The Situation of Children and Adolescents in Curaçao
1. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY 17
2. COUNTRY OVERVIEW 21
3. SOCIAL POLICIES AND SOCIAL INVESTMENT 27
4. THE RIGHT TO HEALTH 37
5. THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION 45
6. THE RIGHT TO PROTECTION 53
7. THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION 67
8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 73

REFERENCES 80

ANNEX:
COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD’S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CURAÇAO 83
LIST OF BOXES, FIGURES AND TABLES

Boxes
1. Limitations of civil society organizations
2. Issues specific to undocumented immigrants

Figures
1. Population pyramid by age, 2011 census
2. State budget by ministry, June 2012 (%)
3. Vicious cycle: the impact of poverty and inequality on the situation of children and adolescents
4. Causal chain of problems in the education system
5. Curaçao’s current child protection system
6. Types of maltreatment reported to AMK, 2010
7. Reports received by AMK by person or organization reporting, 2010
8. Alcohol and drug use among students aged 10 to 18
9. Causal chain of principal problems affecting the situation of women

Tables
1. Financial support to single people and couples with and without children as of June 2012 (in US$)
3. Infant, under-5 and neonatal mortality rates (per 1,000 live births), 1998–2010
5. Education system levels in Curaçao
6. Data for the 2011–2012 school year by type of school
7. Causes of absence from school
8. Number of teenagers involved in violent crimes, Jan–Nov 2011
Boy, 11 years old, Curaçao.

I live with my father, mother, and brother. My mother is the strict one. I get on well with my parents and I find it easy to talk to them. It’s not like that at school. My teacher doesn’t like my behaviour: if I contradict her, she says I’m being disrespectful. At home I am usually allowed to air my views. Then my parents listen, and we talk about it.

Everything about Curaçao is great. You can be on the beach in no time. If you want to meet up with your friends, nobody has to check their diaries. The only thing I don’t like about Curaçao is the heat.

I would like to become a professional footballer. In the Netherlands, scouts go to matches every month, but here on Curaçao that only happens once a year. I haven’t been scouted yet, but I think it will happen. If it doesn’t, then I will become a teacher.

I tried smoking just once. Not a cigarette, just paper. My brother and I stapled some paper together and lit it on the stove. I almost choked to death and I never did it again.

When I get upset or sad, I go to my room and I just sit there for a while. That happens sometimes, maybe once a month. I don’t feel a need to look for help or to find someone to talk to about it; I have my parents and my brother.

I’m in the final year at primary school and I have a lot of friends in my class. Everyone is in love with this one girl, but I don’t know why. Well, I actually think she’s nice too. I like school, but it’s pretty stressful sometimes. What’s fun is that I can sit and joke with friends and work. I get stress from all the work that I have to do.

At school I sometimes get teased. It doesn’t bother me as long as it’s just words. As long as they don’t touch me. I tease back sometimes, but I don’t like to.

I feel like there is not enough for children on Curaçao. Some children have everything, and others have nothing. Children on Curaçao should be able to make their own decisions, so parents don’t always decide everything for them.
Boy, 16 years old, Curaçao.

Before I went to the Netherlands, I lived here with my mother, father, and two brothers. When I came back, I lived with my mother and three brothers. After that I went to live with my father, where I also have a lot of brothers. In all I have 15 brothers and sisters. My mother is pregnant now by her new boyfriend.

My father lets me do pretty much anything. It didn’t work out very well living with my mother. Only during the week no staying out late. On Saturday it doesn’t matter how late I come home.

I don’t really like Curaçao. But the disco here is great. I like going out with my friends. Maybe I’ll go to the Netherlands when I finish school.

I’m also going to a psychologist now. I wanted to go myself, and my father, the social worker, and the school also said I had to, because I get angry very easily. I don’t know why, I just get angry easily. If somebody says something I don’t like, or if somebody touches me, then I start fighting. But I only touch people if they touch me first.

The psychologist is someone I can trust. I need that. I don’t really have anyone else I can trust. I don’t tell my deepest secrets to anyone, no-one at all. It’s a lot easier to tell the psychologist things than to tell someone else.

When my father gets angry, he starts shouting. My mother shouts and swears when she’s angry. She threw me out of the house for something that I didn’t do. She thought I had stolen something and then I got into a fight with her new boyfriend. Then I ended up in a refuge, but there were some problems there. I had only been there three days and they already got angry with me because they said I was supposed to wash the windows. So they sent me away. Now I’m living with my father again, and I want to stay here.

I used to do drugs, but not any more. My mother knew about it. I do drink alcohol. When I go out, I drink a lot.
Then I have fun, I make jokes, and I keep laughing. I don’t go looking for fights. Sometimes my father tells me that I’m becoming an alcoholic. I get happy when I drink alcohol.

At the start of the evening, around 8 o’clock, I help my father in the snack bar. I close up at the end of the evening, and sometimes I sweep up. At home, I wash my own clothes, and I clean my own bedroom. When I lived with my mother, I had to make a contribution to the household expenses and I worked as a bricklayer sometimes, when there was a job.

I’m in the third year in preparatory vocational school, in the care programme, that’s for beauticians and hairdressers. I am the only boy in my class. There are some boys in the fourth year. Unless some of those boys have to repeat a year, I will be the only boy in my class next year too.

I like this school better than all the other ones, because I have so many practical subjects. At the other schools I had a lot of problems, I didn’t want to learn there. I skipped a lot of classes.

I want to open barbershops, here and in the Netherlands. I can draw pretty well. When I see something, then I can draw it.

I know that there is a lot of violence. You read about it in the paper all the time. I know how the people on Curaçao are. They’re nasty. Many people on Curaçao walk around with guns, even little boys. I have been in a lot of fights, and usually the people I fight with call their friends who have guns. Then those people come after me with guns. There are 15 year old boys walking around with guns.

I can say what I think wherever I go. If I don’t agree with something, then I say so.

If I was in charge of Curaçao, I would change a lot. I would make a rule that mothers can’t hit their children any more. On Curaçao that happens a lot. And I would make an amusement park here. I would also want more fun fairs and events for the young people.
Girl, 10 years old, Curaçao

I’ve been living on Curaçao for two years now. We came over from the Netherlands. My mother and I live in a student house with 11 rooms. My mother takes care of me because my mother and father are divorced. I want to go to the Netherlands, too, to be with my father and brothers. I have an older sister living on Curaçao and two brothers living in the Netherlands. They all have different mothers.

There’s not a lot for children to do on Curaçao. The only thing you can really do here is go swimming. But I do like it here: the beach, the aquarium, and the museums. I also think the history of Curaçao is very interesting.

When I’m sad, I go and sit in my room. I lock the door and I cry or I talk to myself. I’m sad a lot because I miss my father and brothers in the Netherlands. And sometimes I want to go back to the Netherlands. Sometimes I stay at home alone. I don’t mind that because then I can do whatever I want. Sometimes I fry an egg, or I go stomp on the stairs or slam the doors to the rooms. Or I jump on the chairs or play games on the internet. When other people are home, I can’t do any of that.

I have my own room. And I have a box for my secrets. I always hide it in my room, but my mum always finds it. That’s where I keep love letters from boys and the letters from my girlfriends.

Sometimes I get ill. We don’t have insurance yet so we can’t go to a doctor. Last year I was in hospital, because I had an infection in my large intestine. It hurt, and it was scary being in the hospital because there were people all over screaming in pain.

I love it at school. I like languages. We learn Spanish and English. And maths. You also get to play at school. No one gets to say very much, because usually we just have to listen to what the teacher says.

I was teased a lot at my last school. I was the only white girl there and everybody teased me, except for one girl.
If I can’t manage with my homework, then my cousin helps me. My mother works until very late. She doesn’t normally get home until very late.

When I finish school on Curaçao, I want to go back to the Netherlands. I want to study law, because I want to be a lawyer.

Sometimes I get hit. Once or twice I’ve seen a woman hitting a child with her high-heeled shoes. That made me very upset and I never went there again.

At home, sometimes I get asked for my opinion, but it’s usually afterwards. After something has already happened, my mother asks me what I think. I wish my mother would ask me what I think before. At school they never ask you what you think. I think that’s weird.
A situation analysis of children, adolescents and women in Curaçao was undertaken in 2012. Commissioned by the United Nations Children’s Fund-The Americas and Caribbean Regional Office (UNICEF-TACRO) and conducted by the Observatorio Social del Ecuador (OSE), a non-governmental organization based in Ecuador, it took a right-based and participatory approach. It analysed the socioeconomic and political processes affecting the situation of children, adolescents and women and was informed by local voices through interviews and focus groups with key informants and young people. Data from the 2001 and 2011 censuses were reviewed as well as multiple
documents and research from various national and international organizations. However, a limitation was the small amount of disaggregated statistical information available on children and adolescents.

Once a Dutch territory, Curaçao became an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands in October 2010. Among the major legacies of this historical dependence are the island’s legal framework focused on rights, its judicial system and its political stability. Being a young state in transition implies a number of challenges, however, among which is forging a national identity: the country is home to over 60 different nationalities. This cultural diversity is one of the country’s strengths but at the same time offers possible challenges regarding integration and social cohesion. A hangover from the colonial period is the persistence of discriminatory attitudes regarding ethnicity and class, which could lead to marginalization, vulnerability and at-risk environments for some young people.

In 2011, children and adolescents aged 0–19 made up 30 per cent of the population, which totals 149,679 (81,231 women and 68,488 men). The population is currently ageing. It is a multilingual country: Papiamento is the main language spoken at home (78.6 per cent), followed by Dutch (9.4 per cent), Spanish (6 per cent) and English (3.5 per cent).

Curaçao has one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean and is categorized by the World Bank as a high-income country. Its free market economy is diversified, with oil refining, tourism, financial services and ICT (information and communications technology) predominating. However, poverty and inequality on the island have somewhat increased. There are a large number of low-skilled jobs, and unemployment for 2009 was 9.7 per cent of the economically active population.

Curaçao’s legal system has a focus on human rights and the country is committed to a number of international agreements relating to children, adolescents and women. The rights approach means that the state provides subsidies to and support for vulnerable groups. The essential elements are also present to organize a child and adolescent protection system through the interplay of state and civil society foundations; these provide an excellent framework to highlight the importance of the country’s commitments to children and their families. However, the new state has some limitations, including a shortage of trained human resources to meet the needs of the country, poor coordination among ministries and between these and foundations, and the absence of mechanisms to monitor public policy execution and its real impact in improving people’s lives.
Acknowledgements

This report is based on the ‘Analysis of the Situation of Children, Adolescents and Women in Curacao, commissioned by the United Nations Children’s Fund and produced by Observatorio Social de Ecuador (OSE) with research carried out by Alejandra Espinosa Andrade, Belén Febres Cordero, Margarita Velasco Abad and Soledad Álvarez. The Coordinator in Curacao was Alejandra Espinosa Andrade while general coordination was provided by Margarita Velasco Abad, Executive Director; Soledad Álvarez, Research Coordinator; and Tatiana Cevallos, Administration, OSE.
In 2012 UNICEF-TACRO (The Americas and Caribbean Regional Office) and the Netherlands National Committee for UNICEF, alerted by government and civil society organisations, jointly took up the notion of not having a proper baseline on children in Curacao and the Observatorio Social del Ecuador (OSE), a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Ecuador was therefore asked to prepare an ‘Analysis of the Situation of Children, Adolescents and Women in Curacao’. The study had two main objectives: to evaluate progress and challenges around the implementation of the rights of children and women; and to make recommendations for social action and public policies in the medium and long term in order to improve the conditions and life opportunities of that population.

The research methodology was based on ‘Guidance for Conducting Situation Assessment and Analysis of Children’s and Women’s Rights’ (UNICEF, 2008) as well as on OSE’s previous experience in qualitative and quantitative research. The aims of a situation analysis (SITAN) include identifying the causes of and structural links between the problems affecting children, adolescents and women; accounting for how resources and the social, economic and organizational structures of a country (including its policies and institutions) can help address constraints in the situation of children and women; developing capabilities (or enhancing existing ones) and local technical support; generating a process of participatory analysis to mobilize local actors and manage strategic alliances at different levels of society to achieve favourable outcomes for children, adolescents and women; and promoting the use and application of information generated in both civil society and the state and ensuring a process of monitoring and updating of the information produced (ibid.).

To meet these aims, and given the size of the country and challenges in the availability of statistical information in some sectors, OSE used a highly participatory approach. A variety of investigative techniques (field observations, in-depth interviews, conversations, life stories) enabled it to ascertain key social, economic, political and cultural problems. Local counterparts worked with the team to identify key informants with whom semi-structured interviews were conducted. These included representatives of the state, civil society, academia and international organizations as well as several immigrant women, children and adolescents. Where possible, information derived from interviews and focus group discussions was cross-referenced with other quantitative and qualitative information and compared to existing government policies and programmes related to children and adolescents.

The child-portraits in this report, telling the stories of individual children, were made by the Netherlands National Committee for UNICEF, the Antillean Federation for Youth Care (FAJ) and the Fundashon Bos di Hubentut. These
portraits form part of a bigger project, complementary to this situation analysis, to allow children of Curaçao to be heard and to have their views or opinions taken into account, in line with the fundamental right of children to participate. The results of this project will be presented separately.

Performing a SITAN involves not only assessing and analysing the situation of children and women but also applying a human rights-based approach. This means that the research took into account the commitments assumed by Curaçao, as part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, related to a number of international treaties including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Articles of the CRC and CEDAW were transformed into indicators in order to gather information that would reflect specific aspects of compliance with the rights of children, adolescents and women as referred to in these international agreements. In addition, the analysis was poured into causal chains, which helped clarify the structural causes of social problems afflicting these groups and identify gaps in social and state actions.

It is hoped that the information contained here will be received and used by both the state and civil society to guarantee full compliance with the rights of children, adolescents and women in Curaçao. It should be noted that the situation analysis concluded in the first half of 2012 and hence any changes to legislation after that period may not be reflected in this document.

**Acronyms and abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>Central Bureau of Statistics of Curaçao</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPG</td>
<td>Curaçao Plan of Government 2010–2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECLAC</td>
<td>Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
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<tr>
<td>FMA</td>
<td>Maneho de Adikshon Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>OSE</td>
<td>Observatorio Social de Ecuador</td>
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<tr>
<td>SITAN</td>
<td>situation analysis</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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1. Introduction and Methodology
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The Observatorio Social de Ecuador (OSE), a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Ecuador, conducted a situation analysis (SITAN) in 2011–2012 of children, adolescents and women in Curaçao with the United Nations Children’s Fund-The Latin American and Caribbean Office (UNICEF-TACRO) and with major support from a counterpart team from the Ministry of Social Development of Curaçao.

This first section of this report details the work focus and methodology through which OSE addressed the context and reality faced by the island society in general and children and adolescents in particular. The second section briefly describes the current situation in the island in terms of its demographic, political, economic and social realities, and then section three looks at social policies and social investment by the state. Sections four to seven describe Curaçao’s progress and challenges regarding the fulfilment of children’s and adolescents’ rights to, respectively, health, education, protection and participation. The final section offers some suggestions and recommendations to the state to improve conditions and life opportunities for children and adolescents. It is hoped that the information obtained through this study will be used by both the Government and civil society so that together they can ensure comprehensive protection for all young people on the island.

Research objectives, focus and methodology

A SITAN in a particular country does not just assess and analyse the situation of children and adolescents. It also involves applying a historical and political analysis and a rights-based approach to enable the achievement of several objectives related to one of the central functions of UNICEF’s mandate: to support national capacity to promote human development and therefore unconditional compliance with citizen’s rights (UNICEF, 2008). Thus, analysing results and processes, a SITAN aims to:

→ Identify the causes and structural links between the problems affecting children, adolescents and women; that is, show how local development issues in their various dimensions (social, economic, political and cultural) particularly affect this population, making less obvious problems more visible.

→ Account for how the social, economic and organizational resources and structures of a country (including its policies and institutions) can help address limitations in the situation of children and women.

→ Develop capabilities (or enhance existing ones) and local technical support, thereby creating a participatory analysis process to mobilize local actors and manage strategic alliances at different levels of society in order to achieve positive results for children, adolescents and women.

→ Promote the use and application of information in the SITAN, both by civil society and the state, and ensure a monitoring and updating process of the information produced (UNICEF, 2008).
Achieving these four objectives involves creating a research method that meets two requirements: an analysis of socioeconomic and political processes accounting for causalities in the situation of children, adolescents and women, and, at the same time, a participatory process involving actors and leaders to enhance local capacities to transform the challenges identified in the medium and long term.

Given the described objectives and requirements, as well as methodological requirements, OSE created a research method that combines a qualitative, highly participatory research focused on the situation of the rights of children, adolescents and women with a quantitative analysis and secondary literature sources. This method involved stakeholders and local leaders in the different phases of the research process.

**Selection of method and design of research tools**

Starting with an initial field visit to Curaçao in November 2011, and with the prior support of UNICEF-TACRO representatives, the research team worked with key counterparts in the Ministry of Social Development, Labour and Welfare. Having the support of the Ministry was critical since it allowed the team to begin mapping actors from the state and social spheres, establish future contacts and get a first look at the issues facing children, adolescents and women, all by collecting quantitative information directly.

The SITAN research method used by OSE involved a combination of investigative techniques – field observation, in-depth interviews, conversations and life histories – that immersed the team in the local reality and involved local stakeholders in developing the analysis. An additional technique that enriched the research was holding focus groups with children and adolescent students and adults from different neighbourhoods representing different social strata. In addition, the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) were turned into indicators to assess their implementation.

To obtain data on the island’s various socioeconomic indicators, statistical information was drawn from the 2001 and 2011 (preliminary data) censuses as well as from different civil society organizations and related government programmes fulfilling the rights of children, adolescents and women. Specific information was also obtained about the existing policy framework as well as the national budget and social spending. These data were supplemented with information from the World Bank, UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and other statistical sources.

Studies produced by other UN agencies concerning Curaçao were reviewed, with special attention paid to the CRC and CEDAW Committees’ national reports on the country, as well as a number of academic studies (social, cultural, economic or political) that could contribute to the investigation.
Mapping of key informants and field work

Local counterparts worked directly with the OSE team in identifying key informants from the following sectors: the state, civil society organizations, the university and international organizations. This aid was essential in developing a fieldwork agenda. Furthermore, since these partners were responsible for establishing initial contacts, this greatly facilitated the openness of the informants. Other referrals then came from the initial list of potential informants, and a total of 85 interviews were conducted. The interviews were semi-structured and consisted of two parts. First, informants were asked general questions about the historical and political processes of the country and to identify the main problems that, in their opinion, face children, adolescents and women. Second, depending on the informant’s expertise, they were asked questions specific to CRC and CEDAW compliance.

Additionally, collaborative links with local counterparts were strengthened and partnerships built with other civil society and state actors. This was key since it allowed for feedback from local actors who also got involved in the SITAN, thereby expanding the future spectrum of advocacy for children, adolescents and women.

Information systematization and analysis

The team undertook a critical interpretation of Curaçao’s socioeconomic indicators to account for the progress and/or challenges regarding the fulfilment of the rights of children and women in the country, together with constant reflection on the global and local historical and political processes that affect this population group. Both routes led to the building of causal explanations about social issues that affect children and women. Also, they contributed to the identification of gaps in civil society and state actions on the island, thus allowing for the identification of possible impact areas through specific public policies.

A workshop held in June 2012 to review the draft report was attended by government officials and members of civil society. The recommendations that emerged have been included in this report. It should be noted that the SITAN concluded in the first half of 2012 and hence any changes to legislation after that period may not be reflected in this document.
2. Country Overview
2. Country Overview

Historical context

The most striking aspect of the history of Curaçao is the different migratory flows that have created the different classes. The fact that it was a Dutch territory for nearly 400 years, combined with the process of migration, led to very particular historical differentiation along ethnic, economic and political lines that still affects the composition of the society. The legacy of colonialism and slavery is reflected in the persistence of discrimination against certain population groups, coupled with discourse seeking ‘reconciliation’.

There are also tensions connected to the process of building a new state. As of October 2010, the Netherlands Antilles ceased to exist and Curacao became an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles ceased to exist and Curaçao became an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This means making decisions about what kind of state the population requires and wants and how to manage the new relationship with the Netherlands, which retains responsibility for defence and foreign affairs. When it comes to the realization of fundamental human rights and freedoms, legal certainty and good governance the charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands can also be relevant as article 43 of the Charter states: “.. The safeguarding of such rights and freedoms, legal certainty and good governance shall be a Kingdom affair”.

Demographic profile

According to preliminary data from the 2011 census, Curaçao currently has a population of 149,679 people: 81,231 women and 68,488 men. Young people under 19 makes up 31 per cent of those living on the island: 14 per cent are 0-9 years, 9 per cent are 10 to 15 years and 8 per cent are 15 to 19 years. Since 2001, the population has grown by 14.7 per cent (19,052 people), i.e., an average growth of 1.5 per cent per year (CBS, 2012). Over those 10 years, the number of people between 15 and 59 years has increased by 12 per cent while the number of children under 15 years has fallen by 7 per cent (ibid.). This implies that the population is aging.
Despite being only 444 square kilometres, Curaçao is home to more than 60 different nationalities. Currently the main immigration flows from Latin America and the Caribbean are from Colombia, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Venezuela. Papiamento is the language most spoken in the home (78.6 per cent), followed by Dutch (9.4 per cent), Spanish (6 per cent) and English (3.5 per cent). It is important to note that this does not indicate the number of languages that islanders know or have the ability to speak. One of the characteristics of this population is precisely the ease with which people speak, with varying degrees of fluency, these four languages.

In regard to religions practiced on the island, according to the 2001 census Roman Catholicism predominates at 80.1 per cent followed by Protestant (5.5 per cent) and ‘none’ (4.6 per cent). Other religions together account for 9.6%.

Figure 1. Population structure by age, 2011 census
**Socioeconomic indicators**

Currently, Curaçao has one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean, with a per capita income of US$19,722. The country’s gross domestic product (GDP) in 2011 was US$2,952 million, GDP growth was estimated at 0.3 per cent and inflation was about 2.4 per cent (Ministry of Economic Development, 2011). Despite being categorized as a high-income nation (World Bank, 2012), what is striking about Curaçao is that poverty and inequality are rising. In 2007, the lowest quintile households received 3.3 per cent of the total income and the highest quintile received 51.8 per cent (UNDP, 2011).

Virtually the entire population is literate (98 per cent), and the percentage of children in primary school is also high: 97 per cent, which is very similar to the regional average.

Life expectancy at birth is 72.4 years for males and 80.1 years for females, similar to the Dominican Republic (73) and Peru (73), but lower by two and six years respectively than Aruba (75) and St. Maarten (78). It is also significantly lower than the Netherlands (81) or the United States (79). Moreover, the infant mortality rate stands at 12.8 per 1,000 live births, compared to Aruba (8.7 per 1,000) or St. Maarten (7.6 per 1,000). Another telling figure is unemployment, which reached 9.7 per cent in 2011. Although this is less than the level recorded on St. Maarten (10.6 per cent), it is almost 3 points higher than Aruba (5.7 per cent).

According to the Ministry of Economic Development, one of Curaçao’s strengths is having a diversified economy that is not dependent on a single sector. It is service-oriented and the most important economic activities are the refinery, tourism, financial services, information and communication technology (ICT) and construction. A new economic development plan for the island being developed at the time of writing seeks the involvement of various state sectors, civil society and the private sector in a comprehensive way. Among the issues it plans to address are strengthening exports in the international market, balancing economic growth and social development and reducing the gap between rich and poor.

**Politics and the legal system**

The state consists of the executive, legislative and judicial branches. The executive branch is headed by the Head of State of the Netherlands (currently King Willem-Alexander), represented in Curaçao by a Governor General. The Head of Government is the Prime Minister, who is usually the leader of the majority party in Parliament. The legislative branch is a unicameral parliament with 21 seats. Members are elected by popular vote for a term of four years. Suffrage is universal from age 18. The judicial branch consists of the Combined Court of Justice for Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten, which is made up of a Court of First Instance for each country and a joint Court of Appeals. Judgements from the latter can be appealed at the Supreme Court of the Netherlands in The Hague. The Charter of the Kingdom of The Netherlands granted autonomy to Curaçao and St. Maarten to develop their own internal laws as long as these are consistent with the rules and regulations of the Kingdom (UNDP, 2011).

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1This calculation was made using the GDP given in the ‘Curaçao Economic Outlook 2011’ (Ministry of Economic Development, 2011, and the total population in 2011 (CBS, 2012).
The Dutch legal framework with its focus on rights, the judicial system and the resulting political stability are all positive factors. It is noteworthy that, as a result, the Curaçao approach to rights is ‘internalized’, and rights are paramount in terms of commitments to children and families. The rights-based approach is reflected in the new Constitution framed in 2010. For example:

→ The preamble specifies that Curaçao is a democratic constitutional state that guarantees and respects fundamental rights. In those terms, justice is established as a priority.
→ In Article 2, which specifies the existing legal frameworks, the charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands appears first and then all agreements signed with international organizations that have been ratified by Curaçao. After these two legal frameworks come national laws and ordinances.
→ Chapter 2 specifies that the state should guarantee the fulfilment of human rights, including the right to equal treatment without any form of discrimination.
→ Also, Article 23 states that livelihoods, sharing of prosperity and opportunity and promoting of welfare are government responsibilities.
→ Additionally, there are several constitutional articles related to children and adolescents.

In formal terms, therefore, the rights of children and adolescents are guaranteed in the local legal framework. However, some laws need to be reviewed and updated as they do not correspond with current reality in the island. A challenge for the state is how to organize the government and how to understand the difference in its work now that Curaçao is a country with domestic responsibilities. This raises questions about, for example, whether to restructure the educational system and whether the judiciary is appropriate for the island, among other issues.

With the new constitutional order since 10-10-10, all treaties signed by what was formerly the Netherlands Antilles became applicable to the country of Curaçao. These include the CRC and CEDAW and impose a responsibility on the state to create political mechanisms that allow for unrestricted rights compliance. Progress reports on compliance are undertaken by ministries and NGOs. In January 2012, Curaçao prepared its contributions to the third report of the Kingdom of The Netherlands to the CRC. In 2014 it is expected to prepare it contribution to the CEDAW. Important efforts are being made to communicate the importance of child rights and provide information about the implementation of the CRC in Curaçao. Although this is not part of the curricula in schools, teachers introduce the topic in their classes. There are also several foundations that are actively engaged in publicizing the rights of children and adolescents in schools and the state supports some of these initiatives financially.
Forging a national identity

Behind the constitutional reform debate in the last four or five years there has been a debate about national identity (Allen, 2010), including issues of racism and discrimination. These are complex, socially constructed issues. While the historical legacy of slavery is a key factor, it does not fully explain the negative – though often hidden – attitudes among population groups on the island. There is said to be discrimination both by black against white and white against black. Another aspect mentioned is ‘self-discrimination’, i.e., people who think that their ethnicity bars them from opportunities, and they therefore cease to look for them, or who start adopting defensive attitudes not necessarily based on objective discriminatory experiences.

A study on the perspective of children and adolescents in this regard called ‘Makamba’ na Kòrsou’, based on a survey among 253 children aged 14 to 21 in seven schools, found that a little over a third (36.6 per cent) agreed that the Dutch discriminated against Curaçaoans and 47.2 thought that the Dutch considered themselves superior (Hortencia and Kester, 2011). More than half (54.8 per cent) thought that the Dutch had the best jobs and 43.7 per cent said that the Dutch lived in the best neighbourhoods (ibid.).

At the same time, there is great cultural diversity on the island with various mixes between the Dutch and Curaçaoans: families with two Dutch parents with children born on Curaçao; families with one Dutch and one Curaçaoan partner; and many other combinations with descendants of Portuguese, Latin American and other Caribbean immigrants as well as all the ‘new’ immigrants.

For many of those interviewed, overcoming historical differences involves not only understanding the past and its consequences but also thinking ahead to a country where ‘everyone is Curaçaoan’. This would include building a joint vision, overcoming divergences and acting towards a future where the country can stand on its own. This underlines the importance of working to stop discrimination and recognize the contributions of the multiple cultures living on the island.

\[^1\text{Makamba is a word used by the Curaçaoans to refer to the Dutch on the island.}\]
3. Social Policies and Social Investment
3. Social Policies and Social Investment

As noted in the previous section, Curaçao became a semi-autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands in October 2010. As a new state under construction, it will have to make a number of decisions about how to run the country without the direct economic support that it received previously. The process of state building also raises questions about how to tackle a number of opportunities and challenges and improve the country’s technical and political capacities. One challenge due to the parliamentary democracy in Curaçao is that the party that wins at the ballot box does not always command Parliament because of coalitions that may be formed after the voting processes.³

However, the new state made a promising start and the 2010–2014 Curaçao Plan of Government (CPG) established clear guidelines for the future development of the island. It highlighted a “sovereign, united and sustainable” vision of the nation and aimed to inspire the community to work for “dynamic and lasting” development (Government of Curaçao, 2010: 3). The foundations for sustainable development were identified as social, ecological and economic development, to which “emancipatory development of our people and our community” was also added (ibid.).

The plan also identified strategic goals including:

→ **High standard of living** (through a dynamic and diversified economy), which means exploiting the strengths of the island such as its geographical position, cultural diversity and the creativity and skill of its inhabitants.

→ **High quality of life**, which notes the importance of safety, health care, education, training, housing and special care for youth and adults.

→ **Social cohesion**, which means valuing oneself, ones neighbours and the community.

→ **Democratic, fair and effective administration operating closer to the people**, which creates opportunities for more participation, works in a visible and transparent way and respects democratic principles especially for the vulnerable.

Based on these general guidelines, the CPG set out detailed strategic plans for each ministry. With respect to children and adolescents, for example, it specified that the Ministry of General Affairs would be responsible for coordinating UN reports concerning implementation of the CRC. Moreover, the plan alluded to undertaking targeted actions for aligning legislation and policies with the Convention (Government of Curaçao, 2010).

³There were three Prime Ministers in 2012 as one was ousted by the Parliamentary majority, leading to a caretaker government. After elections were held in October 2012, a new alliance of parties formed a Government that was sworn in in December. These frequent changes may lead to a lack of continuity in government policies and programmes.
As shown in Figure 2, the ministry that receives the highest percentage of the budget (21.2 per cent) is the Ministry of Social Development, Labour and Welfare, followed by the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture (20.8) per cent and the Ministry of Justice (13.2 per cent).

Figure 2. State budget by ministry, June 2012 (%)

Note: The combined total of the percentages equals 86.1 per cent. The remaining 13.9 per cent corresponds to regular costs not shown, including state personnel costs.

Source: based on a table provided by the Ministry of Social Development, Labour and Welfare in June 2012.

During 2008–2010, a total of 110 projects were undertaken through USONA (the organization that manages Dutch special funds), of which 77 were in the social and educational sectors and 33 in the economic sector. The following projects intended to have a positive influence in the workplace should be highlighted:

→ Creating childcare centres with flexible schedules outside working hours and during weekends. This project focuses specifically on women, whose unemployment rate is higher than men’s.

→ The ‘Horeca Training Jobseekers’ project, which aims to train unemployed people so that they can work in the tourism sector.

→ The Knowledge Centre Vocational Training Private Sector Curaçao foundation, which aims to provide continuous consultation between the vocational education system and the private sector in order to adjust education to meet the needs of the latter and fill gaps in the labour sector.

→ Subsidies granted by the state to the more disadvantaged members of society (see section 6 on the right to protection).
The Dutch Government’s total contribution to these and other projects was around US$67.6 million. The Government of Curaçao contributed about US$38.36 million for 13 projects, of which 7 are economic. However, it should be noted that economic support from the Netherlands is being phased out. To facilitate the transition, the Dutch Government has funded development projects through the Social Economic Initiative (SEI) and, as part of the constitutional reform of 2010, also put in place a ‘Debt Relief’ programme. This consisted of the cancellation and payment of approximately 50 per cent of the debts owed by Curaçao in order to facilitate its new status as autonomous country in charge of running its own economy with the necessary regulations and procedures in place to keep its finances up to date.

The state is concerned with various aspects of special protection, and 9 per cent of the budget of the Ministry of Social Development, Labour and Welfare is allocated to programmes and projects for children and youth. The subsidies for foundations dealing with child protection measures – including violence prevention, child labour, sexual exploitation and rehabilitation programmes – are US$24,445,719. The Coordination Centre under the Culture and Sport Sector receives an annual grant for children plus administrative costs of US$2,667,797. The Centre currently subsidizes 830 children, and this number is set to increase by 20 per cent annually (Ministry of Social Development, Labour and Welfare, 2012).

After-school childcare is also a state concern so 24 schools and another 3 or 4 private organizations offer extracurricular activities. The total grant for these programmes last year amounted to US$2,222,338 (ibid.).

**The provision of state benefits**

The vision of the Ministry of Social Development Labour and Welfare holds that each person should have the opportunity and responsibility to develop optimally, in a family and community, and contribute to their own individual welfare and that of the community. The Ministry therefore provides financial support, covered by the state budget, to vulnerable members of society. This is given in the form of either direct support – a cash contribution every two weeks to the unemployed and/or people with financial problems – or subsidies for services (e.g., water, housing, nursing home costs).

As of June 2012, 5,344 people received some benefit, which can be requested once one is of legal age (18). It is estimated that approximately 75 per cent of the people receiving this assistance are women (although there is no gender difference regarding the ability to access it) and the average age is 35–40 years. Table 1 shows the amounts given by number of children.
Table 1. Financial support to single people and couples with and without children as of June 2012 (in US$)

<table>
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<th>Single</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amount given every two weeks</td>
<td>90.73</td>
<td>102.47</td>
<td>114.20</td>
<td>125.93</td>
<td>137.67</td>
<td>149.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Couple | Amount given every two weeks | 157.05 | 168.79 | 179.05 (maximum) |


While on the one hand this social insurance system is positive in many ways and supports those who cannot find employment, on the other hand there are people who are accustomed to receiving benefits and therefore not motivated to work. In the case of young mothers, the approach is currently being changed to support them in their education, so that they can educate their children in a better way and make a career plan. There are many young mothers who will still be under 40 when their children are grown up.

**Challenges faced by Curaçao**

There are a number of challenges that could affect the fulfilment of the rights of children and adolescents in Curaçao.

**Poverty and inequality**

In 2008, Curaçao defined the poverty line as an income level sufficient to purchase the products required to live a healthy life, and the cost of a basket of basic goods was calculated as US$1,226.26 a month for an average household of two adults and two children (UNDP, 2011). A minimum hourly rate of pay of US$4.07 was set. In January 2011, this was adjusted for inflation and raised to US$4.20 (Ministry of Economic Development, 2011). According to recent calculations based on the 2011 census, however, 11.4 per cent (7,154 people) of the total labour force receive a monthly income of less than US$568.20 (CBS, 2012).

Along with these high levels of poverty, there are problems related to the workplace. Workers are not paid overtime and there are cases where they do not get vacation days. Indications are that working conditions in the tourism and commerce sector are not as good as in the public sector as more people earn the minimum wage. In tourism, there are no collective bargaining agreements and no pension arrangements.
These challenges in the labour market directly affect children and adolescents since there may be emotional and psychological consequences to a mother and/or father working in an unfavourable employment context. Due to poverty many children go to bed hungry, attend school without eating breakfast and live in precarious conditions. Figure 3 summarizes some of the implications of poverty for the situation of children and adolescents.

**Figure 3. Vicious cycle: the impact of poverty and inequality on the situation of children and adolescents**

**Unemployment and low-skilled jobs**

There is an economically active population of 62,627, of which 32,434 are women and 30,193 are men. In 2009, 56,582 people were employed, giving an unemployment rate of 9.7 per cent for the year (the latest statistics available). Female unemployment (11.3 per cent) remains higher than overall and male unemployment (7.9 per cent). The youth unemployment rate decreased in 2009, reaching 24.7 per cent, but it is still more than double the overall unemployment rate, which is considered high by international standards. In some neighbourhoods around three quarters of the economically active population is out of work.

Many employees have only basic and secondary education (a total of 41,289) compared to higher education (13,289). This implies that most jobs on Curaçao require low-skilled labour, which directly affects the level of development the island can reach. Should low-skilled jobs continue to be the most commonly available, and given the aging population, the current pension system may be facing challenges.
Challenges with human resources and institutional capacity

One of the difficulties of the transition process has been the lack of human resources, since many of the higher educated people have left. Due to the dismantling of the Federal Government of the Netherlands Antilles and the high rotation among state employees and large number of new ones, there has been a lack of continuity to actions and policy implementation. In particular, there is no human resource policy in place to develop and strengthen the nascent Curaçaoan state or training for state staff on specific issues related to the protection of children and adolescents. It is important to note, however, that the University of the Netherlands Antilles has greatly increased the number of students enrolled (from approximately 810 in 2003 to 2,096 in December 2010). Moreover, 79 per cent of alumni are Curaçaoans, offering a great opportunity for the island to link what the university offers to the needs of state building.

Limited coordination between ministries

One of the key challenges in Curaçao is the limited coordination and integrated work among government ministries, which means that there is no linkage at the structural level on issues concerning children, adolescents and women. Moreover, despite the auspicious legal framework protecting their rights, there is no implementation and monitoring agency for the conventions and treaties related to these groups. In particular, regarding the report to the CRC, more efforts are required to provide systematic follow up to the Committee's observations and recommendations rather than the introduction of some isolated initiatives.

Limited monitoring and data

There is also no system for monitoring and controlling activities related to children, adolescents and women. For example, the state gives money to organizations for various programmes focused on these groups but does not keep track of what is being done with that money or what results are obtained. Currently, the state has begun a pilot programme to follow up how the money is used from when it is disbursed until the programme or project ends.

Related to this, one of the main problems in tracking compliance with rights treaties – including those dealing with children and adolescents – is the lack of data, and the absence of a clear baseline makes it difficult to measure the level of compliance in each area. The main reason for the limited availability of data is the transition from a bureau of statistics for the Netherlands Antilles, where not a lot of disaggregation was provided for each of the islands, to a bureau focused solely on Curaçao. Good data is available from the latest census but, since the census takes place only every 10 years, other surveys are required to obtain timely statistics for monitoring the situation of children and to be able to report any changes and/or take measures for improving the situation by designing new policies and programmes or adjusting existing policies based on solid statistical evidence.
The situation of children and adolescents in Curaçao

The participation of civil society in addressing challenges in the social sector

Civil society organizations play an important role on the island and work on a variety of topics such as childhood, youth, women, the environment, violence and culture, among others. There is also the Antillean Federation for Youth Care (FAJ), an umbrella federation comprised of 90 organizations working for children and youth aged 0–24 years. The organizations are financed either through private institutions, the Dutch Government or the state. The Dutch funds are channelled through USONA and the Antillean Co-Financing Organization (AMFO). As noted previously, Dutch funding is gradually being phased out. In the event that the Curaçaoan state cannot finance these projects and give continuity to the processes, this will negatively affect children, adolescents and women on the island.

There are no mixed state-civil society agencies regulated by the Constitution to discuss issues concerning the planning and development of the island (e.g., budget issues or planning a joint agenda). Popular participation in these matters is limited to the vote, although when laws are being reviewed, they may be opened up to public discussion. A tripartite agency – made up of the Government, private sector and unions – previously existed that worked well and prevented social tension; it could perhaps be revived.

There are 24 unions, all linked to the Curaçao Union Centre. One of the largest is the ABVO (General Federation of Government Employees.) This organization brings together 4,000 employees in the public and private sector, including hotels, telecommunications, airports and ports. Some of its main achievements have been equal pay for women and men, support for women's right to organize and a reduction in the retirement age.

Within civil society organizations, the Curaçao Neighbourhood Unity plays an important role as 70 neighbourhoods are involved, including 1,500–2,000 volunteers. It defines the districts’ priorities and needs and develops action plans based on these.

There are different opinions about the relationship between the state and civil society organizations, but overall there is an absence of real links between the two types of bodies. Box 1 describes some of the current limitations of the latter.
Box 1. Limitations of civil society organizations

Some of the problems organizations currently face and that affect the protection given to children, adolescents and women of the island are:

- **Lack of a control system.** For example, the state gives money to organizations for various programmes but does not keep track of what is done with it or the programme results.

- **Funding issues:** The problem of limited funding is likely to be exacerbated in the medium term due to the phasing out of Dutch contributions.

- **Lack of coordination.** While organizations have sometimes joined together – for example, on the issue of environmental conservation and discussions around the refinery – each one generally works independently in relation to children and adolescents and the actions they take are disjointed.

- **Lack of technical knowledge or expertise:** While many organizations are willing to help and have positive intentions, they face challenges in organization, planning and budgeting (e.g., they make plans but do not follow through). Another problem is that many organizations are staffed by volunteers with varying levels of capacity. It should be noted, however, that the situation is improving.

- **Lack or dispersion of information:** Both state and civil society organizations have little or sparse information regarding the current situation of children, adolescents and women and there is no centralized information database. Thus, for example, there may be three organizations that deal with child abuse and each handles its own data, making it impossible to know how this information is connected or whether the population evaluated is the same or not. Many organizations do not have a data collection system, while others have one but the information may be outdated.
4. The Right to Health
4. The Right to Health

- Overall, figures on the health of children and adolescents are very positive: Almost all babies – 99 per cent – are delivered in health institutions with specialized care; 95 per cent of children between 1 and 4 years have been vaccinated; and the under-five mortality rate is relatively low.

- However, undocumented immigrants, who are generally among the poorest, do not have health insurance and sometimes face challenges in accessing the system. Although vaccinations are provided free through the schools, treatment must be paid for.

- Experts estimate that between 25 per cent and 30 per cent of children and adolescents are overweight, which can lead to diabetes and hypertension.

- While the percentage of teenage pregnancies has remained stable, adolescents have been getting pregnant at younger ages and the number having more than one child before age 18 has risen.

- A study of drinking and smoking among schoolchildren found over two thirds had consumed alcohol and one third in secondary school had smoked.

- Health care is not organized in a single system and there is a gap between preventive and curative care. Some health data are lacking or scattered, and the existing information is not used to make decisions.

The Curaçaoan health-care model is similar to that found in the Netherlands; it is based on a central coordinator or family doctor who refers citizens requiring services to specialists as necessary. The island has both public health care, which emphasizes prevention, and private health care, which focuses on curative care. There is no quality difference between the two services as there is a strict law to control both personal and institutional health quality. Nevertheless, there is a difference in waiting time, with the public service generally taking longer. The island has one general hospital, St. Elisabeth Hospital, and a number of private clinics including the Taams Clinic and the Antillean Adventist Hospital.

The Government has established a comprehensive concept of health, understanding it as a matter of physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual welfare. Importantly, the health of children and young people 0–24 years has high priority in terms of reproductive health, immunization programmes (aimed at maintaining 95 per cent coverage or more) and communicable disease control, seeking a Curaçao free of measles and rubella. The need to implement a national plan related to the prevention of HIV and AIDS is also emphasized. Issues of hygiene and food quality for the population are included as well.

The new Curaçaoan civil code establishes that every child is to be treated equally and no distinction is made between locals and immigrants. According to this regulation, any person living on the island can access the health system if she or he has medical insurance. While undocumented immigrants do not have health insurance, they can
use the health service if they pay for it. Undocumented immigrant children also have free access to the preventive health system since vaccination is part of the school health programme. However, if they need curative treatment, this must be paid for.

There are five types of health insurance: the PPK (‘pro-paupere kaart’), which is totally funded by the Government and is intended for the indigent and those who are not otherwise insured because of advanced age or the existence of a chronic condition; the public insurance programme, which covers 100 per cent of health-care costs for blue-collar workers and 90 per cent for personnel in higher categories of public-sector employment; the insurance fund for retired public sector employees; private insurance plans provided by large private companies for their own personnel; and the social security fund, which covers employees of small private companies. In 2011, only 2.6 per cent of the total population was not insured (i.e., had no insurance at all), compared to 7.7 per cent in 2001 (CBS 2011). The insurance system is in the process of being restructured to improve the quality of care and enhance equity.

Overall, the health related indicators on Curacao are very good for both the general population and for children. However, some challenges still exist, particularly in addressing emerging health concerns such as increasing levels of obesity (discussed below) as well as some environmental health issues. To address the former, according to the Ministry of Economic Development (2011) there are now several private initiatives to grow food in greenhouses and combat the high prices of imported fruits and vegetables. In addition, the Ministry is looking at proposals to lower taxes on imported fruits and vegetables and raise taxes on less healthy products.

Progress achieved to date

The Maternity Act

One of the Government’s successes is the Maternity Act, the primary goal of which is to create favourable conditions to ensure the health and safety of working women who are pregnant. This law has ushered in advances regarding the regulation of work, respect for the pregnant mother’s condition and care for newborn babies. One important improvement is the extension of maternity leave from 12 to 14 weeks and the involvement of fathers in their children’s early care. An indirect, positive consequence of the former could be to encourage exclusive breastfeeding during this time.

Antenatal and postnatal care

Pregnant women are offered antenatal check-ups and the norm is for them to have at least four – more in the event of any problems. During this time, special care is taken to prevent disabilities and other potential birth defects or ensure their timely detection. If there are no problems, women can give birth at home, with a midwife in attendance, or in a specialized centre. Nevertheless, if there are difficulties in childbirth, the woman is immediately referred to the hospital for attendance by a specialized gynaecologist. All births (or at least 95 per cent or more) are attended by a skilled health professional and mothers are helped with post-natal care (UNDP, 2011).
**Increased vaccination coverage**

A total of 95 per cent of children between 1 and 4 years have had their scheduled vaccinations including BCG, three doses of DPT, polio and measles, which implies an increase over 2001 (when coverage reached 80 per cent of children).

The increase in vaccination coverage is largely due to the fact that this is the cornerstone of Curaçao’s National Health Plan. The Children’s Health Department conducted an immunization programme in clinics for those aged 0 to 19. Moreover, there are several private foundations that handle vaccinations, which are subsidized by the Government in many cases. These institutions provide support for the prevention of childhood and adolescent diseases and also monitor the mental, psychological and social development of the individual. This comprehensive system involves doctors, educators, dieticians and nurses.

**Challenges remaining**

**Obesity**

Although there has been no specific study on the magnitude of the child and adolescent obesity problem on the island, between 25 and 30 per cent of this sector of the population are estimated to be overweight. This high percentage has a largely cultural explanation: the idea that bigger is better. This conception of beauty starts very early and mothers overfeed their children, especially girls. Other factors, such as the availability of specialized clothing brands in plus sizes, reinforce the idea that big is beautiful.

Obesity is also a consequence of the wide availability of high-calorie foods, preferred by parents because of the lack of time to prepare healthy meals and the lower cost compared to fruits and vegetables (due to the absence of agricultural production on the island and the consequent need to import these goods). Added to this is a sedentary lifestyle. Only 25 per cent of the population exercise. This can partly be explained by the fact that it is very hot during the day and there is a lack of safety at night, while private sports facilities are expensive. Some of the diseases related to obesity are diabetes, hypertension and glaucoma, which in the future will represent a high treatment cost for the Government and the citizens.

Addressing and preventing obesity among children will require the Government to implement multi-sectoral prevention programmes, which could include the promotion of healthy lifestyles and a culture of sports, including in schools.

**Child mortality**

While Curaçao has low rates of infant (under one year) and child (under five years) mortality, it is noteworthy that in the last 12 years a slight upward trend is seen. It should be noted that this indicator is sensitive when it comes to low volumes of population as it is measured per 1,000 live births and so the death of one additional child increases the rate substantially.
Table 3. Infant, under-5 and neonatal mortality rates (per 1,000 live births), 1998–2010

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<td>8.2</td>
<td>9.8</td>
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<td>5.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
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</table>

Source: Data estimated by the CBS 2011.

Among the most common causes of death in newborn children in Curaçao are asphyxia and other respiratory problems, congenital diseases, low foetal growth, lack of nutrition and complications during pregnancy. Of these causes, the last three are directly related to the quality of the mothers’ antenatal care. It is also worth pointing out that lack of nutrition and low foetal growth could be linked to poverty.

Teenage pregnancy

The percentage of teenage mothers fluctuated between 8.1 per cent and 9.6 per cent from 1999 to 2007 (Table 4). While the total number of teenage pregnancies has declined slightly in recent years, the number of teenagers who have more than one child before age 18 has increased.

Table 4. Births by age of mother, 1999–2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
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<td>167</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total births</td>
<td>2,144</td>
<td>2,047</td>
<td>1,929</td>
<td>1,857</td>
<td>1,868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% total births to teenagers</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Planned Parenthood Foundation.
There are various explanations for teenage pregnancy. Since sex education in schools is not mandatory, children and adolescents do not receive the necessary information and, if they do, it is not at a young age. In addition, poor communication within families leads to children and adolescents growing up without adequate knowledge of sexuality. Connected to this are misconceptions about contraceptive methods. The absence of a proper family life can also lead to teenage pregnancy as children seek affection outside the home or want to have something for themselves. This means that they do not see pregnancy as a problem and may not want to use protection. Pregnancy also happens due to casual relationships, peer pressure and the negative influence of the media.

The risk of complications – premature or complicated births – is greater for teenage mothers as their bodies may be physically unready. Furthermore, abortion is also a risk because, despite this being officially illegal, it is estimated that one in three pregnant adolescents resorts to abortion. These operations are performed in private offices or by doctors on house calls, making it impossible to regulate the quality of the operation.

There are several projects and programmes to reduce the teenage pregnancy rate. The Children’s Health Department trains leaders to provide sex education in secondary schools. The Planned Parenthood Foundation has worked since 1965 to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, teaching family planning and selling contraceptives to teenagers at a reasonable price.
Addictions and consumption of alcohol and drugs

The consumption of alcohol and drugs poses a risk to the health of children and adolescents. Experts explain that in most cases this usage is a symptom of shortcomings in the family and social environment in which the individual is growing up. Some of the reasons are the high percentage of single-parent families, young and inexperienced parents, socioeconomic problems within households, lack of guidance in the growth process, youth unemployment, lack of after-school activities, curiosity and peer pressure.

The Maneho de Adikshon Foundation (FMA), in collaboration with the Public Health Service, conducted an investigation in 2010 into alcohol and drug use among students aged 10 to 18. This analysis involved 326 students from 14 primary schools and 1,074 students from 24 secondary schools. Some key findings were that 79 per cent of primary students and 76 per cent of secondary students had consumed alcohol at some time, 35 per cent of secondary students under 15 had been drunk at least once and 32 per cent of high school students had smoked (see Figure 8). Other results of this study indicated that young people started smoking cigarettes and later experimented with marijuana, but the consumption of hard drugs was not common. However, other sources point towards much higher rates of consumption of alcohol and drugs, particularly among secondary school students.

HIV and AIDS

According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS, 2010), the Caribbean region has the second highest prevalence of HIV and AIDS worldwide. In Curaçao, as of June 2011, a total of 746 HIV-infected patients had been registered, of whom 590 (79 per cent) were still alive and 156 (21 per cent) had died since initial registration (SHM, 2011). This was an increase of 73 patients, or 11 per cent, compared to the previous year in which 673 patients were registered. Of those infected, 13 were under 13 and 16 were aged between 13 and 18. Most of the children (10) had been infected through their mother before the introduction in 1995 of universal HIV and AIDS testing for pregnant women to prevent mother-to-child transmission. The adolescents were mainly infected through sexual relations (ibid.).

The age group between 15 and 24 is the only one where the number of infected women (107) exceeds that of men (83). One reason for this may be the tendency of young women to have relationships with older men, who have a higher risk of having contracted the virus.
**Environmental health**

Those residing in the neighbourhoods around the refinery, including children and adolescents, live with the permanent smell of burning oil. There have been times when the schools nearby have been closed due to the gaseous pollutants. As long ago as 2003, ECLAC warned about the high risk of pollution not only for the island but also for the region, as well as the effects of oil transportation on marine diversity; it estimated that about 15,000 people live around refineries in the Netherlands Antilles and are regularly affected by emissions (ECLAC, 2003). Although the state is discussing alternative and renewable forms of energy, it is important to also undertake studies on the impacts of the refinery in terms of the health of the population, particularly children and adolescents.

**The health budget**

The percentage of the national budget spent on direct health interventions is relatively low when compared to other countries: 3.5 per cent (see Figure 2). The changes as of 2010 have caused some instability in the health system and have put some pressure on it to meet all the needs of the population.

A substantive part of the health budget is dedicated to direct health interventions. However, a greater percentage should be allocated to preventive actions and health promotion. This includes the further promotion of breastfeeding, encouragement of healthy lifestyles (aimed at preventing obesity among children) and programmes aimed at preventing unwanted teenage pregnancy and improving reproductive health. It should be noted that programmes that deal with obesity and teenage pregnancy require a multi-sectoral approach to increase the potential for success.
5. The Right to Education
5. The Right to Education

- Education is free and is compulsory for children from ages 6 to 18. Primary school enrolment stands at 97 per cent and secondary school enrolment at 77 per cent.

- The current educational model, including the language of instruction, leads to poor identification with their society and culture among children and adolescents and could later result in ‘brain drain’. Rigid teaching methods persist and there is little emphasis on sport or cultural activities.

- There are high levels of dropout, particularly in secondary education: 23 per cent of adolescents, the majority boys, are not in education or training despite the Mandatory Social Training Act being passed in 2005 to address this issue.

- Children with disabilities are not integrated into the regular education system.

- Due to the limited supply of after-school activities, children and adolescents are often left alone while their parents work, increasing their likelihood of engaging in activities such as drug use and crime (especially adolescents).

- Although education is ostensibly free, schools ask parents to pay a monthly amount because state funding does not cover all the costs. There are not enough teachers or educational materials.

- While all immigrant children have access to education, undocumented students cannot receive a diploma when they complete secondary education. As a result, it is virtually impossible for them to go to college and extremely difficult to find a job.

- Education in Curaçao is free, is guaranteed in Article 21 of the Constitution and is compulsory for children from ages 6 to 18. Primary school enrolment stands at 97 per cent and secondary school enrolment at 77 per cent. Due to the compulsory education law, both documented and undocumented immigrant children have access to schooling. The Ministry of Education estimates 7 per cent of foreign children in schools lack documents.

Other important laws governing education include:

- The law for opening, establishing and operating schools includes important requirements such as health, safety and others.

- There is a pre-school education law that covers kindergarten centres.

- The law governing basic education establishes that after eight or nine years of basic education a child should be trained in the cultural arts, mathematics, language, science and nature. These are linked to the core competencies that children and adolescents should have at the end of their schooling.

- There are laws governing secondary education.
In 2005, in response to the dropout or extended absence issue (see below), the Mandatory Social Training Act was passed with the intention of providing young people aged 16–24 who have left school without qualifications with education and training in different career sectors. It also involves home visits and conversations with children to find out about their problems and the causes of their absence. The mid-term report of an evaluation being conducted by the Teaching and Youth Cooperation Programme (OJSP) on teaching on Curacao and St. Maarten between 2008–2012 found the number of absent days had fallen although the goal set for numbers entering the programme had not been reached (Felix, 2011).

The Curacaean education system is based on the Dutch system and has different educational levels that children and adolescents can access according to their academic performance (see Table 5)

**Table 5. Education system levels in Curacao**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FO</th>
<th>VSBO</th>
<th>SBO</th>
<th>HAVO</th>
<th>VWO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school.</td>
<td>Secondary school. This is divided into three levels: TKL: more theoretical level PKL: more practical level PBL: completely practical</td>
<td>Generally following VSBO, professional level education</td>
<td>Higher level secondary education; it lasts five years.</td>
<td>Higher level secondary education, preparing for potential participation in university education; it lasts six years and is more advanced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FO has eight grades. After this, children are placed in different VSBO levels or in HAVO or VWO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interviews with a specialist and the Ministry of Education (prepared by OSE).

The number of students currently attending school in each of these levels is shown in Table 6.

**Table 6. Data for the 2011–2012 school year by type of school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of schools</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FO</td>
<td>17,342</td>
<td>8,876</td>
<td>8,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO</td>
<td>1,117</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSBO</td>
<td>6,934</td>
<td>3,398</td>
<td>3,536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBO</td>
<td>3,510</td>
<td>1,548</td>
<td>1,962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVO/VWO</td>
<td>3,352</td>
<td>1,394</td>
<td>1,958</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


All schools on Curacao are government subsidized and only a few are private. Public schools are divided into Roman Catholic schools (60 per cent) and Protestant, Christian, Adventist, humanist and government schools (30 per cent). Representatives of these schools form the School Board, a committee that makes decisions related to educational policies.
Progress achieved to date

High levels of primary school attendance and literacy

As noted above, education is compulsory and 97 per cent of children attend primary school. Literacy is almost universal (98 per cent).

Plans to address the lack of after-school activities

The Ministry of Education is currently working on what is called ‘education after regular hours’, through which it seeks to introduce activities related to culture or sport as a compulsory subject. Another proposal is to extend the school day until five in the afternoon, but this would be quite costly since doing so would involve hiring more teachers.

Challenges remaining

Persistence of the Dutch model of education

In cognitive terms, the Dutch education system, on which the education system in Curaçao is based, is very good; however, in emotional and psychological terms, it needs to be adjusted to the local context. It is said to construct representations about the Netherlands that are very separate from the Curaçaoan reality and lead young people to suffer from a lack of identity and identification with their island.

In terms of the curriculum, there is little emphasis on culture, history, sports and the environment. This is also related to the exams to pass from primary to secondary education, since teachers emphasize language and arithmetic and even take time from other subjects to teach to the test. This leads to children developing few skills and knowledge related to other subjects.

Language of instruction

Discussions regarding the educational system have historically focused on the issue of the language of instruction, which, until 2003, was Dutch. In that year, after much debate, a law was passed changing this to Papiamento, but only at the primary level. Faced with protests related to this, it was determined that the management of each school and institution could determine whether to teach in Dutch, Papiamento or a combination of both languages. Most primary schools teach the first years in Papiamento and then switch to Dutch.

However, the availability of school supplies in Papiamento is limited. Moreover, the tests to go from primary to secondary school are of Dutch design and are based on arithmetic and language. While children are able to take these tests in either Papiamento or Dutch, the way the overall system and the test are structured leads most to
The right to education take it in Dutch (e.g., because the terms used in the test have been covered during school years in Dutch and not Papiamento). Children who fail are unable to move on to theoretical and professional secondary school levels and consequently their potential future jobs are low or medium grade. Wealthier families can send their children for additional training focused on this examination.

The language of instruction is the main problem for immigrant children in schools since they often do not speak either Dutch or Papiamento. This also affects their social integration in the classroom and on the island.

**Dropouts**

Though literacy levels and elementary school attendance are high, one of the biggest problems affecting children and adolescents in Curacao is the high number of school dropouts – young people who leave the school system without a high school diploma. The Ministry of Social Development, Labour and Welfare’s Bureau of Examinations states that the dropout rate fluctuates, with 2009 being the year with the most dropouts (33 per cent) at the VSBO level. Currently there is a preference to speak of ‘prolonged absence’ rather than ‘dropout’ to express the hope that the child or adolescent will return to school. An absence is considered prolonged when a student is absent for more than five days in a month.

The reasons behind the absences of children are not always clear. According to indicators provided by the Educational Affairs Service, shown in Table 7, the highest rates are due to ‘unknown causes’ (37 per cent) followed by ‘sickness’ (36 per cent).

**Table 7. Causes of absence from school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unknown causes</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sickness</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult neglect</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic problem</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave home and do not go to school</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem with the law</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family problems</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour problems</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other stated causes combined</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Educational Affairs Service (prepared by the OSE).

Some of the external causes for dropping out include financial constraints and poverty, which affect mobility (e.g., access to school, children live in distant neighbourhoods), nutrition (not all come to school well fed, which affects performance) and housing (e.g., flooded by rain), among others; parental indifference leading to a lack of motivation; and the desire to acquire material goods – promoted by a consumerist society and by the television and Internet – and hence to make money rather than attending school. Some internal causes as expressed by
children are the inflexibility of teachers in the classroom; the lack of opportunity for young people to express themselves; numerous rules that children find meaningless and punishments such as cleaning the school, which strengthen their negative perception of the school; and too many academic subjects compared to very few hours of sport.

Asked about role models in focus group discussions that were part of this study, very few children referenced those close to them such as parents, teachers or neighbours – in general, they are not motivated by adults but by what they learn from the television, computer, smartphones and other electronic devices. Many children do not have a good male model because there is no father in the home and a lack of male teachers in primary schools.

**Little attention to gender differences**

According to a comprehensive analysis of gender differences in education participation in the Netherlands Antilles (Narain, 2010), schools do not pay attention to the fact that girls and boys have different learning styles. For example, girls learn to read and write earlier than boys but it is girls’ learning speed that is followed in the classroom. As the educational level gets higher, males are being left behind (ibid.). Boys are the highest proportion of children attending special education schools (71 per cent in 2006), indicating that they have more learning problems than girls. They are also the majority (approx. 78 per cent) of those on the waiting lists for these schools.

**Limited availability of after-school activities**

There are insufficient recreational spaces for children and adolescents. While middle class children mentioned after-school activities such as classes, soccer and tennis, those from a lower socioeconomic level note that there are very few affordable recreational opportunities. Most of them go home after school and prepare their own lunch or heat food left ready by family members. Afternoon activities include widespread Internet usage, chatting on the phone or watching television. Although there are some state-run ‘neighbourhood centres’, these do not exist in all areas. Moreover, children differ about whether these are fun places where they can dance, do homework and meet friends or whether they “have nothing” or only “occasionally” promote activities. The lack of parental presence in the home and the consequent neglect of children’s care increases the likelihood of their engaging in activities such as drug use and crime.

**Limited integration of children with disabilities or in need of special education**

In 2001, there were 848 children with disabilities aged between 0–14 in Curaçao, 74 per cent of whom were male and 43 per cent female. This includes children with significant vision problems (22 per cent), physical disability (21 per cent) and mental limitation (22 per cent). The data referenced could not be updated because, up to the closing date of this report, there were no disability results from the 2011 Census.

The educational system still has no capacity for the inclusion of children with disabilities. These children are instead referred to special schools: there are three for severe disabilities, eight for ‘medium range’ intellectual disabilities,
one for physical disabilities and one for the deaf. There is also a centre for the blind that prepares them for mainstreaming into regular schools. The classes in the special schools have 15 to 18 students per classroom.

The majority of the special schools are aimed at children and teenagers with ‘medium-range’ learning disabilities. As mentioned above, most of the children and adolescents with educational problems are male and this may be connected to the lack of regard for gender differences in learning. It is also important to remember that emotional and family problems affect children and adolescents in the home, and the educational system’s ability to provide an adequate response to this is limited.

Apart from these schools, there are some programmes for children with disabilities implemented by NGOs such as Asosiashon Totolika. This institution started a programme for people with disabilities three years ago: 300 children eat a meal after school and engage in sporting and cultural activities in the afternoon as well as social skills activities. Initially funded by the Dutch, this programme currently expects support from the state. With regard to training specialists in this area, there is a Bachelor’s degree in special education, but courses and training for teachers specializing in people with disabilities do not exist in Curaçao.

**Education is not entirely free**

While the percentage of the state budget for education is high (20.8 per cent) and education is ostensibly free, institutions need to ask parents for a monthly stipend because state financing does not sufficiently cover infrastructure and school materials. Educational institutions mention that it is difficult to handle these issues with parents who, even if they have enough money, often refuse to pay saying that it is the government’s responsibility to cover the costs of all people equally. The books for more advanced educational levels are expensive as they are purchased in the Netherlands, and the state has determined that parents should pay US$140 towards this cost.
Brain drain

Studying in the Netherlands, the USA and other countries is seen as a chance to get ahead. Students with good grades go overseas to pursue careers not found on the island. The Dutch Government funds studies in either Curaçao or the Netherlands. The requirements for the latter are Dutch nationality and that the subject to be studied is not offered in Curaçao (and is recognized by the Dutch Government). An SBO, HAVO or VWO diploma is also required, depending on the type of tertiary education. Annually, 1,000 students apply to study in Curaçao and 300 to study in the Netherlands. Some of the latter stay on to work temporarily while a substantive number do not return at all. Ways in which the state could motivate students to return have been suggested, such as providing job search assistance or reductions in housing costs. Further emphasis could be given to developing a human resources policy that defines how many and what types of professionals the country needs in order to undertake reinsertion activities for young people who have left to study and want to return.

Figure 4 summarizes the main problems in the education system.
6. The Right to Protection
6. The Right to Protection

- An initial system of child protection exists involving both state and civil society entities. However, there is no comprehensive protection system that includes prevention, care, rehabilitation and restitution of rights. Such a system would need adequate information on the frequency of problems and should be linked under a single multi-sectoral policy for children that crosscuts the various ministries.

- While a substantive number of state and/or privately funded civil society organizations implement programmes, projects or activities related to child protection, they often face financial constraints and cannot always count on adequate levels of technical or specialized knowledge. State oversight of these organizations could be enhanced.

- The number of reported cases of violence in the home has risen. About 38 cases of sexual abuse of children are reported yearly and incest is said to be not uncommon. However, there are no statistics on the real magnitude of the problem or the causes.

- Adolescents are at risk of getting involved in drug trafficking because some consider it a quick and easy way to make money.

- The upgraded juvenile justice system launched in 2011 still allows those between 16 and 17 to be sentenced as adults and, with no juvenile detention centre, young offenders often end up with adults in the general prison without any age-appropriate regime.

- Curaçao is reportedly a source, transit point and destination country for women and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour. There are no specific policies for the prevention and detection of these issues involving children, adolescents and women.

The rights to health and education have been almost universally achieved in Curaçao. The challenge now, as for other high-income countries, is to fulfil the right to protection. The CRC is explicit in noting in Article 32 to 40 which aspects of the protection of children require special attention and an integrated response: child labour, economic exploitation in work harmful to health and child development (Article 32); drug use and addictions (Article 33); sexual abuse and exploitation (Article 34); abduction, sale or trafficking of children (Article 35); all forms of exploitation (Article 36); torture and injuries against children (Article 37); armed conflict and children (Article 38); and children and adolescents in conflict with the law (Article 40). To these considerations another high priority should be added: the situation of children with disabilities.

On Curaçao, child labour is not an issue of great concern. The circumstances that repeatedly appear as the biggest concern for the welfare of Curaçaoan children are domestic and school violence, the inequality of immigrant children and adolescents, the risk of child sexual exploitation, alcohol and drug use and the issue of teenagers in conflict with the law.
Progress achieved to date

There is no doubt that the legal and judicial system in Curaçao is one of the successes in guaranteeing the protection of children and adolescents, including steady improvement in areas such as trafficking in women and children and juvenile justice. NGOs are also actively involved in addressing child protection issues. However, the limited regulatory role of the state in terms of assessing quality of services provided in through these NGOs as well as the limited coordination within the system (especially among NGOs and between NGOs and the state) often results in a fragmented response.

The child protection system

There is an initial system of child protection in which various private and public entities are involved in the detection, prevention and restoration of violated rights. Figure 5 illustrates how this system operates.
Figure 5. Curaçao’s current child protection system
As seen in the figure, abuse or violation of the rights of children and adolescents may be detected at a number of points by family members or neighbours, by schools or day-care centres and by youth medical services or paediatricians. It can then be reported either to the public Child Protection Service (Voogdijraad) or to a private foundation (Stichting Kinderbescherming) that works on issues related to child abuse. Both agencies may then refer cases of children or adolescents who have been abused or whose rights have been violated to the police or to institutions for psychological and medical care and the restitution of their rights, and/or, depending on the case, take abuse victims to shelters or place them with foster families.

When there is a lot of abuse in a household, the Child Protection Service serves as a focal point to assist and resettle the children involved. It investigates cases and provides support and assistance to families. It serves about 1,400 children annually, of which 200 to 300 are removed from their homes and treated at the care centre. In these cases, the idea is to help parents regain their children. In practice, sometimes this happens and in other cases it is very difficult due to a lack of human and financial resources. It is important to improve the violent environment in which the child was living so she or he can be reinserted into the family. Therefore, setting up an early warning system is necessary in order to solve the shortcomings at home before having to move on to relocating the child.

With the aim of providing multi-disciplinary support, the Ministry of Social Development, Welfare and Labour inaugurated the Family and Youth Centre in 2011 to provide assistance, protection and care for children and adolescents and adults facing different social, emotional and psychological problems. Since 2006 the Voices of Youth Foundation has trained volunteers to provide information in educational settings and held workshops with teachers so they will know how to recognize abuse. Its members also visit schools, put on plays and provide information to students about abuse and how to prevent it, and it has a radio programme called ‘By What Right’ that discusses abuse. In addition, the Positive Parenting Programme (PPP) provides guidance to parents.

**Other foundations giving care and guidance to children related to their rights are:**

- **SGE (Sentro pa Guia Edukashonal)**, whose mission is to guide schools in the management and treatment of children and adolescents with disabilities and learning problems.
- **PSI (Perspektiva i Sosten Integral)** for mental health care, which has a special unit for children and adolescents
- **Child Rights Centre (Tienda Di Lei Pa Mucha)**, a department of the private foundation Stichting Kinderbescherming, where children can ask questions on the rights and duties.

In addition, local schools have social workers who help in the detection process. However, trained human resources in this area are very limited.
Addressing trafficking and addiction

To prevent human trafficking, the new penal code contains articles prohibiting forced labour and sex trafficking and prescribing penalties between 9 and 24 years in prison, which are commensurate with those for other serious crimes such as rape. The Government has also established a Working Group on Human Trafficking, which has established direct contact with the consulates of the most vulnerable groups. Other efforts to prevent trafficking have included a multilingual campaign to raise public awareness about forced labour and forced prostitution, and the provision of public information. The Government has acknowledged the EU’s Anti-Trafficking Day through a ministerial decree.

Measures to address drug trafficking include the placement of radar and coastguard patrols of the bays. In addition, to prevent drug taking among youth, the international institution Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) has undertaken a primary prevention project for four years that goes to schools to provide information about drugs and drug abuse. Annually, around 4,000 students from different levels have participated on its workshops. In addition, the Addiction Management Foundation (AMF) works to provide alcohol and drug prevention information in schools. This institution also undertakes rehabilitation programmes for people addicted to alcohol, drugs, gambling and smoking.

Juvenile justice

A new juvenile sanction system was launched in 2011 and is much more flexible than the previous system. However, some of the challenges in implementing this are discussed below under ‘Adolescents in conflict with the law’.
Challenges remaining

Need to consider adjustments to the legal framework

Having the Dutch legal system as a reference is generally positive, but there is also a negative side: the legal framework does not always reflect the reality, culture and needs of Curaçaons. For example, the new penal code introduced the right of children to choose whether the person accused of abusing them should be prosecuted or not. At first glance, this may seem like a legal breakthrough, but it has led to a situation where a child molester may go free, even if reported by an adult, if the child does not want to accuse him.

Another difficulty is that the new penal code continues to set the legal age of consent at 16 years, so that there is no punishment for an adult who has sexual relations with a 16 year old. There is a need to raise the age of consent to prevent sexual abuse or sexual violations committed by adults against anyone under 18 years old.

Need for enhanced coordination in the child protection system

While the existence of the initial system described above is undoubtedly a crucial first step on the island to reverse child abuse, it is not enough. A comprehensive protection and care system for children and adolescents would involve a legal framework specifically involving this population group. For example, a legal code for children and adolescents should define one state body that formulates government policy in this area and monitors compliance and another that offers and executes comprehensive actions. This implies operating seamlessly in the social areas (education, health, protection), in the economic area and in the justice system.

A comprehensive system would require all state ministries to assume a much more active and complementary role in relation to detection of and intervention in the mistreatment of children. It is essential to create awareness programmes on the importance of detecting and reporting child abuse to ensure that it is not normalized in society. It would also be desirable to create programmes to guide parents in the proper way to raise children, hence the need to encourage links between schools and families.

Curaçao already has the pieces to operationalize a comprehensive system of care and protection: the many civil society organizations working with children and adolescents provide a base for the system. It is therefore essential there is a real political will to ensure this transformation takes place.

Violence in the home

One of the major problems for children and adolescents in Curaçao is the often violent nature of relationships in the home. In 2010, about 424 complaints were received at the Child Abuse Counselling and Reporting Station (AMK). Figure 6 highlights the different types of abuse within the home, ranging from emotional abuse/neglect to physical abuse, affective or cognitive abuse, educational neglect and sexual abuse.
According to the ‘First Millennium Development Goals Report 2011’, the number of reported domestic violence complaints increased from 45 to 103 between 2008 and 2009 (UNDP, 2011). In a survey published in 2010 with the participation of 545 children from 12 island schools, it was estimated that 431 juveniles had been abused (Klein, 2010).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that these data are possibly underestimates because emotional abuse was not considered abuse in the past. In the aforementioned survey, 43 per cent of the students interviewed described experiences that can only be defined as abuse, plus 16 per cent were victims of sexual abuse while 37 per cent reported experiencing physical abuse. Some children experienced more than one type of abuse (Klein, 2010).

There are several factors within families that contribute to this problem. For example, insufficient household income and lack of childcare facilities means that mothers must sometimes work in more than one job, leaving their children alone and unprotected. Stress and high levels of alcohol consumption also have negative effects within the household. Additionally, parents often do not know how to discipline their children and resort to physical punishment. Thus, the percentage of juveniles who reported being beaten by their fathers and/or mothers reached 6 per cent in 2010. Of those, 7 per cent were female and 4 per cent male.

Currently parents make the most reports to the AMK, followed by anonymous calls and complaints by teachers (see Figure 7). However, not all abuse cases come to light because people are afraid of reporting, especially when the perpetrator is a family member or acquaintance. Abuse is also not always detected because various forms of violence have undergone a normalization process to the point that they go unnoticed. For this reason, it is

**Source:** Child Abuse Counselling and Reporting Centre (AMK).

**Figure 6:** Types of maltreatment reported to AMK, 2010
important to encourage people to know and report the signs of abuse.

![Pie chart showing reports received by AMK by person or organization reporting, 2010](image)

Source: Child Abuse Reporting and Counselling Centre (AMK).
Figure 7. Reports received by AMK by person or organization reporting, 2010

Certain schools are also not safe sites because abuse and violence occurs between students. Moreover, 26 per cent of young people do not feel safe in their neighbourhoods. Girls feel even less safe (32 per cent) than boys (20 per cent).

According to Curacao’s CRC implementation report, 92 per cent of the causes for state protection measures are parental negligence in childcare (68 per cent), physical, psychological or sexual abuse by parents (12 per cent) and improper behaviour by the child (12 per cent). The report notes that neglect is mainly psychological abandonment, and it suggests that a major cause is the stress produced by “the financial difficulties we found in all layers of the population, the worsening socio-economic situation, parental drug and gambling addiction, poor housing conditions and parental psychiatric problems” (Ministry of Social Development, Labour and Welfare, 2012).
Sexual abuse

According to informants, about 38 cases of child sexual abuse are reported annually on the island. It is also stated that incest is not uncommon, particularly where a person living in the house uses drugs, people have a low educational level or the entire family feels it is normal and it carries on from generation to generation. Since a thorough investigation has not been conducted, there are no statistics or studies on the reasons behind this type of abuse.

Although the state has care and monitoring mechanisms through state-funded foundations and civil society organizations, there is no coordinated system that includes prevention, the systematic collection of data on the frequency of the problems, care, rehabilitation and the restitution of rights.

Child trafficking and prostitution

The ‘2012 Trafficking in Persons Report’ by the US Department of State states that Curaçao is considered a source, transit point and destination country for women and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour. While the report does not present statistics, it mentions that foreign trafficking victims come from Colombia, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Asia. According to the IOM, it is estimated that each year 3,000 women are trafficked into the island, 50 per cent of all women working in non-regulated prostitution (Borland et al., 2004).

It is difficult to effectively control the age and the protection of women who work at bars, some of which also function as illegal brothels where prostitution occurs with the women servers. However, it is difficult to prove whether bars and hotels use children in this way and the problem is not out in the open.

Despite a new penal code specifically prohibiting forced labour and sex trafficking, it is said to be very difficult to find the evidence necessary to charge and convict traffickers. Moreover, the US Department of State (2012) states that “the government demonstrated modest efforts in prosecuting trafficking offenses and no proceedings or conviction for sexual or labour trafficking occurred under the new statute or other statutes that have been used in the past to prosecute trafficking offenses” (ibid.). There is no awareness campaign specifically targeted at potential clients of the sex trade in Curaçao, as part of an effort to reduce demand for commercial sex acts. The island does not have a trafficking rapporteur to monitor and evaluate anti-trafficking efforts and has not identified child sex tourism as a problem (ibid.).

Another worrying mechanism of child sexual exploitation is the phenomenon of ‘loverboys’. This refers to youths usually aged between 18 and 24 who provide vulnerable young girls with emotional and financial support and then, when the girls have fallen in love with them, ask them to have sex with other people as a ‘personal favour’. Several persuasion mechanisms are used. For example, the young men may say they have a debt and that this would be a way to pay it or that their life is in danger and that this way she can help. They actually charge for the ‘favours’ and this psychological blackmail thus forces girls into prostitution. Moreover, it is unlikely that the victims will seek help or make charges against the abuser since they do not consider him as such.
This circumstance is one where the liberal nature of the laws currently operating on the island is evident because, as mentioned earlier, girls over 16 are able to decide about their sex life. Furthermore, the fact that the new penal code has introduced a child’s right to be heard in court makes it hard to press charges if the girl who is the victim of a ‘loverboy’ does not want to.

The presence of child commercial sexual exploitation responds to multiple causes that are often not only related to socioeconomic problems that induce people to seek an income that solves their problems of survival. As described, it may begin with manipulation or blackmail, but it can be associated with domestic abuse, being kicked out of the house or neglected by parents and the lack of social support networks to control and prevent prostitution.

**Drug trafficking and gambling**

Curaçao’s geographic location makes it attractive as a drug trans-shipment point between Latin America, the US and Europe. No specific policies have been created to stop this, and it especially endangers young Curaçaoans. The risk is not only of consumption but also that some young people see drug trafficking as a quick and easy way to make money. Measures to address this issue are lacking; although the Government has programmes to inform the community about drug use, there is no structural management or specific drug trafficking prevention policy. It would be prudent to conduct an investigation to determine the link between school dropouts, the few training alternatives available and possible early involvement with illicit activities related to drug trafficking. Such evidence as derived could further guide the design of campaigns and policies aimed at the prevention of drug use.

The Maneho de Adikshon Foundation (FMA), in collaboration with the Public Health Service, conducted an investigation in 2010 into alcohol and drug use among students aged 10 to 18. This analysis involved 326 students from 14 primary schools and 1,074 students from 24 secondary schools. Some key findings are that 79 per cent of primary students and 76 per cent of secondary students have consumed alcohol at some time, 35 per cent of secondary students under 15 have been drunk at least once and 32 per cent of high school students have smoked (see Figure 8). Other results of this study indicate that young people start smoking cigarettes and later experiment with marijuana, but the consumption of hard drugs is not common. However, other sources point towards much higher rates of consumption of alcohol and drugs, particularly among secondary school students.
Gambling is also a risk to youth, with 17 per cent of high school and 9 per cent of primary students having already gambled. This is attributed to the fact that Curaçao is one of the four Caribbean islands with the most casinos per square metre, which also contributes to 10 per cent of the population being at risk of pathological gambling and 3 per cent of the population already affected. Unlike other addictions, this is more common in women and is more difficult to detect and therefore treat. Furthermore, there is no control regulating the entry of locals – including teenagers – to the casinos.

**Adolescents in conflict with the law**

Less than 1 per cent – exactly 0.27 per cent – of the population of adolescents aged 10 to 19 were implicated in violent crimes during 11 months of 2011.

**Table 8. Number of teenagers involved in violent crimes, Jan–Nov 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minor offenders</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minor suspects</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women suspects</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most common activities committed by teenagers that bring them into contact with the law are assaults, theft in combination with violence and use of weapons. In most cases when teenagers have committed these crimes, they have been under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (Salsbach, 2008). Reasons that explain youth violence are mainly insecurity in homes, schools and neighborhoods, dropping out of school with no alternatives, a lack of guidance in the child and adolescent growth process, youth unemployment and emotional problems. All these problems are exacerbated when they are not resolved, e.g., untreated emotional problems increase the propensity to get into conflict with the law. Hence a joint effort between the state, civil society, family and school is needed to identify and treat children with problems that can lead to these conflicts.

Violence in the home can cause young people to see this as normal and an everyday and accepted part of life. Many parents are unprepared for the role they must play and do not know how to guide their children in the growth process. Lack of adult supervision due to parents having to work in multiple jobs, the absence of a positive male figure in the home and a lack of extracurricular activities can also lead to involvement in illicit behaviour. Added to this is the role of the media, which give young people access to information that, without the proper guidance, can make children easily influenced by negative roles. Moreover, for those lacking self-esteem, acting in an aggressive way can make them feel powerful. To address these issues, the SIFMA Foundation, for example, through its ‘parenting support’ programme, encourages families to do a better job in executing their responsibilities by providing workshops for parents and educators.

Both Salsbach (2008) and Marcehan-Slot (2012) conclude that due process is not satisfied when it comes to children and teenagers in conflict with the law in Curaçao and that the laws with respect to the detention of young offenders should be urgently updated according to international standards. Salsbach (2008) further states that the information available from various civil society organizations is very scattered, so the exact age of young offenders and the types of crime committed are unknown. However, she concludes that in most cases they are arrested in the act rather than following an investigation. The report also states that no special protection is offered to young offenders who require witnesses, and little or no investigation is conducted to safeguard the welfare of children or adolescents who serve as witnesses. In the case of children who are victims of crime, the only protection given is placement in state shelters or foster care (ibid.).

The criminal code of the Netherlands Antilles remains in force after the signing of the Status Aparte and, despite the new juvenile justice system mentioned above, young offenders over age 16 are still frequently sentenced as adults. There is no special facility on the island for teenagers who go to prison, and there is no juvenile prison (Salsbach, 2008). In most cases, young offenders end up with adult prisoners in the Sentro Di Dentenshon i Korekshon di Kòrsou (SDKK) general prison, where they are not separated from the adults and there is no age-appropriate regime.

There are two agencies on the island for juveniles under 16 who have been arrested: GOG, which is an institution for youth in trouble with the law; and BRASAMI, which takes in people who abuse illegal substances. As an alternative to prison, teenagers may be put in the FOBA (Forensic Observation and Guidance Unit). However, this unit also
houses psychologically disturbed adult prisoners and others under psychological observation. Therefore, facilities specially designed for young offenders are desirable. Although education is compulsory on the island, this service is not provided in the prisons. However, in GOG and BRASAMI juveniles can continue with their studies.

During 2008, the year with the most recent data, between 160 and 170 young people under 24 years were imprisoned on Curaçao. According to the report, the profile of young offenders was teenagers who had dropped out of the school system, from households with low socioeconomic conditions, and usually growing up alone or in single-parent households.

Box 2. Issues specific to undocumented immigrants

Although there are no exact statistics, there are estimated to be about 5,000 undocumented immigrants in Curaçao. Under the Expulsion and Stay Law, foreigners (including children) must be outside the country to apply for permission to stay. In addition, parents must demonstrate that they make US$1,676 gross monthly (or US$838 if one parent is a Dutch national – the difference is because anyone married to a Dutch national is entitled to a local job). The immigrant will also need a valid passport, birth certificate, statement from a recognized school, health insurance and ultimately a certificate of good conduct. In 2002, the state granted a grace period for the legalization of undocumented children, but many people did not take advantage of this because they did not qualify or feared being deported.

Undocumented immigrants are vulnerable and their rights are disrespected in various aspects of their daily lives. They tend not to report abuses in the workplace, such as lower wages or overtime without pay, because they are afraid of being deported. This stressful situation affects their children, who have to deal with the emotional aspects of growing up in a family that is not fully recognized by society and the state. While, as noted above, undocumented children have free access to preventive health, treatment must be paid for. Since undocumented immigrants tend to have a low income, they cannot always afford this. Moreover, while undocumented children and adolescents have access to primary and secondary education, without papers they cannot get a diploma; it is then impossible for them to pursue higher education and extremely difficult to find a job. For this reason, their insecure economic situation may be perpetuated.
Introduction and Methodology

7. The Right to Participation
7. The Right to Participation

- Overall, there are several important spaces for adolescents to ventilate their ideas and opinions. Such efforts could be further encouraged and expanded.
- The Youth Parliament enables young people to express their opinions and present ideas and proposals to the state, although it has no power to make policy changes.
- A magazine created by adolescents circulates among all schools, and children and adolescents can also air their views on local radio stations.
- Measures to promote the participation of children are needed since existing programmes focus only on those over age 12. Laws to ensure youth participation are still in development.
- Laws that were openly discriminatory against women have been revised and/or eliminated, but there are only 5 women in Parliament compared to 16 men and 2 women on the Board of Ministers compared to 7 men.
- There is no policy to assist women to fulfil their dual role as caregivers and guarantors of the household economy.
- More social inclusion measures are needed to reduce the marginalization experienced by undocumented immigrants, including increased efforts to legalize those under 18.

Participation of children and adolescents

The Ministry of Social Development, Labour and Welfare has established a youth monitoring programme that works in secondary schools with children aged 12 to 18 and is responsible for hearing and addressing their main problems. The Government also has a foundation to promote youth participation and communication. In addition, ‘4 YOU-TH MAGAZINE’ is created by young people as a space where they can express themselves and is distributed free of charge.

The Voices of Youth Foundation was founded in 1993 with the aim of helping children know their rights and take an active role in developing the island economically, culturally and politically. It created the Youth Parliament, which trains young people to formulate and express their views. Although this initiative has no power to implement specific changes in government policies, the national Parliament analyses their suggestions, ideas and projects when making decisions. However, more measures are needed to facilitate and promote the participation of children, and existing programmes only focus on young adults. Also, laws to ensure youth participation are still in development.
In regard to participation at the school level, a law is being developed on the formation of student councils; however, this is not yet operational. At the neighbourhood level, children do not participate in local committees but they do share their ideas in regard to the activities promoted by these agencies, mainly sports or using computers. Other spaces for children and adolescents to express their views are local radio stations. There are several weekly radio programmes on which various issues are discussed, stories told of interest to children and/or music played for this group.

A ‘national plan to develop the neighbourhood’ under the Ministry of General Affairs intends to use participatory methodologies and ‘empowerment’ of the inhabitants to find solutions to daily life problems. In general terms, it also establishes that the Government recognizes its obligation to inform the community about the issues it handles. One of the tasks is to create a broad political and public base. Given the process of change, it is important to encourage participation – including the participation of children and adolescents – in government processes.

The situation of women

In the last three decades, Curaçao has seen important advances in legal terms regarding women’s rights. Laws that openly discriminated against women have been reformulated and/or repealed. For example, since the 1980s, a married woman has been allowed to work in a government job. Along with this, the island – which was already a signatory to the Convention since 1991 as part of the Netherlands – ratified CEDAW in 2010 and is expected to make a report in 2014. However, as mentioned previously, Curaçao still does not have an investigation and centralized data collection mechanism, making it difficult to verify CEDAW compliance.
Women in the public sphere

Although the island has had five women Prime Ministers in its history, equity in government has not been achieved: sixteen seats in the Parliament are held by men and only five by women, while seven positions in the Council of Ministers are occupied by men and two by women. At one point there was a Women’s Desk, but this agency was abolished and its tasks were divided between different organizations, the Family and Youth Centre and the Ministry of Social Development, Labour and Welfare. There are no gender-mainstreaming policies integrating the vision of gender equality across all government ministries.

One of the ways in which the absence of such policies manifests itself is the lack of support available for women in terms of the multiple roles they play inside and outside the home. Although some women hold high positions in politics, this is not the typical situation of women in Curaçao. Many of them, especially immigrants but also locals, struggle to make ends meet. About 40 per cent of households are single parent, usually headed by women. Women are largely responsible for the emotional care – and, in many cases, the economic well-being – of children. Due to the economic reality of the island, many heads of households must have more than one job.

As discussed in the section on education, girls do better than boys in primary, secondary and especially college education on the island. Apart from the faculty of engineering, women make up the majority in the faculties at the University of the Netherlands Antilles, accounting for about 62 per cent of the institution’s enrolment (UNDP, 2011). However, this educational advantage does not always translate into better job opportunities and, as noted earlier, more women are unemployed than men. In addition, while a man’s average income is US$1,495, a woman’s is US$870.

Violence against women

Domestic violence is thought to be an increasing problem, with 45 cases recorded in 2008 but 103 in 2009 (UNDP, 2011). This is said to be due to a number of factors including the macho culture on the island, jealousy, the fact that men feel threatened and marginalized from their responsibilities and economic stress within families. Domestic violence prevents women from being full participants in society. Since 2003, Curaçao has had a centre to assist battered women and since 2007 a shelter for women aged 18 to 24 who have had conflicts in their homes.

If the situation of women on the island is to improve, a holistic national plan to prevent violence should be created, which also takes into account men and the family, to improve the situation of all who are part of the lives of women and thus ensure the fulfillment of their rights.
Insufficient policies to support women in their many social roles

- Increasing cost of living/limited job opportunities
- High numbers of single-parent families
- Invisibility of men’s role in childcare
- Limited extra-curricular activities for children and adolescents

- Mothers in the workplace do not always have equality in conditions or political participation
- Extended family is also working and not able to help with childcare
- Needing to work multiple jobs to stabilize home finances
- Mothers as only authority figure in the home

- Persistence of machismo/ men feel threatened
- Economic stress

- Domestic violence
- Lack of care and guidance for children and adolescents in their growth process (especially after school), which leads to negligence, abandonment and abuse

Figure 9. Causal chain of principle problems affecting the situation of women
8. Conclusions and recommendations
8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The enormous potential of Curaçaoan society comes from universal access to education and health care and the fact that the country is going through a transition process that involves social, political, economic and cultural factors. This historic juncture could be an opportunity for the state to consolidate its stewardship and leadership by creating mechanisms for the fulfilment and guarantee of the rights of children and adolescents. Its potential is also underlined by the fact that Curaçao is a multicultural and diverse country with a legal framework that promotes full rights compliance.

However, although the child protection system has all the necessary component parts, it does not work as a harmonious, articulated and robust whole in the areas of prevention, care, rehabilitation and restoration of rights. The supply of these services involves societal participation through foundations that often work independently from each other, and a comprehensive state policy is lacking. Moreover, the Government has also faced a number of challenges related to the dismantling of the Federal Government of the Netherlands Antilles, including a lot of staff changes in ministries. Another issue is that while Curaçao is classified as a high-income country, inequalities related to the poverty of a quarter of the population affect the lives of children and adolescents, putting the whole society at risk.

Of the recommendations made in 2009 by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to the countries of the Dutch Caribbean, there are some still to be resolved in the case of Curaçao. These have to do with:

1. The need for installations specially designed for children in conflict with the law and the fact that, although education is compulsory, this service is not present in prisons.
2. The persistence of teenage pregnancy and the need to make exclusive breastfeeding state policy.
3. The lack of access by disabled children to the regular education system.
4. The trafficking of children and adolescents for commercial sexual exploitation or slave labour. This has been flagged for attention not only by the 2009 CRC report but by the US Department of State (2012). This is a serious risk for children that may be hidden or normalized.

The right to education has been largely met with the exception of immigrant children’s access to college. However, the school dropout rate is very high. While the country has taken steps since 2009 not only to prevent dropout or absence from school but also to install a monitoring and evaluation process, it still has not been able to solve the difficulties that children have at each level of the system.
Other issues that need addressing include the limited supply of state childcare services or after-school activities for children and adolescents and the high cost of private sector services. Mothers are left to resolve the childcare issue without the support of their partner or the state. Disadvantages are still observed between women and men in the areas of labour and participation, and a gender policy has not been mainstreamed in the Government.

The maternity law is noteworthy since it endeavours to ensure mothers care for their children for more weeks during the first stage of life, which also promotes breastfeeding, and that fathers are part of this care. However, while the country has designed preventative health services, the continuing high rates of teenage pregnancy and obesity reflect the absence of integrated policies related to health, education, agriculture and protection. The relative increase in mortality rates among children under five in the last 12 years calls for investigation.

Violence against children in the home is still a problem despite educating parents on the subject. While there is an Ombudsman, there is no child-specific defender. Information on the situation of children and adolescents remains scattered and untimely.
Recommendations

General

→ Strengthen coordination and cooperation between government institutions and departments in addressing the rights of the child in health, education, child protection and participation.

→ Strengthen the role of the state in fulfilling a normative role in terms of setting norms and standards for quality and functions of non-governmental organizations and foundations, including establishing clear mechanisms for referral aimed at addressing the rights of all children in Curaçao in a holistic manner.

→ As recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the state should guarantee funds and strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems with periodic data that is reliable and accessible to all in the implementation of action plans related to childhood and adolescence. A specific child and adolescent information system would allow for permanent monitoring of the Convention and internalization among decision makers and the general public of the importance of compliance with the rights of childhood and adolescence. For this it is essential that the Central Bureau of Statistics be strengthened in order to exercise stewardship in terms of information and be the sole registry of violations of the rights of children and adolescents.

→ More disaggregated statistical information is needed between censuses from household surveys and administrative data systems. Research should be undertaken to deepen understanding of the situation of children and adolescents in terms of health, education, protection and various aspects of social life. A survey system that disaggregates by a number of different factors including national origin would catch important variations in the Curaçaoan population that could feed state planning.

→ There is a need for transparency in actions in favour of children and adolescents and open spaces for accountability. The implementation of laws, policies, programmes and budgets and quality of spending need to be public. Yearly accounting mechanisms could be put in place using contemporary forms of communication such as the Internet and social networks, as well as maintaining institutional memory, which is essential for the continuity of state policies. This way past mistakes can be analysed and avoided in the future. The implementation of mechanisms such as citizen oversight and observatories for monitoring public policies is necessary.

→ Regional integration could support management of new international relations and dialogue with other countries in the Caribbean and Latin America, as well as cultural and economic exchange, which could contribute to the process of constructing a new state.
Health

→ The state should institutionalize a preventative, curative and rehabilitative care system placing special emphasis on obesity, tendency to addiction and teenage pregnancy. This will ensure a better quality of life for the population as well as a reduction in state expenses used in treating diseases that arise from these problems.

→ To control and prevent obesity, it is also important to create a policy that establishes preventive activities in health-care centres, childcare centres and schools and to develop a communication campaign along with education on healthy eating and ensuring adequate attention to regular physical exercise inside and outside the home, workplaces, schools and colleges to change cultural notions that bigger is better.

→ A larger percentage of the state budget should be allocated to disease prevention to address obesity and teenage pregnancy, as well as the problems that come from an aging population, and to scientific research to find causes for the health problems currently plaguing the island. This would include studies about the real impacts of the refinery and tourism in terms of the health of the population, especially children and adolescents.

→ As also recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, greater efforts are needed to promote exclusive breastfeeding and comply with the International Code of Breast-Milk Marketing. These could be based on the advances made with the Maternity Law.

→ Specific research to investigate the increase in child mortality should be developed and look at the quality of antenatal care as well as the social conditions of pregnant mothers with major problems.

Education

→ Given that 20.8 per cent of the state budget is spent on education, it is recommended to move forward with maximizing efficiency and effectiveness of the available resources with the aim of increased school attendance and improved learning outcomes.

→ Along with changing the Dutch perspective in the education system, it is essential to strengthen parallel reintegration educational programmes for children and adolescents. Addressing the reasons for dropping out is an important way to reduce the cycle of poverty and ensure complete education. Innovative teaching methodologies are needed to manage children at different levels and change the unilateral education concept from one that sees children as passive receivers to one centred on learning that develops student abilities in entrepreneurship, independence and creativity. The school absence monitoring system should be continued to yield permanent data on the impacts of the measures taken to correct school absenteeism.

→ Early warning mechanisms are necessary in schools to detect any socioeconomic problems or learning problems affecting children in order to ensure that children fully participate in the school system. This care must be specialized (e.g., psychologists, psychologists, social workers) so as to not confuse domestic issues (low self-esteem, isolation from the environment, etc.) with learning problems. Teachers should be trained and learning materials provided so that children with disabilities can be included in the regular school system.

→ Sex education should be included in the school curriculum and work conducted with the family and the school on preventing pregnancy with a special emphasis on girls 12 and older.
Protection

→ The scattered actions that currently characterize the child protection system need to be integrated in order to trigger an early warning once a child’s rights are at risk. This requires a network linking institutions that care for children. It is not enough to have vertical programmes and activities that are not part of a comprehensive social policy proposal. Coordination is essential between the various ministries and public institutions related to education, health, protection and justice and the respective foundations that care for children and adolescents. It is important to train state staff on specific issues related to the protection of children and adolescents.

→ Monitoring, evaluation and impact mechanisms are needed regarding the actions of NGOs and foundations working in childcare and the quality of spending in the social sector to verify the efficiency and effectiveness of measures taken by the private sector for the protection of children.

→ A code for children and adolescents should be designed and implemented in order to adapt laws to Curaçaoan reality regarding the prevention and protection of children – especially those in special circumstances such as sexual abuse, violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking. A specific Ombudsperson for children and adolescents could also be appointed to work with the Ombudsman.

→ The state should support working families by providing care for children not only in their early years but up to age 18 by increasing the number of state childcare centres and offering extracurricular activities oriented, guided and accompanied by experts as well as the promotion and creation of public spaces. These may be directed to the strengthening of cultural and sporting activities. The construction of parks, boulevards and sites for artistic expression (theatre, music, dance, etc.) would respond to the explicit demand of children and adolescents for recreational spaces.

→ Policies agreed by the State regarding trafficking, detection, educating the population and tracking and prosecuting perpetrators should be implemented under the parameters of the new penal code that punishes the crime. The issue of trafficking in children and adolescents requires a solid protection system that is networked with society and has prevention as one of its main supports. In addition, this should be complemented by care services for affected children so they can be reintegrated with their families or housed in shelters for treatment and restitution of their affected rights.

→ In order to eradicate violence in the home, detection and treatment mechanisms for victims are needed as part of a comprehensive protection and care system for children and adolescents. It is essential that the problem is brought out into the open, otherwise it will be normalized and lead to a society where rights to protection are permanently violated.

→ Children in conflict with the law should be treated according to CRC requirements. Specific facilities, separate from adults, should be built for them and offer various educational programmes and psychological treatment. Ample alternatives for handling youth who have allegedly broken the law should be created without resorting to judicial proceedings. Placing children in conflict with the law in institutions, depriving them of liberty, should be as much as possible avoided.

→ It is essential to create an information system that tracks the age of young offenders, their socioeconomic background and the type of crime committed. It is especially important for this system to follow up on the situation of these young people during arrest and thereafter. Justice system mechanisms in place should work with the protection system to prevent any recurrences in crimes. The reintegration of young offenders into society can be ensured only through the various social protection agencies working together.
Participation

→ All schools should have student councils, and the participation of children under 12 should be promoted.

→ Policies aimed at achieving gender equality are needed to reverse the disadvantages that persist between women and men in the areas of employment and political participation. Fathers need to be more involved in the care process, and mothers who are in the workplace should be supported.

→ Greater social inclusion measures would help reduce the marginalization currently experienced by undocumented immigrants on the island, such as greater facilities to legalize those under 18 in order to ensure more effective respect for their rights.

In conclusion, the research findings reveal that Curaçao has broadly met many of the rights defined in international agreements. The society and the new state have enormous potential and the opportunity to build a nation with deep understanding of its historical past based on respect for human rights. A country where fairness, freedom and respect are the core values is the best space for compliance with international conventions and ensuring the rights of children and adolescents.
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Klein, K., *De prevalentie van kindermishandeling onder middelbare scholieren op Curaçao en de visie van huisartsen op de signalering aldaar* [Prevalence of child abuse among secondary school students on Curaçao and the vision of medical doctors on the identification of cases], Universitair Medisch Centrum Groningen, Groningen, 2010.


Annex: Committee on the Rights of the Child’s Recommendations for Curacao
Under Article 44 of the CRC, the Committee examined the Netherlands’ third periodic report (CRC/C/NLD/3), which included reports from the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, in January 2009 and issued its concluding observations on 27 March 2009. This table highlights some of the Committee’s concluding observations alongside key findings related to the reality of childhood on Curaçao found in the SITAN.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2009 Committee recommendations</th>
<th>Comments on 2012 findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A positive in Curaçao is the establishment of an Ombudsman. However, it is important to strengthen this role in terms of the protection of children and adolescents.</td>
<td>There is still no specific ombudsman for children and adolescents. According to the current Ombudsman, this is still in process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Committee notes that the State maintains its reservations to articles 26, 37 and 40 of the Convention, in relation to children’s right to social security, the application of criminal law applicable to children 16 or older in certain circumstances, and exceptions to the right to counsel. The Committee, in line with earlier recommendations (CRC/C/15/Add.227, para. 10) and in light of the Vienna Declaration and Action Programme, recommends that the State take all necessary measures to withdraw its reservations to articles 26, 37 and 40 of the Convention.</td>
<td>It is important that Curaçao recognizes all children’s right to benefit from social security, specifically social security related to the health of undocumented children. Greater efforts are needed related to the penal system for children 16 or older.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Committee recommends that the State continue taking steps to harmonize its legislation with the Convention. The Committee reiterates its recommendation that the laws be revised to fully comply with Convention provisions, and that the Netherlands Antilles civil code be published and made accessible to the public.</td>
<td>Considering that many Curaçaoan laws are still in process, it is important for the state to continue to take steps to harmonize its legislation with the Convention.</td>
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<td>The Committee encourages the State to adopt action plans to implement the Convention throughout its territory, with a focus on the rights and empowerment of children and taking into account the outcome of the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on children held in 2002, entitled ‘A World Fit for Children’, and its mid-term review, conducted in 2007. The Committee recommends the State ensure adequate budget allocations and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the full implementation of the action plans, to regularly assess progress achieved and identify any deficiencies.</td>
<td>The Curaçaoan State should guarantee funds and strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems for the implementation of action plans related to childhood and adolescence.</td>
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The Committee further recommends that these institutions are accessible to children and their representatives at the national and local levels that comply with the Paris Principles, and take into account general comment No. 2 (2002) on the role of independent national human rights. The Committee also recommends that the national children’s ombudsman or human rights institution, in addition to investigating complaints, be responsible for promoting the Convention and monitoring its implementation. As long as a specific advocate for children is not chosen, this recommendation is still pending on Curaçao.

The Committee recommends that the State, in accordance with Article 4 of the Convention, allocate the maximum available resources for the implementation of children’s rights, with particular attention to the eradication of poverty, and the reduction of inequalities between different jurisdictions. In this endeavour, the State should take the Committee’s recommendations made the day after the 2007 general discussion on “Resources for children’s rights: State responsibility” into consideration. Special attention must be paid to the eradication of poverty.

The Committee welcomes the new data collection system disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant indicators determined in the Netherlands, as well as periodic surveys to gather specific data. However, the Committee is concerned that there is no national data collection system for all areas covered by the Convention. It remains important to strengthen the data collection and indicators system relevant to Curaçaoan children and adolescents in areas covered by the Convention.

The Committee recommends the State encourage the active and systematic involvement of civil society, particularly NGOs and children’s associations, in the promotion and implementation of children’s rights, especially in the planning stage of policies and cooperation projects as well as in monitoring the Committee’s concluding observations and preparation of the next periodic report. It encourages the State to support civil society at the local level and at the same time respect its independence. The Curaçaoan State is encouraged to strengthen working together with NGOs related to children, adolescents and women on Curaçao, not only in terms of promotion and application of rights but in the planning, implementation and monitoring of public policies.
The Committee recommends that the State take all appropriate measures to ensure that, in accordance with Article 3 of the Convention, the best interests of the child are properly incorporated into all applicable legal, judicial and administrative decisions and in projects, programmes and services that impact children.

This recommendation is still valid, considering that the Curaçaoan State is in the structuring process; in the case of immigrant children, this provision has not been met in full.

The Committee reiterates its recommendation that the State strengthen its support for the National Youth Council and youth organizations. It also draws the State’s attention to the recommendations adopted during the day of general discussion on the right of the child to be heard, held on 15 September 2006.

The Curaçaoan State should support and strengthen youth organizations.

The Committee recommends that the State prohibit corporal punishment by law and enforce the ban everywhere, especially in the family, in schools and other institutions for children. The Committee recommends that the State conduct awareness campaigns and education programmes for parents to otherwise discipline their children, respecting the child’s human dignity and in accordance with the Convention, in particular paragraph 2 of Article 28, and taking into account general comment No. 8 (2006) on the child’s right to protection from corporal punishment and other forms of cruel or degrading punishment.

The Curaçaoan State has made efforts on issues related to education for parents.
The Committee urges the State to take immediate steps to ensure that children in need of assistance are not placed in institutions for juvenile offenders.

The Committee recommends that the State take measures to protect children, including boys, from sexual exploitation, violence and other forms of abuse. There should be a common registration system in the Netherlands Antilles for such cases.

The Committee reiterates its concern about the fact that, in the Netherlands, minors are increasingly being put into preventive detention, it is still possible for 16 or 17 year olds to be prosecuted under criminal laws applicable to adults and that people in this age group can be sentenced to life imprisonment in the Netherlands Antilles.

The Committee recommends that the State: (a) Ensure the full implementation of juvenile justice standards, in particular, articles 37, 40 and 39 of the Convention and the United Nations’ Standard Minimum Rules for the administration of the juvenile justice (Beijing Rules) and the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines), in light of General Comment No. 10 on children’s rights in juvenile justice, (b) Consider amending its legislation to eliminate the possibility that children are tried as adults; (c) eliminate life imprisonment for children; (d) Ensure that the detention of juveniles is used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period.

While some steps have been taken to address this recommendation, further efforts are required to ensure that such cases are dealt with in specialized facilities, separated from adults, and that various educational programmes and psychological treatment can be accessed. Placement in such institutions should always be the last resort and in principle should be avoided.
In light of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (resolution 48/96, annex), Article 23 of the Convention and the Committee's general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee recommends that the State: (a) Take all necessary measures for the effective implementation of the legislation providing for the protection of persons with disabilities and service programmes for children with disabilities; (b) Develop and strengthen early identification and early intervention programmes; (c) Undertake awareness campaigns on the rights and special needs of children with disabilities, encourage their integration into society and prevent discrimination and institutionalization; (d) Provide training for professionals working with children with disabilities, such as medical, paramedical and related personnel, teachers and social workers; (e) Ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its optional Protocol, signed on 30 March 2007.

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<th>The Committee is concerned about immigrant children without a residence permit access to health care.</th>
<th>Curaçao currently has several centres specializing in this area. However, it needs to make greater efforts to include these children in society and in the regular school system. It is important to conduct specialized studies in the field, in order to improve diagnostics for children and adolescents who are not in school in order not to confuse children with a disability with those with emotional and/or family problems.</th>
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<td>This observation is maintained and reiterated in this report.</td>
<td>This report reiterates this recommendation.</td>
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<td>The Committee also recommends that the State strengthen its strategies to educate and sensitize the general public to reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancies, especially in Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles.</td>
<td>On the subject of education, the observations are almost entirely met on Curaçao. Attention must be placed on the problems of the current educational system and its adaptation to the reality of the country. In this sense, special attention is being paid to the high rates of prolonged absences in school.</td>
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<td>This report reiterates this recommendation.</td>
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The Committee recommends that the State: (a) Strengthen its efforts to reduce and prevent cases of sexual exploitation, child trafficking and exploitation of children in sex tourism, among other measures, undertake a comprehensive study and data collection on the incidence and extent of these problems and implement strategies and policies; (b) Strengthen cooperation with the authorities of the country of origin or destination of trafficking in children in order to combat this phenomenon; (c) Continue to sensitize professionals and the general public about the issues of sexual exploitation and child trafficking and exploitation of children in sex tourism, education campaigns, particularly in the media; (d) Consider the final documents of the first, second and third World Congresses against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in 1996, 2001 and 2008; (e) Take appropriate legal and other measures to protect child victims of sexual exploitation and prostitution and prosecute the perpetrators of sexual abuse and exploitation; (f) Train law enforcement officials, social workers and prosecutors on how to receive, monitor and investigate complaints and prosecute perpetrators, considering the sensitivity of children.

According to the analysis in the present study, the issue of trafficking is a problem that persists on Curaçao and needs to be addressed.

Next Report: The Committee invites the State to submit its fourth periodic report by 6 March 2012. The report should be comprehensive and include information on all State regions, and should not be more than 120 pages (CRC/C/118).

Curaçao completed the fourth periodic report on compliance with the Convention in early 2012.

Key findings

Curaçao has made great strides towards accomplishing many of the rights and goals defined in international agreements; at the same time, there are some that still need to be implemented or improved. Specifically, while the rights to health and education have been largely fulfilled, the rights to protection and participation need to be further addressed.
The right to health

Progress achieved

There is near-universal health-care coverage as only undocumented immigrants lack health insurance (and they can access the system if they pay). Preventive health measures emphasize antenatal and postnatal care and almost all babies – 99 per cent – are delivered in health institutions. The vaccination programme has achieved 95 per cent coverage of children between 1 and 4 years.

Among the established goals, priority has been given to actions for children and adolescents aged 0 to 24 in the areas of immunization, control of communicable diseases and reproductive health. Emphasis is also placed on HIV and AIDS prevention and on nutrition. The recently passed Maternity Law is intended to ensure the health and safety of the working mother when she is pregnant.

Challenges remaining

Health care is not organized in a single system and there is a gap between preventive and curative care. Some health data are lacking or scattered and the existing information is not always used to make decisions.

In the last 12 years the number of children dying before their fifth birthday has increased and, while in absolute numbers these figures are not alarming, studies are needed to determine the reasons. There is no law promoting breastfeeding and low coverage of antenatal care for undocumented women. Although undocumented children have free access to preventive care, treatment must be paid for.

Another challenge is obesity, with experts estimating that between 25 and 30 per cent of children and adolescents are overweight. The explanation is both cultural as well due to hyper-caloric diets – as a result of the very high costs of healthier foods, which are imported – combined with lack of exercise. Obesity can lead to diabetes and hypertension.

While the percentage of teenage pregnancies has remained stable in recent years, adolescents are getting pregnant at younger ages and the number having more than one child before age 18 has increased. Reasons include the lack of sex education in schools, lack of communication within families and the persistence of erroneous beliefs about forms of birth control. Early pregnancy has dangers for the health of the mother and child and may put girls at risk of ongoing poverty.

Addictions also pose a health risk to children and adolescents: one study found 13 per cent of pupils in primary education and 32 per cent of students in secondary had smoked; 79 per cent of pupils in primary education and 76 per cent in high school had consumed alcohol; and 2 per cent of primary school students and 4 per cent of secondary school students had used cannabis.
Other health challenges include HIV and AIDS, with the number of registered HIV-infected in June 2011 showing an increase of 11 per cent compared to the previous year, and possible negative health effects related to pollution from the oil refinery.

The right to education

Progress achieved

Education in Curaçao is free, is guaranteed in Article 21 of the Constitution and is compulsory for children from ages 6 to 18. Primary school enrolment stands at 97 per cent and secondary school enrolment at 77 per cent. Due to the compulsory education law, undocumented immigrant children have access to schooling. The Mandatory Social Training Act was passed in 2005 to address the issue of dropouts and provide education and training in different career sectors to young people aged 16–24 who have left school without qualifications.

Challenges remaining

The Dutch model of education leads to challenges in identification with their society and culture among children and adolescents and could result later to ‘brain drain’. Although Papiamento is now used in the early stages of schooling, educational materials in this language are limited. The tests to move from primary to secondary maintain the Dutch structure and are based on arithmetic and language. Rigid teaching methods persist and there is little emphasis on sport or cultural activities.

There are high levels of dropout: 23 per cent of adolescents, the majority boys, are outside the educational system. Explanations include the above factors as well as poverty, the desire to work to earn money and the lack of family support due to parents working multiple jobs. Schools also follow girls’ learning speed in the classroom, leaving boys behind. Children with learning disabilities (mainly boys) may be referred to special education schools. Children with disabilities are not necessarily integrated into the regular education system. Due to the limited supply of after-school activities, children and adolescents are often left alone while their parents work. This increases their likelihood of engaging in activities such as drug use and crime.

Although education is ostensibly free, schools often ask parents to cover for additional costs because state funding does not cover all the costs. There are not enough teachers or educational materials.

While both documented and undocumented immigrant children have access to education, the latter cannot receive a diploma when they complete secondary education. As a result, it is virtually impossible for them to go to college and it remains extremely difficult to find a job at a higher level.
The right to protection

Progress achieved

There is an initial system of child protection in which various private and public entities are involved in the detection, prevention and restoration of violated rights. The Government emphasises the right to social protection, and there are universal benefits — either a cash contribution or subsidies for services — for all citizens that require them. There is no evidence of child labour on the island. A number of foundations and civil society organizations are financed by the state to implement programmes and projects for at-risk children and adolescents. A new juvenile sanction system was launched in 2011 and is much more flexible than the previous one.

In the last three decades, Curacao has made important advances in legal terms that have ensured compliance with the rights of women. Since 2003, it has had a centre to assist women victim of violence and since 2007 it has had a shelter for women aged 18–24 who have had conflicts in the home.

Challenges remaining

There is no comprehensive child protection system that includes prevention, care, rehabilitation and restitution of rights which is based on a single system for monitoring at-risk children. Such a system would have to link the various state ministries through a single policy for children and ensure better cooperation between the state and civil society. Currently civil society organizations lack state oversight; often experience financing problems, and limited availability of technical or specialized knowledge.

The number of reported cases of violence in the home has risen and has been attributed to several factors: single parents, mothers who go out to work leaving their children alone and unprotected, lack of a male role model, high levels parental stress in some parts of society that has negative repercussions within the household. About 38 cases of sexual abuse of children are reported yearly. It is also argued that incest is not uncommon. However, there are no statistics on the real magnitude of the problem. There is also the phenomenon of ‘loverboys’: young men (around 18 to 24 years) who cause vulnerable girls to fall in love with them by providing emotional and economic support, then ask them as a personal favour to have sex with other people and charge for these services. The girls do not report this as they do not consider it to be abuse.

According to the US Department of State, Curacao is a source, transit point and destination country for women and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour and the Government has so far not fully addressed the minimum standards for eliminating this. Although the 2001 Penal Code provides stringent penalties for these crimes, there have been no proceedings or convictions. There are also no specific policies for the prevention and detection of these issues involving children and adolescents.
Adolescents are at risk for drug trafficking because they sometimes consider it a quick and easy way to make money. While the Government has programmes to educate the community about drug use, the prevention of trafficking is not being specifically addressed.

The new juvenile justice system still allows those aged between 16 and 17 years to be sentenced as adults and most young offenders end up with adult detention facilities, which is a serious problem and needs to be avoided.

**The right to participation**

**Progress achieved**

In general terms, the participation of adolescents in the public sphere is in an initial phase. There is a Youth Parliament that has objectives related to the political education of youth. While it has no power to make policy changes, it is open to hearing the views of young people and presents ideas and proposals to the state. A magazine created by adolescents circulates among all schools, and children and adolescents can also express their views on local radio stations.

Historically, civil society organizations have played an important role in the island. Currently 90 organizations are associated under a single federation working with children and youth (0–24 years). This includes the United Neighbourhoods of Curaçao which involves 1,500 to 2,000 volunteers from 70 neighbourhoods.

**Challenges remaining**

Measures to promote the participation of children are needed since existing programmes focus only on those over age 12. Laws to ensure youth participation are still in development.

Equity has not been achieved in government as women only account for five of the twenty-one members of Parliament and hold just two of the nine posts on the Board of Ministers. While women excel in the educational environment at primary, secondary and particularly tertiary levels, more women than men are unemployed. Women also earn less than men and, as the majority of single parents, may have more than one job in order to support the family. There is no policy to assist women to fulfil their dual role as caregivers and guarantors of the household economy.

In the past, the state granted a grace period for legalizing undocumented children, but many people did not take advantage of this as they were able to fulfil the requirements demanded or feared being deported. This creates a stressful situation for children, who have to deal with the emotional aspects of growing up in a family that is excluded by society and the state.
Recommendations

General

→ Strengthen coordination and cooperation between government institutions and departments in addressing the rights of the child in health, education, child protection and participation.

→ Strengthen the role of the state in setting norms and standards for quality and functions of non-governmental organizations and foundations, including establishing clear mechanisms for referral to address the rights of children holistically.

→ Provide monitoring and evaluation systems with reliable and accessible data on the implementation of action plans related to childhood and adolescence.

→ Undertake research to deepen understanding of the situation of children and adolescents in terms of health, education, protection and various aspects of social life. A survey that disaggregates by national origin would catch important variations in the population that could feed state planning.

→ Put in place mechanisms, including citizen oversight and the use of contemporary forms of communication such as the Internet and social networks, to ensure transparency and accountability regarding actions in favour of children and adolescents.

→ Encourage dialogue with other countries in the Caribbean and Latin America, as well as cultural and economic exchange, so as to contribute to the process of constructing a new state.

Health

→ Put in place a preventative, curative and rehabilitative care system that places special emphasis on child obesity, tendency to addiction and teenage pregnancy.

→ Create a communication campaign along with education on healthy diets in workplaces, schools and colleges as well as the promotion of physical exercise for all, both in order to address obesity.

→ Undertake further research on the causes of the health problems of children and adolescents. This would include studies into the impacts of the environmental pollution.

→ Make greater efforts to promote exclusive breastfeeding and comply with the International Code of Breast-Milk Marketing.

→ Carry out research on the increase in child mortality and look at the quality of antenatal care as well as the social conditions of pregnant mothers with problems.

Education

→ Support working families by increasing the number of state childcare centres, offering after-school activities and promoting and creating public spaces for cultural and sporting activities.

→ Maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the available resources with the aim of increased school attendance and improved learning outcomes.

→ Consider the adaptation of the Dutch perspective in the education system to a more local perspective and provide innovative teaching methodologies for children at different levels.
→ Strengthen reintegration programmes for children and adolescents that have dropped out of school and continue to monitor the impacts of the measures taken to reduce school absenteeism.
→ Introduce early warning mechanisms in schools to detect any socioeconomic problems or learning disabilities affecting children.
→ Train teachers and provide learning materials so that children with disabilities remain as much as possible integrated in the regular school system.
→ Include sex education in the school curriculum and encourage families and schools to work together on preventing unwanted pregnancy with a special emphasis on girls 12 and older.

**Protection**

→ Strengthen the child protection system through a network coordinating the various ministries and public institutions related to education, health, protection and justice and the foundations that care for children and adolescents.
→ Create mechanisms for the State for increased monitoring and evaluation of the actions of NGO’s and foundations working in child protection and to monitor their efficiency and effectiveness and their compliance with government regulations.
→ Design and implement a code for the protection of children and adolescents that responds to the local reality.
→ Train state staff on specific issues related to the protection of children and adolescents.
→ Implement policies regarding trafficking – detection, educating the population and tracking and prosecuting people – with prevention and the protection of children and adolescents as the main pillars. This could be complemented by care services for affected children.
→ Address the problem of violence in the home and bring it into the open so that it does not become normalized.
→ Create alternatives the juvenile justice system aimed at providing them with educational programmes and psychological treatment. Placing children in institutions should always be the last resort and alternative systems should be prioritized.
→ Create an information system that tracks the age of children in conflict with the law, their socioeconomic background and the type of crime committed and ensure the various social protection agencies work together reintegrate them into society.

**Participation**

→ Ensure that all schools have student councils and promote the participation of children under 12.
→ Develop policies to reverse the disadvantages that persist between women and men in the areas of employment and political participation, to help fathers be more involved in the care process and to support mothers who are in the workplace.