



# CORONA CRISIS AND CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS ON SABA

**Rapid Risk Assessment**

## COLOPHON

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# INTRODUCTION

Along with the rest of the world, with two confirmed cases, Saba was not spared the direct consequences of COVID-19 despite its isolation. With the Public Entity Saba (from here, OLS)<sup>1</sup> in the lead of crisis management, schools were closed for eight weeks from March 19th and re-opened on May 18th 2020. During the school closures, children's regular education and direct contact with teachers were interrupted and their movement restricted. The strict social distancing measures, temporary closure of the Saba University School of Medicine and travel ban that were put in place brought the tourism sector to a standstill, which affected many already vulnerable families. The lockdown ended on Saba on May 10th. However, up until the date of publication of this report, there had been no indication of when the travel restrictions will end. COVID-19 not only disrupted public life, health care and the economy, it also put children's safety and their future at risk. While children appear to be less vulnerable to the virus itself, the consequences of the measures taken affected them significantly. Although the Corona measures have all been necessary understandable, it remains important for sufficient attention to be paid to the consequences for (vulnerable) children and adolescents and to the safeguarding of their rights.

This assessment report serves to assist OLS and partners, including the Dutch Government, with identifying necessary actions needed to respond to the risks and needs of the most vulnerable children and their families as the crisis continues, while also taking preventive and preparatory actions in the event of future crises. UNICEF Netherlands urges all authorities involved to centrally consider the rights and the best interest of the child in all measures taken during the Corona crisis and other crisis situations.

## Methodology & limitations

This report is primarily based on a rapid risk assessment held with a representative of the OLS' Community Development Department on May 6th, 2020. A brief account of identified and possible risks faced by children during the crisis and the responses by OLS and partner organizations was provided. Follow-up information and clarity was requested and a draft of the report has been reviewed by other relevant persons within OLS. Where possible and to a very limited extent, accounts can be corroborated by sources retrieved from the public domain. The assessment report is based on what is known about the situation until now and is therefore incomplete.

The framework for this rapid risk assessment is largely based on risks and possible responses identified in the 'Technical Note: Protection of Children during the Coronavirus Pandemic V1'<sup>2</sup> prepared by the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. Other monitoring instruments produced by UNICEF, based on experiences in other crises, were also considered when developing the framework. The assessment has a child protection focus including cross-cutting themes on social protection, nutrition, and education, and to a lesser degree health and WASH. Each thematic section begins with a short description of the situation under regular circumstances or 'before the crisis' based on findings from the 2019 Situation Analysis on Children and Adolescents in the Caribbean Netherlands. The sections continue with a list of identified and possible risks and the response to these risks organized

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<sup>1</sup> Openbaar Lichaam Saba

<sup>2</sup> At the end of May 2020 this document was adapted to Version 2

by OLS and partners. Recommendations are presented by UNICEF Netherlands related to gaps identified in the response and based on suggested responses formulated in the aforementioned Technical Note among other sources. Reference has also been made to recommendations formulated in the 2019 Situation Analysis on Children and Adolescents in the Caribbean Netherlands where these prove to be relevant during the Corona crisis as risks to children previously identified during the study may have been exacerbated during this period. Where relevant, recommendations are accompanied by available technical information on the subject.

# 1. PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT

The Convention on the Rights of the Child articles 19, 34, 39: children are entitled to protection against all forms of violence, mistreatment, abuse and neglect. Also during crises.

## The situation before the crisis

Domestic violence and various forms of abuse pose significant threats to women and children in the Caribbean Netherlands. This issue was signaled in both the 2013 and 2019 Situation Analyses and in several other studies conducted within and after that time. Because of the taboo surrounding this topic, people are not always inclined to report to the competent authorities.<sup>3</sup>

## Identified and possible risks to children during the crisis

- Children may have experienced *maltreatment* during the lockdown and school closures. Some parents may have been panicking, stressed out, and feeling overwhelmed. There were no actual signals of this; rather, the concern is that some parents may have struggled to consistently meet the needs of their children while struggling with feeling overwhelmed themselves.
- Relationships that were instable prior to the Corona crisis may have been under additional pressure due to confinement indoors and other stress factors. This may have contributed to an increased risk of *domestic violence, physical violence and other forms of abuse of children* within these households. Two cases were reported by stakeholders to Youth Care and Family Supervision (JGCN).
- *Sexual exploitation* of children is, under regular circumstances, a taboo on Saba. However, professionals, among others, believe that it is a problem on the island. For example, when parents are struggling financially and send their children to “beg for money” or in situations of overcrowding when children are left unsupervised with unsuitable persons. With some parents struggling financially during the Corona crisis, there is an increased risk for children to be exploited in this way. There is no substantial evidence of this, anecdotal reporting of this is also limited.
- Children may be at *risk of injuries and other dangers*, due to limited or inadequate supervision of children, such as harm from ingesting or being exposed to toxic products. There have not however been any reports of this from the hospital. If there were cases, in the absence of a ‘reporting code on child abuse’, the hospital does not currently have a legal obligation to report these cases to the protection or social services.

<sup>3</sup> See relevant sources in Situation Analysis Children and Adolescents in the Caribbean Netherlands, 2019, chapter 3.1. [https://www.unicef.nl/files/Situation%20Analysis%20Children%20and%20Adolescents%20in%20the%20Caribbean%20Netherlands%202019%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.unicef.nl/files/Situation%20Analysis%20Children%20and%20Adolescents%20in%20the%20Caribbean%20Netherlands%202019%20(1).pdf)

For more recent sources see Bijdragen van de Justitiele Partijen aan de Aanpak van Huiselijk Geweld in Caribisch Nederland. <http://www.raadrechtshandhaving.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Eindrapport-huiselijk-rapport-CN.pdf>

## Response to risks by OLS and partners

In general, there is no insight into what is happening at the homes. Professionals are usually able to gauge the well-being of children through school, day-care, and after school care contacts. However, this access was interrupted with the closure of these institutions. JGCN and OLS social services had been in regular contact with vulnerable families throughout the lockdown. The OLS Community Development Department (social services) communicated through their Facebook page about where persons could access help and support. Infographics were also posted with regards to how parents can talk to their children about the crisis. Child Focus and Expertise Center Education Care (EC2) also regularly posted child friendly information, tips, and challenges for children on their Facebook pages. It is unclear to what extent children also received direct access to this information.

The social and child protection services have not been pressured by the situation and there is no apparent lack of access to services. During the lockdown, JGCN primarily utilized electronic means and virtual meetings as needed in order to maintain contact with their clients. There may be situations where interventions may have been necessary before the crisis and these families remain difficult to reach.

During the lockdown, different organizations were also reaching out and having contact with parents. But it is unclear whether this was enough and it remains unclear what experiences children were going through at home. EC2 did have direct contact with some vulnerable children during that time who had already been receiving their education-care support. EC2 opened a helpline for children and parents. However, the uptake of this service was reported to have been limited.

The crisis highlighted that a lot more needs to be done to protect children (in times of crises). As it is expected that the crisis will continue in waves, OLS is considering what preventative measures still need to be taken. For example, how to create an effective mechanism for children to access help directly when necessary. Different ways to ensure direct contact with children were considered, however, OLS is very cautious about labeling children and exposing their vulnerabilities.

And due to privacy limitations, there needs to be real signals to intervene in a family environment.

## Recommendations for gaps in response

- Ensure that an inventory of vulnerable children, their families, and their protection needs are prepared in advance and readily available in the event of a crisis/disaster. Ensure that there is a broad understanding and consensus among partners about how to access needed information in consideration of privacy protocols.
- Develop child-friendly and age and gender appropriate messages on COVID-19, associated child protection risks and available services. Ensure that these messages reach, especially vulnerable, children and adolescents directly. Display the messages in schools. During distance education contexts, ensure that these messages are otherwise communicated to children, adolescents and their parents.
- Establish mechanisms to ensure that during situations while restrictions on movement are in place, that children at risk of experiencing violence have continued access to child-friendly, holistic care.
  - Ensure that there are no interruptions to social and child protection services during crisis situations; enable vulnerable children and their families to have continued access to services throughout crisis situations.

- Ensure that schools and youth protection can also keep in touch with vulnerable children living in unsafe home situations, even in crisis situations. This should also be possible if there is no internet or mobile device available.
- Ensure that there are available safe options for children to reach out for support on child protection matters.
- Revise or develop SOPs with the health sector and others to ensure the safe identification and referral of children at risk. See SitAn recommendation: put in place a comprehensive legislative framework in the area of domestic violence and child abuse, which will serve to better protect children, especially during crises.
- Involve children and adolescents when making further plans related to child protection during crisis situations.
- See also: COVID-19 response: Considerations for Children and Adults with Disabilities and Life in the Times of COVID-19: A Guide for Parents of Children with Disabilities.



## 2. SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The Convention on the Rights of the Child article 27: all children are entitled to access to social security provisions and an adequate standard of living.

### The situation before the crisis

43 per cent of households on Saba had income lower than the average monthly budget needed for basic expenses (up to 90 per cent of the reference budget). 36 per cent 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).<sup>4</sup> There is currently no specific data available on the number of children living in poverty. Approximately 10, 30 and 38 percent, of 0-4 year old's, 4 to 12 year old's, and 12 to 18 year old's live with just one of their parents. 95 percent of children on Saba living in a single-parent household have a working parent.<sup>5</sup> Comparatively, in the European part of the Netherlands, 67 percent of the children in one-parent families have a working parent. Despite their labor participation, figures from 2016 indicate that single-parent households in the Caribbean Netherlands have very low standardized income or purchasing power.<sup>6</sup> Focus groups and interviews during the 2019 Situation Analysis uncovered what appears to be a stigma around collecting welfare. Most interviewees opted to work several part-time jobs in the informal sector to make ends meet.<sup>7</sup>

### Identified and possible risks to children during the crisis

- *Children living in poverty*, in households with families that were already struggling, may have encountered increased hardships.
- During the lockdown, people were *not allowed to leave the home environment* except for some exceptions. People were eventually allowed to walk outside for certain times a day. Some families could be seen walking with their children throughout their neighborhoods. It is unclear whether vulnerable families also took advantage of this opportunity to spend time with their children outside. There was not much opportunity for outside play for children which possibly exacerbates the issue of children spending a lot of time on online games.
- Children in vulnerable households may not have had *access to adequate nutrition*. It is also assumed that children may have been eating a lot while at home, but not necessarily the most healthy food.

### Response to risks by OLS and partners

The pre-existing list of vulnerable families expanded as more families were in need of support. OLS collaborated with stakeholders to complete an inventory of vulnerable families and other families at risk. It was difficult to build new relationships with the new families as contact was very limited. OLS had a virtual help-desk in place. Social cases were referred to the OLS social services team. A lot of the immigrant population work in the tourism sector which was heavily

<sup>4</sup> Onderzoek naar het ijkpunt voor het sociaal minimum voor Caribisch Nederland, 2018, see pg. 54 or 67. <https://www.regioplan.nl/wp-content/uploads/data/file/2017/17128-Eindrapport-Ijkpunt-sociaal-minimum-Caribisch-Nederland-Regioplan.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Jaarrapport Landelijke Jeugd Monitor 2018, see pg. 118. <https://longreads.cbs.nl/jeugdmonitor-2018/>

<sup>6</sup> The average disposable and standardized incomes of different households per island, 2016, CBS.

<sup>7</sup> See Situation Analysis Children and Adolescents in the Caribbean Netherlands, 2019, chapter 3.2. [https://www.unicef.nl/files/Situation%20Analysis%20Children%20and%20Adolescents%20in%20the%20Caribbean%20Netherlands%202019%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.unicef.nl/files/Situation%20Analysis%20Children%20and%20Adolescents%20in%20the%20Caribbean%20Netherlands%202019%20(1).pdf)

impacted by the lockdown. Some companies had difficulties paying salaries. It is not entirely clear what the consequences will be for families with children. The Public Entities have brought an increase in poverty to the attention of the Dutch Government. The Dutch Government has put emergency financial regulations in place to support businesses impacted by the crisis.<sup>8</sup> A temporary reduction in the costs for water, electricity and internet has also been arranged until the end of this year.<sup>9</sup> And budgets for food packages<sup>10</sup> and educational devices<sup>11</sup> for students have also been made available.

OLS' social services team's focus has been on the provision of food to the vulnerable families. This allowed the team to see how the families were doing and to assess moods. However, this did not provide insight into the home environment or enable direct contact with the children as parents collected the food without the children present.

Under regular circumstances, the secondary school provides school meals. During school closures, the school continued to offer food baskets for some families. The After School Care, EC2 and Child Focus also contributed to food baskets for families. The food baskets should have been sufficient for a two week period. The Public Health Department assisted people in quarantine. The Red Cross assisted the supermarkets and pharmacy with deliveries of food and medication.

A regular limitation on Saba is that almost all food supplies are imported. Fruit sources tend to be expensive under regular circumstances and this remained an issue during the lockdown. The community gardens were still up and running and providing delivery services. The OLS garden gave vegetable donations and these were provided by the OLS social services team to vulnerable families.

While the aforementioned services and relief were provided, there is no guarantee that everyone in need of assistance were reached.

EC2 did have direct contact with some vulnerable children during the lockdown who had already been receiving their education-care support; including children with disabilities.

### Recommendations for gaps in response

- Maintain an inventory of vulnerable families and families at risk of becoming vulnerable and in need of social assistance due to shocks resulting from pandemics, hurricanes, or other crisis and disaster situations.
- Make combatting child poverty a spearhead of government policy in tackling this crisis. Gain a better understanding of vulnerabilities and deprivations in order to know how and pro-actively plan to readily support those in need. See SitAn recommendations:
  - conduct a child poverty analysis to fill the gap in data on child poverty rates and to better monitor the (short and longer-term) impact of the crisis on children in vulnerable households.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/caribische-deel-van-het-koninkrijk/nieuws/2020/04/16/eerste-bedragen-noodregeling-caribisch-nederland-uitbetaald>

<sup>9</sup> Kamerbrief extra maatregelen Caribisch Nederland in verband met COVID-19, 24 april 2020. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2020/04/24/kamerbrief-extra-maatregelen-caribisch-nederland-in-verband-met-covid-19>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Kamerbrief over Ondersteuning leerlingen bij onderwijs op afstand [https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven\\_regering/detail?id=2020Z07949&did=2020D16981](https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven_regering/detail?id=2020Z07949&did=2020D16981)

- carry out a multi-dimensional poverty study to gather baseline information on poverty and deprivations, in order to readily scale up all necessary services and target children and families in need during crises.
- Involve children and young people in developing poverty alleviation measures during crisis situations; ensure that information is understandable to them.
- In the event of future lockdowns, actively encourage vulnerable families and especially those living in social housing to play with their children outdoors during times when movement restrictions are relaxed. Provide a list of ideas for play and games for the different age groups, including adolescents and those of ECD age.
- Arrange with supermarkets to reserve fruit sources for vulnerable families.
- See also: [Life in the Times of Covid 19: A Guide for Parents of Children with Disabilities](#) and [COVID-19 response: Considerations for Children and Adults with Disabilities](#)

# 3. ALTERNATIVE CARE & YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, articles 20, 37 and 40: children who cannot live with their own parents have the right to extra protection. If a child is in conflict with the law special provisions must be in place to handle the case and detention is only allowed under exceptional cases.

## The situation before the crisis

On Saba residential care and foster care are not available. Alternatives are arranged within the Caribbean Netherlands or further throughout the Kingdom when necessary. The same applies for children in conflict with the law who have to be placed in facilities.

## Identified and possible risks to children during the crisis

- There are currently no children on or from Saba in detention. However, during the lockdown, young boys may have been engaged in *increased risky behaviors*. There is an already vulnerable group of boys who already have issues with authority and their stress levels and pressure may be higher during the crisis.
- The assumption is that *children placed in alternative care* abroad prior to the Corona crisis have been in continued contact with their parents during the crisis. There have been no children placed in alternative care during or due to the crisis.
- A major concern is the lack of suitable alternative placement with adequate supervision for children and adults if they had to be placed outside of their home during the crisis.

## Recommendations for gaps in response

- Scale up preventative services targeting at-risk and vulnerable adolescents, especially during crises situations and lockdowns.
- Ensure that there is suitable alternative placement with adequate supervision for children and adults if they have to be placed outside of their home during the crisis.
- Provide staff with necessary information regarding the protection of children during the covid-19 pandemic. See:
  - Protection of Children During the COVID-19 Pandemic : Children and Alternative Care: Immediate Response Measures.
  - Technical Note: COVID-19 and Children Deprived of their Liberty
  - Social Service Workforce Safety and Wellness during the COVID-19 Response: Recommended Actions

# 4. MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DISTRESS

Articles in the Convention on the Rights of the Child on education, free time, information, participation, health, and adequate standard of living are all connected to the mental health of children and adolescents.

## The situation before the crisis

In the 2017 Caribbean Netherlands 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. This data was not available for younger children.

## Identified and possible risks to children during the crisis

- *Children may be distressed* due to their parents reaction to and fear of the unknown. During the lockdown and spending all day at home with family members, children may have overheard conversations regarding COVID-19 and response measures, without being clearly explained about the disease and why the measures were necessary. Parents may also be struggling with an inability to maintain structure which can also be distressing for children.
- Children and parents with *pre-existing and undiagnosed mental health conditions* who are not willing to accept the possible support they need were a concern during the lockdown. There was a concern about how the situation may have been worsening their condition and influenced their behavior and interaction with others. Persons having the issues have to be willing to receive the support and parents have to allow their children to receive the support they may need. This was not identified as a concern for people already receiving MHPSS services from the Mental Health Caribbean (MHC).
- *Teachers may have been stressed by and unprepared to handle the new challenges of distance education and digital teaching.* This may have impacted their ability to teach and tend to the needs of their students via online platforms and it may have impacted their ability to provide consistent and quality education. The distress may have also impacted their ability to resume regular teaching when schools re-open.

## Response to risks by OLS and partners

There have been no reported pressure on or lack of access to MHPSS services. MHC continued to offer online support and direct support for their clients who needed it. EC2 opened a helpline for children and parents. It is unclear to what extent this service was used. Child Focus shared ideas on child-friendly activities and communication material on their Facebook page. Tips and ideas were being shared online by various stakeholders regarding how parents can best interact with their children and communicate about COVID-19.

It is unclear to what extent teachers were trained to offer psychological first aid in regular

education settings or in distant education environments. The OLS social services and MHC will collaborate to roll out an appropriate and light psychosocial support program for the entire school. In this way, professionals will be able to better determine which children and teachers may be in need of more specialized care during and after crisis situations.

### Recommendations for gaps in response

- Identify strategies for providing context gender and age appropriate psychosocial support to children, adolescents, parents, teachers, and social services (including alternative care) staff during periods of lockdown and when schools resume.
- See also:
  - Interim Briefing Note - Addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Aspects of COVID-19 Outbreak Version 1.5 (also in Dutch)
  - Social Service Workforce Safety and Wellbeing During the COVID-19 Response • Recommended Actions

# 5. EDUCATION

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, articles 28 & 29: education must aim at the fullest possible development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities.

## The situation before the crisis

While both the primary and secondary schools on Saba have achieved the basic quality standards, as determined by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education, the quality of education in the Caribbean Netherlands is considered vulnerable for different reasons. In addition, there are clear signals from the educational institutions on the three islands of poverty among children and the symptoms associated with this, such as less supervision at home, addiction, and domestic violence, which are noticeable at school.<sup>12</sup> The Public Entities initially signaled development issues among children and this concern was later reinforced by the childcare baseline study conducted by ECORYS which found that the majority of children in the Caribbean Netherlands are at risk of developmental and educational disadvantages.<sup>13</sup> The 2018 Caribbean Netherlands Safety Image reported that teachers often do not know where to turn regarding their students with behavioral problems.<sup>14</sup>

## Identified and possible risks to children during the crisis

- Children's regular education/learning was temporarily interrupted. *Distance (online) education may not have been of sufficient quality* as teachers may not have been prepared to teach in digital learning environments.
- *Children's distance education may not have been sufficiently supported at home.* Not all children may have participated in the Zoom classes or completed their homework. Parents may not have been equipped to help with schoolwork. Children may have had to help to take care of siblings/family members or work in the household, which could have led to insufficient time for home schooling.
- There are concerns that secondary school students *may not be sufficiently prepared for exams* or to make their transition to tertiary education.
- Very young children (0-4) may not have received *adequate care or early stimulation* which could lead to disadvantage in their development.
- There may have been a higher risk to disadvantage/backlog in education, development and behavior for *children who need special education or children with behavioral problems.*
- *Child protection risks may have remained undetected* due to interruptions in the otherwise regular protective school environment.

## Response to risks by OLS and partners

OLS worked with stakeholders to ensure that families had internet access to allow children to

<sup>12</sup> Letter to Parliament on the Progress of Education in the Caribbean Netherlands, 10 July 2019. [https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven\\_regering/detail?id=2019Z14910&did=2019D30591](https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven_regering/detail?id=2019Z14910&did=2019D30591)

<sup>13</sup> Nulmeting kinderopvang Caribisch Nederland, 2019. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2019/06/28/nulmeting-kinderopvang-caribisch-nederland>

<sup>14</sup> Veiligheidsbeeld BES 2018. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2019/02/12/tk-bijlage-veiligheidsbeeld-bes-2018>

participate in Zoom classes. Computers, tablets, etc. were provided to children in need by the educational institutions and JGCN.

The schools continued to receive support from EC2 during the weeks of distance education. An inventory of children who usually receive support from EC2 but who were not participating in their digital support system was completed by OLS based on information from education professionals and EC2. In future crisis situations, the intention is for the social services team to support educational professionals by encouraging these parents to ensure that their children participate in the virtual education support sessions.

With regard to the child protection risks, the regular line of reporting was still in place during the lockdown and school closure. Lines of referral to JGCN were still in place. There were at least two cases where stakeholders contacted JGCN with concerns about children.

With regard to early stimulation, the Public Health Department and the Laura Linzey Day Care Center were in regular contact with families of concern. Tips and strategies were provided to families through a pre-existing WhatsApp group which was already active before the crisis.

The Secondary School CXC exams will be held in July 2020. The Caribbean Examinations Council had announced an amended examination process and is examining the possibility of taking the exams digitally.

### Recommendations for gaps in response

- Make use of standard checklist such as the 'Framework for Re-opening Schools' as well as the related Safe Back to School: A Practitioner's Guide, Action Tracker and Logical Framework as a guideline and tools throughout the different phases of school closure and reopening processes. As schools re-open, give sufficient attention to the socio-emotional well-being of children and adolescents, as well as of the teachers and other school staff.
- During crises and school closures, schools must still play a central role in assessing the well-being of children through distance education and signaling concerns to social, protection, and other support services. Actively encourage teachers to maintain regular contact with at-risk and vulnerable students. See the approach outlined by OCW with regard to involving the services of the truancy officer: Brief regering: Stand van zaken onderwijs op afstand tijdens Corona crisis.
- Develop a separate program to provide adequate distance educational support for vulnerable children during a lockdown. If necessary, make exceptions for the most vulnerable children so that they can be taught face-to-face by their teachers in the classroom. Consider ways to do this while still ensuring respect for the dignity and privacy of the students.
- Especially while day care centers are closed, ensure that (the most vulnerable) children ages 0-4 are receiving the quality care and early stimulation they need to develop optimally within the home environment. See SitAn recommendation: bring early stimulation to the household and engage parents to complement what is being done in day care.
- Support the development and roll-out of child-friendly complaints and feedback mechanisms in schools and other education facilities.
- Ensure that teachers have the skills necessary to provide quality distance education. OCW has indicated that schools have indicated that they need help with the proper implementation of distance learning.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See letter to Parliament, Maatregelen OCW in Caribisch deel van het Koninkrijk i.v.m. het coronavirus, 15 april 2020 [https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven\\_regering/detail?id=2020Z06789&did=2020D14458](https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven_regering/detail?id=2020Z06789&did=2020D14458)



- Ensure that teachers and day-care and after school center staff have necessary knowledge and skills related to child protection, child safeguarding, and safe referral practices, with a focus on gender. Ensure that these professionals are trained to recognize signs of distress, including during distance education contexts, to enable them to identify, support, and/or safely refer children who may be in distress or may have specific child protection needs.

## 6. OTHER

### Recommendations for gaps in response

- Integrate a focus on child protection in emergencies/crisis situations in *local crisis management handbooks*.
- *Understanding risks, impact, and necessary responses*: Clarify short, medium, and long term risks to children during and/or as a result of crises situations and necessary effective responses; understand how large the risks are (e.g. the number of children or impact, age and gender specific) and what responses work best. Evaluate the effectiveness of the COVID19 response as it related to responding to the needs of the most vulnerable children and their families. Compile lessons-learned and best-practices while also learning from the other Dutch Caribbean islands.
- *Participation*: Ensure that children, including adolescents, are able to safely participate (age appropriately) in planning, rolling out and evaluations for crisis situations so that their views can be heard and considered also in future crisis situations.
- *Knowledge of risks*: Train health, education, child services, including alternative care staff, and MHPSS staff on COVID-19-related child protection risks.
- *Prevention of spreading*: Collaborate to provide safe, child-friendly hygiene promotion activities before and during outbreaks, including the development of child-friendly posters and infographics targeting children, parents/caregivers and teachers.

### Other recommended resources:

- [Technical Note: Protection of Children during the Coronavirus Pandemic V2 \(including annexes\)](#)
- [COVID-19 related Child Protection resources, for professionals working on safety for children \(UNICEF Netherlands website\)](#)



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