetic on each of the three islands in order for schools to better gauge whether learning achievements are high enough should be accelerated. Regarding the situation of secondary school graduates, tertiary education in the Caribbean Netherlands is limited and most students with the desire to continue their education must do so abroad. Due to signals that the transition to tertiary education and the labor market is not always smooth, enhanced support for these students and their families is needed as well as monitoring their success rate. Regarding early childhood education, the recently launched BES(t) 4 Kids program is meant to ensure that every child has an equal opportunity for a strong start by access to quality and affordable early childhood education services. Where this program is concerned, attention to quality care and early stimulation in the home environment is still needed and optimal access to early childhood development services by all children, and especially the most vulnerable, should be ensured.

Analysis of children's right to health

In general, health care services in the Caribbean Netherlands are of high quality with high levels of satisfaction among the local communities. In the 2013 situation analyses, sexual health among adolescents, childhood obesity, care for children with mental health issues, and high teenage pregnancy rates were among the issues reported. Since then, the rate of registered teenage pregnancies has decreased. The need for more data on and a better understanding of mental and sexual health among adolescents remains as well as the need to enhance available services. As such, conducting a light research on adolescent well-being is recommended which would also help to inform necessary services. A promising initiative in the area of child and adolescent health is the Sport and Prevention agreement that has the potential to improve sex education at schools and address the childhood obesity rates. Effective monitoring of the progress and achieved results and impact of the programs is encouraged. Considering recent reports that breastfeeding practices are low and that a relatively high percentage of children are exposed to smoke on the three islands, the execution of campaigns geared toward changing these behaviors is also advised.

Governance coordination, collaboration, and cooperation

The 2013 situation analyses listed several issues related to governance and cooperation including the short-term approach to program planning on the side of The Hague, the need to look more to the region for context-appropriate best-practices, the need to foster shared responsibility and an integrated approach to policymaking and implementation, and the lack of data needed to monitor the situation of children and the effectiveness of policies and programs. While the national government is increasingly demonstrating a move toward structural programming, with the recent launch of long-term programs and agreements accompanied by the necessary financial commitments, learning from the region is still uncommon. Furthermore, cooperation between local and national government authorities and between ministries is not always ideal, encumbered by coordination issues, which is particularly the case for youth care and child protection where tasks are rolled out over several ministries or assigned between the public entity and the national government. UNICEF Netherlands formulates recommendations meant to: improve coordination between the ministries and public entities, i.e. further decentralize authority and support local government capacity to assume it; and between the ministries, i.e. invest more in inter-ministerial coordination functions and ensure that efforts reflect local priorities set out in island specific youth policies. Additionally, the ministries and public entities are encouraged to promote data collection and use by collaborating with the Central Bureau of Statistics to ensure the availability of necessary disaggregated data, reinforcing all programs with robust monitoring frameworks, and reporting on the situation of children in the Caribbean Netherlands in national publications. This study points out the need for consistent consultation mechanisms with civil society, communities, adolescents, and children, in order to ensure participatory processes and broad stakeholder buy-in on initiatives.

Conclusion and recommendations

The efforts made by all involved children's rights duty-bearers and other stakeholders are evident; children's rights are on the agenda, stakeholders are dedicated to addressing the issues and are backed up by significant financial investments. With that noted, it is difficult however, to state with certainty whether the actual situation of children has improved since 2013 due to limited or no data on for example, child abuse, child poverty, the success rate of secondary school graduates, and adolescent sexual and mental health. Nevertheless, this situation analysis report is intended to give continuity to the current discussions and development paths related to the well-being of children and adolescents on the islands. As a basis, this study stresses the need for efforts to be structural, grounded in a strong legal and policy environment and for them to be measurable and equitable. In recognition of the 30th anniversary of the CRC, 30 recommendations have been formulated in this study and specifically addressed to the Dutch national government as primary duty-bearer for safeguarding children's rights, the three Public Entities, and other stakeholders. UNICEF Netherlands intends to continue its work with the public entities, national government, and other stakeholders to monitor the progress of their implementation. Most importantly, the recommendations will be further discussed and developed with the leadership and engagement of the people of the Caribbean Netherlands as champions of children's rights on the islands.

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. In moving forward, while all recommendations are relevant and important to address, priorities will have to be set. Many key recommendations reflect the following three

priority areas which UNICEF Netherlands identifies as key bottlenecks to the advancement of the rights of children in the Caribbean Netherlands. In consideration of child and adolescent vulnerabilities on the three islands, UNICEF Netherlands proposes for parties responsible to:

- Introduce necessary laws and strengthen the policy environment as a basic condition, specifically in the area of child abuse and domestic violence.
- Strengthen coordination across the youth chain between ministries and between ministries and public entities; expand and strengthen intersectoral work, in partnership, bringing together different counterparts to seek the best solutions in order to meet the needs and guarantee the rights of children and adolescents in a systemic way.
- Improve monitoring the progress of interventions: ensure that all programs are backed-up by baselines and strong monitoring frameworks, that involved implementers have the capacity to use them, and that the data is available for indicators to measure progress.



1.

Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba

The three islands covered by this situation analysis report, Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba, are part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Kingdom of the Netherlands has a European part and a Caribbean part. Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba, along with Curacao, Aruba, and St. Maarten are the Caribbean part and the Netherlands is the European part. The Kingdom of the Netherlands comprises four countries: the Netherlands, Curacao, Aruba, and St. Maarten. Since the October 10th, 2010 dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles, known as 10-10-10, Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba have the status of public entities of the Netherlands and are collectively referred to as the Caribbean Netherlands.¹ Since 10-10-10, Curacao and St. Maarten became autonomous partners within the Kingdom, alongside the countries the Netherlands and Aruba. Prior to 10-10-10, Curacao, St. Maarten, Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba, constituted the Netherlands Antilles, a single autonomous country within the Kingdom.²

The Caribbean Netherlands have an area of 328 square kilometers. Bonaire is the largest island (288 square kilometers) and Saba the smallest (13 square kilometers). While St. Eustatius (21 square kilometers) and Saba are part of the Leeward Group of the Lesser Antilles, Bonaire is located over 500 miles south in the Caribbean Sea, about 50 miles north of the Venezuelan coast. The European Netherlands is 42,508 square kilometers.

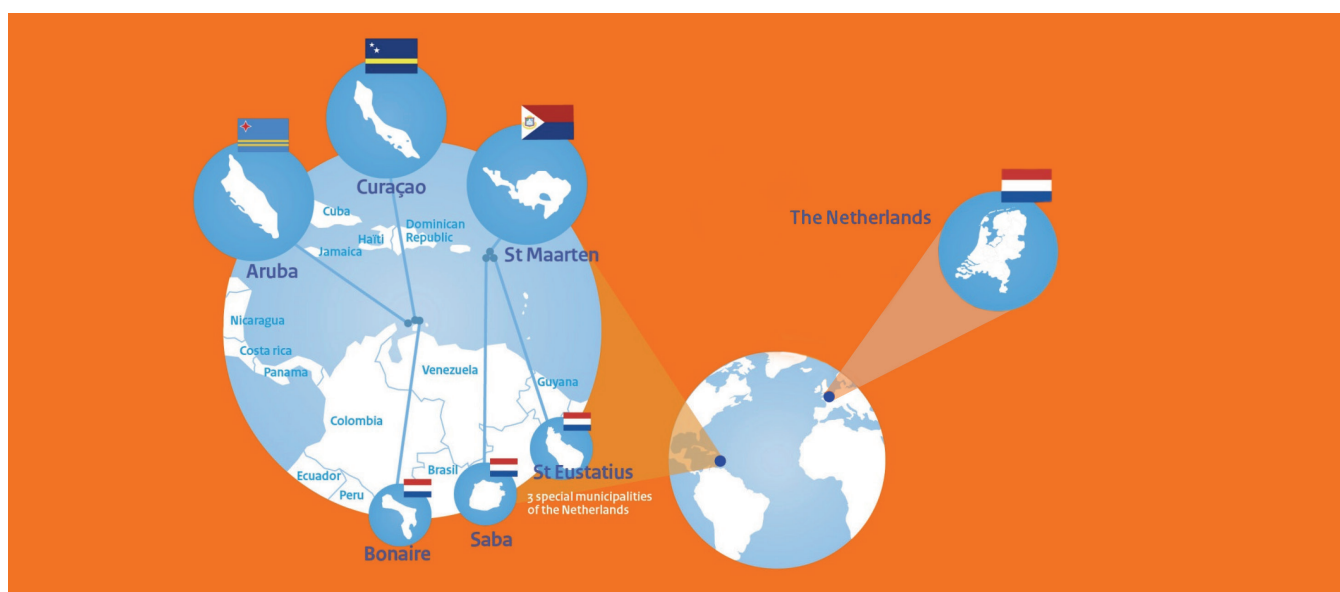


Figure 1. The Kingdom of the Netherlands, One Kingdom — Four countries, European & Caribbean.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague

¹ The three islands are also commonly referred to as the BES islands.

² The dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles was preceded by referenda on each of the five islands between 2000 and 2005. Aruba became an autonomous country within the Kingdom in 1986. Prior to this, Aruba also formed part of the Netherlands Antilles.

1.2 Overview of the Situation Analysis

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. The most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, it has inspired governments to change laws and policies and make investments so that more children get the health care, nutrition and education they need to survive and develop, are protected by strong safeguards against violence and exploitation, and have their voices heard and participate in their societies.

The Convention gave UNICEF an important mandate to monitor implementation by governments. Accordingly, throughout the world, UNICEF upholds and advocates for children's rights as part of its work with governments, donors, other United Nations agencies and programmes, civil society, citizens, children and adolescents. UNICEF uses situation analyses to support its children's rights monitoring and advocacy efforts, among other important functions including an evidence-base for quinquennial reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Headquartered in New York, UNICEF was founded in 1946. As a permanent part of the United Nations system, it operates in 192 developing countries, assisting governments to deliver programmes for children. As an independent non-governmental organization (NGO) since 1955, UNICEF Netherlands is part of a unique network of 34 UNICEF National Committees that promote and monitor child rights, and advocate and secure financial support for UNICEF's work on the survival, protection, participation and development of children worldwide. The committees serve as the main voice of UNICEF in reaching public audiences in high-income countries. They work through established alliances with government officials, NGOs, professional organizations, schools, young people and media.

1.2.1 Purpose

The objective of this situation analysis, conducted between October 2018 and June 2019, is to establish a common understanding of the main challenges facing the children and adolescents in the Caribbean Netherlands.³ UNICEF Netherlands completed earlier analyses of the three islands for the first time in 2013.⁴ Due to the 10-10-10 dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles, and the administrative transition of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba to public entities of the Netherlands, the Government of the Netherlands became the primary duty bearer for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the three islands. UNICEF Netherlands has used the situation analysis to highlight the needs of Dutch Caribbean children to the Dutch Government, which has led to different initiatives such as the development of action plans for children's rights on the islands and the introduction of the Kingdom Taskforce on Children's Rights. Members of Parliament submitted a motion that led to an amendment to the Kingdom Relations 2015 Budget, making €3 million available for 2015 to 2017 to improve the position of children in the Caribbean Netherlands.⁵

In 2016, in addition to asking the Central Bureau of Statistics to expand its Youth Monitor to include the Caribbean Netherlands and promising to begin improving quantitative data on children and youth, the Minister of Interior Affairs and Kingdom Relations requested UNICEF Netherlands to support the monitoring of progress on children's rights in the Caribbean Netherlands by conducting another situation analysis for each of the three islands.⁶ The Public Entities Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba later committed to the new round of situation analyses in May 2018. The study is meant to assess progress since the 2013 situation analyses and inform current and future policymaking on children's rights. Progress and remaining or new bottlenecks to progress will be presented in this report together with a brief reflection of issues signaled in 2013. For the most part, emerging challenges will be presented with recommendations for actions by the national government, the public entities and other stakeholders that can further accelerate progress towards fulfilment of rights obligations.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 also give particular importance and relevance to this situation analysis in current debates about the direction of development for children and adolescents in the Caribbean Netherlands. The 17 SDGs provide a transformative agenda with 169 thematic targets grounded in advocacy for universal respect for human rights and human dignity.⁷

1.2.2 Methodology

The situation analysis was guided by a rights-based and equity-focused framework which entails a critical assessment of trends in the realization of children's rights in the Caribbean Netherlands and an analysis of the key underlying and structural causes of shortfalls and disparities. The study focused on children's and adolescents'

3 UNICEF defines adolescence as the second decade of life.

4 See Kloosterboer, K. (2013).

5 For more details on the activities that were carried out see the Letter to the House of Representatives from State Secretary of BZK. May 2018.

6 Letter to the House of Representatives from the Minister of BZK. May 2016.

7 The SDGs (officially known as *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*) were adopted as the successors to the Millennium Development Goals by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015. The SDGs contain 17 specific goals that broadly address poverty, the provision of quality services, environmental protection, climate-change adaption, governance and partnership. For more information, see: Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1 (September 2015).

rights to protection, education, participation and health, with an added emphasis on child protection issues (child abuse, domestic violence, and juvenile justice) and specific difficulties facing adolescents as they transition into adulthood. The methodology involved the review and synthesis of existing data as well as interviews, focus groups, and consultations. A situation analysis involves building consensus around key current and emerging priorities of major importance to children, adolescents, parents and policymakers at the national, municipal and community levels.⁸ UNICEF's procedure for ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis and the basic ethical principles for conducting research on human subjects was respectfully applied.

1.2.3 Data usage and limitations

Data collection relied on a participatory methodology involving extensive consultations with programme administrators, partners and stakeholders. Interviews with key informants and focus groups with children, adolescents, single parents and church leaders were held in Bonaire, St. Eustatius, Saba, and the Netherlands.

Completion of the report required the collection of a substantial quantity of data across the three islands. The availability of statistical data was uneven from island to island and almost always gender-blind, but a critical issue for all three is the lack of systematic and up-to-date data to monitor implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

8 For more detail on UNICEF's situation analysis methodology see: UNICEF. (2012).





In some cases, the only available data were more than a decade old. The usual primary sources for data (such as the online databases of international agencies, including UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United States Census International Division) were not available. National data sources rarely included disaggregated data for the Caribbean Netherlands. Several caveats about data are in order:

- The availability of quantitative information varies by source and sometimes lacks consistency in methodologies for data reconciliation processes used to estimate, examine trends in and update data. Some data are expected to be updated/completed after the completion of this situation analysis.
- Although the Central Bureau of Statistics produces data on the Caribbean Netherlands (see *Trends of the Caribbean*, for example), it is difficult to find mention of the three islands in flagship publications on the Kingdom, such as reports on poverty and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁹
- Several important data collection systems were not fully operational, limiting trend analysis (juvenile justice, domestic violence and child abuse, for example).

Situation analyses are not a substitute for in-depth thematic or sectoral technical reviews, such as a multidisciplinary poverty analyses, that are essential to design, develop and implement specific policies and programmes to benefit children or achieve progress towards the SDGs. They are not intended to comprehensively assess and analyse the situation of children in relation to all articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, or in relation to all SDGs and their corresponding targets. Rather, they provide a platform for discussion around children and adolescents, and make suggestions that can be used for

⁹ CBS. 2018, 2017, 2016. *Trends in the Caribbean Netherlands*.

policy decisions. They function as an advocacy tool to position children at the forefront of planning for sustainable economic and social development by providing an overview of the most critical challenges, based on an informed, consultative consolidation of trends and issues. In this situation analysis of the Caribbean Netherlands, there is no intention to compare the islands, but rather to highlight issues common across them, and in many cases, across the Caribbean subregion.

With regard to monitoring progress since 2013, note that the 2013 situation analyses reports did not offer detailed recommendations. Rather, the reports were agenda setting, serving to raise and clarify issues and identify responsible parties.¹⁰ As such, it is not possible to monitor progress of recommendations since 2013. Additionally, reporting on progress will be, in most cases, limited to mention of outputs, that is, what has been done, rather than mention of what has been achieved in terms of the impact of activities on the lives of children which would be the ideal longer-term form of reporting. This limitation is due in part to the lack of data on the situation of children and, relatedly, the limited use of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks by program developers and implementers across the social sectors. Moreover, reporting on outputs related to certain issues has been further complicated by the fragmented nature of program implementation on the Caribbean Netherlands.

1.2.4 Key informant interviews and focus groups

Semi-structured interviews with key informants and focus groups with children, adolescents and adults were held in Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba. The exercise reached 93 per cent of targeted interviewees. Securing formal interviews in St. Eustatius was a problem (only 76 per cent of targeted interviewees were reached), particularly in accessing personnel and students in secondary schools where competing priorities were an issue.

Nearly 85 per cent of the respondents were female, primarily in social services, education and health sectors. Most male interviewees were in island leadership and upper management, where only 4 of 17 respondents were female. Four of the single parents were male.

Interviewees' observations should be seen as the way in which they *perceive* different aspects of their social situation and believe them to be relevant from a policy perspective. While the number of interviewees may not be "representative" of society in general, their voices cannot be dismissed.

¹⁰ The summary report ended with ten guiding principles for all parties involved with improving children's rights on the Caribbean Netherlands which are all to a large extent still relevant today: respect for local language and culture; local capacity building; stimulate collaboration between public entities, local civil societies, and the European Netherlands; participation of children and youth; caution in applying European Netherlands rules on the islands; choose context-appropriate approaches; inadequate situations require extra efforts and resources; initiate further research about children; organize the registration of data about children; and the need to improve children's rights is urgent.

Table 1. Summary of interviews by category

	Bonaire		St. Eustatius		Saba		The Hague		Total		%
	Target	Reached	Target	Reached	Target	Reached	Target	Reached	Target	Reached	
Social programme planners, W administrators and leaders	30	28	20	16	20	18	15	14	85	76	89%
Teachers, principals and school personnel	15	16	15	6	15	18	0	0	45	40	89%
Civil society groups	5	7	5	1	5	3	3	3	18	14	78%
Secondary and tertiary pupils	20	16	20	8	20	16	20	17	80	57	71%
Out-of-school adolescents	10	11	10	13	10	6	0	1	30	31	103%
Health-care administrators and personnel	5	4	5	6	5	5	1	0	16	15	94%
Parents and caregivers	25	35	25	26	25	31	0	0	75	92	123%
Children 8-10 years old	7	7	7	5	7	8	0	0	21	20	95%
Total	117	124	107	81	107	105	39	35	370	345	99%
Percentage reached	106%		76%		98%		90%		93%		93%

Note: Percentages above 100 per cent indicate a reach that surpassed targets.



2.

The context of the Caribbean Netherlands

2. The context of the Caribbean Netherlands

2.1 Legal and policy environment

The Caribbean Netherlands are public entities of the Netherlands which are part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands along with the autonomous countries Curacao, Aruba, and St. Maarten. In broad terms, the position of the Caribbean Netherlands is similar to that of Dutch municipalities, with adjustments for their size, distance from the European part of the Netherlands and geographic location in the Caribbean region.¹¹

2.1.1 International treaties

Only the Kingdom of the Netherlands can be considered a State. The Kingdom – not the individual autonomous countries or the public entities – has international legal standing and is subject to international law. It can conclude, ratify and accede to international legal agreements, such as treaties and conventions. The geographical applicability of these agreements may be confined to Aruba, Curaçao, St Maarten, the European part of the Netherlands and/or the Caribbean part of the Netherlands.¹²

The international treaties and conventions to which the Kingdom of the Netherlands is a signatory party include the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). It came into force on 8 March 1995 for the European Netherlands and on 16 January 1998 for the former Netherlands Antilles. The Convention is directly and fully applicable to children on the islands of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba. By ratifying the CRC, States commit to undertaking “all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures” for the full realization of the rights it contains. In the concluding observations on the 4th periodic report of the Netherlands, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which monitors and reports on the implementation of the Convention, specifically mentions its applicability to the whole Kingdom. The Committee urged “the State party to ensure equal enjoyment of rights by all children in all four countries of the Kingdom”.

Unless denounced, the treaties of the Netherlands Antilles, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, remained in force in the Caribbean Netherlands after the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles in 2010. New international treaties can make an exemption for the Caribbean Netherlands, which was done for the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence. More details about specific treaties will be described in the relevant chapters.

¹¹ For this reason, the Caribbean Netherlands are also referred to as ‘special municipalities’ of the Netherlands. The terms public entities and special municipalities are often used interchangeably.

¹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2015).

2.1.2 National law

As the Caribbean Netherlands have become an integral part of the country of the Netherlands, the Netherlands Constitution applies on the islands as of 10 October 2010. A guiding principle has been that the legislation of the Netherlands Antilles currently in force in the Caribbean Netherlands would largely remain in force after that date. Neither existing nor future Netherlands legislation (as applicable in the European part of the country) apply to the three islands unless this is explicitly provided for. As a result, two different legal systems apply. The Dutch Government and public entities agreed to limit the introduction of legislation for five years following the transition.

Legislation in most Caribbean countries still does not fully recognize social realities. Most countries have reviewed their family laws, however, and some revisions and reforms have taken place to align local laws to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other treaties, forming a coherent basis for developing rights-based ordinances and policies. As demonstrated in neighbouring Caribbean island states, the review, reform and alignment of legal frameworks to international treaties can be a vital step in shaping effective policies to realize the rights of children and adolescents.

2.2 Governance and expenditures

With new status as public entities, in 2010, the powers of governance on the Caribbean Netherlands are distributed between local island governments and the national government. The island government structure is, under regular conditions, the same for all three islands. The local democratically elected representative assemblies known as island councils are the highest administrative bodies in the public entities and are responsible for local legislation. The executive power rests with the island governors (appointed by the King) and commissioners (appointed by the island councils).¹³

The Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland (RCN) provides central support to all active ministries on the three islands. Cooperation within the framework of the RCN has no consequences for ministerial responsibility. The minister of each department is politically responsible for the work of the department in question. To facilitate this responsibility, each ministry has a departmental liaison housed within the RCN but under the authority of the corresponding ministry in The Hague.¹⁴ The following ministries, among others, have main offices for the Caribbean Netherlands in Bonaire with sub-offices on St. Eustatius and Saba: the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport or VWS; the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment or SZW; the Ministry of Justice and Security or J&V; and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports or OCW.¹⁵ The Ministry of VWS has two offices: the Zorgverzekeringskantoor (Health-care Insurance Office) and the JGCN (Youth Care Caribbean Netherlands). The Ministry of J&V has several offices including the Guardianship Council and the Victims Support Unit. The Caribbean Netherlands fall under the Public Prosecution Service (OM) BES and a Joint Court of Justice serves Aruba, Curaçao, St. Maarten, Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba.

¹³ This structure was temporarily interrupted on St. Eustatius in February 2018 after an administrative investigation pointed to corruption and serious neglect. The island government was dissolved through an administrative intervention and the national government appointed a government commissioner and deputy commissioner to lead administration on the island. This arrangement remains in place until a situation arises in which a regular island government may be deemed capable of properly performing its duties.

¹⁴ Nauta, O. (2015).

¹⁵ Commonly used Dutch acronyms for ministries are used throughout the report. See List of Acronyms.

Regarding the division of tasks, the decision lists of the administrative consultations of 3 November 2009 and 22 April 2010 are important. All statutory government duties are exhaustively listed in the appendices, subdivided by Dutch ministry. The lists detail who is responsible after the transition (the Netherlands or public entity) and where the responsibility will be carried out (public entity, RCN or the Netherlands).¹⁶

Table 2 gives an overview of the expenditures of the different ministries active in the Caribbean Netherlands in the areas of coordination, child protection, education, social affairs, health and youth care. A detailed picture of which expenses from different ministries are specifically directed towards children and youth was not readily available. The Kingdom Relations and BES funds budgets do not provide information on whether these expenses were spent on public entity or national responsibilities and tasks. The ministerial budgets are as much as possible copied in the budget of Kingdom Relations; however, special allowances and incidental funding for tasks and responsibilities of the public entities are not explicitly included.¹⁷ More detailed information on budgets and resources for education, after-school care, youth care and child protection, and health are included in Chapter 3.

Table 2. National government budget overview for the Caribbean Netherlands 2015 to 2023 (figures in euros x 1,000)¹⁸

						Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated
Ministries	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
BZK	6,906	11,761	13,766	7,788	6,232	7,616	7,616	7,500	7,500
J&V	39,957	34,356	36,949	40,207	38,908	38,958	38,968	38,964	38,951
OCW	59,026	56,900	55,503	56,992	58,137	56,773	58,615	50,620	50,153
SZW	28,744	32,597	32,050	31,979	35,587	33,299	33,754	34,619	35,420
VWS	107,841	117,627	136,655	129,176	133,975	137,338	141,271	145,213	148,998

Source: National budgets 2017 and 2019, Chapters IV Kingdom Relations and BES funds.

2.3 Population, sociocultural context and demographics

Each of the three islands have unique characteristics and differ from each other. In terms of land area and population, Bonaire is the largest island in the Caribbean Netherlands. All three islands have a relatively young population with 24 per cent of residents under the age of 25. On Bonaire and Saba, between 2010 and 2018, the population grew considerably, by 24 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively. On St. Eustatius, the population contracted by 9 per cent.

In total, 5,417 children under 18 years old live in the Caribbean Netherlands, of whom 4,308 are on Bonaire, 740 on St. Eustatius and 369 on Saba. There are 1,487 youth from 18 to 24 years, comprising 1,175 on Bonaire, 158 on St. Eustatius and 154 on Saba.

¹⁶ Nauta, O. (2015).

¹⁷ IdeeVersa. (2019).

¹⁸ The structural financing for the BES (t) 4 Kids program from 2020 is not yet included in this budget.

Table 3. Number of children and adolescents in the Caribbean Netherlands in 2019

	Bonaire	St. Eustatius	Saba	Caribbean Netherlands
0–18 years old	4,308	740	369	5,417
19–24 years old	1,175	158	154	1,487
Total	5,483	898	523	6,904

Source: CBS, retrieved on July 11th, 2019.


Migration is a central element of the demographic landscape. This includes migration within the Caribbean Netherlands, the Caribbean subregion and to countries outside the Caribbean.

Table 4. Country of birth of residents of the Caribbean Netherlands on 1 January 2017

Country of birth	Bonaire		St. Eustatius		Saba	
Aruba	493	3%	112	3%	43	2%
Bonaire	7,395	39%	4	0%	2	0%
Curacao	3,480	18%	172	5%	54	3%
Saba	5	0%	10	0%	540	27%
St. Eustatius	29	0%	1,106	34%	6	0%
St. Maarten	40	0%	378	12%	286	14%
European Netherlands	2,755	14%	178	5%	112	6%
South and Central America	3,726	19%	936	29%	409	20%
United States	317	2%	101	3%	205	10%
Canada	42	0%	6	0%	97	5%
Other countries	897	5%	247	8%	256	13%
Total	19,179	100%	3,250	100%	2,010	100%

Source: CBS, 2017.

Like many small island states, those in the Caribbean Netherlands face sociocultural characteristics that must be acknowledged as they have an impact on policy and the realization of children's rights. The smaller the community, the more closed its community and culture. Many people know each other or come into contact at some time or another, whether at work, school, church or on the sports field. Transactions often take place among "acquaintances". At the same time, the administrative characteristics of small communities often include limited staffing for multiple portfolios (resulting in overextended personnel, small spare/reserve capacity, difficulty in attracting/retaining specialists, limited promotion and mobility, high turnover rates); lack of training/capacity (linked to a shortage of management skills, low problem-solving capacity, low levels of innovation); and poor working environments combined with few opportunities outside of the public sector (leading to low morale and motivation, high levels of fear and frustration, and systemic uncertainty). These characteristics challenge efforts to reform policies to realize children's rights in ways that are effective, efficient and equitable.



Like the Caribbean subregion, the Caribbean Netherlands is heterogeneous with respect to race and religion. A number of different cultural orientations shape social norms regarding the treatment of women and children. The main religion is Roman Catholicism, but all three islands also have Protestants, Muslims, Rastafarians, Jews and non-believers. The populations are predominantly of Afro-Caribbean descent, although also have Caucasian, Latino and Asian people. While Dutch is the official language used in government and legal transactions, St. Eustatius and Saba are English-speaking. Papiamentu is commonly spoken in Bonaire, and Spanish is also widely spoken. The influx of immigrants from non-English or Dutch-speaking countries means that the Caribbean Netherlands is becoming increasingly multilingual. This heterogeneity speaks to the need for cultural sensitivity in designing programmes for children and their families.

Norms and behaviours change according to a given environment and culture. In the Caribbean Netherlands, norms are grounded in a history much like that of other Caribbean islands. Modern Caribbean societies are largely the product of nearly five centuries of European colonial policies with the most valued religious and practical beliefs and African cultural traditions surviving. Empirical research on violence and child abuse in the Caribbean has defined violence as a regular feature of the lives of many Caribbean children and women, which violates their rights and diminishes the quality of their lives.¹⁹ The influence of the socio-cultural context (cultural values, ideologies and social norms) is similar throughout the subregion when it comes to gender-role socialization, and problems related to power imbalances, gender relations and parenting in family systems.

An important demographic feature of the Caribbean Netherlands and the Caribbean subregion is the predominance of female-headed households. 29% of children ages 0-18 in the Caribbean Netherlands live in

¹⁹ Jones, A., & Trotman Jemmott, E. (2009).

single-parent households.²⁰ Female-headed households are more vulnerable than male-headed households for several reasons, as discussed in more detail below in chapter 3.2. They are more likely to be poor, are typically larger and have more dependents (children and often elderly relatives) than male-headed households.

2.4 Economic situation

All three Caribbean Netherlands islands have a limited number of economic activities, rendering them economically vulnerable. Tourism is very important on each of the three islands. The (very) limited size of the islands otherwise imposes limits on the scope of the local economy and available spending potential. The majority of commodities and other goods and products used on the islands have to be brought in from elsewhere.²¹

Between 2013 and 2016, Bonaire experienced strong economic development. Its gross domestic product (GDP) grew at an average of 2.3 per cent. In that same period, the economy of St. Eustatius shrunk at an average annual rate of –0.6 per cent. The economy of Saba grew at an average of 1.6 per cent per year. The strong economic growth of Bonaire was based on the strong growth of the population.

In 2011, directly after the 10-10-10 transition, the Caribbean Netherlands experienced high inflation, at 5.5 per cent on Bonaire, 6.4 per cent on Saba and 9.9 per cent on St. Eustatius. Prices later stabilized with a normal inflation rate starting in 2013 to 2014 and beyond. Purchasing power has increased on all three islands between 2012 and 2016. On Bonaire, it grew on average 2.7 per cent per year, and on St. Eustatius by 3 per cent and Saba by 3.6 percent.

Despite economic growth and improved purchasing power, the unemployment rate on Bonaire increased from 5.8 per cent in 2010 to 6.7 per cent in 2017. On St. Eustatius, unemployment doubled despite the population shrinking from 3.2 per cent in 2010 to 7.1 per cent in 2017. On Saba, unemployment remained at a low 3.3 percent in 2016. Youth unemployment will be touched upon in Chapter 3.3.

Income inequality is measured by using the GINI coefficient, with a value of 0 indicating complete equality, whereby everyone has the same income, and a value of 1 showing complete inequality, whereby one house has all the income and the rest has nothing. In the European Netherlands, the GINI coefficient is 0.29. In Bonaire, from 2011 to 2016, it edged up from 0.39 to 0.40, suggesting that inequality has slightly increased. In Saba, inequality has slightly narrowed, with the GINI coefficient decreasing from 0.41 to 0.37 from 2011 to 2016. In St. Eustatius, income inequality has slightly increased; it has the largest income inequality of the three islands with a GINI coefficient of 0.42 percent in 2011, rising to 0.44 in 2016.

²⁰ CBS, 2018.

²¹ All figures in this section are based on: SEO Economisch Onderzoek. (2019).





3.

Analysis of the situation
of children and adolescents

3. Analysis of the situation of children and adolescents

This chapter assesses the performance of the Dutch national government and the public entities in the realization of specific rights for children in the Caribbean Netherlands, including protection (Section 3.1), standard of living (3.2), education and participation (Section 3.3) and health (Section 3.4). It analyses the pace, degree and progress of change compared to the 2013 situation analyses as well as related obstacles. Detailed conclusions and recommendations follow each sector-level discussion. Recommendations are directed toward the relevant ministries and public entities. All recommendations are summarized in Chapter 5 and numbered for ease of reference.

3.1 The safe and protective environment: every child is protected from violence and exploitation



States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification,

reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19).

Realizing the right of every child to live free from fear, neglect, abuse and exploitation (SDG 16.2).

The Council of Europe's landmark Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence open the path for creating a pan-European legal framework to protect women from all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence. The Convention was approved for the Kingdom of the Netherlands on 24 June 2015 and entered into force on 1 March 2016 for the European Netherlands.

3.1.1 Children in need of care and protection in the Caribbean Netherlands

All children are entitled to a protective environment where they can live free from violence, abuse and neglect. Children are by nature more vulnerable than adults and in greater need of protection. Particularly vulnerable children are those deprived of parental care; victims of sexual, physical, emotional abuse and neglect; and children in conflict with the law.

Child abuse and domestic violence



What young interviewees said:

Bonaire

Over 60 per cent said they knew someone who had been sexually abused.

St. Eustatius

65 per cent said they knew someone who had been sexually abused.

Saba

Nearly 50 per cent said they knew someone who had been sexually abused.

Domestic violence and abuse pose significant threats to women and children in the Caribbean Netherlands. The 2013 situation analysis showed that considerable improvement is required on Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius to make it possible for children to grow up in a protective environment.²² This was reiterated in the report from Regioplan (2014), which investigated the consequences of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the Caribbean Netherlands: “The impression exists that, compared to the Netherlands, domestic violence on the islands often concerns more serious forms of physical violence. The prevalence of domestic violence is persistent.”²³ A 2015 report called *Five years of the Caribbean Netherlands* reconfirms: “There are many indications of domestic

²² Kloosterboer, K. (2013).

²³ de Bruijn, J. Kriek F. and de Vaan, K. (2014).

violence, sexual violence and incest. Citizens do not readily talk about these issues. But social workers, teachers and the police are saying loud and clear: women and children are in a vulnerable position.”²⁴ The Safety Profile BES 2018, published in January 2019, and commissioned by the public Prosecutor’s Office and sent to Parliament by the Minister of Justice and Safety, confirms the concerning and bleak picture of child abuse, describing issues of abuse, child prostitution, incest and, specifically on Bonaire, lover-boy problems.

Responses from interviews, focus groups, and consultation workshops for the 2019 situation analysis also indicate that the issue is serious. Almost all of interviewees mentioned violence as a major issue facing children, adolescents and women in their community or household. Although over half of the adult interviewees from all three islands believe child sexual abuse to be a “common” occurrence in their communities and families, it remains a taboo topic for discussion.

When a child witnesses domestic violence, it is also considered child abuse.²⁵ If a child lives in a home where there is domestic abuse, then they’re likely to be at risk of other types of abuse – and those could be physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or neglect.

Data from the Victims Support Unit show that cases of domestic violence on Bonaire have been on the rise since 2015. Police reports equally show an increase of 32 per cent from 2017 to 2018. This trend of rising numbers of domestic violence concurs with the responses of people interviewed during three field missions to Bonaire. They also opined that the number of cases of domestic violence was on the rise. The 2018 annual report of the Prosecutor’s Office said: “It is true that an increase can be seen in registered criminal offences, but that increase (Bonaire and St. Eustatius) mainly concerns threats/abuse and domestic violence. Within the Safety Profile BES 2018, one identifies that fatal domestic violence is apparent on the BES islands. Many respondents indicate that domestic violence on all islands is increasing. It is a persistent problem and shows increasingly serious forms. The taboo on this subject is great. There is often a relationship established with poverty. The problem is that both the size of the problem and the relationship with poverty cannot be underpinned with data. There is also a taboo surrounding this topic so people are not inclined to report to the competent authorities.

Willingness to report

Willingness to report cases of child abuse and domestic violence is a concern in the Caribbean Netherlands. Incidents of child abuse and domestic violence are underreported. And if one reports, necessary action is not taken by the responsible authorities. That is at least the perception of the population.²⁶ With regard to an increase in domestic violence, it can be cautiously concluded that people appear to be more prepared to notify and report crimes. The government campaigns with regard to awareness therefore appear to be effective, prosecutors said in the report.²⁷ There are no data on the number of children affected in these cases of domestic violence.

24 Bijl, R., & Pommer, E. (2015).

25 Report submitted by the Netherlands pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 1 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (baseline report). September 2018.

26 van der Zee, S. & Hoebé, D. (2019).

27 *The Daily Herald*, June 2019: “Prosecutor’s Office announces safety policy for Statia, Saba.”

Surveys to measure the prevalence of child abuse and domestic violence have found that rates are severely underestimated in police statistics because cases are highly underreported. Youth Care and Family Supervision Caribbean Netherlands leads efforts to investigate and manage reported cases of child abuse and neglect, and provide care and protection to children in need.

“If you call the police because you know a neighbour child being abused, people think you interfering with business not yours. What’s happening in your house is your business.”

Interviewee, Bonaire

“Witnesses of child abuse and domestic violence don’t like to report because they are required by law to leave their name.”

Interviewee, Saba

“People on the island who know children being abused are afraid to report it because everyone will know who reported it, and the community is small and unforgiving.”

Interviewee, Saint Eustatius

Corporal punishment

Considerable progress has been noted in prohibiting corporal punishment in schools; however, the use of violent and/or threatening and intimidating language remains prevalent there. Authorities and care counsellors contacted at schools (day care, primary and secondary) in all three islands noted that corporal punishment “has no place in the school”, “is not allowed”, is “against the code” and not permitted in and around the school. Those interviewed outside of the school setting offered a slightly different perception. Most of the older (over 30 years) women and men interviewed spoke of children being hit, yelled at and pushed in school. Several indicated that they agreed with this form of punishment.

Using corporal punishment to discipline children is generally accepted but attitudes seem to change with younger parents. The 2013 situation analysis noted that a lack of alternatives to corporal punishment resulted in unrestrained behaviour, and that there was limited communication between parents and children because of how children were perceived by parents. The 2019 situation analysis does not indicate any major difference in this pattern. Older respondents recalled “getting whippings” as kids from parents and teachers alike. And some lauded that form of discipline as the reason “I came out ok”. Conversely, younger parents and adolescents stated that corporal punishment is being used less and less in the home, replaced by alternative means (such as taking away access to social media and other privileges). All seven single teen mothers in Bonaire (17 to 20 years old, but all under age 19 when their babies were delivered) said they did not “lick or spank” their children (all under 4 years old), and that they did not believe in using corporal punishment to discipline their children. Many of the other interviewees under 30 reported not having used corporal punishment at all, and the remainder said they only use corporal punishment

“While using reasoning to discipline my 3-year-old at the store, an older woman stopped to tell me ‘you need to spank his little butt’. I felt pressured to do what she said but remembered what I learned in class and refused.”

Interviewee, Saba

sometimes when serious issues arise. This is perhaps an indicator of changing attitudes and behaviours that could be a result of recent positive parenting initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns.

Children in conflict with the law

The number of juvenile offences for the Caribbean Netherlands (disaggregated data per island, by age or gender are not available) fell from 58 cases in 2017 to 35 cases for 2018. These figures confirm a positive trend defined in 2015 research, which showed (contrary to hearsay) a decline in the number of minors in contact with the police and the judiciary.²⁸ The 2018 annual report of the Prosecutor’s Office mentions that in Bonaire there is an “evident” and “clear” increase in the number of minors who come to the attention of the police and the Prosecutor’s Office. According to the police, this can be explained by the fact that young people relatively often meet up at hang-out spots. The police also indicated that the lack of a meaningful way of spending their free time and the lack of affordable recreation for young people plays a role in this. The reports of the Guardianship Council on the number of cases processed for advice on hearings, coordination of community service and supervision of juvenile rehabilitation, or admitted to the HALT programme, illustrate the effort to divert juveniles in contact with the law from the courts and settle on measures that avoid police records.

Table 5 illustrates the number and type of cases reviewed between 2013 and 2018.

Table 5: Juvenile crime in the Caribbean Netherlands: cases processed from 2013 to 2018 by the Guardianship Council

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Hearing advice for juvenile criminal matters	8	19	11	6	12	11
Coordination of community service for juvenile offences	12	10	12	9	2	8
HALT programme cases	26	22	7	1	8	24
Supervision of juvenile rehabilitation	15	8	5	5	7	2
Total	61	59	35	21	29	45

Source: the Guardianship Council.

3.1.2 Legal framework: implementation and supervision

Legislation is a key part of preventing and responding to violence and promoting respect for children’s human rights. Effective enforcement of laws that define and prohibit all forms of violence against children may deter violence and ensure justice for victims. Laws alone do not reduce violence, but their effective implementation and enforcement supports and strengthens all strategies to end violence against children. In addition, legislation may provide an overarching framework for prevention, protection, response and support for victims, witnesses and children in conflict with the law.²⁹

28 Leertouwer, E.C. & Zaalberg, A. (2015).

29 World Health Organization. (2016).

Several relevant international treaties, which are the backbone of Dutch legislation on child protection and domestic violence, are not applicable to the Caribbean Netherlands. During the ratification process, it was decided that the ‘Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence’, also known as the Istanbul Convention, would not apply to the public entities of the Netherlands, on the premise that a catch-up phase was still needed to meet Convention obligations. The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse came into force in 2010 but only for the European part of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of the Netherlands ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016. It does not apply to the Caribbean Netherlands until existing legislation and policy have been considered in light of Convention obligations.³⁰ However, by signing on to these Conventions, State Parties agree to their basic principles and implementation of their provisions and corresponding monitoring mechanisms.

The laws of the European Netherlands are not applicable to the Caribbean Netherlands. Child protection is only addressed in the Civil and Criminal Codes. In the European Netherlands, different laws and regulations define the legal framework for the prevention of child abuse and neglect, and policies guide approaches to end domestic violence and child abuse. Among others, the 2014 youth law and the 2015 law on social support do not apply to the Caribbean Netherlands. These laws define child abuse, specify the different responsibilities of different actors in the child protection system, and stipulate policies on reporting. This kind of legislation is lacking in the Caribbean Netherlands. Another gap is the absence of a legal reporting right and the non-applicability of the temporary domestic exclusion order act – which is governed by administrative law and makes it possible for a mayor to impose a domestic exclusion order on a person who has initiated a (serious) threat of domestic violence.³¹

The Civil Code for the Caribbean Netherlands defines the tasks and competences of the Guardianship Council, which is similar to the Child Protection Council in the European Netherlands. The law enforcement council (Raad voor de Rechsthandhaving) oversees the council’s crime-related tasks, while the inspectorate for youth care supervises civil tasks.

To meet the obligations arising from the Istanbul Convention, an administrative agreement, “Approach to domestic violence and child abuse in the Caribbean Netherlands 2017 – 2020” was concluded in June 2017. This agreement focuses on prevention; enhancing the expertise of professionals; strengthening assistance and the chain approach, including by setting up safe shelters for victims of domestic violence and child abuse; and establishing an easily accessible reporting structure and a legal framework. Each island has its own action plan on domestic violence and child abuse. The ultimate goal is to have the Istanbul Convention apply to the Caribbean Netherlands.³²

30 Sixth periodic report of the Kingdom of The Netherlands under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, February 2016, p. 11.

31 Ibid., p. 10.

32 Baseline report submitted by the Netherlands pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 1 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, p. 5.

In June 2019, within the context of the administrative agreement, a booklet for legal assistance on domestic violence and child protection in the Caribbean Netherlands was launched by the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sports. It provides professionals with information on which legislation on domestic violence and child protection from the European Netherlands applies to the Caribbean Netherlands, and which does not. It also gives guidance on which laws are applicable to the Caribbean Netherlands from the civil and penal codes as well as European treaties, and could be applied in cases of domestic violence and child abuse. Given the lack of a youth law, it also clarifies the definitions of domestic violence and child abuse using wording defined by international treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Istanbul Convention. By giving concrete examples, it helps professionals judge which actions to take. With the absence of a legal reporting obligation, it also provides information on how to go around this and introduces a five-step plan for reporting.³³

The public entities of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba are working on comprehensive youth policies for each island. These are designed to invest as much as possible in the preventive side of the youth care system. There will be more focus on a larger role of the family and social networks in the care process, and better coordination and integration of services. Bonaire was drafting its youth policy at the time of the field missions for the 2019 situation analysis. On Saba and St. Eustatius, first meetings with stakeholders have been organized.

The ban on corporal punishment

The Convention on the Rights of the Child upholds the importance of the family and promotes the concept of parental responsibility, with children's best interests as parents' basic concern (Article 18). Some people argue that hitting a child in the name of discipline is, in fact, in the child's best interest in the long term. But as the Committee

³³ Janssen, L. (2019).

on the Rights of the Child has stated “.. interpretation of a child’s best interests must be consistent with the whole Convention, including the obligation to protect children from all forms of violence and the requirement to give due weight to the child’s views; it cannot be used to justify practices, including corporal punishment and other forms of cruel or degrading punishment, which conflict with the child’s human dignity and right to physical integrity.”³⁴

A ban on corporal punishment came into force in 2007 for the European Netherlands. The law states that, “parents will not use any psychological or physical violence or any other degrading treatment in the upbringing of their children.” In the Caribbean Netherlands a comparable law has not yet been introduced though violence in general is punishable by law in the Criminal Code. The punishment can be increased by one-third if the offender commits a criminal offence against his or her child (among other parties).³⁵

Juvenile justice

As per the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children who (allegedly) break the law should not be treated cruelly or in an inhumane or degrading way (art. 37). On the contrary, they must be treated fairly and in a child-specific manner (art. 40). They are entitled to a special pedagogical approach. They must not be put in a prison or detention with adults and have the right to keep in contact with their family (art. 37). Neither death nor life imprisonment without the possibility of release can be imposed for offenses committed by adolescents under the age of eighteen (art. 37). Children who are accused of breaking the law should receive legal or other appropriate assistance and custodial sentences for children can only be used for the most serious offences and should be enforced in an institution for children (art. 40).

34 Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 8, The right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment.

35 Report of the working group, A/HRC/36/15/Add.1, Addendum, p. 6, 14 September 2017.



Access to justice is an inalienable right of all children; this includes access to quick, effective and fair measures to protect their rights, prevent or solve disputes and control abuse of power through transparent, affordable and accountable processes. Children in contact with the justice system should encounter specialized, age-appropriate, speedy and diligent processes adapted to the needs and rights of the child, and upholding their best interests.

The Caribbean Netherlands islands are subject to a separate penal code, the Code of Criminal Law. In contrast to the Penal Code for the European Netherlands, it does not yet contain a separate youth criminal law. The main penalties that may be imposed on minors are fines and reprimands. In addition, it is possible to apply adult criminal law (and thus imprisonment) to cases of 16 and 17-year olds and a life sentence can be imposed.³⁶ This situation is not compliant with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Although there is a separate ward within the Bonaire Correctional Institution reserved for minors, no independent juvenile justice facility exists on the islands.

The Code of Criminal Procedure also contains provisions on matters concerning young people. A child cannot be prosecuted for criminal offences committed before age 12 (Article 477). It also contains provisions on persons who, at the time proceedings were initiated against them, had not reached age 18.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that cases involving juvenile offenders should be prosecuted and adjudicated in a manner appropriate to their age, as set forth in a separate juvenile justice system articulated in laws and regulations. This system is not yet in place for the Caribbean Netherlands, but will be introduced in 2020. It will have a pedagogical character, where the interests of the child, protection and special prevention are the main priorities. The prevention of recidivism will also be important as well as improving the upbringing of young persons. Under the management of the Ministry of Justice and Security, preparations for the system include training professionals, among other elements.



36 Kloosterboer, K. 2013.

3.1.3 Preventive and responsive services: a state and local responsibility

Increasing the proportion of children who receive response and support services requires effective child-focused services and mechanisms for children and parents to seek help, support and care, and to report violent incidents. These can include counselling and referrals to child protection services offered by the police, health-care providers and social welfare workers, and assistance with securing temporary accommodation when necessary.³⁷

Youth care in the Caribbean Netherlands falls largely under the responsibility of and is largely funded by the State ministries. The exception is preventive youth care and some tasks surrounding the response to domestic violence; these tasks are under the public entities. The Minister of Justice and Security is responsible for the functioning of the Guardianship Council and implementation of guardianship, family custody and juvenile probation. The Minister of Public Health, Welfare, and Sport (VWS) is responsible for the implementation of non-preventive youth care and protection.³⁸

The role and responsibilities of the Guardianship Council

The Guardianship Council protects the interests of minors and carries out tasks relating to youth in both civil and criminal matters. The duties of the council are defined in the Civil Code and the Criminal Code for the Caribbean Netherlands.³⁹

The role and responsibilities of Youth Care and Family Supervision Caribbean Netherlands

Operating under the Minister of Public Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS), the JGCN is responsible for supervision and guardianship, and offers the following forms of youth care: ambulatory youth care, foster care, residential care, and, on Saba and St. Eustatius, parenting support.

Monitoring the quality of Youth Care

Regarding monitoring the quality of services, as stated earlier, the Youth Act does not apply in the Caribbean Netherlands. As such, the Implementation Act for the Public Entities of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba was amended in the spring of 2016 so that the Health Care and Youth Inspectorate supervises the providers of youth care and family supervision in the Caribbean Netherlands. In 2016, the Guardianship Council received a moderate assessment from the Youth Care Inspectorate about the civilian tasks of the BES Guardianship Council. In a re-assessment, the inspectorate came to the conclusion in 2017 that the quality had improved to a satisfactory level but had a number of points of concern with regard to the methodology and work processes used, the waiting lists, expertise of employees and cross-border behavior.

³⁷ World Health Organization (2016).

³⁸ IdeeVersa. (2019).

³⁹ Note following the report and letter of amendment of the Implementation Act for Public Entities Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba in connection with the statutory regulation of quality requirements for youth care on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba and the supervision and enforcement thereof by the youth care inspection, 2015, p. 1.

To be able to test the quality, the Inspectorate has further specified the criteria formulated by Youth Care and Family Guardianship Caribbean Netherlands (JGCN). The quality framework for responsible care in the Caribbean Netherlands uses ten criteria on the basis of which the inspection is carried out, such as family-oriented approach, cooperation between chain partners, supervision of juveniles, residential care and expertise of staff.

Table 6. Overview of caseloads for JGCN 2018

Overview of caseloads for JGCN 2018	Bonaire	Saba	Sint Eustatius
Total caseload	257	30	36
Guardianship	23	4	2
OTS cases	55	2	4
Mediation	8		
Outpatient cases	60	16	16
Access arrangements	13	2	1
Youth probation	4		1
Foster parents	49	4	2
Places in the Netherlands	5	1	1
Placed in long term residential care	8		
Placed Rosa di Sharon	7		
Placed Kas di Karko	8		
Placed Curacao	3		1
Placed Miss Lalie (SXM)		1	
On-going intakes	14	4	10
Placement in foster care	6		
Waiting for intake/unmanaged cases	6/12	1	

On Saba and St. Eustatius, prevention and positive parenting programmes until now have fallen directly under the responsibility of the Ministry of VWS, but there will be a transition to the public entities in the near future, with a pilot project on Saba and discussions at St. Eustatius. Parenting support programmes on Bonaire are the responsibility of the public entity and implemented by the Centre for Youth and Family.

Coordination mechanisms

Though stakeholders in many countries are working to eliminate violence against children, their efforts are not always well coordinated and supported. Coordination mechanisms are therefore essential, as no single sector can deliver the full package of interventions. Efforts to implement strategies to protect children should therefore encourage cooperation and learning.

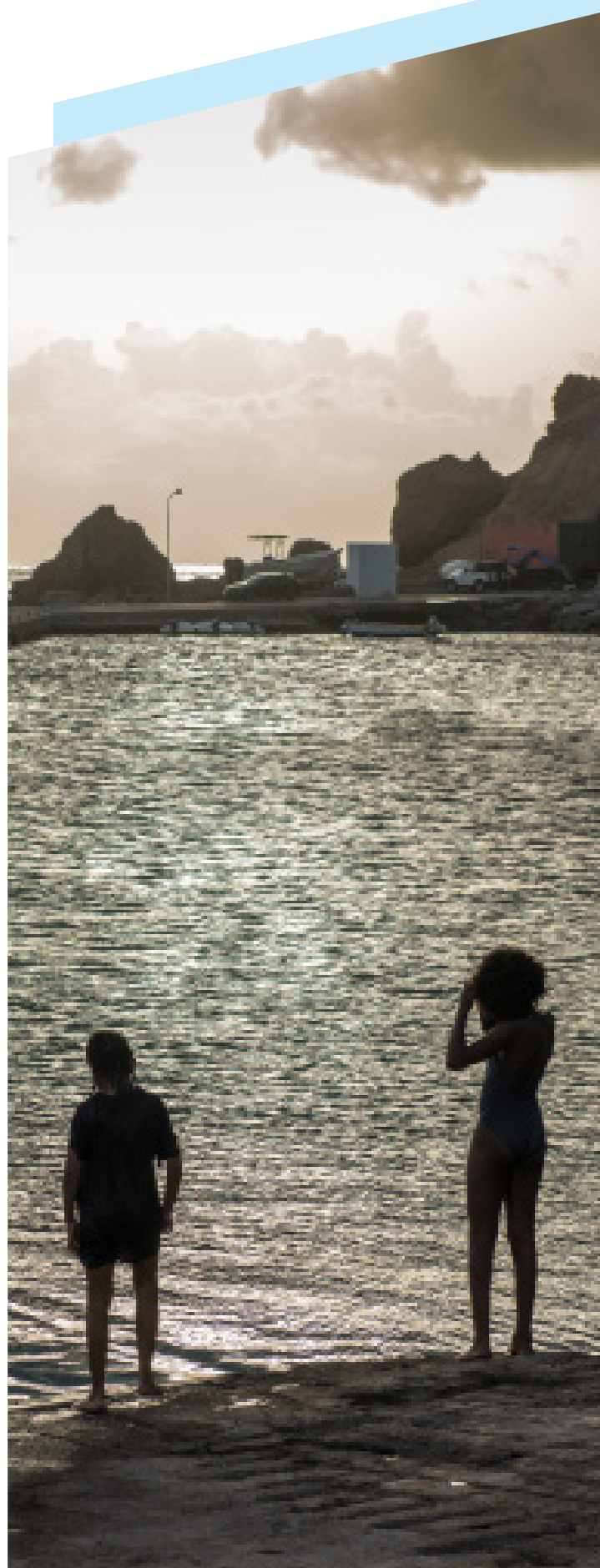
In 2018, Bonaire started a pilot where 15 agencies joined a “care and safety” network called ‘Safety House’ Multidisciplinary Meeting (Veiligheidshuis in Dutch). All of these organizations work on care, justice, education and government. Together, they tackle issues surrounding domestic violence, problem families, youth problems, care after detention and nuisance situations. After a successful pilot, coordination meetings among network members were extended into 2019, and 19 cases of domestic violence were comprehensively addressed. On St. Eustatius, the Safety Net network was launched in the spirit of Safe at Home; it involves all actors in youth care. On Saba, a domestic safety network was similarly introduced.

In The Hague, the different ministries responsible for children’s rights meet frequently in the interdepartmental team, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Interior Affairs and Kingdom Relations and the Ministry of VWS. They share information on different policies, projects and activities that relate to children’s rights, youth care, education and protection.

Safe shelters

There is currently one shelter in Bonaire for domestic violence victims; a small apartment temporarily functioning as a shelter is available on St. Eustatius. On Saba, there is no shelter. There are future plans to set up a fully operational short term shelter on Saba for crisis situations with the understanding that complimentary actions will be essential. Experience in the region shows that without the full package of services and support, victims are highly likely to return to the abusive situation.⁴⁰ For longer term crises the Ministry of VWS looks into the possibility to collaborate with other Dutch Caribbean islands, such as St. Maarten and Aruba, to provide shelter for those instances that women and children are in danger at home.

40 See Safe Haven in St. Maarten and the St. Lucia Crisis Centre, for example.



Residential care



Perceptions from interviewees on Bonaire

“We are very hesitant to give our children away. We care for our family.”

“Families don’t like to ‘give up’ rights to children.”

Every child deserves to grow up in a loving family. The birth family or immediate relative of a child are the best possible options when they provide a solid nurturing environment. When this environment becomes dysfunctional and dangerous, however, removal of the child becomes necessary, and they are admitted to residential care or foster families.

On Saba and St. Eustatius, the preferred options in the best interest of the child (residential care and foster care) are not available. On Bonaire, these options are all available, and facilities also receive children from Saba and St. Eustatius. Where difficult cases require placement of children in facilities that provide specialized care or, in the case of juvenile delinquents, a closed facility, children are sent to Curacao or the European Netherlands. There is concern, however, about the quality of these services in Curacao and Aruba. One interviewee argued that if the quality of these services continues deteriorating it will not be acceptable to send children to them.

Foster care

The foster care programme provides temporary out-of-home care because of parental inability, neglect, abuse, abandonment or exploitation. Some children are placed in residential care by their parents and/or in foster families. All out of home placements are meant to be temporary accommodations until their biological parents/families are able to take care of them. The programme in the Caribbean Netherlands is currently administered by the JGCN. Foster families express discontent about inequality in the foster family allowance paid in the European Netherlands compared to the one in the Caribbean Netherlands. As of September 2019, Bonaire foster families will receive the same allowance per child as families fostering children in the European Netherlands. A new foster care framework will also be introduced at this time. The Ministry of VWS is working on providing a legal basis for this new framework. Since there is currently no legal framework for foster care in the Caribbean Netherlands, the

starting point of the new framework is to align as much as possible with the system in the European Netherlands under the youth law, with necessary adaptations to the context of the three different islands. The new framework should clarify the responsibilities and authority of the JGCN, the criteria for foster parents, and what foster parents and children can expect from foster support and remuneration.⁴¹

Parent and caregiver support

In an effort to reduce harsh parenting practices and create positive parent–child relationships, positive parenting, triple P and conscious discipline programmes are used by practitioners and trainers in the Center of Youth and Family, JGCN, schools, day care centers and public entities. The aim is to raise parent’s confidence in their parenting skills by “unlearning” negative emotional practices and behaviours (disrespect, hatred, flogging, beating and yelling, mistrust), and replacing them with positive alternatives (love, respect, alternative approaches to discipline, active listening and effective communications, and trust). These programmes are offered as both mandatory sessions in response to families in JGCN cases and on a volunteer basis to families who take advantage of “walk-in” services.

The Victims Compensation Programme

The Victims Compensation Programme (Schadefonds) has recently been introduced to offer assistance with losses incurred as a result of injuries from physical crimes. The fund will include reimbursement for treatment costs, such as for medical and mental health, as well as wage losses, relocation expenses, property losses, etc. For survivors of domestic violence, this could prove useful during the transition period of finding employment and a permanent housing situation. The programme was officially launched in June 2019 on Saba.

Raising awareness of domestic violence and child abuse

On all three islands, awareness-raising campaigns have been launched on domestic violence and child abuse. On St. Eustatius, the campaign “Dare to Care – Stop Domestic Violence at Statia” kicked off in 2018. The communications department of the RCN organized “Het stopt niet vanzelf”, “E ta no top di mes” (in English: It does not stop on its own) in collaboration with the public entities. The campaigns were part of a pilot project on strengthening collaboration and expertise among professional service providers, and increasing the awareness of citizens regarding domestic violence and child protection. They were initiated by the Ministry of Justice and Security, and were complementary to the administrative agreement on domestic violence and child abuse between the public entities and the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sport. Activities aimed at strengthening action against domestic violence and child abuse on Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius will be continued and expanded by the public entities in the context of the administrative agreement.⁴²

A hotline

St. Eustatius launched a hotline and counselling service in 2017 with little success, and after a few short months was forced to shut down a related web site. This experience has been valuable in underscoring the imperative of having a comprehensive prevention and response programme in lieu of fragmented efforts that are unsustainable

41 Letter to the House of Representatives from the State Secretary of VWS, June 2018. (2018D35690)

42 See Mental Health Caribbean, June 2019: ‘Attention to tackling domestic violence and child abuse remains necessary’.

and lack continuity. The current plan is to re-think the hotline and web page strategy as part of a comprehensive package of actions to combat domestic violence and child abuse. There is currently no child helpline on the islands.

Skills-building for professionals

Numerous exchanges and trainings for trainers and service providers have taken place since 2017 on all three islands, including “Kas Sigur” targeting the perpetrator and “Signs of Safety” around the safety of victims (especially children) with a focus on family participation. These trainings have been followed with practice involving registered cases, including 14 cases in 2018 in Bonaire and 6 cases in Saba. Refresher sessions are needed given high turnover among professionals.

3.1.4 Emerging challenges and recommendations

Legislative and policy environment

As previously mentioned, the suspected prevalence of child abuse and domestic violence in the Caribbean Netherlands was signaled in the 2013 situation analyses. While the administrative agreement between the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sport and the public entities on the approach to domestic violence and child abuse has served as a catalyst for action, activities remain fragmented. The fight to end domestic violence and child abuse and neglect cannot be accomplished in a piecemeal fashion. The administrative agreement approach to domestic violence and child abuse is intended to lead to the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. The Convention stipulates that Parties shall take the necessary legislative and other measures to promote and protect the right for everyone, particularly women, to live free from violence in both the public and the private sphere. While important and helpful projects have commenced, such as guidance on reporting, awareness-raising campaigns, and training and capacity building for youth care professionals, it is not clear how these steps will lead towards ratification. **The Ministry of VWS, in close partnership with the Ministry of J&V, is encouraged to conduct a legal gap analysis, which is one of the activities listed in the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Administrative Agreement, along with a specific roadmap, necessary budget and clarification on how and when the Convention will be ratified for the Caribbean Netherlands (recommendation 1). On the basis of the legal gap analysis, the Ministry of VWS is encouraged to put in place a comprehensive legislative framework that provides clarity on roles, responsibilities and respective actions (reporting right, reporting code and point, restrictive orders, compulsory registration/monitoring for sex offenders, house ban for perpetrators of domestic violence, etc.) (recommendation 2).**

The 2013 situation analysis concluded that legislation on the islands does not meet the minimum requirements set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. For one, there is no legislation explicitly prohibiting corporal punishment of children in all settings and the current application of adult criminal law to 16 and 17 year olds and the option of lifelong imprisonment in the Caribbean Netherlands is not in accordance with the CRC. This 2019 situation analysis reiterates these conclusions while recognizing that juvenile justice will be introduced for the islands in 2020, which is an important and positive step forward. Nevertheless, **the Ministry of J&V is encouraged to: (i) ensure that when detained, young people are held separately from adult criminals; (ii) safeguard the pedagogical nature of juvenile criminal law by providing guidance, education, and skills training for juvenile**

detainees; (iii) and guarantee contact between children and parents if the detention takes place on an island other than the child's residential island (recommendation 3).

Developing and strengthening legal protections and policies for children and youth, in conjunction with the means to enforce these protections, are prudent steps in preventing violence against children. Laws that prohibit behaviours such as violent punishment are useful in several ways. They hold perpetrators accountable for their actions, which already is possible in the Criminal Code for the Netherlands, and show society that corporal punishment for children is wrong. They emphasize the specific vulnerability of children in their relationship with adults and can therefore help eradicate prevailing norms that exacerbate it. Corporal punishment reflects the day-to-day experience of many children on the Caribbean Netherlands, and in every case, a child's dignity and physical integrity are violated. The explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in the relationship between parents and children and as a means of discipline raises the status of children and contributes positively to how they are viewed and treated in society. This situation analysis found that younger mothers less frequently use corporal punishment, which shows that society is open to messages to stop the practice. An explicit ban on corporal punishment will strengthen these young mothers if others (grandmothers mothers, neighbours) argue for spanking a child to teach him or her how to behave. The point of adopting a law explicitly banning all corporal punishment is not to put more parents in jail. It is about fulfilling children's rights and moving societies toward positive, non-violent relationships with children. **The Ministry of J&V is encouraged to implement steps toward adopting a legal ban on corporal punishment specifically focused on the relationship between parents and children and the use of violence in the upbringing of their children. These steps must be taken in close consultation with the public entities and in regular dialogue with the Caribbean Netherlands island communities (recommendation 4).** Key to this recommendation is the essential dialogue with community members. As stakeholders stressed during consultation workshops on the islands, legislation and policies will not be embraced without the support from the communities.



The Legal Guidance Booklet developed by the Ministry of VWS outlines a five-step plan that professionals should use in handling cases of domestic violence and child abuse. However, it remains unclear in the plan how a child should be treated as a witness and thus victim of domestic violence. For example, in the Netherlands, the ‘child check’ is used by professionals to detect cases of clients with a physical or mental condition that may pose a risk to the safety or development of their children. This element is not included in the Legal Guidance Booklet. **The Ministry of VWS is encouraged to 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** (*recommendation 5*).

Strengthening/expanding existing services and capacity building

The Legal Guidance Booklet (Juridische Handreiking BES) on domestic violence and child abuse, developed by the Ministry of VWS, provides useful advice to professionals on how to report without violating confidentiality. It defines child abuse and domestic violence, and explains that when a child witnesses domestic violence, it is also considered child abuse. **The Ministry of VWS is encouraged to facilitate guidance for professionals on how to engage in conversation with abused children to ensure that discussions are not only about the children but also with the children**⁴³ (*recommendation 6*).

The small scale of the islands makes it difficult to provide specialized services for children and safe shelters for victims of domestic violence. All three islands struggle with the lack of good shelters for victims of domestic violence. It is difficult to find safe havens where victims can stay without fear that the offender will find them. Among other issues, the small size of the islands makes it difficult to effectively establish shelters that are safe and confidential. On Bonaire, it already is a challenge to shield victims, let alone on St. Eustatius and Saba.⁴⁴ During the consultation workshops on each of the islands, these limitations were remarked upon by professionals as hindrances to providing quality services to victims. **The Ministry of VWS, in close partnership with the Ministry of J&V, are encouraged to invest in technical assistance, and/or make available necessary funds from the Dutch Government to raise the standard of services for child protection, to regularly monitor quality, to enable shared services for shelters and alternative care institutes, and to stimulate cooperation between Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire, and St. Eustatius, Saba and St. Maarten** (*recommendation 7*). An inspiring example could be the collaboration between Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on the training school for the Windward Islands.

Coordination, collaboration, and cooperation

Responsibilities across the child protection system in the Caribbean Netherlands are not centralized, rather they are carried out by several partners. The islands appear to struggle to develop an effective child protection system that offers a clear process, policy and mechanisms to deal with any form of child abuse and exploitation. A coherent matrix could be developed to integrate the activities and plans of all ministries assisting children and adolescents. Details should include the organizations involved, types of activity, target populations, funding, etc. Related to recommendation 26 in chapter 4 on government cooperation, collaboration, and cooperation, **the Public Entities,**

43 See: The guidelines on child abuse and deciding on appropriate help together with parents and young people. Also, the Safe at Home Handling Protocol and the Quality Framework of the Child Care and Protection Board state that the investigator always sees or speaks to the child. Also the guide participation of children in the reporting code for domestic violence and child abuse.

44 van der Zee, S. & Hoebé, D. (2019).

with the support of the Ministry of VWS, are encouraged to develop a tracking and monitoring coordination mechanism to inform multiple stakeholders on the wide range of actions being undertaken to ensure that no child is left behind. Stakeholders should routinely meet to assess progress, share information and data, pool funding flows where relevant and conduct operational oversight. Such a process should include a monitoring and evaluation framework to manage and reduce the risks of non-achievement of expected outcomes (*recommendation 8*). This would enable the public entities to play a stronger coordination role along the child protection sector.

Awareness raising and communication for behavioural change

Related to recommendation 4 above, a law on corporal punishment needs to be accompanied by support to parents on how to engage and discipline their children in a positive way. As mentioned above in section 3.1.3., positive parenting programs are being implemented by several entities. It is unclear to what extent the different organizations are targeting the same parents and whether parents are receiving consistent messages. **The Public Entities are encouraged to take the lead in consolidating parenting programmes and adopting strategies to create more demand for these programmes which will be vital to eliminating violence against children, neglect and abuse (*recommendation 9*).** During this situation analysis, stakeholders also shared the need to target fathers and encourage them to be more actively involved in the lives of their children. Although it must be noted that an increased involvement of fathers was observed by primary school staff and baby clinic personnel on Saba. School staff remarked that a cause for this might be employers' willingness to give parents time-off during work hours to participate in school events and activities. This situation analysis finds that stimulants should be further explored, capitalized, and shared as best-practices with the other islands.

Awareness-raising campaigns have garnered more public attention to domestic violence and child abuse. They



seem to have led to more reporting on domestic violence. However, this situation analysis finds that the campaigns could be more consistent, consolidated, and, importantly, targeted to the right audiences, with the appropriate messages, and via the most effective mediums. This requires, not only an understanding of the issue, but also an understanding of the target group and their understanding of the issue. Furthermore, it is also important to be able to measure the outcome of the campaign and whether it results in the desired behavior change over a specified period of time. **The Public Entities, with the support of the Ministry of VWS, is encouraged to conduct a baseline survey of attitudes on violence against women and children essential to understand perceptions, to establish working terminology for domestic violence and child abuse, to define key messages within different advocacy and awareness campaigns, and to allow measurement of the effectiveness of campaigns (recommendation 10).**

Such a survey could also be useful to professionals to gain clarity on potential differences in knowledge, understanding, and perceptions of the issues they collectively address. During consultation discussions on each of the islands, professionals remarked that concepts sometimes differed between, and even within, organizations. The absence of common understanding of the categories of child abuse and domestic violence represents a major barrier to data collection, collation and analysis. What one department categorizes as neglect another may call emotional abuse. Similarly, domestic violence for some departments involves only cases resulting in visible physical harm. For many interviewed, the link between domestic violence and child abuse is blurred unless the child is present or injured during a physical assault. **The Public Entities, in close partnership with the Ministries of VWS and J&V, are encouraged to facilitate discussions to sort through and build consensus on defining cases of emotional abuse, financial abuse and psychological abuse, among others, and to understand that domestic violence can be gender-blind and/or take place between same-sex partners (recommendation 11).**

Evidence generation, data gathering, monitoring and management

The 2013 situation analyses concluded that getting a good snapshot of safety on the islands would require more up-to-date data. This situation analysis maintains that such data are still not adequately registered. Data collection, collation, analysis and reporting on cases of child abuse and domestic violence remain embryonic processes. As in other sectors, data and information systems are critical in monitoring and planning service provision. The generation of good quality, child-centred data to inform decision-making requires efforts from all departments that produce information. National and island-level planning and decision-making for child protection can have a more powerful impact if information-sharing regarding family, adolescent and child-focused interventions is enhanced. Achieving this progress must start with the departments that have specific mandates for child protection. While data tables provided by JGCN give a good indication of the numbers of victims, a much richer picture of the situation would include analysis of data disaggregated by gender, age group, profile of the victims, where the violence takes place and the type of abuse or violence. This information would also enable sharper targeting of recommendations and strategies. Much remains to be done to understand the extent to which violence affects the daily lives and decisions of many families in the Caribbean Netherlands. Disaggregated data could routinely feed discussion and understanding, particularly among front-line workers. Pursuant to recommendation 28 in chapter 4 on government cooperation, collaboration, and cooperation, **the Ministry of VWS is encouraged to lead the development of an integrated system for collecting and managing data on child protection and children in contact with the juvenile justice system in order to strengthen policies for the protection of children and provide resources to CBS and other actors to develop such a system for the Caribbean Netherlands.**

3.2 Poverty and inequality



States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 27).

The parent(s) or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capacities, the conditions of living necessary for the child's development.

States Parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programs, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.

The SDGs call for ending poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1), and making economic growth inclusive to provide sustainable jobs and promote equality (SDG 8).⁴⁵

3.2.1 Recent legislative and policy developments

The current Cabinet of the Dutch national Government indicated in its coalition agreement that the priority on the islands is to improve the economic outlook by, among other priorities, reducing poverty.⁴⁶ The Regioplan report on a benchmark for a social minimum for the Caribbean Netherlands was publicized in June 2018,^{47,48,49} indicating that 33 per cent, 35 per cent and 36 per cent of households on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba, respectively, had an income at or below 75 per cent of the estimated average budget needed for basic expenses (the lower limit of the reference budget). Among households in Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba, 43 per cent, 39 per cent and 43 per cent, respectively, had income lower than the average monthly budgets (up to 90 per cent of the reference budget). The report did not provide any percentages of children growing up in households with an income lower than average monthly budgets. Since the release of the report, the Government has rolled out a series of measures to alleviate poverty and improve employment. These started to take effect in January 2019.⁵⁰

45 As the SDGs require age disaggregation, children's over-representation among poor people becomes clearer in SDG monitoring reports. SDG Target 1.2: By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions. Indicator 1: Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, disaggregated by sex and age group. Indicator 2: Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

46 The third Rutte cabinet, in place since October 2017, consists of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), the Democrats 66 (D66) and the Christian Union (CU). The Cabinet's coalition agreement was presented in October 2017.

47 Regioplan. (2018).

48 A social minimum is the minimum amount that a person needs to be able to bear the costs of living.

49 The issue of poverty in the Caribbean Netherlands was repeatedly raised in prior reports, such as by UNICEF Netherlands (2013), NIBUD (2014), the Human Rights Council/College van de Rechten van de Mens (2016), the Children's Rights Ombudsman (2017), among others.

50 Letter to the House of Representatives from the State Secretary of SZW. June 2019. (5000-IV-61)



Under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, the child allowance, initially introduced in the Caribbean Netherlands in 2016, increased by 50 per cent, with an additional increase of \$20 announced for January 2020.⁵¹ Parents on Bonaire will receive \$82 per child per month and on St. Eustatius and Saba \$84.⁵² In January 2019, employers' premiums were reduced, giving them room to increase wages. The legal minimum wage for all three islands will be increased by 5 per cent for Bonaire and Saba and 2 per cent for St. Eustatius as of January 2020. Financial aid (or "onderstand" in Dutch) will continue to increase along with the minimum wage. More people are also now able to make an appeal for financial aid with the increase of the eligibility income limit to 120 per cent of the minimum loan. Benefits such as the Old Age Pension and Widowers Pension will also be proportionally increased with increases in the minimum wage.⁵³

Additional efforts are being made to reduce living costs such as for housing and childcare. The Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) is taking steps toward expanding social housing and regulating rental prices. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (I&W) provides a subsidy to keep the price of drinking water affordable. The Ministry of Economic Affairs is currently reviewing the telecoms law and regulations to improve services and reduce costs. The ministries of SZW, OCW, and VWS are financially contributing to a multi-year program (9.8 million euros annually from 2020) with the islands to make childcare financially accessible to all parents, and to improve quality via the BES(t) 4 Kids programme.^{54,55} The Subsidy Scheme Opportunities for all children (in Dutch *Kansen voor alle kinderen*), initiated in

51 The amounts for the child benefit are not finite yet. The final amounts will be published in November 2019 at which time inflation will also be included.

52 The child allowance was initially introduced in the Caribbean Netherlands in January 2016.

53 Letter to the House of Representatives from State Secretary of SZW, 27 June 2019. (5000-IV-61)

54 Ibid.

55 Letter to the House of Representatives from the State Secretary of SZW, 27 June 2019. (31322-397)

2017 by the Ministry of SZW to promote participation among children from low-income families, will become a part of the BES(t) 4 Kids programme from 2020 onwards.

Most notably, in June 2019, the Dutch Government established the long awaited benchmark for the social minimum.⁵⁶ Note that the figures in Table 5 are lower than the Regioplan estimates. The Government's explanation for this is that some costs upon which the latter were based can be influenced by government policy and are expected to decline, e.g., childcare and housing. The Government intends to use the benchmark for the social minimum as a reference point for targeted measures to increase benefits and the legal minimum wage in the coming years so that the legal minimum wage is above the social minimum and financial aid is closer to it. The legal minimum wage on Bonaire is currently below the level of the benchmark for the social minimum for a single person, on St. Eustatius it is above, and on Saba the amount is roughly the same.

Table 7. Baseline for the social minimum (in dollars)

	Bonaire		St. Eustatius		Saba	
	Regioplan	Social minimum	Regioplan	Social minimum	Regioplan	Social minimum
Single person	1,338	945	1,321	1,056	1,470	1,077
Single-parent household		1,235		1,364		1,426
Couple		1,328		1,454		1,519
Two-parent household		1,598		1,764		1,869

Source: Letter to the House of Representatives from the State Secretary of SZW, June 2019. (5000-IV-61)

3.2.2 Expenditures on social services

Through representation on the three islands and offices at the shared service centre (RCN), the key ministries in the social sector, SZW, VWS and OCW, continue their commitment to delivering equitable and quality social services for sustainable development, particularly to the vulnerable and marginalized. Since 10-10-10, government expenditures on social affairs, education and health care combined for the Caribbean Netherlands more than tripled, from \$50.2 million in 2010 to \$163 million in 2014.⁵⁷ Although social affairs benefitted from the smallest increase during that period (less than 10 per cent or about \$4 million), the increase was consistent until 2018, with additional increases for 2019 and 2020 (see Table 2).⁵⁸ Expenditures on social protection services include support for vulnerable groups of children, women and the elderly who are exposed to risks. Current services from both the national government and public entities provide social safety nets for disadvantaged households such as public housing, breakfast programmes and public assistance programmes (e.g., cash, food stamps, school uniforms). These initiatives represent critical tools in the fight to end poverty and are considered safety nets for those who are vulnerable.

⁵⁶ The establishment of the social minimum had been a highly political matter with one motion passed by the Senate in 2016 and two by the House of Representatives in 2016 and 2018 requesting the Government to set a social minimum for Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba on the basis of the cost of living. The Dutch Government was also urged by the Island Governments to establish the social minimum. See the following press releases: The Daily Herald, September 2018: Social Minimum delay is disappointing.

Caribisch Netwerk, October 2018: Misunderstanding and disappointment: no social minimum for Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius in the coming years.

⁵⁷ Bijl, R., & Pommer, E. (2015).

⁵⁸ Ibid.



Poverty in the Caribbean Netherlands from a Caribbean subregional perspective^{59, 60}

The Caribbean subregion reduced hunger from 15.3 per cent to 6.1 per cent between 1992 and 2014. Nevertheless, poverty remains a problem, despite the fact that many countries have reached a level of development that should permit a good proportion of the poor to escape from poverty. Poverty is at the core of a considerable amount of vulnerability, and a significant share of this poverty is rooted in inequality. Comparatively, cases of extreme poverty are atypical in the Caribbean Netherlands. Few islands elsewhere in the Caribbean subregion have universal health coverage and dropout rates as low as the islands in the Caribbean Netherlands, where school fees are non-existent, and indirect costs for education are minimal.

3.2.3 Environment and household vulnerabilities

In the Caribbean Netherlands, 57 per cent of young people up to the age of 18 live in a two-parent family, and 29 per cent live with one of their parents. Specifically, on Bonaire and Saba, 60 per cent of minors live in two-parent families, while on St Eustatius, this share is significantly smaller at 44 per cent. The remaining 14 per cent live with their family or independently. Children aged 0 to 4 make up a relatively large share of this amount at 18 per cent.⁶¹ In the European Netherlands, 22 per cent of all families with children living at home are single-parent families.⁶²

Of the nearly 5,200 children below age 25 living at home in Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba, 92 per cent have at least one working parent. Table 8 shows that the labour participation rates among single parents on the three islands are higher than the rates for two-parent households. Comparatively, single parents in the European Netherlands have a lower labour participation rate than two-parent households. The figures do not, however, provide clarity on full-time or part-time labour participation. These figures also provide some indication that children in one-parent households on the three islands might be receiving less parental care than their peers in two-parent households.

59 See Caribbean Development Bank, Country Poverty Assessment Reports for St. Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Grenada, among others, and the Aruba Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index 2010. St. Maarten is preparing to conduct a similar study in 2019. Also, see United Nations, *MDG Progress Report of Latin America and the Caribbean in 2015*, as well as the UNICEF situation analyses for countries in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

60 United Nations, *MDG Progress Report of Latin America and the Caribbean in 2015*.

61 CBS. Youth Monitor 2018.

62 ECORYS. (2019).

Focus groups and interviews with single parents uncovered what appears to be a stigma around collecting welfare. On Saba and Bonaire, the number of single parents receiving welfare benefits represented a very small percentage of the total number. Most interviewees opted to work several part-time jobs in the informal sector to make ends meet.

Table 8. Household labor participation

	Children living at home in a single-parent family: labour participation of the parent, 2018 (percentage)		Children living at home in a two-parent family: labour participation of parents, 2018 (percentage)			
	Parent working	Parent not working	Two parents working	One parent working	Parents not working	Unknown
Bonaire	92	8	71	24	2	3
St. Eustatius	87	13	74	18	4	4
Saba	95	5	59	16	9	16
Caribbean Netherlands	91	9	70	22	3	4
European Netherlands	67	33	76	20	4	0

Source: CBS, 2018.

Despite their higher rate of labour participation, single-parent households have very low standardized income or purchasing power (see Table 9). “(Underage) children in a single-parent family therefore live at a lower level of prosperity than (underage) children in a two-parent family.”⁶³ Over 75 per cent of interviewees (mostly informal) and focus group participants in the Caribbean Netherlands blame rising poverty levels and behavioural problems with children (low education levels, unemployment, violence, etc.) on single female-parented households. 29% of children 0-18 years old in the Caribbean Netherlands live in a single-parent household.^{64/65} While not all single female-parented households can be considered poor and/or dysfunctional, the gender gap in economic empowerment is at the heart of the high poverty rates among female-headed households. In general, gender disparities drive women’s high poverty rates on several fronts, including through the significant number of women working in unwaged and low-paying jobs and in the informal sector, gender biases in skills training and more limited access to credit for women.⁶⁶ While female-headed households are generally more vulnerable than male-headed households, statistical relationships between gender, poverty and female-headed households cannot be established for the Caribbean Netherlands. In the absence of comprehensive poverty analysis, it is not possible to determine the number or the extent to which households conform to multiple dimensions of dysfunctionality and deprivations.

63 Conclusion reached by ECORYS (2019). P. 22., brackets added by UNICEF NL.

64 CBS, 2018.

65 This data was already presented in chapter 2.3. on population, sociocultural context and demographics.

66 UNICEF. (2007).

Table 9. The average disposable and standardized incomes of different households per island, 2016

Household characteristics	Location	Average disposable income x \$1,000	Average standardized income x \$1,000
Private households	Caribbean Netherlands	32,1	21,3
	Bonaire	31,7	20,8
	St. Eustatius	34,8	23,9
	Saba	32,2	22,5
Single-person households	Caribbean Netherlands	19,9	19,9
	Bonaire	19,0	19,0
	St. Eustatius	23,8	23,8
	Saba	21,2	21,2
Single-parent households where all children are younger than 18	Caribbean Netherlands	18,5	11,7
	Bonaire	18,1	11,3
	St. Eustatius	17,4	11,1
	Saba	-	-
A couple without children	Caribbean Netherlands	35,8	25,3
	Bonaire	35,3	25,0
	St. Eustatius	39,2	27,7
	Saba	35,8	25,3
A couple with children younger than 18	Caribbean Netherlands	41,6	21,8
	Bonaire	39,5	20,7
	St. Eustatius	53,5	27,9
	Saba	-	-

Source: CBS, 2016.

3.2.4 Multidimensional poverty

Although the recent Regioplan research helped establish minimum standards for basic household income, and provided insights into the minimum necessary cost of living and a basis for the Dutch Government to initiate the abovementioned measures, this otherwise laudable effort lacked a multidimensional analysis of the impact of poverty on children and families.

Poverty is often defined by one-dimensional measures – usually income. But no single indicator can capture the multiple dimensions of poverty. Multidimensional poverty encompasses the various deprivations experienced by poor people in their daily lives, such as poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standards, disempowerment, poor quality of work, the threat of violence and living in areas that are environmentally hazardous, among others.⁶⁷

The multidimensional nature of poverty invades all aspects of the lives of individuals, families and communities. When people were asked about their views on poverty during the preparation of the situation analysis, they indicated that it is not simply the absence or lack of money or specific goods, but a combination of a number of deprivations coupled with powerlessness that affects their ability to bargain and defend themselves and their families across social, cultural and economic domains. Their responses project a combination of a sense of dependence, insecurity, anxiety, impotence, inability, inferiority and ill treatment.

⁶⁷ As defined by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. Alkire, S. (2007).



When examined from a human rights and equity perspective, multidimensional poverty analysis uncovers issues of injustice, exclusion, lack of opportunities, poor quality social services, chronic health challenges and physical disabilities. Poverty assessments undertaken in the subregion point to the fact that inequality manifests in more limited access to education, insufficient professional skills, inadequate housing and unsafe environments, social discrimination and exclusion, and more limited participation in decision-making. Because they have more limited education, the poor have more constrained economic opportunities. Those interviewed gave the clear message that poverty also includes the experience of psychological deprivation and frequent exposure to high risk, vulnerable and borderline situations (living in substandard housing, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and violence). Over 80 per cent of those interviewed for the situation analysis agreed that poverty in the Caribbean Netherlands is “passed on from one generation to another,” and that children and adolescents, especially girls, are the most vulnerable.

3.2.5 Emerging challenges

The 2013 situation analysis estimated that many children in the Caribbean Netherlands grew up in poverty with limited access to basic needs such as food and proper clothing. The studies reported that many parents had to combine different jobs, which curtailed their time with their children. Limited funds also meant that access to childcare and after-school activities remained a privilege for many. Based on the contextual information provided above and consultations on each of the islands, this 2019 situation analysis maintains that poverty remains an issue for many children on the three islands. Detailed information/data on poverty and its impacts, however, are not available. The three islands are thus excluded in recent poverty studies and reports from the European Netherlands, which include poverty indicators for European municipalities and the geographical distribution of poor and vulnerable populations.

In the absence of multidimensional poverty analysis (as is conducted throughout the Caribbean region⁶⁸), it is difficult to determine the most basic snapshot of poverty and poverty risks in the Caribbean Netherlands, including:

- Structural deprivations,
- Elements of social integration, and
- Unsatisfied basic needs of the income poor and non-income poor.

Despite the size of the population, development strategies must consider dimensions of poverty in households with persistent indigence, poverty and vulnerability. Respectable research and experience in the region acknowledge that understanding the dynamics in these households is essential to sharpen the targeting of assistance and provide a basis for multisectoral approaches to combat the root causes of poverty.⁶⁹ In this regard, as the Dutch Government further shapes its plans to roll-out poverty alleviation initiatives, the moment is ripe for **the Ministry of SZW, together with the Public Entities and other partners, to carry out a multi-dimensional poverty study to gather baseline information on indigence, poverty and vulnerability, including the underlying causes. This can help to better inform priorities to sharpen targeting of the right households and funding (recommendation 12). Based on the results of the multidimensional poverty study, the Ministry of SZW is also encouraged to strengthen**

68 See CDB (Caribbean Development Bank), Poverty Assessment Reports for St. Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Grenada, among others; Aruba Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index 2010; and note that St. Maarten is preparing to conduct a similar study in 2019.

69 See Puente Programme (Chile), Koudemen Programme (St. Lucia), and Jamaica Poverty Reduction Programme (PRP-IV), for examples.

their multidisciplinary approach so that poverty reduction interventions can be planned, coordinated and monitored effectively and efficiently (*recommendation 13*). The Ministry of SZW is also encouraged to conduct a child poverty analysis to fill the gap in data on child poverty rates (*recommendation 14*). Such data could help to clarify the profile of children living in poverty and specify the profile of households that poverty alleviation initiatives should target.



The impact of child poverty⁷⁰

Child poverty in particular can result in children failing to achieve their full potential due to deprivations in cultural, physical, mental and social development, participation and protection. If child poverty is not addressed, the potential for intergenerational patterns of poverty will rise, thereby threatening future national economic and social development objectives.

The State Secretary of the Ministry of SZW has expressed a commitment to collaborating with local and national stakeholders, and maintaining open dialogue on relevant themes.⁷¹ In endeavouring to forge such collaborations, it is also important for the **Ministry of SZW to ensure that the public entities have sufficient capacity to implement poverty reduction strategies** (*recommendation 15*). This would be consistent with the SDGs and related targets that call for sustainable development and poverty eradication, with recognition of the special needs of small island states. Similarly, this would also be consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child that calls for State Parties to take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement the right to an adequate standard of living and, in case of need, provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing (art. 27.3).

70 OECS Commission and UNICEF. (2017).

71 Letter to the House of Representatives from the State Secretary of SZW, June 2019. (5000-IV-61)

3.3 The living and nurturing environment: every child learns and participates



Children's education should develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect human rights and their own and other cultures. It should also help them learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people. Children have a responsibility to respect the rights of their parents, and education should aim to develop respect for the values and culture of their parents (Convention on the rights of the Child, Article 29).

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care *and pre-primary education* so that they are ready for primary education (SDG 4.2).

By 2030, ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4).

By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university (SDG 4.3).

Ensuring the realization of children's rights to inclusive and quality education is a key government priority, and a seminal prerequisite for sustainable social and economic development. Education enables children's personal development by providing a safe and structured social environment where children can progressively acquire the knowledge as well as personal and technical skills to improve their lives and contribute to society.

3.3.1 Legislative and policy environment

After 10-10-10, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) assumed responsibility for educational policy in the Caribbean Netherlands. The primary and secondary schools on the three islands became part of the education system of The Netherlands. The public entities retained responsibility for education housing, compulsory education and student transportation, for which legislation is in place.⁷²

The educational laws for the Caribbean Netherlands are similar to those of the European Netherlands with some differences with respect to the local situation. The following five laws apply to formal education on the Caribbean Netherlands: the Primary Education Law BES, the Secondary Education Law BES, the Vocational Education Law BES, the Compulsory Education Law, and the Social Opportunities for Young People Law. The Compulsory Education Law applies to children and adolescents 4 – 16 years old. The Compulsory Education Law also regulates the Qualification Obligation which applies to adolescents up until 18 years old. This obligation goes into effect when an adolescent turns 16 years old and is not yet in the possession of a start qualification, i.e. a secondary school diploma. The start qualification is seen as the minimum requirement for good participation in society. This Obligation is one of the measures employed to prevent young people from exiting the school system without a diploma. There are no

⁷² IdeeVersa. (2019).

special education facilities in the Caribbean Netherlands, and no law on special education and special secondary education is in place. Instead, expert centres for education care were established on the islands in 2011 to support schools with their provision of education care for children with special needs.

In formulating the targeted level of facilities in primary and secondary education, the Ministry of OCW aimed for primary and secondary schools on the three islands to offer education of sufficient quality by 2016, and, as such, to attain a level of education acceptable for the European Netherlands.⁷³

Day care and afterschool care fall under the responsibility of the public entities, although these are not yet legally required.⁷⁴ On Bonaire and St. Eustatius, day-care centres have been regulated by local ordinances since 2010. This is not yet the case on Saba.

3.3.2 Expenditures

Government expenditure on education for the Caribbean Netherlands tripled from 15.7 million euros in 2010 to 43.2 million euros in 2014, effectively funding the action plans associated with the ongoing reforms.⁷⁵ Budgets have continued to rise, though not as steeply as the first years (see table 2). The Ministry of OCW has also made significant investments in upgrading education infrastructure through agreements with the public entities.

The islands spend around \$1.9 million annually on childcare and afterschool care. Between 2015 and 2017, between \$600,000 and \$1.2 million was made available, albeit incidentally, for childcare through the integrated funds provided by the ministries SZW, VWS and BZK. Children's rights subsidies totaling 3 million euros and managed by the Ministry of BZK were used for day care and after-school care. The Ministry of SZW made a one-time \$1 million investment in the "community school" (bredeschool in Dutch) on Bonaire, with other investments coming from the Ministry of OCW and the public entity. The Ministry of VWS subsidized a number of institutions directly up to and including \$1.3 million in 2018 for the three islands.⁷⁶ With effect from 2019, these resources have been transferred to the public entities and brought under the direction of the BES(t) 4 Kids programme.⁷⁷ The ministries of SZW, OCW, and VWS will financially contribute to a multi-year programme for childcare at 9.8 million euros annually from 2020.

3.3.3 The spectrum of learning opportunities in the Caribbean Netherlands

Formal education in the Caribbean Netherlands consists of primary education (ages 4 to 12), and secondary education (ages 12 and up), including academic and vocational streams. Pre-primary or day care is also available for children 0 to 4 years old. Opportunities for tertiary education are limited to higher vocational education programmes and a branch of Curacao's primary education teacher training on Bonaire, and online options on

73 Bijl, R. & Pommer E. (2016).

74 IdeeVersa. (2019).

75 Bijl, R. & Pommer E. (2016).

76 IdeeVersa. (2019).

77 Letter to the House of Representatives from the State Secretary of SZW, June 2019. (31322-397)



Bonaire and St. Eustatius.⁷⁸ Most students who wish to pursue tertiary education do so in the Netherlands and the United States, and to a lesser extent in the Caribbean region, each with the option of receiving study financing.

Early childhood development

Early childhood development or early childhood development and care (ECEC) in the Caribbean Netherlands target two groups of children:

- 0 to 3 years: early stimulation aims to stimulate and follow the development of a child including sitting up, crawling, getting up, playing together, walking in a row, sitting on a chair and toilet training, among other key milestones.
- 3 to 4 years: learning colours, numbers, socialization process, preparing to transition to primary.

Among the 23 day-care centres in Bonaire, a number are located at primary schools; 13 also offer afterschool care. A few are subsidized particularly to support vulnerable families.

On St. Eustatius, there are three day-care centers. Buzzy Bees is the only one subsidized by the local government. In addition, pre-primary education is offered at two of the primary schools (run by the Methodist and the Seventh Day Adventist churches).

The Laura Linzey Day Care Center is the only centre operational on Saba. It is part of the local government, and has outgrown its facilities. Land and funding have been allocated to build a new centre.

Parental contributions are collected at all of the centres.

⁷⁸ While the Saba School of Medicine and the James School of Medicine, are located on Saba and Bonaire, respectively, students are mainly from North America and Canada. A bachelor's degree is a basic entry requirement, for which study abroad is first necessary.



Experience with the ‘brede school’ concept on Bonaire

Where day-care, primary, secondary and afterschool services are in the same “compound”, parents like the convenience of dropping all children in one location. Administrators say the close “proximity” makes “sharing among practitioners easier and we often know the child’s issues from previous years”. It is also cost effective when maintenance and management can be done for one infrastructure.

“Parents want to send their children to this centre because we have teachers trained in HighScope. We have a waiting list.”

Day-care administrator

“I cannot afford formal day care.”

Mother, Bonaire Day-care administrator

Table 10. Basic data on day care in the Caribbean Netherlands

	Number of day-care centres, 2019	Number of children aged 0 to 4 in 2018	Percentage of population accessing day care in 2018	Parent fees, US dollars	Percentage of 0-4 year olds living in single-headed households.
Bonaire	23	822	62	\$200-\$340	23
St. Eustatius	3	132	80	\$165-\$190	38
Saba	1	81	67	\$75 – \$150	10
Source	Situation analysis	CBS (2018)	ECORYS	Situation analysis	CBS (2018)

Primary education

Primary education on Bonaire is in accordance with the European Netherlands system. Dutch is the language of instruction as was the case before the transition. At the early stages of primary school (groups 1 and 2) teachers often make use of a combination of Dutch and Papiamentu as language of instruction. Bonaire has seven public elementary schools and two private primary schools with about 1,900 girls and boys enrolled in the 2018–2019 school year.

St. Eustatius has four elementary schools and one private school with a total enrolment of 338 pupils in 2018. The private school is operated by NuStar to accommodate children of expatriate employees on the island. The language of instruction at the schools is English.

Saba has one primary school serving the island with 149 students enrolled in 2018. The language of instruction is also English.

All primary schools are run by their respective school boards and supported with a care coordinator who is linked to protection and care services on the island.

Table 11. Primary school population (4 to 12-plus years old)

	Total	Boys	Girls
Bonaire	1,902	995	907
St. Eustatius	338	173	165
Saba	149	74	75
Caribbean Netherlands	2,389	1,242	1,147

Source: CBS, 2018.

Secondary education

The secondary school community on Bonaire (SGB-Scholen Gemeenschap Bonaire) is a school community in three locations with more than 1,500 students in 2017. The language of instruction is Dutch and education is in accordance with the Dutch system. The school consists of the following departments:

- Preparatory secondary vocational education (VMBO)⁷⁹
- Liseo: General secondary education (MAVO), academic secondary education (HAVO) and preparatory scientific education (VWO)
- Tertiary vocational education (MBO)
- Special Lesson Places (SLP) consisting of three parts:
 - Practical education (PrO) for students who develop better when theory is well supported by practice;

⁷⁹ This and the following are commonly used acronyms in Dutch, see list of acronyms.

- Secondary special education Cluster 3 is for students with an intellectual disability, a physical disability or a chronic illness. Cluster 4 is for students with a heavy support requirement who cannot function in a large group at a regular school due to serious behavioural problems, developmental problems and/or psychiatric problems;
- Rebound offers students from all departments relief and guidance when, due to their behavioural problems, they can no longer go to regular classes.

The Gwendolyn van Putten school on St. Eustatius recently underwent a major shift, phasing out the Dutch secondary education system (similar to what is listed above) by the 2018–2019 school year. It introduced the Caribbean education system organized by the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC). Lower grades, Forms 1 to 3, follow the Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC) curriculum. Students then enter two-year academic or vocational streams, where they obtain the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) or the Caribbean Vocational Qualification, respectively. The shift in the system also included a shift from Dutch to English as the language of instruction, with Dutch taught as a foreign language. Total enrolment in 2018 was 216 students.

The Saba Comprehensive School has been offering the English CXC CSEC system for the past three decades. On Saba, the recently implemented CCSLC curriculum is offered to students in Forms 1 and 2, before they continue to the academic or vocational streams from Forms 3 to 5. In 2018–2019, the school began a CAPE (Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination) pilot programme with one student who had successfully completed the CSEC exams. English is the language of instruction with Dutch taught as a foreign language. One hundred students were enrolled for the 2018–2019 school year.

Table 12. Secondary school students in the Caribbean Netherlands in 2018

	Total number	Number of boys	Number of girls
Practical education	202	147	55
Forms 1 and 2	436	219	217
VMBO Grades 3 to 4	296	131	165
Pre-university secondary education years 3 to 6	189	84	105
Total Bonaire	1,123	581	542
Practical education	27	24	3
Forms 1 and 2	78	44	34
CVQ Grades 4 to 5	66	31	35
Pre-university secondary education years 4 to 5	45	22	23
Total St. Eustatius	216	121	95
Practical education	7	3	4
Forms 1 and 2	49	26	23
CVQ Grades 3 to 5	17	8	9
Pre-university secondary education years 3 to 5	27	14	13
Total Saba	100	51	49
Total Caribbean Netherlands	1,439	753	686

Source: CBS, 2018.

Children living with disabilities

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) place obligations on States to recognize the rights of every child to education. The CRC specifies that States Parties see to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (Article 29.1 (a)). The SDGs call for states to ensure inclusive education (SDG 4). The Netherlands ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016, with the exception of the Caribbean Netherlands. It was decided that the Convention would not apply there for the time being.⁸⁰ While the scope of CRPD includes all people with disabilities, not only children, it specifies that States Parties ensure that 'children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education or from secondary education on the basis of disability' and that 'persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live' (CRPD Article 24.2 a and b). The CRPD in particular establishes a powerful framework to guide local communities, countries and the international community towards disability-inclusive development.

Compulsory education in the Caribbean Netherlands ensures that children with disabilities exercise their right to education. There are no special education or special secondary education schools. Education care is primarily provided by schools, teachers and special education teachers, with support from the education expertise centres located on each island: Expertise Education Care (Expertise Onderwijs Zorg) on Bonaire, the Expertise Center for Education on St. Eustatius and the Expertise Center Education Care on Saba. The centres carry out diagnostic testing and identify learning needs. They offer support and guidance to students who are at risk of development and education setbacks due to learning, cognitive or physical disabilities, and/or communication, socioemotional and behavioural problems. They also provide teachers with remedial materials to help them to address some of the learning needs of their students. Public Entities are legally required to provide students with disabilities transportation as needed.

80 See van de Mortel, E. & Nauta, O. (2016).

While the schools strive to provide inclusive education, an arrangement in which children with disabilities remain as much as possible in the regular classroom environment, they struggle to accommodate children with severe disabilities. On Bonaire, the issue appears to be the most acute, with some extra yet still very limited provisions. The primary school Kolegio Strea Briante focuses on children who need extra support, and the Stichting Project supports primary and secondary schools with children who have serious behavioural problems. In some cases, children with severe disabilities receive an exemption from the compulsory education officer and attend the FKPK (Fundashon Pa Kwido Personanan Desabilita), an institution for children and adults with intellectual or multiple disabilities, where they do not receive an education. The challenge is that the number of children with severe behavioural, psychiatric or physical problems on Bonaire is too large for intensive counselling at a regular school and too small for an individual school.⁸¹

Table 13. Indication of the number of children with disabilities (minimum estimate)

Disability	Bonaire	St. Eustatius	Saba
Visual	11	0	0
Auditive	9	0	0
Motoric	3	0	3
Medical	2	0	0
Severe learning disability and/ or profound and multiple learning disability	21	1	1
Light intellectual disability	271 (age range 4 – 24)	Unknown	Unknown
Psychiatric	16 (severe, no estimate of lighter disabilities)	Unknown	10 (needs mental health care)

Source: van de Mortel, E. & Nauta, O. (2016).

Afterschool care

On Bonaire, 23 organizations offer afterschool care, including 13 that also provide day care. On St. Eustatius, the Buzzy Bees school also offers afterschool care to children from 4 to 8 years old. The Mega D Foundation offers activities for children 6 to 16 years old, and Daughters of the King to girls 5 to 12 years old. The Academy+ offers homework support and career guidance to children 12 to 18. On Saba, the After School Care provides afterschool care to children aged 4 to 12, and Child Focus offers activities to children 4 to 12 years old. The Saba Comprehensive School has recently integrated afterschool programmes into its curriculum.

⁸¹ van de Mortel, E. & Nauta, O. (2016).

Table 14. Key data on afterschool care services in the Caribbean Netherlands

	Afterschool care centres, 2019	Number of children aged 4 to 12	Percentage of population with access	Number of children aged 12 to 18	Percentage of population with access	Parent fees, dollars
Bonaire	23	1,883	42	1551	11	\$25+
St. Eustatius	4	345	49	305	8-10	\$0-\$50
Saba	2	153	36 (only After School Care)	127		\$0-\$85
Source	Situation analysis	CBS (2018)	ECORYS	CBS (2018)	ECORYS	Situation analysis

Aftercare programmes go well beyond homework help. They can support children in becoming the kindest, most capable and most resilient version of themselves. To succeed, these programmes must provide each child with the safe space, encouragement and materials they need to follow their passions – whether they want to start a drama club, learn to play an instrument, join a debate club, play a competitive sport, build a science project or create a comic book.

Parents consulted for the situation analysis valued the services as safe places for their children where they can find help with homework, and opportunities to pursue activities that would otherwise be very expensive (such as dance, music and art lessons). In some cases, children can access competitive sports activities that support travel to other islands for events.

Social Opportunities for Youth (SKJ – Sociale Kanstraject Jongeren)

The Caribbean Netherlands has developed institutions to accommodate young people aged 18 to 25 who have not completed secondary education, require support to transition into the workforce, or need extra time and support to enter tertiary education or a professional trade.

On Bonaire, Foundation FORMA focuses on second chance education (SKJ), literacy and adult education. In 2017, 229 students registered for courses in the MBO 1 stream with a 32 per cent dropout rate.⁸² A total of 51 students received diplomas in 2017 with 13 moving on to MBO 2, 13 going into the workforce, 3 continuing their studies in the Netherlands, 2 staying home and 20 unknown.⁸³ The New Challenges Foundation on St. Eustatius offers professional skills development through various programmes including second-chance education, GED (General Educational Development) tests and job training. It assisted 9 students to complete secondary education in 2017 and 2018. In 2019, the SKJ programme had 11 females and 2 males enrolled.

82 FORMA, Annual Report, 2017.

83 Ibid.

The Saba Reach Foundation offers second-chance education, a labour market training initiative, a social workplace for otherwise unemployable individuals with social or psychological challenges, and adult continuing education courses.

Foundation FORMA still accommodates a significant number of dropouts. However, on St. Eustatius and especially on Saba, the target group is very small. As a result, there are often no or hardly any students registered. An evaluation of the implementation of the SKJ law will be completed by the end of the year. The evaluation is necessary to get a good picture of the extent of the problem, the effectiveness of the implementation so far, bottlenecks and possibilities for the future of the programme.

“I came from St. Maarten after having my daughter to complete my education. NCF gives me a stipend and helped me to find a job while I am studying... this gave me confidence and I know I can take care of myself.”

19-year-old single mother, St. Eustatius

Young people active in the labour market are generally underemployed, often working less than a full day for inferior pay in the informal market without benefits or a regularized contract. Without experience, access to and understanding of labour laws, they are easily exploited, leaving them poor even though they are working. Obtaining basic qualifications for the labour market from organizations like the SKJ improves their opportunities for finding decent work.



Figure 2. Youth unemployment and NEETs in the Caribbean Netherlands⁸⁴

The NEET indicator is used to show the proportion of young people who are not in education or other training and do not have paid work.

	NEET	Unemployment
Bonaire	10%	20,2%
St. Eustatius	25%	Too small to calculate
Saba	7%	Too small to calculate

Source: CBS (2018). Labor Force Assessment.

The NEET figures in the Caribbean Netherlands can be considered high when compared to figures for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries: 6 per cent for the group aged 16 to 19, and 17 per cent for those aged 20 to 24 years.

The NEET figures are low when compared to the Caribbean subregion unemployment rates for 18 to 24 year olds in 2016, at 20 to 25 per cent.

On Bonaire, the youth unemployment rate is relatively high compared to an overall unemployment rate of 7 per cent. Considering that the percentage of unemployed youth compared to the NEETs on Bonaire, and the high enrolment at FORMA, it appears that at least 50 per cent of unemployed youth on Bonaire make use of FORMA's services, highlighting the value of the programmes.

3.3.4 Educational reforms

Monitoring basic quality standards

In accordance with lawfully regulated inspection frameworks, the Dutch Inspectorate of Education conducts yearly visits to the Caribbean Netherlands to monitor the quality of education. Prior to 10-10-10, no school met the basic quality standards.⁸⁵ As such, development goals were formulated with the schools and reflected in the First Education Agenda for the Caribbean Netherlands. Inspectorate visits in 2012 reported that 5 of the 12 schools in the Caribbean Netherlands were most likely to reach the basic quality standards by 2016. The results of the visits in 2018 concluded that those schools already achieving basic quality standards managed to sustain that level. Gwendoline van Putten school on St. Eustatius was the last school to achieve the full basic quality standard in February 2019.⁸⁶

84 NEET: Not employed, in education, or training.
The NEET percentage does not account for young people who might be engaged in unregistered forms of labor.

85 Bijl, R. & Pommer E. (2016).

86 The delay in this achievement compared to other schools is thought to be due to transition to the CXC system.

While standards for assessing schools in the Caribbean Netherlands are almost the same as in the European Netherlands, some exceptions apply.⁸⁷ For one, the Inspectorate does not assess schools for education results because no standards have been set for the Caribbean Netherlands for education results.⁸⁸ The reason provided for this is that the Inspectorate derives its standards for education results, particularly for arithmetic and Dutch, from average educational results from large groups of comparable schools. The schools for secondary education on St. Eustatius and Saba have education according to the CXC system and are not comparable with other Dutch schools; attempts have been made to make formal comparisons to the rest of the Caribbean subregion. The primary schools on St. Eustatius and Saba and all schools on Bonaire cannot be compared to other schools in The Netherlands either, because the starting situation of the students is incomparable given the fact that Dutch is a foreign language for them, which they only hear in Dutch lessons.

The Inspectorate does, however, monitor the development of the schools' educational outcomes on an annual basis. It asks the schools to analyse these and make adjustments to their lessons to ensure improvements as necessary. At the end of the First Education Agenda in 2016, the Inspectorate reported that on Bonaire, where the language of instruction in schools is Dutch and the native language of most students is Papiamentu, average results on technical reading lagged behind European Dutch averages. Stable growth in reading was noticeable throughout students' school career, however. The expectation is that for many students, the Dutch standards will be difficult to achieve because Dutch is a foreign language for them. For arithmetic, where trends could be determined for Bonaire, the backlog had become smaller since 2013. Yet the question remained whether the standard used was appropriate considering the difference in mother tongue.⁸⁹

For the subjects of arithmetic, English and Dutch as a foreign language on St. Eustatius and Saba, and for Papiamentu and Dutch on Bonaire, trends are not easy to determine. No externally standardized tests are taken, or available standards are not appropriate for the student population. Current testing practice only provides indications of learning performance based on standards defined by schools themselves. Without an external standard, it is not possible to determine whether the level of achievement is high enough.⁹⁰

The Inspectorate concluded that in the interest of the students and their future possibilities, it is necessary to get a better picture of the learning outcomes of schools in English, Papiamentu and Dutch, and also arithmetic. The intention is that schools and policymakers, in consultation with the Inspectorate, develop a joint vision for measuring and interpreting learning outcomes. An initial consultation was held in 2016. During a work visit in 2019, OCW met with all parties where goals were set and actions planned in preparation for the necessary steps.

87 Another difference in assessment is that, given the stage of development, the inspectorate cannot give the final assessment "very weak" to schools in the Caribbean Netherlands; standards can be rated with "can improve", "insufficient", "sufficient", and "good". Additionally, due to the specific context in the Caribbean Netherlands, while the quality of education and quality assurance are discussed at a board level, only the financial standards are assessed at the board level, not the board itself.

88 Inspectorate of Education. (2018).

89 Inspectorate of Education. (2017).

90 Ibid.



Education agendas

Two education agendas, a first from 2011 to 2016 and a second from 2017 to 2020, were designed with explicit benchmarks to support schools in achieving quality objectives, and to eliminate educational breakdowns, disadvantages and development lags. The Ministry of OCW, with OCW RCN based on the islands, work closely with the schools in realizing these goals. In an effort to further build upon the objectives reached and results achieved in the First Education Agenda, the priorities in the Second Education Agenda include further organization of the education care structure, providing education that is properly geared to further education and/or the labour market, and ensuring preconditions such as compulsory education and integrated collaborations. New to the list of priorities is to offer more effective language education.^{91,92} The progress of the second agenda will be evaluated during the 2019–2020 school year to identify bottlenecks, so that necessary interventions can be implemented, and to exchange ideas with educational institutions and other parties involved about how cooperation should look after 2020, both in terms of content and process.⁹³

CXC and English on St. Eustatius and Saba

As per the 2015–2016 school year, education on St. Eustatius transitioned from Dutch as the language of instruction to English, with the intention for Dutch to remain as a strong foreign language.⁹⁴ Most students on St. Eustatius are raised with the Stian dialect of English as their native language.⁹⁵ As a consequence, the Dutch secondary education system was replaced by the CXC system and the first CCSLC exams for the lower Form 3 were held in June 2018.⁹⁶

91 Ministry of OCW. (2017).

92 Other priorities are to further promote administrative power, professionalism and continuity, sound financial management and a long-term policy.

93 Letter to the House of Representatives from the Ministers of OCW. July 2019.

94 Saba had already taken the decision to transition from Dutch to English as the language of instruction in 1986.

95 Drenthe, et. al. (2014)

96 RCN News Item 19 June 2018. First CXC exams on Saint Eustatius.

These transitions took place after a study on the language of instruction on St. Eustatius concluded that “despite stakeholders’ commitment to the same goal of maximum competence in both English and Dutch for students, for the great majority of students who had very limited access to Dutch outside the school system, the use of Dutch as the language of instruction was having a negative effect on academic performance in both English and Dutch. Despite the fact that all of these stakeholders had been working tirelessly over the years to achieve this shared goal, they all acknowledged that they had never even come close to achieving it, and with each passing year it seemed to move further and further from their grasp. The vast majority of the stakeholders stated that the disadvantages of the Dutch system by far exceeded any possible advantages. Case in point, a very small number of pupils made it to the final exam of HAVO, and even fewer managed to complete tertiary education”.⁹⁷

A later study on the feasibility of language of instruction on St. Eustatius concluded that the best solution for most of the students on St. Eustatius would be for them to be given a solid foundation to master the language closest to their native tongue, i.e., standard English, and to adopt the regional English CXC education system, which was used for decades on sister islands St. Maarten and Saba for secondary academic education.⁹⁸ The Ministry of OCW later reported that the transition to the introduction of English as the language of instruction was tackled with enthusiasm, and that signals on St. Eustatius point to a better understanding of the curriculum by the students.^{99,100}

The Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) system was formally implemented on both St. Eustatius and Saba in the 2019–2020 school year. Before this transition, the

97 Faraclas, N. Kester, E. Mijts, E. (2013). *Language of Instruction in Sint. Eustatius*.

98 Drenthe, et. al. (2014).

99 Letter to House of Representatives from the Minister and State Secretary of OCW. April 2016.

100 Letter to House of Representatives from the Ministers of OCW. July 2019.





two schools used the Dutch MBO system for vocational education. The expectation is that the transition to the full CXC system will lead to a better match with regional tertiary education and the regional labour market, and more successful participation in local and regional society.

BES(t) 4 Kids programme

Progress in early childhood development (ECD) and afterschool care has accelerated with the advent of the BES(t) 4 kids programme, launched in January 2019. Impetus for the programme came from development issues initially signaled by the public entities, which were later reinforced by the childcare baseline study conducted by ECORYS. It found that the majority of children in the Caribbean Netherlands are at risk of developmental and educational disadvantages.^{101,102,103} In the European Netherlands, schools and municipalities receive resources to prevent and combat educational disadvantages and parents receive a childcare allowance. These provisions are not in place for the Caribbean Netherlands. As such, another basis for the BES(t) 4 Kids programme is to provide opportunities for children and parents to access quality childcare that are equal to those of their counterparts in the European Netherlands.¹⁰⁴

The objectives of the BES(t) 4 Kids programme are to (i) increase financial accessibility so that all parents can let their children from 0 to 12 years old participate in day care and afterschool care, (ii) improve the quality of day care and afterschool care by further training employees, improving working conditions and investing in accommodation, and (iii) ensure optimal continuous development and the perspective of children in the Caribbean Netherlands.¹⁰⁵ To reach these objectives, the national Government and public entities will increase

101 Letter to the House of Representatives from the State Secretary of SZW. June 2019.

102 ECORYS. (2019).

103 See also Section 3.1. on protection and 3.2 on poverty.

104 Letter to the House of Representatives from the State Secretary of SZW. June 2019. (31322-397)

105 See BES(t) 4 Kids Program 2019.

their investments in the sector considerably, while parents are expected to continue to make affordable personal contributions. Legislation specific to the Caribbean Netherlands will be put in place and adopted for localization by each of the public entities in order to regulate public and private childcare centres, i.e., licensing, minimum quality requirements and conditions for financing. This legislation will also set conditions for a childcare inspectorate that the three islands will organize collaboratively with the Dutch Education Inspectorate and the Municipal Health Service, (GGD) Haaglanden. The programme is prioritizing ensuring a continuous line of development from day care to primary and ideally also secondary school, including for children with special needs.

The significance of early childhood education¹⁰⁶

Without adequate attention to and investment in early childhood education, children in aged 0 to 4 are left behind and less likely to reach their potential for optimal development in the physical, cognitive, linguistic and socioemotional areas. As young children are developing during these crucial years, they are also particularly vulnerable to lasting impacts of poverty and exposure to violence.

The programme is a collaborative effort between the public entities and the ministries of SZW, VWS, OCW and BZK ministries, with SZW in the lead. While the public entities are responsible for the implementation of the agreements made at island level, the ministries will provide financial resources and expertise, and are responsible for embedding the system in legislation and regulations at the national level.

As the BES(t) 4 Kids programme targets children aged 0 to 12, the national government, in consultation with the public entities, is exploring options to develop a similar approach for those aged 13 to 18.

¹⁰⁶ UNICEF. (2017).

3.3.5 Emerging challenges and recommendations

The investment in and sustained focus on reforming education in the Caribbean Netherlands has paid handsome dividends. Much has been accomplished to provide coaches and guidance to school teams, improve professionalism, build and repair infrastructure, seek alignment with the region and build evidence for policy transformations, among many other efforts. The current situation analysis found the achievements in education since 10-10-10 and the 2013 situation analysis to be visible, notable and remarked upon by teachers, administrators and other professionals at schools as well as students, parents and both levels of governance.

While many of the issues brought to the fore in 2013 remain to some extent, progress is noticeable. Many issues are openly acknowledged as such by authorities and are already high on the national government's agenda. The following paragraphs will elucidate remaining and emerging challenges, and provide recommendations meant to maximize and strengthen planned initiatives and interventions where relevant.

Learning outcomes

As previously mentioned, reports from the routine visits of the Dutch Inspectorate of Education show clear and valuable strides towards quality education in the Caribbean Netherlands, which are measurable with the achievement of basic quality standards at all schools. This is a major advancement since the 2013 situation analyses. As the ministers of the Ministry of OCW have noted, however, the quality of education in the Caribbean Netherlands is vulnerable for different reasons.¹⁰⁷ The language of instruction on both St. Eustatius and Bonaire was one of the issues highlighted in 2013. While the situation on St. Eustatius has transformed significantly within the past six years, solutions on Bonaire appear to be less straightforward. Many stakeholders on Bonaire continue to express sentiments and frustrations surrounding the issue of the language of instruction affecting the children on their island, which are very similar to those documented in the study on the language of instruction on St. Eustatius. As language policy at schools is a responsibility of the schools, the Ministry of OCW is providing resources until 2020 to support schools with developing more effective language policies for both Papiamentu and Dutch. Consistent with the Second Education Agenda, the goal to improve language policy in English and Dutch also applies to St. Eustatius and Saba. In line with this endeavour, a declaration of intent has been signed between the ministers of education of the four countries of the Kingdom to cooperate on improving Dutch as a foreign language education in the Dutch Caribbean with continued support from the Dutch Language Union.^{108, 109}

While these developments are without a doubt positive, learning outcomes for Dutch, Papiamentu, English and arithmetic are still not measured based on context appropriate standards, and schools in the Caribbean Netherlands are still not assessed for quality based on their ability to support students to achieve desired learning outcomes. In the absence of context appropriate standards, the schools have been receiving support in using differentiated learning objectives and guidelines and corresponding tests for English, Dutch and arithmetic; these are not yet in place for Papiamentu but a method is in place. Given the recent cooperation established between the Caribbean Netherlands and autonomous countries, pursuant to the intentions reported by the Inspectorate in 2016, and in

¹⁰⁷ Letter to the House of Representatives from the Ministers of OCW. July 2019.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ See also: Taalunie (2014).

the interest of students and their future, **schools and policymakers at the Ministry of OCW, in consultation with the Inspectorate, are encouraged to use the momentum surrounding Dutch as a foreign language education to 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**¹¹⁰ (*recommendation 16*). Promising in this regard is that effective language education is an objective in the Second Education Agenda and that the Ministry of OCW sees this particular point as a priority. Both the Ministry of OCW and the Inspectorate have indicated that progress is already underway.

Education care and the youth chain

In 2013, the first situation analysis highlighted the limitations of education care and suitable education for children with disabilities on the islands. This remains an issue on all three islands. Other related issues found in 2019 include confusion among families, communities and teachers between children with potentially undetected disabilities and behavioural problems, which sometimes results in delayed interventions; limited availability of specialized support, especially on St. Eustatius and Saba; and the need for parents with special-needs children to better understand the importance of testing as a preliminary step to improve their child's performance. An evaluation of education care will be carried out by the end of 2019 to ensure that as many students as possible can receive the care they need to be able to follow education. Specific attention will be paid to the bottlenecks experienced by the education expertise centres within the current educational care system.¹¹¹ Areas probed in the evaluation will include, among others, which target groups can be distinguished within educational care, the available and possibly missing expertise among teachers related to guidance and education care, and the expertise available and possibly missing from the perspective of the expertise centres within the youth care chain. These areas are particularly relevant for determining what care should be provided to children with severe behavioural problems and by whom to prevent them from falling through the cracks of the youth chain.¹¹²

The inability of schools to handle behavioural problems was also addressed in the 2013 situation analysis. The 2018 Caribbean Netherlands Safety Image reported that teachers often do not know where to turn regarding their students with behavioural problems, and that these children often end up out of school.¹¹³ Notably, while the dropout rate has decreased on St. Eustatius and particularly on Saba, due to the lack of a compulsory education registration system, there is little insight into the number of dropouts on Bonaire.¹¹⁴ **Each of the public entities, and Bonaire in particular, is encouraged to make use of compulsory education registration systems to monitor trends and report on the number of dropouts on their island** (*recommendation 17*).

110 See "Youth evaluation measures language skills in group 8" in the 12th edition of *What's New in Caribbean Netherlands Education*. In May 2019, the Language Union supported teachers from Aruba, Bonaire, St. Maarten, Saba and St. Eustatius to conduct Dutch as a foreign language evaluations among almost 700 Group 8 students to assess their language competence and inform roadmaps for desired improvements.

111 Letter to the House of Representatives from the Ministers of OCW. July 2019.

112 Considering that the evaluation is underway and will better focus on and articulate the bottlenecks involved, a recommendation has not been formulated for this challenge.

113 van der Zee, S. & Hoebé, D. (2019)

114 Ibid.

The education experience and protective environment

Similar to the challenges facing many countries in the post-Millennium Development Goal environment, effort is required to ensure positive outcomes in terms of the quality of education. Learning is dependent on the pedagogical approaches that teachers use in the classroom.

To ensure that children and adolescents perform optimally requires that teachers use a combination of approaches on the spectrum from teacher-centred to learner-centred pedagogy, use local terms and languages, vary lesson activities, take a positive attitude towards students, respect their diversity and believe in their capacity to learn. In this way, a positive education experience and a protective learning environment is created, and pupils develop a healthy connection to the school and their peers. Children and adolescents also react positively to inclusive approaches including participation in governing bodies and task teams on issues that affect them and their peers.

The 2013 situation analysis noted that pedagogical approaches and interaction between teachers and students needed improvement. Apart from very positive exceptions, respondents at the time remarked that teachers were either too authoritarian and directive or, conversely, did not sufficiently set clear limits. They used verbal and physical violence, offered their pupils too little encouragement, and involving the pupils seemed unheard of. Since then, the Inspectorate has indicated substantial improvements in the pedagogical climate in the schools on the islands.¹¹⁵ These improvements were also reflected in responses from teachers during the 2019 situation analysis. They noted, for example, that corporal punishment is not permitted in and around schools. On each of the islands, schools are making use of the conscious discipline method as guidance in positively interacting with their students. There is a slightly different perception from those interviewed outside of the school setting, however. The reason for this could possibly be lasting anecdotes of past incidences. Apart from continuing steady improvements in this area, school boards and management should also routinely communicate progress achieved to students, parents and the community at large, among others, to better gauge and manage public perceptions about education quality and the educational environment. It is also important for the BES(t) 4 Kids program to place emphasis on creating safe and positive pedagogical environments at day care and after school care centres.

The Law on (Social) Safety at School applies to the Caribbean Netherlands. Since 2018, it has been mandatory to appoint someone at every school to coordinate bullying policies and receive complaints about bullying.¹¹⁶ All students must also be asked annually about their safety at the school. During the last inspections on the islands in 2018 and 2019, the Inspectorate rated social safety at each school as “sufficient”. Some schools had policies in place and some issued surveys. Responses on the issue of bullying, however, appear to vary. For example, 20 per cent of students at SGB Liseo responded in an otherwise generally positive survey that they were unsatisfied with how schools dealt with bullying. In conversations with the Inspectorate, students remarked that bullying rarely happens. On St. Eustatius, informal interviews yielded the impression that fighting was an issue. Stakeholders later remarked that it was much less of an issue now possibly because of several changes at the school, and that drug

115 In the last Inspectorate reports from 2018 and 2019, the pedagogical climate was assessed along with the social climate or didactical processes. The Inspectorate views pedagogical-didactical actions as those that enable students to learn and develop.

116 The Inspectorate views the social school climate as a learning environment that is safe and motivating according to socially broad principles; students experience the school as a safe place.

use appeared to be much more of an issue.¹¹⁷ On Saba, a school questionnaire showed that bullying was rare and when it occurred was dealt with, along with receiving ample attention in the lessons. Responses from students during the situation analysis, however, indicated that school authorities did not respond to reports of bullying. Schools are encouraged to continue to raise awareness on school social safety and no-tolerance bullying policies, monitor and record incidences, and measure change.

*Bullying*¹¹⁸

Research on the prevalence of bullying behaviours among children and adolescents identifies verbal bullying as the most popular type, followed by group rejection and physical assault, with boys more frequently involved in almost all types of bullying than girls, except for gossiping. Bullying is not a new behaviour, but with the increase in access to and use of social network sites, public awareness has recently become an acute need. Sexual bullying, which is gender-neutral and can involve abuse that is physical, verbal or via technology, has become a growing concern among adolescents.

*We Can Young*¹¹⁹

This promising initiative is a global campaign, coordinated in Saba by the Body, Mind and Spirit Foundation, targeting youth from 12 to 21 years old. In 2016, a Bullying Prevention Programme was launched in collaboration with several other partners to extend awareness-raising activities from the school into the communities. Secondary students completed a 10-day workshop on bullying and produced a video titled “Don’t Stand by When Boundaries are Crossed”. This is a good practice that continues to be a source for discussions about sexual bullying on the island.

117 See Section 3.4 on adolescent health.

118 UNESCO. (2017).

119 Video titled ‘Don’t Stand By When Boundaries are Crossed’ by Saba students: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TC85ekz5c0_



Participation

Children have the right to participate in decision-making processes that may be relevant in their lives and to influence decisions taken in their regard—within the family, the school or the community (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms that children have the right to express their views in all matters affecting them and requires that those views be heard and given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity. The 2013 situation analysis noted that there were limited opportunities for children to participate in the Caribbean Netherlands. Since then, promising initiatives fostering a culture of participation have been initiated, including Kid's Councils, Youth Councils and children's rights education in schools. Under an initiative by Jong Bonaire, teen leaders serve as a voice for afterschool programmes and also help guide the staff in planning activities and events. **All schools in the Caribbean Netherlands, with the support of the ministry of OCW, are encouraged to integrate children's rights education and participation activities into their curriculum so that participation becomes a core part of school organizational culture and children's educational experience and that children are better able to think critically for themselves and express their opinions in informed decision-making processes (recommendation 18).** Using qualified and adequate communication with appropriate language, information and tools can result in greater reach and impact.

"Participation pertains to parenting and education. Children are not challenged to give their own opinions about solving problems and miss the skills when they're older."

Technical committee member, Bonaire

Putting children and adolescents at the centre of discussion regarding their lives helps to build their self-esteem and strengthens their connections to family, peers, church and community while guiding them to build personal assets and discover ways to support themselves and others. Opening opportunities for them to participate in governance structures, committees and boards ensures their ownership of results while they learn the principles of ownership. Bringing them into problem-solving and solution-finding processes makes them co-creators of results, and opening space for them to influence policies that effect their future well-being shows them how to value, share and leverage their experiences. When adolescents and young people know what they think is taken seriously and respected by others, they gain more control over their lives and develop hope for the future. This increases the likelihood that they will choose positive behaviours that lead them to avoid taking risks and endangering others.

Transition to tertiary education, vocational and professional training, and the workforce

An emerging issue in the 2019 situation analysis is the preparedness of adolescents to transition to tertiary education and the labour market. Many respondents and key stakeholders remarked on the need for especially vulnerable adolescents and their families to get more support and guidance in preparing to take the next step, such as formal assistance in filling out forms for loans and college applications. Furthermore, given the limited availability of tertiary education on the Caribbean Netherlands, youngsters are, so to speak, “educated to emigrate” to the European Netherlands, North America and in the region to pursue higher education.¹²⁰ Staying on the island is seen by young people as a failure. There are signals that migration particularly to the European Netherlands proves to be especially challenging, however. Possible reasons for not completing education include, among other things, language, study choice (due to poor orientation advice), limited degree of necessary self-reliance and independence, and cultural differences. For students living in poverty, although study financing is in place for most students, travelling abroad to study can be extra challenging when parents cannot afford to send necessary extras. The Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences reported that of the roughly 200 students from the Dutch Caribbean enrolled in the first year, three-quarters do not reach the finish line.¹²¹ Data are currently not available to ascertain the specific success rates for students from Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba.

In February 2019, the four ministers of education from the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Aruba, Curacao, St. Maarten) agreed during the four-country meeting on “Education and Culture” to set up a joint official working group on the transfer issues to tertiary education. This working group must ensure that a quantitative and qualitative analysis assesses the connection to the further education of Caribbean Netherlands students. **Secondary schools, with the support of OCW RCN, are also encouraged to scale up guidance and support for students (and families) transitioning from secondary to tertiary education, vocational education or the labour market and explore options to develop a graduate tracking system that provides insight into graduates’ success so that the results can be used to make any necessary improvements to prepare students for the transition (recommendation 19).** In this way, the Inspectorate would then also be better able to monitor the school’s performance on student preparedness for transition. A potentially interesting model for preparation for the transition to tertiary education abroad could be the “Bridge Program” that St. Eustatius intends to launch. It is meant to reinforce student capacity

120 Crane, J. G. (1971).

121 See the Algemeen Dagblad, February 2019: *College stops recruiting in the Antilles, students get too few diplomas.*

before transitioning. Consistent with a 2013 situation analysis finding is that students did not have enough opportunities to explore their interests and talents. This can then of course easily result in making the wrong choices about a study and career. Schools and afterschool programmes are encouraged to provide more structural opportunities for youngsters to discover and develop their talents. The programme currently being explored by the Ministry of VWS for youngsters aged 12 to 18 might very well be able to provide opportunities to develop their talents, participate in decision-making, and be better prepared to transition to tertiary education or the labour market.

The changing nature of work¹²²

According to the World Bank, the competences that help children and adolescents develop and learn have shifted beyond the classic approach standardized in most of the subregion, which does not fit the world we live in today. More and more, as students finish high school and either enrol in college, vocational school or head straight to the workforce, they're finding themselves poorly prepared for whatever path they choose. They're planning their futures on the belief that doing well in school creates opportunities – that showing up, doing the work and meeting their teachers' expectations will prepare them for what's next. But something along the way is not working. It appears that the demands placed on them in school do not match students' capabilities or the level at which they need to be performing to stay on track for a successful college degree or career.

“In school at home when I didn't do my homework. I just told the teacher, who was my aunt, that I didn't find time to complete the assignment. She would say oh that's ok bring it in tomorrow. In Holland, there is no such thing. School is much more rigorous and getting used to that takes time. As a first-year student this is time you do not have and there is no sympathy.”

Caribbean Netherlands student in Holland

Early childhood development

The BES(t) 4 Kids programme is seen as a positive and model programme in many ways. It is a collaborative effort by the involved ministries and public entities to take an integrated approach to possible developmental setbacks that can result from poverty. It is a bottom-up approach with the ministries providing structural resources, guidance and expertise on a theme that has been prioritized by the public entities. There is a clear division of tasks between the public entities and the ministries. The programme will attempt to facilitate alignment with and ensure the continuity of related programmes such as the Sport and Prevention Agreement as well as activities initiated with the Children's Rights and Opportunities for Children subsidies. Lastly, the programme is supported with baseline evidence, which can eventually allow measurement of results.

¹²² World Bank (2019).

While the programme focuses on improving quality, ensuring financial access to childcare services, and ensuring optimal continuous development and the perspective of children in the Caribbean Netherlands, it is remarkable that no emphasis is placed on the quality of care in the home environment. Globally, UNICEF monitors and reports on advancements in early childhood development looking at three vital areas: early childhood care and education (access to good quality care and education programmes), developmental status of the child (physical, social, emotional and mental) and quality of care in the home environment (learning materials, books, toys, support for learning time, etc.).¹²³ By failing to include attention to the home environment, the programme risks failing short in providing equitable opportunities for all children. It ignores the potential effects of poverty, violence and neglect that some children might be experiencing in the household environment. With many parents working several jobs, there is also concern that day-care and afterschool services can potentially shift parental responsibilities to institutional services. While 75 per cent of parents surveyed in the ECORYS Childcare Baseline study said they thought the development of their child was important, day-care centres reported that parental involvement was limited.¹²⁴ Additionally, 34 per cent of parents surveyed who did not make use of day-care services said that it was better to provide care for their children at home. **The public entities, with the support of the Ministry of SZW, is encouraged to bring early stimulation to the household and engage parents to complement what is being done in day care (recommendation 20).**

123 UNICEF. (2013).

124 ECORYS.(2019).



Poverty can limit parents' ability to spend time and money to play with, feed, and educate their children, resulting in a less stimulating home environment. A growing body of randomized evaluations has rigorously evaluated early child stimulation in the home environment and provides actionable lessons.¹²⁵ In order to reach parents already using day care and those who opt not to, **the Public Entities, with the support of the Ministry of SZW, are encouraged to design and implement a sustained media initiative targeting parents/caregivers on the importance of early stimulation and early childcare to ensure that they have the information they need to provide the right care for their children (recommendation 21).** Early stimulation implemented at home can contribute to children's cognitive and socioemotional development, highlight the importance of making the child a priority within the family setting, and boost demand for early childhood development services. To maximize access to services, it would be opportune for the Public Entities and the Ministry of SZW to commission further studies to fully understand how to bring the advantages of pre-primary education to all children aged 3 to 4 to ensure that they are adequately prepared for the transition to primary school.

There is ample evidence both globally and in the Caribbean subregion of the benefits of pre-primary education where activities such as playing, reading or singing are critical for early brain development.¹²⁶ Children from the poorest families in particular should get access to day care and afterschool care, because in low-income families less attention is paid to the early stimulation of children aged 0 to 4. The BES(t) 4 Kids program intends to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework to monitor progress and measure results (see recommendation 29 in chapter 4). **In this regard, it is important for the most vulnerable children to be defined and for their access to the improved early childhood care services to be consistently monitored.** This includes that children with disabilities have access to services and that the available care and facilities are suitable to their needs. With laws and regulations being put in place for childcare, other steps would be to regulate training requirements and qualifications for staff working with children in afterschool care as needed, and ensure that all workers have and abide by a code of good conduct.

125 See The World Bank. (2016)

126 See for example, UNICEF (2017). A. Barros and F. Ewerling, 2016, "Early childhood development: a new challenge for the SDG era," *The Lancet*; and "Investing in education in Latin America and the Caribbean" at <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/investing-education-0>, among others.

3.4 Health and well-being: the mental and physical health of children and adolescents

Children have the right to live. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 6).



Children have the right to good quality health care – the best health care possible – to safe drinking water, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help them stay healthy. Mothers should have appropriate pre-natal and post-natal health care (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 24).

Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages (SDG 3).¹²⁷

3.4.1 Legislative and policy environment

The Government of The Netherlands regards the pursuit of good health as a fundamental human right.¹²⁸ The Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) is responsible for health care (medical and long-term care) in the Caribbean Netherlands. A health insurance policy was introduced for every legal resident as per January 2011, giving everyone equal access to a broad package of care. Since 2012, public health care has been regulated by the Public Health Act, a European Netherlands law that also applies to the islands apart from a few provisions. This law regulates general care for public health, youth and the elderly, and infectious disease control. The public entities are responsible for these areas. The Ministry primarily has a coordinating role, including as a liaison to the various international organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).¹²⁹

3.4.2 Services and expenditures

Health care on the islands has improved in many areas since the 10-10-10 transition; that was the view of many people in the years from 2010 to 2013.¹³⁰ Health-care infrastructure has been modernized, including through establishing an urgent care centre on Bonaire, and upgrading infrastructure, staffing and services at Mental Health Caribbean on all three islands. Hospitals are fully equipped to respond to most emergencies, and there are a number of medical doctors on the islands. Bonaire has a resident pediatrician. Air ambulance service is always accessible from Bonaire to Curacao, and helicopter service from St. Eustatius and Saba to St. Maarten or Colombia for urgent medical evacuation. Full-service pharmacies are available on each of the islands. In January 2017, the length of maternity leave on all three islands was increased from 12 to 16 weeks.

127 Includes 13 targets many of which are relevant to the well-being of children and adolescents.

128 Lucas, P. L. et al. (2016).

129 Ministry of VWS. (2016).

130 Bijl, R. & Pommer E. (2016).



These impressive advances resulted from a steady and substantial increase in investment in the overall Caribbean Netherlands health-care budget, from 15.3 million euros in 2010 to 134 million euros in 2019 (see Table 14). IdeeVersa estimates that about 10 million euros of this budget are allocated to youth. The tasks for public health are paid for by the special allowance set up by the temporary scheme for public health care in the Caribbean Netherlands. This payment is a total of just under \$1 million made available by VWS. The temporary arrangement runs from 2014 to 2019 and is currently being evaluated.¹³¹

3.4.3 Health status of the population

When examining results from the 2017 Caribbean Netherlands Health Study,¹³² a positive trend emerges with 76 per cent of the population on Bonaire, 71 per cent on St. Eustatius, and 80 per cent on Saba reporting that they were in “good” or “very good” health. Compared to the 2013 health survey results from CBS, more people on Bonaire felt healthier than four years prior. On Saba, the share was slightly less, and on St. Eustatius there was a decrease of 10 per cent. In terms of chronic non-communicable diseases, those same studies reported that 8 per cent of the population suffered from diabetes on Bonaire (roughly the same as 2013), 9.8 per cent on St. Eustatius (almost a 1 percentage point decrease) and 10 per cent on Saba (almost a 2 percentage point increase). On Bonaire, 16 per cent of the population as well as 17 per cent on St. Eustatius and 21 per cent on Saba reported they had suffered from high blood pressure in the prior 12 months. The only increase in percentage was on Saba. The data available gave no indication of the self-perceived health of children or adolescents.

¹³¹ IdeeVersa. (2019).

¹³² CBS, 2013.

Table 15. Health and disorders, personal characteristics, Caribbean Netherlands, 2013 and 2017

		Percentage of self-perceived health Very good/good		Percentage of Diabetes		Percentage of disorder last 12 months High blood pressure	
		2013	2017	2013	2017	2013	2017
Caribbean Netherlands	Total	74.4	75.1	8.4	8.8	18.6	17.3
	Men	78.6	80.8	7	8.2	15	13.8
	Women	69.7	69.2	10	9,4	22.8	21.1
Bonaire	Total	72.1	75.5	8	8,2	18.5	16.4
	Men	76.9	80	6.8	8	14.9	12.7
	Women	66.6	70.6	9.3	8,4	22.7	20.4
Sint-Eustatius	Total	80.9	71.1	10.6	9,8	20.6	17.3
	Men	82.9	79	8.7	6,8	15.3	12.3
	Women	78.4	62.6	13	12,9	27.5	22.6
Saba	Total	81.8	80.1	7.7	9,5	15.4	21.3
	Men	85	86.7	.	11,2	15.2	21.2
	Women	78.7	73.4	10.1	7,8	15.5	21.3

Source: CBS, 2013 and 2017 Health Study.

In 2017, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and PAHO warned that obesity and overweight are on the rise throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, with higher prevalence among women and children.¹³³ This trend is evident in the Caribbean Netherlands as well. The 2017 CBS health surveys revealed that 31 per cent of the population on Bonaire was moderately overweight and 30 per cent obese; on St. Eustatius, the shares were 31 and 37 per cent, respectively, and on Saba, 36 and 27 per cent, respectively. Throughout the Caribbean Netherlands, half of people get enough exercise; with women exercising the least. More than 6 in 10 people are overweight. Women are more often overweight (obese) with the percentage of women with obesity on St. Eustatius at the highest at 46 per cent.¹³⁴

“Fathers accompany 80 per cent of the mothers to the pregnancy course.”
Administrator, Bonaire

Reduced consumption of traditional foods, the high costs of healthy food and the consequent increased consumption of cheaper ultraprocessed products have become problems for islands that are net food importers. The 2017 Health Study indicated that 12.2 per cent of children in the Caribbean Netherlands aged 0-17 (almost) never ate vegetables while only 31.2 per cent of children aged 0-17 ate vegetables every day.¹³⁵ The change in

133 FAO and PAHO (2017).

134 CBS & RIVM, 2013 and 2017 Health Study

135 CBS & RIVM, 2013 and 2017 Health Study

dietary patterns is equally linked to economic growth trends, higher average incomes and urban lifestyles (often including parents working several jobs).

Although the tropical nature of the islands exposes the population to mosquito-borne diseases (mostly dengue fever), few cases have been recorded since late 2016 when nearly 75 confirmed Zika virus infections were reported (none among pregnant women). The islands have no malaria. The HIV prevalence rate in the general population is well below the 1 per cent prevalence target in the SDGs. With regard to prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, the islands have had a 100 per cent success rate with no new cases in the past five years. In 2018, there were no reported positives among pregnant women, and no new cases in adults or children.¹³⁶

Chronic non-communicable diseases

In what has been described as a rapid dietary and epidemiological transition, chronic non-communicable diseases have replaced malnutrition and infectious diseases as major health issues.¹³⁷ Health and development professionals in the Caribbean Netherlands work together in campaigning for healthier lifestyles and the sustainable production of fresh, safe and nutritious foods, ensuring their supply, diversity and access. This is complemented with nutrition education and consumer warnings about the nutritional composition of foods high in sugar, fat and salt, at baby clinics as well as through information sessions with adolescents and the elderly.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is critical to providing essential nutrition for newborn and infant development, and can contribute to child well-being in terms of nutrition, health and education as well. UNICEF recommends exclusive breastfeeding for six months. Although there is expansive evidence that breastfeeding contributes to children's development in cognitive and general health terms, specific targets for breastfeeding have not been set as part of the SDGs. The breastfeeding rate in high-income countries is one of the few health indicators on which rich countries tend to lag behind poorer ones. For example, in wealthy countries, the rate for breastfeeding at six months was only 32 per cent in 2006-2008.¹³⁸

Breastfeeding is not a common practice in the Caribbean Netherlands either. Health services on the three islands provide excellent guidance and counselling at the pre- and postnatal periods with continued support and encouragement through baby clinics and midwives. Breastfeeding is encouraged during the first three months of postnatal consultations, and the cost of breast pumps is covered by insurance. Surprisingly, new mothers often start with breastfeeding, but, after a few days or weeks, most discontinue it and switch to formula. Considering the cost of formula on the three islands, which is not covered by insurance, it is surprising that breastfeeding is discontinued so soon in spite of public health efforts. Although the Caribbean Netherlands 2017 Health Study gathered data on practices regarding breastfeeding, more clarity is needed to better understand individuals' motivations and attitudes regarding breastfeeding.

¹³⁶ Data on infectious diseases were not available before publishing.

¹³⁷ *The Lancet*, 2017.

¹³⁸ See UN News, May 2018: *UNICEF urges wealthy countries to encourage more breast feeding*, May 2018.

Immunization

In general, the vaccination rate in the Caribbean Netherlands is high.¹³⁹ Immunization coverage has been between 92 per cent and 100 per cent for the past five years. There is concern, however, that the “anti-vaxxers” movement could affect coverage. Therefore, particularly on St. Eustatius, proactive and preventive efforts are being mounted to issue messages underscoring the necessity and safety of vaccines.

Table 16. Infant vaccinations in the Caribbean Netherlands 2014–2018

		Number of vaccinations of infants	Vaccinations of infants (relative), percentage
Bonaire	2014	167	90.0
	2015	196	92.9
	2016	190	92.7
	2017	203	92.7
	2018	156	92.9
St. Eustatius	2014	31	100.0
	2015	32	100.0
	2016	39	100.0
	2017	30	100.0
	2018	32	97.0
Saba	2014	11	100.0
	2015	17	94.4
	2016	17	100.0
	2017	15	100.0
	2018	20	100.0

Source: CBS 2019.

Note that these percentages of vaccinated children are not linked to the Caribbean Netherlands central registry system so, for example, children who emigrated from the island are also included.

¹³⁹ RIVM. (2016).

3.4.4 Adolescent health

Mental and physical health conditions are projected to become the leading causes of disease burden and mortality, respectively, in the world by 2030.¹⁴⁰ Adolescents may be vulnerable to mental and physical health conditions during their unique developmental period, which is characterized by increased cognitive abilities and physical changes. In the 2017 Health Study, 18.5 per cent of children 12-17 responded that they often felt very nervous in the four weeks preceding the survey and 15.7 per cent of the children 12-17 responded that they felt depressed and gloomy sometimes in the four weeks preceding the survey. In contrast, 89.5 per cent reported that they felt often to constantly happy in the four weeks preceding the survey. Importantly, 92.3 per cent of the children 12-17 stated that there is always someone in their environment who they can go to with their daily problems.¹⁴¹

“Many health workers have a ‘Dutch understanding’ when it comes to providing advice to young people [under 18] about reproductive health care, puberty and how to grow healthy.”

Administrator, St. Eustatius

In the 2017 Caribbean Netherlands Health Study, 18.5 per cent of adolescents 15-17 responded that they had a steady partner and 40.3 per cent responded that they have had sex.¹⁴² Data was not available on the age of the first time having sex or the use of condoms or contraceptives for this age group. Contraception is part of the health care insurance package and the age of consent in the Caribbean Netherlands is 16. In the Caribbean Netherlands, the doctors follow the Dutch law which stipulates that from the age of 13 and before the age of 16, both the parent and child’s permission is

needed for the child to access health care; in some serious cases, it is not necessary to get parental permission. At 16 years, adolescents can make their own decisions regarding medical treatment. Only if they are incapacitated, doctors may request permission from parents or guardians. This means that from 16, adolescents can access contraception, granted they feel comfortable doing so. While sex education is available in schools, few interviewees found the curriculum informative. Every young person interviewed named the internet as the first source for information about reproductive health care. A conservative culture and religious beliefs are deeply rooted in the islands as is the case in the Caribbean subregion.

Viva Amour, a programme recently launched on Bonaire by is a promising initiative that encourages young people to “love themselves” and better understand and manage their own sexuality (including how to say “no”). However, this is not taught in schools.

140 WHO 2018.

141 CBS & RIVM, 2017 Health Study

142 CBS & RIVM, 2017 Health Study

Adolescent pregnancy

“Some women just buy three morning after pills every Friday [for the weekend]. Some are buying for their cousins, nieces who are under age.”

Interviewee, St. Eustatius

“My daughter got pregnant when she was 17. At first, I was very angry and wanted her to have an abortion. After speaking to the doctor he made me understand that this is not the end of the world. My granddaughter is 6 years old now and I am happy she was born.”

Grandfather, Bonaire

Although teen pregnancy was once a major concern in Bonaire (29 per cent in 2012)¹⁴³ and St. Eustatius (31 per cent in 2012), the number of recorded teen pregnancies has recently fallen to 11 per cent in Bonaire. Only 1 teen pregnancy was recorded in St. Eustatius in 2018.¹⁴⁴

The number of abortions (25) in St. Eustatius in 2018 was almost as high as the number of births (36).¹⁴⁵ None of the abortions were performed for females under the age of 18. Similarly on Saba, while teen pregnancy was once a major concern, recorded occurrence has recently fallen to nearly zero.

Promising initiative: Teen mothers in Bonaire are supported by the Center for Youth and Family from the first prenatal visit when they are encouraged to join a network/support group of other teen mothers. They are told “children are a blessing” and not made to feel ashamed or that having a child is a mistake. This approach builds self-esteem, encourages continuation of education, and provides tips and advice on positive parenting as well as building a safe and productive relationship.

143 PAHO. (2012).

144 Public Health Departments Bonaire and St. Eustatius

145 Data provided by personnel at the Ministry of Health.



Table 17. Number of children born alive, age of the mother, Caribbean Netherlands

Age	Period	Caribbean Netherlands	Bonaire	St. Eustatius	Saba
Total	2011-2013	703	566	105	32
	2012-2014	724	592	96	36
	2013-2015	710	561	111	38
	2014-2016	698	562	91	45
	2015-2017	699	552	95	52
Younger than 20 years	2011-2013	67	53	13	1
	2012-2014	55	44	7	4
	2013-2015	39	29	6	4
	2014-2016	37	28	3	6
	2015-2017	43	34	6	3

Source: CBS, 2019.

Risky behaviours

According to the 2017 Health Study, 27 per cent of children in the Caribbean Netherlands aged 2-17 get enough exercise, with Saba youngsters getting the most at 48 per cent. The highest prevalence of obesity among youngsters is on St. Eustatius at 25 per cent, then Saba at 14 per cent and Bonaire at 12 per cent.

Table 18. Exercise and obesity in the Caribbean Netherlands, ages 12 to 17, 2017

		Meets the exercise standard, percentage	Is moderately overweight, percentage	Is obese, percentage
Bonaire	2-17 years	25.3	16.2	11.6
St. Eustatius	2-17 years	29.4	16.7	25.0
Saba	2-17 years	48.4	12.5	13.7
Total Caribbean Netherlands	2-17 years	27.4	16.0	13.7
Total Caribbean Netherlands	All ages	49.2	31.4	31.0

. = minder dan 50 waarnemingen

Source: CBS, 2017 Health Study.

A total of 2.4 per cent of adolescents aged 12-17 in the Caribbean Netherlands smoke sometimes. 3.3 per cent drink heavily.¹⁴⁶ Almost 4 per cent of the adolescents smoked cannabis in the 30 days preceding the survey and 4 per cent in the twelve months preceding the survey. 10 per cent said that they had (at some point) smoked cannabis. The use of hard drugs, such as LSD and XTC, among this age group was reported at less than 1 per cent. International research indicates that alcohol use among adolescents can potentially co-occur with other risky behaviours such as violence, unsafe sexual activity, smoking, and so on.¹⁴⁷

Table 19. Smoking behaviour in the Caribbean Netherlands, 12 years and older, 2017

		Smokes sometimes, percentage	Smokes daily, percentage	Smokes heavily (more than 20 cigarettes per day), percentage
Bonaire	16-24 years	11.2	3.1	1.6
Bonaire	12-17 years	2.2	0.9	0.0
Saint Eustatius	12-17 years	4.3	0.0	0.0
Saba	12-17 years	.	.	.
Total Caribbean Netherlands	12-17 years	2.4	0.7	0.0
Total Caribbean Netherlands	12+ years	17.2	11.2	2.4

. = fewer than 50 observations

Source: CBS, 2017 Health Study.

Table 20. Alcohol use in the Caribbean Netherlands among people aged 12 and above, 2017

		Drinks excessively, percentage	Drinks heavily, percentage
Bonaire	16-24 years	4.6	10.1
Bonaire	12-17 years	0.4	3.4
Saint Eustatius	12-17 years	0.0	1.6
Saba	12-17 years	.	.
Total Caribbean Netherlands	12-17 years	0.8	3.3
Total Caribbean Netherlands	12+ years	7.7	12.1

. = fewer than 50 observations

Source: CBS, 2017 Health Study.

146 Drinks heavily: drinks at least once a week 6 or more glasses of alcohol on 1 day (male), drinks at least once a week 4 or more glasses of alcohol on 1 day (female). Drinks excessively: drinks on average more than 3 glasses of alcohol per day (male), drinks on average more than 2 glasses of alcohol per day (female).

147 <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescents-health-risks-and-solutions>

Table 21. Cannabis use in the Caribbean Netherlands among people aged 12 and older, 2017

		Uses cannabis (current, last 30 days), percentage	Recently used cannabis (last 12 months), percentage	Have used cannabis
Bonaire	16-24 years	3.3	11.6	
Bonaire	12-17 years	2.8	4.3	9.7
St. Eustatius	12-17 years	4.3	1.5	8.8
Saba	12-17 years	.	.	.
Total Caribbean Netherlands	12-17 years	3.5	4.0	10
Total Caribbean Netherlands	12+ years	4.0	2.8	17.6

. = fewer than 50 observations

Source: CBS, 2017 Health Study.

While the percentages of smokers is relatively low on the islands, children's exposure to second-hand smoke, especially on Bonaire, is concerning. On Bonaire, 9 per cent of children aged 0 to 12 are exposed to smoke for at least one hour a day, as are 14 per cent of non-smoking 12 to 17 year olds. On St. Eustatius and Saba, children seem to be less exposed to the smoke of others.

Table 22. Exposure to tobacco smoke from others in the Caribbean Netherlands among people aged 12 and older, 2017

		Smokes along (of the total population), percentage	Does not smoke but passive smoker (of the total population), percentage	Does not smoke, but passive smoker (of non-smokers), percentage
Bonaire	0-17 years	11.3	11.0	11.1
St. Eustatius	0-17 years	4.4	4.4	4.5
Saba	0-17 years	4.9	4.9	4.9
Total Caribbean Netherlands	0-17 years	9.9	9.7	9.8
Total Caribbean Netherlands	All ages	15.1	9.4	11.1

. = minder dan 50 waarnemingen

Smokes along: is exposed to tobacco smoke from others for at least one hour a day indoors.

Source: CBS, 2017 Health Study.

3.4.5 Emerging challenges and recommendations

Improving health care in the Caribbean Netherlands was among the priorities after the transition. Progress is generally reflected in the satisfaction of the populations on the three islands. Some developments appear to be lagging behind, however. Despite a well-functioning and accessible health care system, the Caribbean Netherlands faces challenges related to data collection, analysis and use. In some cases, it is difficult to understand the full scope of success or an emerging problem due to the limited availability of data elucidated by robust analyses. While the 2017 Health Study collected data on youth, the data is not supplemented by a public report with a comprehensive analysis of the results. While interviews for the situation analysis and 2017 Health Study data have been revealing, there is still a dearth of disaggregated information regarding knowledge, attitudes and risky behaviours among adolescents in the Caribbean Netherlands, particularly in sexual and mental health. This is surprising considering the level of investment The Netherlands makes in this type of youth focused research in the European Netherlands. Ongoing research in The Netherlands presently includes: the Health and Wellbeing of Young People in the Netherlands initiative (HBSC-Nederland), Happiness Under Pressure (UNICEF-funded), among others. For example, insightful but unavailable disaggregated data on adolescents in the Caribbean Netherlands would include quantitative and qualitative information such as the age of first sexual experiences and level of maturity and knowledge of risks, the perceived ability to say no to unwanted sex, use of and access to condoms and contraception, gender differences in sexual behavior, social gender biases about sexual behavior, male co-responsibility in sexual acts, machismo related social pressures, bullying, the well-being of adolescents in the LGBTQ+ community, and perceived pressures and preparedness to study abroad. This information would help to build knowledge on adolescent health issues in an appropriate language aimed at professionals and adolescents. Information and educational actions should be adequate considering different age groups, cultural and religious backgrounds, sexual orientation, and gender.

PAHO's routine surveys of youth in the countries of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on sexual behaviours, substance use and mental health are indispensable to planners and policymakers. The absence of such data and information for the Caribbean Netherlands represents major gaps for drafting youth policies, and is evident in present policies and programmes, particularly with regard to the mental health of adolescents. Data would be particularly relevant for the Caribbean Netherlands given recent concerns at the secondary school on Bonaire where a group of about 15 students was (at the time of the situation analysis) displaying self-destructive behaviour and suffering depression, suicidal thoughts/tendencies and self-mutilation. While this is a small group of adolescents compared to the high percentage of adolescents reported to be happy in the Caribbean Netherlands, equity focused approaches call for an understanding of the most vulnerable groups and their profile in order to better target necessary (preventive) interventions. These mental health concerns underscore the need for schools, with the support of relevant partners, to strengthen care circles around secondary school, youth care and parents to address violence, suicide ideation and self-harming behaviours.

The Ministry of VWS is encouraged to support the health sectors on all three islands to build on the 2013 and 2017 health studies and strengthen data collection and analysis, particularly with regard to children and adolescents, to link planning and service provision to health outcomes, and make data more accessible for evidence-based decisions, reporting and budgeting (see recommendation 27 in chapter 4). Additionally, toward this end, the Ministry of VWS is encouraged to commission a light research on adolescent well-being, behaviours and mental health compatible with existing PAHO studies in the region to support an understanding of the most vulnerable adolescents and the use of the adequate language and channels to reach them (recommendation 22). The expertise of CBS would be useful here and this data could serve to expand data reported in the Youth Monitor for the Caribbean Netherlands.

Sexual health education is taught in schools on the islands in varying degrees. The need to introduce sex education in schools was mentioned in 2012 by the Municipal Health Service Den Haag and again in 2016 by the Ministry of VWS.¹⁴⁸ In the 2013 situation analysis, sexual health among adolescents, their ability to access services confidentially, and high teenage pregnancy rates were listed as issues. As mentioned above, confidential access to health care services remains a barrier for adolescents. The challenges with developing robust enough sex education programmes, the capacity to consistently implement them and the full support of schools has proven challenging on all three islands. Particularly on St. Eustatius, where the initiation of the Strong Roots programme has been repeatedly delayed due to gaps in human resources among other factors. Despite these challenges, the teenage pregnancy rate on all three islands has reduced. This can be seen as a very positive development considering the potentially negative effects young motherhood can have on a teenager's psychosocial development, prospects to get a higher education, and the socio-economic outcomes for mother and child. Childhood obesity was also listed as an issue in the 2013 situation analysis and the rates remain quite high.

Opportunities to expand health-promoting programmes in schools, among other locations, appear to be more promising with the recent signing of the Sport and Prevention Agreements between the public entities and the Ministry of VWS. VWS will make 1.5 million euros available each year for a healthier Caribbean Netherlands, with more attention to prevention and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The agreements contain the following themes: obesity, problematic alcohol use, smoking and drug use, sport and exercise, sexual health, and vital organizations on sport and prevention. The results of the recently conducted health study serve as a basis for the objectives of the agreements. For example, considering the low level of physical activity on the islands, programmes will seek to address the issue of availability and accessibility to facilities by expanding and refurbishing sports fields and play areas in neighbourhoods, and recruit more community coaches to stimulate physical activity. Although the programme is broad and does not specify a focus on the youth, a separate youth focus will include curriculum at schools on risky behaviours (alcohol and drug use, and sexual health) and maintaining a healthy diet. Opportunities to develop athletic talents through expert organizations are also being explored.¹⁴⁹ This element would be opportune considering the concern among young people and their parents that students were not getting enough opportunities at school to develop talent. It would also be opportune for the programs to provide sufficient opportunities for professionals in schools to be trained on adolescents' mental, sexual and reproductive health. Additionally, encouraging adolescents' participation in developing health and educational materials can provide

148 Diaz, A.M. (2012). Ministry of VWS. (2016).

149 Letter to the House of Representatives from the State Secretary of VWS. July 2019.

important inputs on the best way to reach their cohort. **The Ministry of VWS is encouraged to ensure that all public entity plans funded by the agreement are based on a good baseline measurement, with clear measurable objectives, a monitoring and evaluation framework, and regular reports indicating progress on predetermined goals. It should also ensure that public entities have the capacity to develop such monitoring frameworks and that the youth are able to provide input in the programs that are intended to directly target and make a difference for them** (see chapter 4 recommendation 29 on monitoring and evaluation frameworks for governing programs and recommendation 30 for youth participation in program development).

Considering the low rates of breastfeeding, baseline studies would help to gain a better understanding of individuals' motivations and attitudes regarding breastfeeding. This information could be used to design targeted campaigns to increase the practice of breastfeeding among young mothers and routinely measure the results. Similarly, based on the available 2017 Health Study data, it is important that public entities inform parents and adults about the negative effects of second-hand smoke on children through targeted campaigns. Saba is already under way.¹⁵⁰



150 See Saba News, July 2019: Saba introduces smoke free play grounds.





4.

Government coordination,
collaboration, and cooperation

4. Government coordination, collaboration, and cooperation

The advancement of children's rights in the small-island contexts of the Caribbean Netherlands requires strategic planning and structural investments across multiple sectors which makes effective government leadership and coordination essential. The 2013 situation analyses made note of the issue of temporality on the part of The Hague, whereby good initiatives often have the character of a plan, project or pilot with temporary financing and capacity, rather than a structural commitment and long-term vision. The recently initiated BES(t) 4 Kids programme and the Sport and Prevention Agreement stand out as among the latest efforts of the Dutch Government to support more structural programming on the three islands. Ideally, in going forward, structural planning such as these will become the norm. The 2013 analysis also underscored the need for interventions to be suitable for the context in the Caribbean Netherlands. While this current analysis finds that ministry representatives appear for the most part to have a clearer awareness of the importance of learning from the region to implement context appropriate initiatives, expertise and practices from the European part of the Netherlands is customarily utilized. In some exceptional cases, an effort has been made to partner with other Dutch Caribbean islands to exchange knowledge and best practices (see examples in Chapter 3).

The 2013 report also stressed the importance of shared responsibility and an integrated approach to policymaking and implementation by relevant government authorities as opposed to the discipline-based compartmentalization that is typical for the ministries in The Hague. While the shared involvement in the BES(t) 4 Kids program and the initiation of the ministry/the Hague level Interdepartmental Consultation Youth (IDO Jeugd) are both steps in the right direction, cooperation between local and national government authorities and between ministries is not always ideal, encumbered by coordination issues.¹⁵¹ This is particularly the case when tasks are rolled out over several ministries or assigned between the public entity and the national Government, as is the case for youth care and child protection. Low levels of satisfaction with administrative performance were clearly noted in the *Caribbean Netherlands five years after the transition* evaluation.¹⁵² On the other hand, since laws and regulations arise from the stability of the Dutch system, transparency and proper administration are priorities. The 2013 analyses also highlighted the lack of data to effectively and routinely monitor and report on the situation of children, and develop and revise policies and plans. This limitation also applies to monitoring the effectiveness of government programs. While ministries and public entities are often able to report on programs in terms of outputs, reporting on the resulting impact of initiatives is harder without robust baselines and corresponding measurable goals.

151 Participating ministries include BZK (lead), VWS, SZW, OCW, and J&V. See IdeeVersa (2019) conclusions for a list of ways in which the coordinating role of BZK could be strengthened in the area of youth.

152 Bijl, R., & Pommer, E. (2015).

Despite available budgetary and human resources, in the areas of government leadership and coordination and data on the situation of children, the following emerging challenges have been identified based on interviews and discussions with government representatives on the public entities and in the Hague.

Coordination between ministries and island governments

Although elaborating and issuing laws remains a competency at the national level, many policies and ordinances can be finalized at the island government level. Drafting policies and ordinances, which are generally grounded in specific legal text or laws, can be complicated by the inapplicability of certain laws to the local context. Many key legal texts, project plans and policy documents remain in draft form, requiring various actions for completion and implementation. The process for consultation (bottom-up and among colleagues) can be slow and cumbersome. Getting input from higher levels (ministry officials) often requires consultation at the level of The Hague to ensure coherence with the laws. By the time the work reaches the stage of approval and dissemination, there may have been staff turnovers in key positions, further delaying dissemination and implementation. Personnel are often held accountable for policy development, but sometimes do not have the authority to enforce inter-agency cooperation or to freely access information essential to the tasks. Without full capacity to assess and analyze the situation, plan and identify accountabilities including the preparation of laws, policies, budgets and plans, and to implement and follow-up on programmes, it is challenging to ensure the optimal use of resources and the best possible results consistent with international standards. **Relevant ministries are encouraged to empower local governments to be more effective policymakers by decentralizing authority to make key decisions** (*recommendation 23*).

Civil servants at the Public Entities express a sense of powerlessness when assigned tasks without the “toolbox” to get the job done. This can be demotivating. For example, consulted civil servants have noted cases where ministries request that an implementation plan, proposal for subsidies or project plans be prepared at the local level, but do not equip the local teams with the necessary planning skills and know-how. This results in a “doomed to fail” situation. Actions do not meet expectations, or a period of inertia commences where one side waits for the other to act. While most administrative personnel are theoretically equipped with planning capacities, refresher courses could sharpen abilities to practice and lead many processes. Additionally, due to the relatively young and complex governance structure, leadership on planning-related research, drafting and consulting can be unclear. The lack of clarity on expectations and on who does what and when can paralyse policy processes. **Relevant ministries together with the public entities are encouraged to conduct skills/team/trust-building exercises between the layers of government and non-state actors that will foster participatory policy development and programme design, cultivate island ownership and motivate the mutual accountability required for long-term planning** (*recommendation 24*).

Coordination between ministries

In considering the various administrative responsibilities in the field of children’s rights and that every ministry has the authority to initiate and implement initiatives related to children’s rights on the three islands, **the relevant ministries are encouraged to invest more in instruments to strengthen coordination in the field of children’s rights in general, but especially in the field of child protection, and ensure effective cooperation and coordination between the different departments before a new programme, action plan, administrative agreement and/or**



memorandum of understanding is introduced to improve the situation of children in the Caribbean Netherlands (*recommendation 25*).

An integrated approach on all levels

Over the past few years, the individual ministries have often determined what island issues are prioritized and placed on the agenda. This has led to conflicting interests and fragmented and short-term implementation of different projects. **With the support of the relevant ministries, each public entity is encouraged to develop and/or finalize a coherent, integrated and coordinated youth policy with a corresponding monitoring and evaluation framework. It should include a range of activities and facilities for young people to ensure that: (i) every child receives the necessary support to live their fullest lives, and no child falls between the cracks; (ii) information exchange improves; and (iii) funding flows are pooled** (*recommendation 26*). In this way, each public entity would determine what issues should be placed on the agenda and when and the respective ministries would support priorities and objectives set-out by each public entity.

A culture of data collection, sharing and use

Data is essential to provide evidence for policymaking. As is the case in many small island states, much needs to be done to promote information-sharing and transparency so that the right information is available at the right time, and in the right format. When data collection is in place in the Caribbean Netherlands, it is often gender-blind and lacks consistency, making comparison and analysis difficult. Evidence-based policymaking requires upgraded assessment and social planning capacity, including the capacity to monitor and evaluate programmes across the different levels of government, ministries and agencies that provide services to children and adolescents. It will be important to provide key opportunities for policy alignment, technical collaboration, and capacity- and team-building. The limited data on the status of children and adolescents (especially under 18 years of age) makes it difficult or nearly impossible to track the results of ministry and public entity initiatives, and progress toward the achievement of children's rights and the SDGs.

The Ministry of VWS commissioned the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) to publish an annual Youth Monitor for the Caribbean Netherlands from 2016 – 2020. The Caribbean Netherlands Youth Monitor and the Netherlands Youth Monitor are published together in an annual report. In comparison, the data available for the Caribbean Netherlands is strikingly less than the data published for the Caribbean Netherlands. While data on births, family situation, education, and labor are published for the Caribbean Netherlands, in comparison to the Netherlands Youth Monitor, no data is published for the Caribbean Netherlands on the national backgrounds of children, youth care, the situation of families receiving financial aid, or youth in conflict with the law. With the intention to gradually expand the Youth Monitor for the Caribbean Netherlands, in 2018, CBS organized consultations with youth services professionals on the three islands to gauge the data they needed and what data is available.

An inventory of indicators which was developed on the basis of these consultations reveal that slightly more than half of the data needed by the professionals is available. However, CBS indicated that for many of the indicators, the available data is not always of publishable quality. Data professionals needed but was not available included data on school absenteeism, situation of young people after attaining a secondary school diploma, and the number of youth dealing with discrimination and bullying. The most significant data gap is in the area of youth care, child protection, and youth rehabilitation where data is not available for any of the indicators indicated as necessary by professionals. These include the share of children making use of youth care and reports of child abuse. Considering the attention on language policy development at schools, particularly on Bonaire, data on low literacy was also not available, but also not indicated as needed by the professionals, at least not those present at the consultation. It would be opportune for these consultations to continue with a broader range of professionals involved in program development and implementation in the Caribbean Netherlands and for CBS to provide advice on collecting data needed to monitor identified indicators. Apart from producing the Caribbean Netherlands Youth Monitor, CBS is well established in the Caribbean Netherlands and has forged partnerships with other statistics bureaus in the





Dutch Caribbean in producing the Dutch Caribbean Labor Force Survey for example. Such partnerships can present opportunities to compare developments regarding the situation of children and adolescents in the Dutch Caribbean but also potentially to the rest of the subregion through eventual partnerships with statistics bureaus of OECS countries for example.

Relevant ministries and public entities are encouraged to: (i) collaborate on strengthening data collection, sharing and use, taking an equitable approach and focusing on the most vulnerable children at risk of exclusion or in need; areas of particular interest concern youth care, child protection, domestic violence, juvenile justice, child poverty, children with disabilities, day care and after school center access, graduate success, and sexual and mental health; (ii) support local capacity to build on outcomes and recommendations of the situation analysis, and develop *systematic monitoring of the situation of children* and how policies address issues raised in the analysis; (iii) ensure that information and data specific to the situation in the Caribbean Netherlands is included in national publications as well as reports on progress towards international commitments, including the SDGs; (iv) promote the use of data, including social and behavioural data to prepare strategies for effective communication and awarenessraising campaigns (*recommendation 27*).

Toward this end, relevant ministries and public entities are also encouraged to employ the expertise, gained experience, and network of CBS in the Caribbean Netherlands. Strengthen their role and increase their resources to build capacity within the public entities to systematically generate the data needed by stimulating the use of standard approaches, data collection tools, and protocols over time. Ensure that CBS is able to continue to expand the Caribbean Netherlands Youth Monitor and that the capacity and resources is available for them to do so (*recommendation 28*).

In order to gauge the extent to which initiatives are achieving intended results, **relevant ministries and public entities are encouraged to make budgets available to invest in good baseline measurement, clear and measurable objectives, a monitoring and evaluation framework, and regular reports for every new programme, action plan, administrative agreement and memorandum of understanding introduced to improve the situation of children in the Caribbean Netherlands (recommendation 29).** This is currently most relevant for the **BES(t) 4 Kids program, the Sport and Prevention Agreement, the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Agreement, and the Inter-Country Task Force action plans.** In this way, successes and failures can be assessed, progress can be monitored, and lessons integrated into new and more effective plans.

Consultation processes with civil society and youth.

While mechanisms for consultation between the different government levels are somewhat in place, challenges persist in developing consultations with and among civil society members, such as churches, as well as communities. A lack of formal consultation and feedback mechanisms can result in unsupported initiatives. **Relevant ministries and public entities are encouraged to create and facilitate consistent consultation mechanisms with civil society and communities in order to ensure participatory processes and broad stakeholder buy-in. In so doing, ministries and public entities are also encouraged to provide opportunities for children and adolescents to express their perspectives as integral to upholding their rights. Use the input produced during consultations to plan and implement inclusive, policies and programs. In this way, children are not only beneficiaries of public policies and programs, but also participants and determinants of their own future and development (recommendation 30).**







5.

Summary of recommendations
and concluding remarks

5. Summary of recommendations and concluding remarks

UNICEF and the Kingdom of the Netherlands both support the belief that children's rights and well-being must be at the center of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and national development.¹⁵³ Sustainable development implies not only a consideration of challenges in the present, but also of how current actions will influence future economic, social and environmental well-being. For development to be sustainable, it is essential that children and adolescents are supported and cared for throughout their growth into adulthood, and provided with opportunities to reach their full potential as productive, engaged and capable citizens able to make a meaningful contribution to their family, community and society. Investing in children's rights and well-being is the most effective means to eradicate intergenerational poverty and vulnerability, boost shared prosperity and enhance social inclusion. Consequently, addressing inequity and child vulnerability must be at the top of the development agenda, not only to ensure children's fundamental rights, but also because they are the custodians and stewards of the collective future. Providing children with the means and the tools to meet these responsibilities is the task ahead and the duty of all.

Since the 10-10-10 constitutional change for Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba, and the last situation analysis for the three islands in 2013, investments in children, families and communities in the Caribbean Netherlands have been significant. Now, to meet the challenges ahead and achieve steady progress toward equitable and sustainable results, several barriers to improved outcomes for children must be overcome. Reviewing the key findings of the 2019 situation analysis of the Caribbean Netherlands, the following recommendations are presented per chapter for consideration.

Chapter three: situation of children and adolescents

This chapter examined the protection, standard of living, education, participation and health of children and adolescents as well as the challenges in achieving improved and sustained outcomes for them.

In the protection sector, legislative gaps need to be addressed. Coverage, although improving, is still not sufficiently child- and gender-responsive in terms of the provision of a comprehensive package of services for victims of domestic violence and child abuse. A number of factors increase vulnerability among children. Manifestations of this vulnerability are: authoritarian childrearing practices, violence and sexual abuse against children and women, neglect and abandonment of children, and children in conflict with the law. There is a need to build on efforts to

¹⁵³ P. L. Lucas et al. (2016)

date, particularly in the area of foster care, and work toward innovative solutions for children in need of residential care. Other gaps are evident in the lack of shelters and assistance for abused women and children, insufficient coordination among agencies and weak information management systems.

Recommendations on protection

1. The Ministry of VWS, in close partnership with the Ministry of J&V, is encouraged to conduct a legal gap analysis, which is one of the activities listed in the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Administrative Agreement, along with a specific roadmap, necessary budget and clarification on how and when the Istanbul Convention will be ratified for the Caribbean Netherlands.
2. The Ministry of VWS is encouraged to put in place a comprehensive legislative framework that provides clarity on roles, responsibilities and respective actions (reporting right, reporting code and point, restrictive orders, compulsory registration/monitoring for sex offenders, house ban for perpetrators of domestic violence, etc.).
3. The Ministry of J&V is encouraged to: (i) ensure that when detained, young people are held separately from adult criminals; (ii) safeguard the pedagogical nature of juvenile criminal law by providing guidance, education, and skills training for juvenile detainees; and (iii) guarantee contact between minors and parents if the detention takes place on an island other than the child's residential island.
4. The Ministry of J&V is encouraged to 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.
5. The Ministry of VWS is encouraged to facilitate guidance for professionals on how to engage in conversation with abused children to ensure that discussions are not only about the children but also with the children.
6. The Ministry of VWS is encouraged to 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.
7. The Ministry of VWS, in close partnership with the Ministry of J&V, are encouraged to invest in technical assistance, and/or make available necessary funds from the Dutch Government to raise the standard of services for child protection, to enable shared services for shelters and alternative care institutes, and to stimulate cooperation between Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire, and St. Eustatius, Saba and St. Maarten.
8. The Public Entities, with the support of the Ministry of VWS, are encouraged to develop a tracking and monitoring coordination mechanism to inform multiple stakeholders on the wide range of actions being undertaken to ensure that no child is left behind. Stakeholders should routinely meet to assess progress, share information and data, pool funding flows where relevant and conduct operational oversight. Such a process should include a monitoring and evaluation framework to manage and reduce the risks of non-achievement of expected outcomes.
9. The Public Entities are encouraged to take the lead in consolidating parenting programmes and adopting strategies to create more demand for these programmes which will be vital to eliminating violence against children, neglect and abuse.

10. The Public Entities, with the support of the Ministry of VWS, is encouraged to conduct a baseline survey of attitudes on violence against women and children essential to understand perceptions, to establish working terminology for domestic violence and child abuse, to define key messages within different advocacy and awareness campaigns, and to allow measurement of the effectiveness of campaigns.
11. The Public Entities are encouraged to facilitate discussions to sort through and build consensus on defining cases of emotional abuse, financial abuse and psychological abuse, among others, and to understand that domestic violence can be gender-blind and/or take place between same-sex partners.

Poverty alleviation is a challenging endeavor, but the governments are geared toward taking it on. An understanding of the multi-dimensional manifestations of poverty and development of multi-dimensional approaches to poverty alleviation, will help government to target the right members of the local populations with the right interventions.

Recommendations on poverty alleviation efforts

12. The Ministry of SZW, together with the Public Entities and other partners, is encouraged to carry out a multi-dimensional poverty study to gather baseline information on indigence, poverty and vulnerability, including the underlying causes. This can help to better inform priorities to sharpen targeting of the right households and funding.
13. The Ministry of SZW is also encouraged, on the basis of the results of the multidimensional poverty study, to strengthen their multidisciplinary approach so that poverty reduction interventions can be planned, coordinated and monitored effectively and efficiently.
14. The Ministry of SZW is also encouraged to conduct a child poverty analysis to fill the gap in data on child poverty rates.
15. The Ministry of SZW is encouraged to ensure that the public entities have sufficient capacity to implement poverty reduction strategies.

In education, marked advancements have included better quality of education and education infrastructure. Additional improvements are expected in the area of early childhood development since the advent of the BES(t) 4 Kids programme. More can be done starting from pre-primary, primary and secondary education to support every child's educational experience, and transition to tertiary education or the labour market.

Recommendations on education

16. Schools and policymakers at the Ministry of OCW, in consultation with the Inspectorate, are encouraged to use the momentum surrounding Dutch as a foreign language education to 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.
17. Each of the public entities, and Bonaire in particular, is encouraged to make use of compulsory education registration systems to monitor trends and report on the number of dropouts on their island.
18. All schools in the Caribbean Netherlands, with the support of the ministry of OCW, are encouraged to integrate children's rights education and participation activities into their curriculum so that

participation becomes a core part of school organizational culture and children's educational experience and that children are better able to think critically for themselves and express their opinions in informed decision-making processes.

19. Secondary schools, with the support of OCW RCN, are also encouraged to scale up guidance and support for students (and families) transitioning from secondary to tertiary education, vocational education or the labour market and explore options to develop a graduate tracking system that provides insight into graduates' success so that the results can be used to make any necessary improvements to prepare students for the transition.
20. The Public Entities, with the support of the Ministry of SZW, is encouraged to bring early stimulation to the household and engage parents to complement what is being done in day care.
21. The Public Entities, with the support of the Ministry of SZW, are encouraged to design and implement a sustained media initiative targeting parents/caregivers on the importance of early stimulation and early childcare to ensure that they have the information they need to provide the right care for their children.

In health, the quality of services is high which is reflected in a number of surveys. Quality is partly influenced by the strength of the enabling policy and regulatory environment. More can still be done on sexual health education and mental health for youngsters, and the availability of and access to data and analysis can be strengthened.

Recommendations on health

22. The Ministry of VWS is encouraged to commission a light research on adolescent well-being, behaviours and mental health compatible with existing PAHO studies in the region to support an understanding of the most vulnerable adolescents and the use of the adequate language and channels to reach them.

Chapter four: government coordination, collaboration, and cooperation

The Netherlands has a well-established legal and policy domain that effectively sets out a vision for national development, economic growth and poverty reduction. This basis has propelled the Caribbean Netherlands closer to a comprehensive regulatory environment, even if more efforts are required to adopt and maximize the enforcement of laws designed to protect children, adolescents and women. Within sectors, key priorities are well established for the three islands, although not yet articulated into overarching sector and subsector policies and guidelines at the local level. Regarding the implementation of public policy, the Government has been particularly effective in ensuring that visions, principles and strategies are budgeted and actionable. The layers of government have also consistently demonstrated a constructive and open approach to policy development and a willingness to engage in dialogue to develop policies and guidelines. These enable intersectoral collaboration across government line ministries, institutions and agencies, and have resulted, for example, in drafts of the penal code for juvenile justice and the early childhood development/day-care policy.

Although the layers of government have established policy foundations conducive to the realization of children's rights and begun to put in place mechanisms for improved cooperation, more could be done to strengthen coordination between the ministries and the public entities by clarifying intersectoral accountabilities, and building local government and sectoral capacity for working together on policy development. This is crucial to articulate policy frameworks that reflect children consistently and holistically, to assess the effectiveness of services and resources employed, and to implement proposed legislation. More could also be done to strengthen coordination and accountabilities between line ministries by ensuring that intersectoral implications in policies are better comprehended and acted upon, especially on a public entity level; by ensuring that results frameworks, and management and coordination mechanisms are better oriented towards achieving cross-sectoral objectives determined together with the public entities; and by constantly improving and refining implementation modalities.

The implementation of multisectoral policy will also benefit from an improved culture of monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the right things are being done, the right people are being targeted and that the desired results are being achieved, in the areas of poverty reduction, domestic violence and child abuse, and early childhood development, among others. Methodically extracting, sharing and discussing lessons learned will improve programme efficiency and effectiveness, and assist stakeholders to continually refine implementation modalities through the mining and dissemination of good practices. Equally vital will be ongoing investments in developing capacity – especially at the public entity level – for the collection, analysis, cross-tabulation and utilization of data to refine and report on programme implementation and achieved results.

Recommendations on government coordination, collaboration and cooperation

23. Relevant ministries are encouraged to empower local governments to be more effective policymakers by decentralizing authority to make key decisions.
24. Relevant ministries together with the public entities are encouraged to conduct skills/team/trust-building exercises between the layers of government and non-state actors that will foster participatory policy development and programme design, cultivate island ownership and motivate the mutual accountability required for long-term planning.
25. The relevant ministries are encouraged to invest more in instruments to strengthen coordination in the field of children's rights in general, but especially in the field of child protection, and ensure effective cooperation and coordination between the different departments before a new programme, action plan, administrative agreement and/or memorandum of understanding is introduced to improve the situation of children in the Caribbean Netherlands.
26. With the support of the relevant ministries, each public entity is encouraged to develop and/or finalize a coherent, integrated and coordinated youth policy with a corresponding monitoring and evaluation framework. It should include a range of activities and facilities for young people to ensure that: (i) every child receives the necessary support to live their fullest lives, and no child falls between the cracks; (ii) information exchange improves; and (iii) funding flows are pooled.

27. Relevant ministries and public entities are encouraged to: (i) collaborate on strengthening data collection, sharing and use, particularly in the area of youth care, child protection, domestic violence, juvenile justice, child poverty, day care center access, graduate success, and sexual and mental health; (ii) support local capacity to build on outcomes and recommendations of the situation analysis, and develop *systematic monitoring of the situation of children* and how policies address issues raised in the analysis; (iii) ensure that information and data specific to the situation in the Caribbean Netherlands is included in national publications as well as reports on progress towards international commitments, including the SDGs; (iv) promote the use of data, including social and behavioral data to prepare strategies for effective communication and awareness raising campaigns.
28. Toward this end, relevant ministries and public entities are also encouraged to employ the expertise, gained experience, and network of CBS in the Caribbean Netherlands and strengthen their role and increase their resources to advise and build capacity within the public entities to systematically generate the data need. Ensure that CBS is able to continue to expand the Caribbean Netherlands Youth Monitor and that the capacity and resources is available for them to do so.
29. Relevant ministries and public entities are encouraged to make budgets available to invest in good baseline measurement, clear and measurable objectives, a monitoring and evaluation framework, and regular reports for every new programme, action plan, administrative agreement and memorandum of understanding introduced to improve the situation of children in the Caribbean Netherlands.
30. Relevant ministries and public entities are encouraged to create and facilitate consistent consultation mechanisms with civil society and communities in order to ensure participatory processes and broad stakeholder buy-in. In so doing, ministries and public entities are also encouraged to provide opportunities for children and adolescents to express their perspectives as integral to upholding their rights. Use the input produced during consultations to plan and implement inclusive, evidence-based policies that prioritize children and adolescents. In this way, children are not only beneficiaries of public policies, but also participants and determinants of their own development.

Concluding remarks

Based on the analysis of the situation of children in chapter three, this study can conclude by acknowledging progress in the realization of children's rights in the Caribbean Netherlands. However, the analysis also shows that challenges persist. While investments, both in human and financial resources have been significant, the analysis points to the need for these investments in social development to demonstrate clearer results and impact on the lives of children. Clarity regarding the results and impact of investments can help to determine whether or not the right interventions are being employed. Such reflections can identify cost-effective best practices which can then be scaled up and expanded through innovation and continued and more strategically targeted investments. In this way, the most efficient programs that have the best potential to achieve sustainable change can be prioritized and enhanced.

Due to limited or no data on for example, child abuse, child poverty, the success rate of secondary school graduates, and adolescent sexual and mental health, this situation analysis cannot conclude with a statement regarding whether the actual situation of children has improved since 2013. Nevertheless, this situation analysis report is intended to give continuity to the current discussions and development paths related to the well-being of children and adolescents on the islands.

In recognition of the 30th anniversary of the CRC, 30 recommendations have been formulated in this study and specifically addressed to the Dutch national government as primary duty-bearer for safeguarding children's rights, the three Public Entities, and other stakeholders. UNICEF Netherlands intends to continue its work with the public entities, national government, and other stakeholders to monitor the progress of their implementation. Most importantly, we encourage that the recommendations be further discussed and developed with the leadership and engagement of the people of the Caribbean Netherlands as champions of children's rights on the islands.

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. In moving forward, while all recommendations are relevant and important to address, priorities will have to be set. Many key recommendations reflect the following three priority areas which UNICEF Netherlands identifies as significant bottlenecks to the advancement of the rights of children in the Caribbean Netherlands.

In consideration of child and adolescent vulnerabilities on the three islands, UNICEF Netherlands proposes for parties responsible to:

- Introduce necessary laws and strengthen the policy environment as a basic condition, specifically in the area of child abuse and domestic violence.
- Strengthen coordination across the youth chain between ministries and between ministries and public entities; expand and strengthen intersectoral work, in partnership, bringing together different counterparts to seek the best solutions in order to meet the needs and guarantee the rights of children and adolescents in a systemic way.
- Improve monitoring the progress of interventions: ensure that all programs are backed-up by baselines and strong monitoring frameworks, that involved implementers have the capacity to use them, and that the data is available for indicators to measure progress.

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Corrections to the initial version of this report which was published in October 2019

The initial version of this report erroneously stated that women head 23 per cent, 38 per cent and 10 per cent of households on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba, respectively. These figures were referred to in section 2.3. pg. 30, section 3.2.3. on pg. 57, and in section 3.3.3. in table 10 on pg. 65 and in table 14 on pg. 70. In this version of the report, the figures have been removed from the aforementioned areas with the exception of table 10. In table 10 the figures remain with the corrected description, namely, that they represent the percentage of children 0-4 years old in the Caribbean Netherlands living in single-parent households. In section 2.3. pg. 30 and section 3.2.3. on pg. 57, the figures have been replaced with the following information : 29% of children ages 0-18 in the Caribbean Netherlands live in single-parent households (CBS, 2018).

The initial version of this report erroneously stated in section 2.3. pg. 28 that there were 5,483 children 0-18 years old and 1,175 young people 19-24 years old living in the Caribbean Netherlands (based on data retrieved from CBS on July 11th 2019). In this version of the report, the figures have been corrected and now state 5,417 and 1,487 respectively.

The initial version of this report stated, in the executive summary on pg. 13 and in section 3.1.4. on pg. 48, that there is no legal ban on corporal punishment in the Caribbean Netherlands. For clarity, in this updated version of the report these statements have been changed to state that there is no legislation explicitly prohibiting corporal punishment of children in all settings.

The initial version of this report stated, in the executive summary on pg. 14 and in section 3.4.4. on pg. 93, that there was a decrease in teenage pregnancies in the Caribbean Netherlands. For clarity, in this updated version of the report these statements have been changed to state that there is a decrease in the rate of recorded teenage pregnancies in the Caribbean Netherlands.



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