Child on Bonaire

Children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands
Karin Kloosterboer

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Foreword

You have before you *Child on Bonaire. Children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands*: a UNICEF study into the situation of children growing up on the tropical island of Bonaire, and one that is innovating and exceptional for several reasons.

This study is the first to shed light on all aspects of the lives of children in the Caribbean Netherlands. *Child on Bonaire* outlines the correlations between various factors: family situation, education, health and health care, safety, leisure time, participation, housing conditions, and financial situation. Alongside this report, there are also separate reports about St. Eustatius and Saba.

This is also a pioneering study in that it actually surveyed the people who are at stake: the children who grow up on the islands. Other than that, the study also drew heavily on input from numerous experts who play a role in children’s lives on the islands. The hearts and minds of these – often inspired – professionals contain a huge wealth of information about both children’s lives and possibilities for improvement of their lives.

This study paints a detailed picture that the researchers have subsequently assessed based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. After ratifying this convention in 1995, the Netherlands has been bound by its terms. The rights specified in the convention apply to all children living in the Netherlands, and therefore also to those growing up in the Caribbean part of the Netherlands. For the first time ever, we now have a report that maps out which efforts are required to bring the situation of children on the three islands into line with the standards set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

UNICEF is convinced that children will develop better when they can exercise the rights granted to them by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is therefore our deepest wish that the results of this study will contribute to improvements for children on Bonaire.

*Jan Bouke Wijbrandi*, Executive Director of UNICEF Netherlands
Acknowledgments

This study is the result of the efforts and input of a great number of people, without whose help and commitment I could not have written this report.

First of all, I owe a great debt of gratitude to the children at the center of this study: children who are growing up on the island of Bonaire. They made a tremendous impression on us during the conversations we had with them. Some of them lead lives that are far from easy, despite the fact that they live on a tropical island and have sunshine every day. We were both struck and inspired by how clearly these children are able to describe their personal situations. Without any ado, they manage to penetrate to the core, and subsequently show great creativity in coming up with solutions. We noticed that many of the children we spoke to are not used to expressing their views. As soon as they realized that we were genuinely interested in what they had to say, they wanted to keep talking for hours. I truly hope this study can help achieve real improvement to their situation.

Besides children, many other people have contributed to this study, some extensively so. Among them were several young people on the islands who are (or recently became) of age, who took part in panel sessions that allowed them to express their ideas and opinions. They shared their experiences of growing up on an island and managed to – literally – view their situation from a distance. Their enthusiasm was great and their drive to make a difference for their island was striking.

The experts surveyed also deserve much gratitude. Most took ample time to talk to me, to attend an experts’ meeting, to find or supplement information, and to review my texts. They were unanimous in their conviction that the children of Bonaire very much deserve to be the central focus of this kind of study. Through their trust and willingness to speak freely, they have contributed significantly to this study. The names of all experts who were consulted are listed in Appendix 2.

Thanks also go out to my fellow researchers. These include Bas Tierolf and Jodi Mak at the Verwey-Jonker Institute. In 2011, they conducted an exploratory study that revealed the difficulty of finding information about children on the island.

In 2012, Stichting Alexander ran several youth panels in the Netherlands. Having enjoyed a fruitful collaboration with Adimka Uzozie on a previous occasion, she once more helped elaborate the concept of youth participation for me, aided by her colleagues Jody Bauer and Diana Neijboer.

On Bonaire, interviews with children were set up through Stichting Project. I retain warm memories of the permanently enthusiastic Liënne Domacassé, who also interviewed children. I also wish to thank the Kolegio Reina Beatrix elementary school, which allowed us to talk to their pupils.

Special thanks go out to Sabina ter Borg, who grew up on Bonaire and is now studying in the Netherlands. She responded to my call for a Papiamento-speaking child interviewer. Although she would initially only come to Bonaire to help out there, she did such a good job that she joined me as a regular interviewer on all six islands. She put in a huge effort, and I greatly admire her commitment and effort.
Arnout Esser helped us with advice about the set-up and execution of the study. He designed and maintained a database that enabled us to analyze study results. Alongside all UNICEF staff who were involved in this study, I would like to single out Mark Wijne and Majorie Kaandorp. I enjoyed a close and pleasant working relationship with Mark on the entire Children of the Kingdom project. Majorie provided expert commentary on the sections about children’s rights. Marlijn Lelieveld took on a large part of the desk research. With great patience and perseverance, she pieced together all the available information on the current situation and legislation, for all of the subjects covered. Sietske Arkenau read the final draft and offered linguistic advice. She had to work under considerable pressure, and I thank her for that.

Performing a study into the situation of children’s rights on the six islands that make up the Caribbean part of our Kingdom proved a far more extensive, lengthy, and difficult job than we at UNICEF had anticipated. However, there was never a moment of doubt as to whether we should persevere with this study. I am extremely pleased and grateful to work for an organization that shares my concern for the situation of vulnerable children; children who are sometimes virtually invisible, such as the children on these islands.

Hopefully, this report will help bring the required improvements to the situation in which children on Bonaire grow up.

Karin Kloosterboer
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Introduction

*Child on Bonaire* contains the results of the study into children who grow up on the island of Bonaire, which is one of the three islands in the Caribbean Netherlands that are jointly referred to as the BES islands (Bonaire, St. Eustatius, Saba).

Alongside this present report, there are separate reports on the other two islands: *Child on St. Eustatius* and *Child on Saba*.

A separately published summary covering all three islands together is also available: *Child on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. Children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands. Summary.*

The study into the situation of children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands is part of a large UNICEF study entitled *Children of the Kingdom: Children’s rights in the Dutch Caribbean.*

This study looks at children’s rights on all six Caribbean islands that are part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Besides Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba (Caribbean Netherlands), this study also extensively studied the situation of children on the islands of Aruba, Curaçao, and St. Maarten. Three separate reports have been published on these three independent countries within the Kingdom, which are available from UNICEF.

The views of children and young people themselves are of crucial importance in a study into their situation, which is why this study has focused heavily on hearing their ideas and opinions. A separate publication entitled *Kind op een eiland. Kinderen over opgroeien op Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, Sint Eustatius en Sint Maarten* provides an impression of life on the islands from the point of view of children, illustrated with photos.

The study ran from 2010 to February 2013.

*Child on Bonaire* answers three central questions of the study on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba:

- What is it like for children to grow up on one of these islands?
- How does the situation of these children measure up against the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?
- How can the situation of children on the islands be improved, where necessary?

On 23 May 2013, the findings of the study were offered to the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, Ronald Plasterk, at the Children of the Kingdom symposium. In September 2013, the studies were presented separately on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba, and were discussed with stakeholders on the islands.
Notes for the reader

*Child on Bonaire. Children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands* consists of three parts.

1. The **Study in the Caribbean Netherlands** section provides information about the study, the island of Bonaire, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This convention constitutes the frame of reference – the benchmark – for the assessment of the situation of children growing up on the islands.

2. The **Children’s Rights on Bonaire** section presents the study results for Bonaire in eight different areas: family and parenting; education; health; safety; recreation, play, and leisure time; participation; housing conditions; and financial situation. Each of the sections covering the various subjects first outlines the current situation based on the available information, followed by the views of children and young people surveyed on that situation. Next, the focus shifts to the knowledge, experiences and opinions of a large number of experts. Each section also contains an overview of information from the literature on the subject in question: studies, reports and recommendations from, among others, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Each section also indicates what the Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates for each subject. Each section ends with a conclusion that compares the current situation with standards set by the children’s rights convention. An overall conclusion ties the various subjects together.

3. In the **Appendices** section, you will find a selection of quotes from children, young people, and experts surveyed (Appendix 1). This is also where you will find a list of experts consulted and a bibliography (Appendices 2 and 3). Appendix 4 contains the advice issued by the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Caribbean Netherlands. Appendix 5 contains the full text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

*Child on Bonaire* is one of three reports on the situation of children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands. *Child on St. Eustatius* and *Child on Saba* provide specific information about the other two islands. Besides these publications, a separately published 32-page summary is also available: *Child on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. Children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands. Summary.*
STUDY IN THE CARIBBEAN NETHERLANDS
Child on Bonaire
The study

1 Background
Around 5,000 children are currently growing up on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. They spend their childhood on an island that is often considered a holiday paradise. It is unclear, however, how these children fare in all aspects of life.

For quite some time already, UNICEF has been drawing attention to the absence of a clear and comprehensive view of the children’s rights situation on the islands. At the same time, there are signals that give cause for concern. On several occasions, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has voiced criticism regarding the situation of children’s rights on the islands.

On 10 October 2010, the country of the ‘Netherlands Antilles’ ceased to exist. Curaçao and St. Maarten became independent countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Aruba had already acquired that status in 1986. Following the break-up of the Netherlands Antilles in 2010, Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba became ‘public bodies’, or special Dutch municipalities, governed from the Netherlands.

This study was prompted by a need to gain insight into the situation of children on the islands, to assess this situation from the perspective of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to improve this situation where necessary. Although information from previous studies was available on parts of some subjects, there was no overall picture. The views of children growing up, and young people who grew up on the islands were also unknown.

Aside from that, experts and chain partners needed a well-founded assessment of the situation of children on the islands. The study assesses this situation based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (see the chapter, Convention on the Rights of the Child). This convention covers all children in the Netherlands, providing clear criteria for the assessment of the various aspects of children’s lives on an island.

Child on Bonaire. Children’s Rights in the Caribbean Netherlands presents the results of the study performed on the island of Bonaire. Similar reports have been published for St. Eustatius and Saba. A separately published summary contains a brief outline of the results: Child on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. Children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands. Summary.

In conducting this study, we worked closely together with other parties such as national and local authorities and organizations, research institutions, care providers, parents and guardians and, of course, the children themselves.

2 Goal
The primary goal of the study is to map out the situation in which children on Bonaire and the other islands of the Caribbean part of the Kingdom grow up. Based on this overview, the situation can subsequently be compared with the minimum requirements set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, making it a so-called baseline measurement.
A baseline measurement can be used to assess which measures are needed to make children’s situation compliant or to ensure it remains compliant with the requirements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

UNICEF hopes the report will prove helpful to all those who are in a position to make a positive difference for the situation of children’s rights. It can furthermore also be used as a source of information by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in monitoring compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Over the course of the study, it emerged that this report might also serve as a starting point or impetus for the (further) formulation of integrated youth policy for the islands of the Caribbean Netherlands. There is a strong call for consistent youth policy coming from the islands. Collaboration between the various sectors is crucial on the small islands. And it is key that the situation on the islands, and not assumptions from the European Netherlands, be taken as the starting point.

Improving the situation of children’s rights on the islands will require extensive stamina and continued focus. Numerous individuals and organizations have been working on that for years, with great energy and resolve. This report should never be taken as criticism of their commitment and efforts. It is intended to support developments that are already underway and aimed at bringing the situation of children into line with the requirements specified by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This report has therefore been written in a way that ensures it is readable by anyone with a concern for the situation that children are in.

3 Period covered
Although the study started in 2010, UNICEF had previously also been looking into the situation on the islands to assess whether a formal study would be necessary, useful, and possible. The study into the children’s rights situation on Bonaire – as well as on the other islands – was a lengthier and more difficult process than estimated beforehand. This was due to several factors, but predominantly to the fact that adequate information about and on the BES islands was largely lacking. To still compile an as comprehensive a picture of the situation in various areas as possible, efforts were made to gather information in all possible manners. Besides extensive desk-based research, anyone who was thought to be able to provide relevant information was contacted. Information gathered in this way was subsequently verified through multiple informers with a view to achieving maximum accuracy in the description of the situation. In some areas, however, we only had outdated information or no information at all. Wherever this was the case, the report states that.

The study will be completed with the presentation of the results on the islands in the Caribbean Netherlands in September 2013.

4 Children of the Kingdom study
The Convention on the Rights of the Child bestows upon UNICEF the (shared) responsibility of monitoring compliance with the convention. As an advocate for children’s rights, UNICEF takes this assignment extremely seriously, also with respect to children growing up in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The study into the children’s rights situation in the Caribbean Netherlands is part of a large UNICEF study into the situation of children on the six islands: Children of the Kingdom. Children’s rights in the Dutch Caribbean. For this study, UNICEF Netherlands
works closely with the regional UNICEF Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (TACRO).

Collaboration with UNICEF TACRO was focused on a study into the children’s rights situation on Aruba, Curacao, and St. Maarten. In these three independent countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Observatorio Social del Ecuador research institute mapped out the situation in which children grow up, under auspices of UNICEF TACRO.

The results of these studies are recorded in three reports: UNICEF Report on the situation of children and young people on Aruba, UNICEF Report on the situation of children and young people on Curacao, UNICEF Report on the situation of children and young people on St. Maarten.\(^1\)

These reports were presented to and reviewed with the authorities of Aruba, Curacao, and St. Maarten, as well as other stakeholders on the islands. This took place in May 2013, prior to the official presentation of the complete study at the Children of the Kingdom symposium on May 23 2013.

Besides Child on Bonaire, there are two further reports on the children’s rights situation in the Caribbean Netherlands, covering the other two islands: Child on St. Eustatius and Child on Saba. There is also an overall summary for all three islands together: Child on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. Children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands.

In May 2013, UNICEF published a photo book that also lets children voice their opinions on their island and that provides brief information about the islands. This book is intended as an initial introduction to the islands and the children who live there. The book Kind op een eiland. Kinderen opgroeien op Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, Saba, Sint Eustatius en Sint Maarten can be ordered from UNICEF or downloaded from the website.\(^2\)

### 5 Starting point

The starting point for this study is the situation as it actually is for children on Bonaire, so not as it should be according to current rules or applicable policy.

The actual situation has been offset against the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This convention specifies rules for the full spectrum of children’s lives.

Children’s rights play a role in all areas of their lives: with regard to the basic necessities such as food, drink and housing, but also to the areas of school, religion, sports, health, play and friends, and to safety and opportunities for development. It is the responsibility of the Dutch state to ensure all Dutch children can exercise the rights granted to them by the convention – also when they live on an island.

### 6 Research organization

The children’s rights situation on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba was first studied by the Netherlands’ Verwey-Jonker institute in an exploratory study commissioned by UNICEF Nederland in 2011. The institute looked at which existing (statistical) data was available on the situation on these islands, and a staff member engaged children on the islands in several online chat sessions. However, the information that emerged in this exploratory study turned out to be insufficient to paint a clear picture of the children’s rights situation on the three islands.

Supplementing this study, UNICEF launched a study on the BES islands in 2011. This study looked for new information and talked to experts on the islands and in the Netherlands. Multiple researchers worked on this study, under the auspices of an UNICEF study coordinator.

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\(^1\) The reports are available on www.unicef.nl/koninkrijksskinderen, under the respective island.

\(^2\) www.unicef.nl/koninkrijksskinderen.
There were also intensive contacts with children on each of the six islands, for which UNICEF Nederland teamed up with local organizations on the islands.

Researchers also spoke to various young people from the six islands who are now living in the Netherlands. Stichting Alexander organized several panel discussions to that end.

7 Methodology

In this report, you will only find information about the methodology used for the study into the children’s rights situation in the Caribbean Netherlands, the BES islands. This study is made up of various components that each followed a specific research methodology. To ensure that this study presents as complete a picture as possible of the children’s rights situation on the BES islands, the study drew on various sources. A tried-and-tested research method was chosen for this study, which enables the comparison of specific situations to the relevant requirements set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹

This study has ‘cut up’ the Convention on the Rights of the Child into the various areas that make up children’s lives. Child on Bonaire focuses on eight subjects:

- Family and parenting
- Education
- Health
- Safety
- Recreation, play, and leisure time
- Participation
- Housing conditions
- Financial situation

The children’s rights situation in each of these areas is assessed by addressing the following in successive order:

- A description of the current situation.
- What is children’s and young people’s view of the situation?
- What do experts make of the situation?
- What studies and other literature are available on this subject?
- What does the Convention on the Rights of the Child say on this specific subject?
- How does the situation relate to the Convention on the Rights of the Child: the conclusion.

7.1 Three perspectives

As mentioned earlier, this study sourced information from three different perspectives to get the most complete idea possible of children’s lives on Bonaire:

- Views and experiences of children on the islands and young people who grew up on the islands.
- Views and experiences of experts.
- Knowledge sourced from (literature) studies.

All information gathered and described was subsequently reviewed by experts (see below).

7.2 Children

‘My wish is to thoroughly fix up Bonaire, because Bonaire cannot continue as it is.’ (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

Those who inspired this study were expressly involved in it: the children on the islands. This seemed an obvious choice, considering the study’s objective of wanting to paint a complete picture of their situation. However, during the study, it turned out to be far from self-evident that children’s views are valued.

UNICEF surveyed a total of 106 children on all six of the islands. On each of the islands, around fifteen children expressed their views, mostly in individual interviews, but also in a few group discussions and chat sessions. We spoke to ‘ordinary’ children, mainly at schools and after-school programs. Interviews were done by local interviewers and one regular interviewer of UNICEF who was born and raised on one of the islands.

孩子们

这个报告指的是所有0到18岁的人作为‘儿童’，遵循《儿童权利公约》中使用的术语。在某些情况下，重要的是要更具体。在这种情况下，术语‘年轻人’可以用来指代年龄在十二到十八岁（及更大）的范围。

访谈

UNICEF希望听到孩子们自己的看法，他们对自己的生活有何感受。事情进展得如何，有什么做得不够好，如何改进？简而言之，我们想听听他们是怎么想的。儿童往往能够清楚地解释他们认为重要的事情。有时他们想出了一些连大人也没想到的解决方案。

在每个岛屿上，访谈者与八到十八岁的孩子进行了交谈。访谈者首先由UNICEF研究协调员培训，以提供他们所需的知识儿童的权利，并教授他们与访谈儿童的特定技能。每位访谈者都有与儿童工作的先前经验。为了确保儿童能够自由表达自己的想法，研究使用了能说儿童母语和熟悉文化的访谈者。访谈在Papiamento、英语、荷兰语甚至在一次情况下使用西班牙语。

访谈方法和技术根据儿童的年龄、发展水平和生活世界进行了调整。一些儿童喜欢解释他们分享的经历，而其他人则更喜欢角色扮演他们认为会发生什么变化，如果他们统治了岛屿，而其他人则完全能够表达他们对某些特定事项的看法。访谈者有清单的提问和主题，以便他们感到需要进一步结构访谈。访谈是半结构化的。

访谈与儿童的访谈不构成科学或代表性的研究，而是旨在通过一个尚未了解的视角，说明儿童权利在岛屿上的现状：儿童对自己在岛屿上长大有何感受？

大多数孩子都非常兴奋地被允许参加这项研究。他们中的许多人过去没有机会表达自己的观点。成人通常不会问他们对不同事情的看法。一些甚至真正惊讶我们真的想知道他们对不同事情的看法。在某些情况下，儿童感到犹豫，因为他们害怕自己的话语会在岛屿上的小社区中泄露。

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socially desirable answers, and a remarkably large number of children perceived problems in their friends, but not in themselves. Interviews lasted between twenty minutes and two hours.

Prior to interviewing children, we requested their parents’ consent. After all, they are the children’s legal representatives. Parents were asked to sign a consent form that was set in their language. We provided them with information about UNICEF, the study, the idea behind the interviews, and the subjects we would be discussing with their children. We also asked the parents for permission to record their children on video or photos and to use that material in due time.

On each of the islands we partnered with a local organization for children. They arranged one or two interviewers who would, together with the UNICEF interviewer, handle the interviews with the children. These organizations also selected the children on their respective islands. In doing so, we asked them to pay attention to the following: voluntariness, a good spread of girls and boys, educational level, background, and age.

We split the children up in groups and explained why we wanted to find out all sorts of things from them. We told them about children’s rights, about UNICEF, about the study, and explained what subjects we wanted to talk to them about and why. On a large sticker, they could complete the sentence ‘Every child has a right to...’ which they all did very creatively.

After that, each child would talk to an interviewer in private. The interviews started with the interviewer making it clear to the child that he or she could at any time say that he or she did not want to talk about something, or wanted to talk about something the interviewer had not addressed. All children were handed a red STOP card that they could hold up whenever they didn’t want to continue talking about a certain subject. This card was used only once during all individual interviews.

During the interviews with the children, all subjects that play a pivotal part in children’s lives were raised: family and parenting, housing conditions, education, health, safety, recreation, play, and leisure time, financial situation, and participation. Children would share their views and experiences, while interviewers asked open questions. Children were also encouraged to share what they would change if they ruled the island.

Collaboration on Bonaire
On Bonaire, we spoke to a total of nineteen children in eleven individual interviews and chat sessions with eight children. The individual interviews were held in October 2011. They were prepared and conducted in collaboration with Stichting Project, an organization on Bonaire that helps and counsels children aged nine and up with behavioral issues. They made sure children from different backgrounds, of different ages, and with different levels of education were approached to take part in the study. We asked them to particularly focus on ensuring a proportional spread of children with care needs and problems and children who do not have those kinds of issues. They also provided sufficient and suitable (separate) rooms in which we could do the interviews.

Aside from that, there was a group interview with five pupils at one of Bonaire’s elementary schools: the Kolegio Reina Beatrix. The information that emerged during that session confirmed the picture the other children had painted during the individual interviews and the chat sessions. Unfortunately, video footage of the group interview was lost due to a technical glitch, as a result of which we were unable to reproduce these children’s words verbatim. We therefore decided not to include this group interview in the database and the study.

Liënne Domacassé of Stichting Project worked on the study as an interviewer. She did the interviews together with Sabina ter Borg, the UNICEF interviewer who grew up on Bonaire and spoke to children on all the islands. This was all done under the supervision of the UNICEF study coordinator. UNICEF provided all the materials required for the
children’s rights and interview training for interviewers, as well as materials used during the interviews with the children: recording equipment, a children’s version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children’s rights stickers, food and drink, clothes to allow the children to dress up, drawing materials, thank-you certificates, gifts.

The interviews took account of children’s specific cultural backgrounds, as these are likely to strongly affect children’s behavior. Some children on Bonaire grow up in a culture where shame and fear are very prominent. These children are afraid to voice their opinion due to the possible consequences. There are children with low self-esteem, who are ashamed of their background, family, appearance (and skin color), or school performance. This may lead to restraint in communication and them choosing to only say what they consider strictly necessary.

Needless to say, there are major differences in eloquence and openness from one child to the next. However, nearly all children who took part in the interviews were very excited to be asked to tell us about their lives. They took part in this study voluntarily, which can be expected to already constitute a kind of natural selection.

In June and July of 2011, chat sessions involving eight children aged between thirteen and sixteen were held on Bonaire. UNICEF commissioned the Verwey-Jonker institute to organize and conduct these online sessions with focus groups (and different sessions). On the island, Jong Bonaire, Stichting Project, and HAK helped make these sessions possible. These chat sessions are captured in the report entitled Kinderen in Tel: ook voor de nieuwe (bijzondere) gemeenten; Kinderrechten-nulmeting en jeugdparticipatie op Bonaire, Sint Eustatius en Saba (Counting Children: also for the new (special) municipalities; Children’s rights baseline measurement and youth participation on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba) from 2011.

Please refer to Appendix 1 for a selection of quotes from all children surveyed, as referenced in the sections on the various subjects.

On the www.unicef.nl/koninkrijkskinderen website, you can find a selection of quotes from children from all six islands.

Anonymous
On a (very) small island, everyone knows each other. That has a lot of benefits, but can also lead to difficulties. After all, there are things that you don’t want everyone to know about. Although most of the children surveyed didn’t mind their names being published alongside their quotes, we still chose not to. The children answered the question ‘What do YOU think?’ Without them, this report would never have existed.

7.3 Young people
‘I see that many children on Bonaire do not get enough attention from their parents.’
(adolescent, Bonaire)

This study also spoke to young people aged between 19 and 25 who grew up on the islands and now go to college or work in the Netherlands. They were consulted in extensive panel sessions. In total, 27 young people were involved, ten of whom grew up on the BES islands. They are currently residing in the Netherlands, are (just) of age, and can view their experience of growing up on the island from a different perspective. UNICEF commissioned Stichting Alexander to run these panel sessions. Stichting Alexander is a national institute for youth participation and participative youth studies. The report entitled Jongeren in Nederland over de kinderrechtensituatie op Bonaire, Sint Eustatius en Saba (Young people in the Netherlands on the children’s rights situation on Bonaire, St.

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1 See also www.verwey-jonker.nl.
The outcome of these sessions were used in this report.

7.4 **Experts**

*‘Young people are barely involved in things here. Talk to them, see what they want!’*  
(expert)

Input from experts was gathered in a variety of ways. There were many individual conversations with experts in the area of children on the islands, both locally and in the Netherlands. These were semi-structured conversations that ranged in duration from 30 minutes to several hours. These individual interviews were conducted by the study coordinator in the period from 2011 to February of 2013.

Experts in various fields were also asked for information by email and phone. This was handled by study staff and the study coordinator over the period from 2011 to early 2013.

In 2011 and 2012, expert meetings were organized, where experts from the BES islands expressed their views.

Finally, several experts reviewed and added to copy that focused on their area of expertise.

A total of 107 experts were consulted.

Every effort was made to ensure we spoke to all experts who are active in (one of) the various environments of children’s lives and who are familiar with the situation on the islands. Nonetheless, there may be experts missing who should indeed feature on the list of experts surveyed.

Appendix 1 provides a selection of quotes from experts on the various subjects, while Appendix 2 contains a list of experts consulted for this study.

7.5 **Literature**

This study drew on all existing and known information, research, and other sources of information on the situation of children on the BES islands. All statistical data relating to the situation of children on the islands was incorporated. Information about the actual situation — as available on websites, leaflets, literature, and the like — was also included and processed in the description of the current situation of each subject. Literature also includes reports on conventions and recommendations by the relevant regulatory bodies, such as the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Please refer to Appendix 3 for the full bibliography. On the [www.unicef.nl/koninkrijkskinderen](http://www.unicef.nl/koninkrijkskinderen) website, you will find, under the island of Bonaire, a PDF file with brief summaries of all literature used, sorted by subject. This will allow you to quickly find out where to find certain information if you want to find out more about a certain subject.

7.6 **Database**

A total of 293 sources were consulted: children and young people, experts, literature. All information gathered has been recorded in a database. Children, young people, and experts made a total of 2,331 statements on the situation of children on the islands. All information in the database is available to researchers from UNICEF upon request and after consultation.

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1 There are also reports on the panel discussions with young people from Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten. These can be found on the website [www.unicef.nl/koninkrijkskinderen](http://www.unicef.nl/koninkrijkskinderen) under the respective island. They are also available on the Stichting Alexander website: [www.st-alexander.nl](http://www.st-alexander.nl).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bonaire</th>
<th>St. Eustatius</th>
<th>Saba</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with children</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in chat sessions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total children</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people (18+)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of sources:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of statements:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,331</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Number of sources used for the study.

8 Website and publicity

During the study, the www.unicef.nl/koninkrijkskinderen website was launched to publish information about the study. This website presents, among other things, information about the islands and the study approach, as well as regular news items. As the study unfolded, interviewers who spoke to children posted updates on their blogs on the website.

In its summer 2012 edition, UNICEF Magazine devoted a large article to the situation on the islands. The study also prompted various other media, both on the islands and in the Netherlands, to report on children’s situation. Please refer to the website.

In the summer of 2012, the IKON broadcasting organization’s Spraakmakende Zaken [Controversial Affairs] series was devoted entirely to children’s rights. The series consisted of six episodes, three of which were set in the European Netherlands and three in the Caribbean Netherlands. This series — presented by former politician Paul Rosenmöller — was inspired by UNICEF’s activities in the area of children’s rights in the Netherlands and the study on children on the islands.

The episode set on St. Eustatius focused on parenting (August 9th, 2012), the one on Saba on education (August 16th, 2012), and the Bonaire episode dealt with the most important subject, sex (August 23rd, 2012). These programs can still be viewed on ikonrtv.nl.

9 Presentation of the study and Children of the Kingdom symposium

The results of the study into the children’s rights situation on Bonaire will be presented and explained on the islands themselves in September 2013. Several stakeholders will attend that presentation to enable a joint evaluation of how this report can help improve the children’s rights situation on Bonaire.

On 23 May 2013, a large symposium was held in the Dutch city of Leiden under the title of Children of the Kingdom. The studies into the children’s rights situation on each of the six islands of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, including the one on Bonaire, were presented

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1 For a more extensive overview see: www.unicef.nl/nieuws/agenda/spraakmakende-zaken-affl-4/.
at this symposium. The reports were presented to the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, Ronald Plasterk, who is the coordinating member of government. Various stakeholders from the islands attended and played an active role at the symposium.

This symposium set out to do various things:

- To inform people on the situation of children on the six islands.
- To garner support in order to get the position of children on the islands on the agenda and where necessary to improve it.
- To facilitate stakeholders in building and maintaining a network in the area of children’s rights on the islands.
- To inspire everyone to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child, also for children on the islands.
The island

1 Growing up on Bonaire
Bonaire is an island in the southern part of the Caribbean Sea. Located eighty kilometers from the coast of Venezuela, Bonaire is, together with Aruba and Curaçao, which are 138 and 50 kilometers further west respectively, part of the Leeward (Benedenwindse) Antilles. These three islands are sometimes also referred to as the ABC islands.

Bonaire is over 800 kilometers south of St. Eustatius and Saba. The distance between the European Netherlands and Bonaire is over 7,000 kilometers.

Bonaire covers a surface of around 290 square kilometers, is about 28 kilometers long and between five and eleven kilometers wide. It also includes the small uninhabited island of Klein Bonaire, which has a surface area of six square kilometers. Bonaire’s highest point is the Brandaris hill, which rises 240 meters above sea level.

Bonaire is known for its tropical climate. It is very dry from February to June. The rainy season runs from October to January. The average temperature on Bonaire is 28°C. Although Bonaire is situated outside the hurricane belt, it is still hit by a hurricane from time to time. Bonaire’s soil is mainly made up of coralline limestone.

Bonaire is home to 16,000 people. The population is made up of different nationalities. Alongside the natives, Bonaire is home to many people from the Netherlands, Curaçao, Aruba, Venezuela, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic.

Bonaire’s official language is Dutch, but Papiamento – or Papiamentu – is also recognized as an official language on the island. Papiamento is a Creole language that is based on Spanish and Portuguese, with Dutch, English, and African influences. English and Spanish are also widely spoken on the island.

In 1499, the Spanish occupied Bonaire, which at the time was already inhabited by Caiquito Indians. The Dutch conquered the island from the Spanish in 1636. At the end of the seventeenth century, the West Indies Company transported a group of African slaves to Bonaire to work there. After having lost the island to the British on two occasions in the early nineteenth century, the Dutch finally brought Bonaire under their rule in 1816. In 1954, the Netherlands Antilles, of which Bonaire was part until 10 October 2010, gained political autonomy.

Over 4,000 children are growing up on Bonaire, making up roughly a quarter of the island’s total population. Compared to the other two islands of the Caribbean Netherlands, St. Eustatius and Saba, the number of children on Bonaire is considerable.

Every year, around 190 children are born on Bonaire: 181 in 2011.

Compared to the other three islands of the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the number of children on Bonaire is relatively small. The independent
islands of Aruba, Curaçao, and St. Maarten are home to nearly 27,000, over 46,000, and just under 12,000 children respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bonaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nickname</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Most widely spoken language | Papiamento: 75%  
Spanish: 12%  
Dutch: 9%  
English: 3% |
| Religion                 | Roman Catholic: 77%  
Other: 16%  
None: 7% |
| Population               | 16,541                                |
| Children (0-20 years)    | 4,060 (24.5%)                         |
| Source of income         | Tourism and salt extraction           |
| Currency                 | U.S. Dollar ($)                       |
| Government               | ‘Public authority’ part of the Netherlands since 2010 |
| No. of elementary schools | 8                                     |
| No. of public high schools | 1                                    |
| University               | St. James School of Medicine          |
| Hospitals                | San Francisco Hospital                |
| Holiday                  | 6 September and 30 April (Dia di Rincón) |

Table 2: Bonaire details

In total, over 90,000 children are growing up in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Bonaire has an even age spread of children (see below).

2 Caribbean Netherlands

Together, Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba make up the Caribbean Netherlands, and are also referred to as the BES islands. On October 10 2010, the country of the ‘Netherlands Antilles’ was broken up. On that date, Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba became part of the Netherlands. They are now ‘public authorities’ and are referred to as ‘special municipalities’ in day-to-day communications (see below for government situation).

2.1 Brief history

Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, St. Eustatius, and St. Maarten are former colonies of the Netherlands. In 1954, instead of gaining independence, these islands became part of a kind of commonwealth of three countries: Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles, and Suriname (until 1975). These countries worked together on matters affecting the whole kingdom (defense, nationality, foreign policy). For other subjects, each of the three countries had their own legislation and policy.

In 1986, Aruba exited the Netherlands-Antilles governmental unit to become an independent country within the Kingdom. The remaining islands, however, did not

Sources: statline.cbs.nl; beautiful-bonaire.nl; dutchcaribbeanlegalportal.com
become a single unit.

The division of responsibility between the mainland and islands was unclear at the time, and Curaçao was considered too dominant by the other islands. This would produce tension.

The dismantling of the country of the Netherlands Antilles was kicked off by a referendum on St. Maarten in the year 2000. Just under seventy percent of voters voted in favor of independent status within the Kingdom.

2.2 Children in the Caribbean Netherlands

Over 5,000 children are growing up in the Caribbean Netherlands, which is about a quarter of the BES islands’ total population. The chart below shows the number of children on the three islands and the age spread.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Bonaire</th>
<th>St. Eustatius</th>
<th>Saba</th>
<th>Caribbean Netherlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 5 years</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>1,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 10 years</td>
<td>1,011</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>1,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 15 years</td>
<td>1,059</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 20 years</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>1,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of children</td>
<td>4,060</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>5,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>16,541</td>
<td>3,791(^1)</td>
<td>1,971</td>
<td>21,585</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Population – as at 1 January 2012.\(^2\)

2.3 Government situation in a nutshell

On October 10 2010, the country of the Netherlands Antilles was dismantled. Curaçao and St. Maarten became independent countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which Aruba had already been since 1986.

Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba became ‘public authorities’ as defined in Section 134 of the Dutch constitution. They were integrated into the Dutch political unit.

The governmental set-up of the public authorities of Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba largely resembles that of municipalities on the mainland. Due to the islands’ special position, however, they need to (be able to) apply different legislation and regulations. The islands were therefore designated public authorities\(^3\) and the special position of these public authorities was laid down in the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands\(^4\) (hereinafter: the Charter).

2.4 Constitution and Charter

The Constitution of the Netherlands applies in both parts of the Netherlands: both in the European and the Caribbean part. Section 1 of the Constitution formulates the principle of equality: ‘All those who are in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in equal circumstances. Discrimination based on religion, personal beliefs, political affinity, race, sex, or any other grounds is excluded.’

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1 Statia welcomed its 4000th inhabitant on 8 March 2013.
3 See: Act of 17 May 2010 providing rules with regard to the public entities Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba (Invoeringswet openbare lichamen Bonaire, Sint Eustatius en Saba).
4 Act of 28 October 1954, containing Acceptance of a Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands.
This constitutional provision does not mean that all legislation and regulations in the European and Caribbean Netherlands must be exactly the same. Based on agreements between the Netherlands and the administrative authorities on the islands, deviating rules can be implemented. And this is exactly what they have done: much of existing pre-2010 Netherlands-Antillean legislation was preserved after the transition. An agreement was made to take a five-year period to gradually migrate to Dutch law. However, a lot of new Dutch legislation has been passed in the meantime.

The Charter regulates the political relationship between the independent countries in the Kingdom of the Netherlands: The Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao, and St. Maarten. This Charter specifies that these countries look after their own affairs independently. Together, they are responsible for issues that affect the Kingdom as a whole: the kingdom affairs. Aside from that, the Charter provides rules for mutual collaboration, assistance, consultation, and the countries’ form of government. The Charter came into force in 1954.

Section 1 of the Charter defines the countries that make up the Kingdom. The second subsection of this section states that Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba come under the government of the Netherlands. It also specifies that the BES islands can be subjected to rules and that other specific measures can be taken with a view to economic and social circumstances, the large distance from the European part of the Netherlands, their insular nature, small surface and population, geographic circumstances, the climate, and other factors that make that these islands are essentially different from the European part of the Netherlands.

This ‘differentiation provision’ has given rise to some debate, and the government has meanwhile submitted a bill to amend the law by replacing this provision with a section in the Constitution (see below).

Whether and how such a provision will materialize, the assessment framework for specific situations and based on which a decision can be made to implement deviating legislation and regulations continues to be Section 1 of the Constitution.

Legislative and regulatory differences between the European and the Caribbean Netherlands have on various occasions caused discontent among the population and authorities on the islands, who have sometimes felt they were considered less important. It is unclear to many people why and on which points a distinction is made.

In March 2013, the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights issued advice on the application of the equality principle in relation to rights stipulated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. For further details, please refer to the next chapter (The Convention on the Rights of the Child).

2.5 Conventions
The Dutch government has made a reservation to several conventions to which the Netherlands is a party. These conventions then apply only to the European part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The important and well-known human rights conventions are applicable in the Caribbean Netherlands, such as the European Convention on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child applies in full on the BES islands (see below).

2.6 Right to self-determination
The right to self-determination is a nation’s right to freely and voluntarily choose their sovereignty. They can choose between independence, ‘free association’ (with an
independent state(s)), or integration into an independent state. The overriding objective of the right to self-determination is to ensure the well-being of the population.1

Prior to the changes to the political situation of the islands of the former Netherlands Antilles in 2010, the BES islands were polled on what they wanted. In referendums in 2004 and 2005, Bonaire and Saba opted for direct ties with the Netherlands, while St. Eustatius chose preservation of the Netherlands Antilles as a country. St. Eustatius’ current status is therefore not based on the will of its people.

Results of negotiations about the BES islands were not presented to the population of Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. It can be assumed that at the time of the referendums many of the islanders did not realize what the consequences were of the various options presented to them. Experts therefore conclude that the status of the three islands does not comply with the requirements of the right to self-determination and is at odds with the international decolonization regulations2. They claim that Bonairians, Statians, and Sabans should be consulted again, after having been provided with extensive information.3

The BES islands still have a right to self-determination, also after the change to their political status in 2010, according to former State Secretary for Kingdom Relations, Ank Bijleveld4.

2.7 Post-2015

On 10 October 2015, a final status will be chosen for Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. That is five years after the political changes. In 2015, or sooner, the current status of public authorities can be evaluated. Until then, the BES islands – according to the former State Secretary of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, Ank Bijleveld – can still choose either of two options: 1) maintain the current status, meaning that of public authority (or municipality) within the Netherlands, or 2) independence.

In theory, the BES islands could also choose to separate from the Netherlands. In practice, however, that ship seems to have sailed. A bill to amend the Constitution has been submitted to the States General regulating the islands’ constitutional position in the Constitution.5 Under that bill, the BES islands would only be able to choose whether to continue as a public authority or as a municipality. Independence would then no longer be an option.

The House of Representatives of Dutch Parliament passed the bill, following which the Senate suspended deliberation on the bill. The Dutch Senate wants to await the results of the evaluation of the new political structure within the Kingdom in 2015 and hence comply with the sequentiality of an evaluation of the political structure before laying down a (new) political structure in the Constitution.6

2.8 Island government and organization

The Bonaire Public Authority is organized as follows. Day-to-day administration is handled by the governing council. This council is made up of the ‘gezaghebber’ (comparable to the role of mayor of a municipality) and three deputies (comparable to aldermen). The island secretary offers official support.

The governing council is responsible for making and implementing policy. In early 2013, Bonaire’s ‘gezaghebber’ is Ms. Emerencia. The Bonaire public authority employs around 340 people.

1 United Nations Resolutions 1514 and 2625.
4 Handelingen (Proceedings) 2009/10, nr. 28, p. 1171.
5 Kamerstukken II (Parliamentary papers) 2011-2012, nr. 33 131, 2 Constitutionele basis openbare lichamen BES (Grondwetswijziging).
6 Kamerstukken I (Parliamentary papers) 2012-2013, nr 33131, C.
The island council is the elected parliament of the public authority, comparable to a municipal council in the Netherlands. This council plays a role in policy-making and oversees the execution thereof. Bonaire’s island council has nine members. The members appoint the deputies, who together with the lieutenant governor make up the governing council. In early 2013, the parties represented on the island council are the Union Patriotiko Boneriano/UPB (four seats), the Democratische Partij (Democratic Party) Bonaire/PDB (three seats), the Movimento Boneiru Liber/MBL (one seat), and the Groep Santana (one seat).¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caribbean Netherlands</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Island council (councilors)</td>
<td>Municipal council (councilors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governing council</td>
<td>Municipal Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant Governor</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy</td>
<td>Alderman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4: Comparison of forms of government.*

2.9 New rules

The Dutch government and the public authorities have agreed to limit the introduction of legislation over a period over five years following the transition in 2010.² The idea was to allow citizens and administrators some time to get settled after the political and administrative changes that already involved a great deal of new regulations.

Whether this ‘legislative restraint’ was successful in practice is unclear. The intention was to only revise the fiscal and social security system, and to implement changes in education and (health) care, but numerous other new rules were also introduced apart from that. According to the Kingdom Representative (see below), the population and institutions of the three islands – companies, authorities, schools, hospitals – are unable to process so many new rules within such a short time span.

The Netherlands Court of Audit has found it impossible to assess whether the agreement to exercise restraint has been honored, because it is unclear to which legislation and regulations this requirement of restraint was to apply.³

The sections about the specific subjects each provide information about relevant legislation and regulations.

2.10 Level of facilities

Like regulations, the level of facilities in the areas of education, health, social security, and safety was also the object of an agreement between the Dutch government and the BES islands.⁴ They agreed to set standards for the required level of facilities in each of these policy areas. This was supposed to happen based on a description of the current situation, but there was insufficient information about the current state of affairs. The Netherlands Court of Audit concluded that the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science and the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport have adopted different approaches. Where the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sciences has set out to raise the level of facilities on the BES islands to bring it into line with that in the European Netherlands, the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport wants to define target levels of facilities for each care provider separately.⁵

¹ See also the website of the public body of Bonaire: www.bonairegov.an.
² Various agreements have been made about this. For an overview see: Algemene Rekenkamer, Rijksoverheid en Caribisch Nederland: naleving van afspraken, House of Representatives, session year 2012-2013, 33471, no. 2.
³ Idem.
⁵ Algemene Rekenkamer, Rijksoverheid en Caribisch Nederland: naleving van afspraken, House of Representatives, session year 2012-2013, 33471, nr. 2.
The sections about the specific subjects each provide information about the level of facilities in the respective areas.

2.11 Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations
The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations is responsible for the BES islands. He intends to be the coordinating minister for all matters relating to the islands. There are several line ministries that are responsible for policy in individual fields. The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, for example, is responsible for education in the Caribbean Netherlands, the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport is responsible for youth policy, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is tasked with fighting poverty on the islands, and the Ministry of Security and Justice is the point of contact for the fight against crime.

However, it is important to have a coordinating government member who ensures there are no ‘gaps’ between the realization of the various responsibilities. This government member can also see to it that ministries work together and that the BES islands are consulted and kept informed. The current minister of the Interior and Employment, Ronald Plasterk, has expressed his intention to fulfill this role as such and to prevent the Caribbean Netherlands being faced with unnecessary rules.¹

2.12 Kingdom Representative
There is a Kingdom Representative (‘Rijksvertegenwoordiger’) for the BES islands who liaises with the public authorities in the Caribbean Netherlands and the national government in the Hague.² He is based on Bonaire, but also has an office on St. Eustatius and Saba. In May 2011, Wilbert Stolte was appointed Kingdom Representative for a term of six years.

The Kingdom Representative has several tasks. First of all, he is tasked with ensuring (civil servants of) ministries on the islands have effective working relationships with the island authorities. He must also see to it that the three public authorities govern the island adequately. He reports back to the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations every six months. He also reports on the situation on the islands in an annual report.

In his 2011 report, he indicated that Bonairians, Statians, and Sabans complained about the loss of their identity and culture, the influx of Dutch people from Western Europe, and expressed a fear that they were losing control over their island’s affairs. Such sentiments of discontent are still present. This is partly also down to criticism of legislation for euthanasia, abortion, and gay marriage that the islands are obliged to accept.

In his 2012 report, the Kingdom Representative again referred to several bottlenecks, while also expressing optimism for the future. ‘That this historic transition did not go smoothly is clear to everyone. It was, in fact, never going to be easy, considering the complexity. Recognition of this given will automatically lead to a willingness to adapt and change.’³

2.13 Children’s Ombudsman
Since 1 April 2011, the Netherlands has had a Children’s Ombudsman, who comes under the office of the National Ombudsman. The Children’s Ombudsman focuses on compliance with the rights of children and young people.

The Children’s Ombudsman advises children and young people on ways of asserting their rights. Aside from that, the Children’s Ombudsman oversees compliance with children’s rights by the government in the Netherlands, but also by private organizations in education, child care, youth care, and health care. He advises parliament and organizations, and raises awareness of children’s rights among the people. The first

² The legal basis is the Act on the Public Bodies of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba (WolBES).
³ Kingdom Representative for the Public Bodies of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, Voortgangsrapportage 2011, February 2012.
Children’s Ombudsman is Marc Dullaert. He reports to the House of Representatives of Dutch Parliament on an annual basis.

The Children’s Ombudsman has stated in various publications that his mandate extends ‘across the entire territory of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and therefore covers the Caribbean Netherlands as well.’ Upon further inquiry, however, this turned out to be erroneous. The Children’s Ombudsman’s mandate stretches across the Netherlands in its entirety, including the Caribbean Netherlands.

In his 2012 Children’s Rights Monitor, the Children’s Ombudsman attempted to map the situation in the Caribbean Netherlands. The Children’s Ombudsman does, however, note in this same publication that little information is available about compliance with children’s rights on these islands.

The way in which the Children’s Ombudsman will be fulfilling the mandate for children growing up in the Caribbean Netherlands is as yet to be determined. What is clear, however, is that he will be teaming up with the National Ombudsman who is already active on the BES islands.

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2 Information received in an email from Rogier Oet, Children’s Ombudsman staff member, 25 April 2013.
4 See www.nationaleombudsman.nl.
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The situation of children on the islands can be assessed in various ways. For this study, a choice was made to use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, hereinafter also referred to as UNCRC or Children’s Rights Convention, as the basis for assessment.

In this chapter, you will first find information about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensuing responsibilities for the state of the Netherlands. Following that, this chapter will go into how the Netherlands is to account for its compliance with children’s rights and to whom. You will also find an explanation of how this convention is used as a measuring tool. This chapter will close with recent recommendations by the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights on implementation of the convention on the islands. For more elaborate details about the convention and other international legislation regarding children’s legal position, please refer to the *Handboek Internationaal Jeugdrecht* [International Children’s Rights Handbook].

1 The Convention on the Rights of the Child at a glance


1.1 Universal

The UNCRC is a special human rights convention. It is of a universal nature in a variety of ways, which is what makes this convention so valuable in relation to other instruments. The convention covers all rights of all children. It specifies classical freedoms that force states to exercise restraint in various areas, while also describing fundamental social rights that encourage states to take action.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the world’s most ratified human rights convention. Only two countries have only signed the convention, but not (yet) ratified it: the United States and Somalia. 193 countries have ratified it.

1.2 Vision

The convention reflects the vision that children are people who need support on route to adulthood. Like any human being, children have rights. Aside from that, children need to be protected and given opportunities for development.

The convention does not define children based on what they are not (not adults yet, not yet competent, not yet fully developed intellectually). It is about what they are.

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1.3 **Child**
The Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to all children, all persons below the age of eighteen.

1.4 **Contents**
Made up of 54 articles, the UNCRC is intended to improve children’s position in society. The rights can be subdivided into four categories: protection rights, special protection rights, facilities, and participation rights.

The convention is organized as follows:

- Definition of child.
- General implementation methods.
- General principles.
- Civil rights and liberties.
- Family environment and alternative care.
- Basic rights in the area of health care, education, leisure time, and cultural activities.
- Special protection measures.

1.5 **Basic principles**
The convention has four basic principles (see below for details):

1. All rights apply to all children: non-discrimination (Article 2).
2. The best interests of the child are the primary consideration in all decisions (Article 3).
3. Right to life and development (Article 6).
4. Respect for the child’s views (Article 12).

1.6 **Holistic**
The articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are closely interrelated and form one single unit.

1.7 **Binding**
By ratifying the convention, states commit to implementing it. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is legally binding. Whenever other treaties may be applied, the UNCRC states that the regulation that is most favorable for the child shall prevail. Treaty law prevails over national legislation.

1.8 **The Committee on the Rights of the Child**
The Geneva-based UN Committee on the Rights of the Child monitors member states’ compliance with their obligations under the UNCRC. Member states are required to report on the children’s rights situation in their country every five years. The committee issues recommendations and publishes General Comments to provide more elaborate explanation on specific subjects. See below under reporting.

2 **The Convention on the Rights of the Child in the (Caribbean) Netherlands**
For the Netherlands, the Convention on the Rights of the Child came into force on March 8th, 1995. As of that date, our country is subject to obligations from the convention for all children in Dutch jurisdiction. That means that the convention is also directly and fully applicable to children on the islands of Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was already applicable on these islands when they were still part of the Netherlands Antilles. Since 2010, the Netherlands has been responsible for the full realization of rights specified by the convention in the Caribbean Netherlands.
International treaties are signed and negotiated by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in consultation with the countries of the Kingdom. Following that, each of the countries of the Kingdom is required to individually ratify (implicitly or explicitly) conventions. The Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles, and Aruba ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on March 8th 1995, January 16th 1998, and January 17th 2001 respectively.

Curaçao and St. Maarten, which became independent countries within the Kingdom in 2010, are still governed by the conventions as these applied to the Netherlands Antilles before then. The governments of Curaçao, St. Maarten, and Aruba are responsible for implementation of the Children’s Rights Convention in their country.

Since 2010, the islands of Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba are part of the Netherlands (for more details, please refer to the section entitled The Island). This makes the Dutch government responsible for compliance with children’s rights on these three islands.

The Netherlands has made a reservation to three articles of the convention. From March 1995, the Netherlands has been obliged to abide by the agreements. The Dutch government must make sure national legislation and regulations and their policy are aligned with the convention. Wherever this is not the case, national rules must be amended, while the rules of the convention shall apply in the meantime.

3 Reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child
To monitor whether states are honoring their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, they are required to report on this subject to the Committee on the Rights of the Child every five years.

3.1 The Committee on the Rights of the Child
Every country that is party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child has assumed the obligation to report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva on ‘measures they have taken in implementing the rights recognized in the Convention, as well as on progress made in terms of enjoyment of these rights.’ This happens by way of country reports, which result in recommendations by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The committee is made up of eighteen independent experts in the area of children’s rights. They meet three times a year to assess all reports that were submitted.

NGOs can also submit independent reports on the children’s rights situation in their country. These reports are discussed at a separate closed session, three months ahead of the government session. The committee will extrapolate a list of issues from such deliberations, which the committee subsequently wants answered prior to the government session. The session with the government is a public one. The committee will formulate recommendations based on this session: Concluding Observations.

3.2 Reports from the Kingdom of the Netherlands
The Netherlands has been a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1995. Two years later, the Dutch government submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Several NGOs, such as the Kinderrechtencollectief [Children’s Rights Collective] and the Dutch Section of the International Commission of Jurists, submitted their own reports. The committee looked at the government’s report in September 1999.

In 2007, the Dutch government reported to the Committee on the Rights of the Child for the third time. Aruba submitted its second report, and the country of the Netherlands Antilles submitted its first report to the committee.

On January 30th 2009, the committee issued the Netherlands, Aruba, and the Netherlands Antilles 86 recommendations on the implementation of children’s rights in these three countries.

In 2012, the Dutch government submitted its fourth report. The Children’s Rights Collective NGO again produced a report of its own. The most recent government report is yet to be evaluated by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

3.3 The committee on children on the BES islands
On January 30th 2009, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child published its Concluding Observations on the children’s rights situation in the Netherlands. In these observations, the committee expressed concern about the situation on the islands, issuing various recommendations for improvement.

The chapters on the various subjects will specify the committee’s concerns in these respective areas.

4 The Convention on the Rights of the Child as a measuring tool
The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the basis for this study. The study maps the situation of children growing up on one of the three islands of Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. Such an overview was lacking until now. The study paints a comprehensive picture of the situation of children in the Caribbean Netherlands.

The next step was to look at to what extent this situation is in line with the requirements the Children’s Rights Convention specifies for our country. The UNCRC is used as the assessment framework or measuring tool. Adequate use of the convention as a touchstone requires a few prior comments.

First of all, the UNCRC provides minimum standards. As a rich country, the Netherlands is able, and encouraged, to do more. Whenever there are provisions that are more favorable for children, these will prevail. The Convention on the Rights of the Child serves three important purposes. Needless to say, it is a legal document. The convention also contains an educational assignment. It is also important that it offers a solid basis for the development of youth policy. This comes to the fore in the wording of many of the convention’s provisions: ‘The State Parties shall...’ This is how the Convention on the Rights of the Child can be used as a measuring tool for the situation of children on the islands.

In their explanatory notes to the convention, the Committee on the Rights of the Child states that the objective of the convention and the wording of Article 4 dictate that states must create legislation that is aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and this legislation must be put into practice. Practical realization of certain rights may require special measures for certain groups of children to get rid of disadvantages.\(^1\)

4.1 Basic principles
As indicated above, the Convention on the Rights of the Child contains four basic principles. These are the starting point in checking children’s situation against the UNCRC. These basic principles are formulated in Articles 2, 3, 6, and 12 of the UNCRC.

Each of these articles will be outlined below to enable determination of how to translate these basic principles to the situation of children on the islands.

**Non-discrimination**

Article 2

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth, or other status.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

The rights specified in the convention apply to every child. Discrimination is not allowed, and states are under an obligation to protect children against discrimination. The government must ensure Dutch legislation does not contain provisions and stipulations that are of a discriminatory nature.

This means that all rights apply in full to children on the islands of the Caribbean Netherlands. They have to be treated equally to children in the European Netherlands. Socially accepted standards therefore also apply to children on the islands.

Article 2 stresses that rights apply to all children within a state's jurisdiction. Even when the government decides to delegate obligations under the convention to lower-level governments, such as municipal or public authorities, the central government retains final responsibility for ensuring the rights to all children on its territory. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has confirmed this in explanatory notes to the convention.¹

**The child’s best interests**

Article 3

1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.

3. States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.

The child’s best interests must be the primary consideration in all actions concerning children. This article is considered a guiding principle for all other provisions of the convention.

Children must be assured of protection and care, by parents or child protection and youth care services (Paragraph 2).

Facilities must have sufficient and qualified staff (Paragraph 3). The same goes for all facilities for children on the islands, such as youth care, education, and health care.

The UNCRC does not further specify ‘the child’s best interests.’ These also differ per child and per situation. However, there are indeed ideas about a more concrete definition of a child’s best interests. As early as in 1989, two psychologists and behavioral therapists, Heiner and Bartels, identified twelve factors for optimum development of a child. In 2006,

Kalverboer and Zijlstra translated these factors into fourteen conditions for development that are linked to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Prolonged absence of these conditions will lead to developmental damage in the child. These are the following fourteen conditions, whereby the first seven relate to family, and the second seven to society.

Best interests of the child – conditions for development:

1. Adequate care: care for health and physical well-being, such as clothes, food, and accommodation.
2. A safe physical direct environment: physical protection of the child in the family, no abuse, no toxic influences, no hazardous housing conditions.
3. Affective climate: security with support and understanding from parents, suited to the child.
4. Supportive parenting structure: regularity, stimulation, control, setting boundaries, room for child’s own initiative, neither too much nor too little responsibility for the child.
5. Adequate role model behavior by parent: the child can copy parents’ behavior, actions, standards, and values.
6. Interest: parent shows an interest in the child and its social environment.
7. Continuity in parenting and care and future prospects: parents build a secure bond with the child, basic trust is maintained by parents’ availability.
8. Safe physical, broader environment: safe neighborhood and society. No war.
9. Respect: child’s environment takes child’s needs and feelings seriously.
10. Social network: child and family have different available sources of support.
11. Education: child is schooled and enjoys an education, and is able to develop its talents.
12. Interaction with peers: child interacts with other children in different situations, matching the child’s level of development.
13. Adequate role model behavior in society: child interacts with others whose behavior, values, and standards it can copy.
14. Stability in housing conditions, future prospects: changes in child’s life are pre-announced and clear. Identification figures and support sources continue to exist. Society offers the child future prospects.

Life and development
Article 6

1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.
2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

This article specifies an obligation to guarantee the development of children on the island ‘to the maximum extent possible.’ In correlation with the best interests of the child, Article 3, this means that the government must go to every effort to ensure children are able to develop safely and freely. Compliance with other convention provisions – such as the right to health care – contributes to realization of this right.

Participation
Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Children have a right to express their views freely, in all matters affecting the child. Children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express them, and these views must be given due weight.

Article 12 of the convention makes it very clear that we should not talk about children (as a legal object) but rather talk to them: children are persons with legal rights. Children can help create insight into matters that concern them. Their best interests should then also be taken as the starting point (Article 3).

This, too, is an important article for children in the Caribbean Netherlands.

4.2 Other provisions and children on the islands
The Convention on the Rights of the Child covers children’s entire living environment, which this study has split up into eight subjects:

- Family and parenting
- Education
- Health
- Safety
- Recreation, play, and leisure time
- Participation
- Housing conditions
- Financial situation

Together, these eight subjects cover children’s entire living environment. Every possible issue that affects children comes under one of these eight subjects. Previous UNICEF research used a highly similar set-up in applying the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a yardstick.¹

The conclusions for each of these subjects will specify what the Convention on the Rights of the Child says about the subject in question and which articles are relevant, while also providing an assessment of the degree of compliance with the minimum requirements stipulated by the convention.

5 Netherlands Institute for Human Rights
In March 2013, the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights issued its advice entitled ‘Equal treatment in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Caribbean Netherlands.’ In their advice, the institution addresses the question of whether – and if so on which conditions – a distinction can be made between the Caribbean Netherlands and the European Netherlands in the implementation of the rights from the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In December 2012², UNICEF asked the institution for advice on the following three questions:

1. When can a distinction in the treatment of the people of one country, the Netherlands, be justified; what can be considered ‘unequal cases’ and how specifically should this be defined?
2. What kind of substantiation is required when the government cites unequal cases to justify unequal treatment?
3. The UNCRC offers minimum standards for the rights of the child. Is the Dutch government allowed to differentiate between children growing up in the European Netherlands and children growing up in the Caribbean Netherlands, and hence push aside Art. 2 of the UNCRC? If so, in which specific situations will the Dutch government be relieved of its

obligation to ensure circumstances of children on the islands meet the minimum requirements of the UNCRC?

The institution found that the questions formulated by UNICEF are also asked in the Caribbean Netherlands. It addressed all three questions and produced clear advice and a checklist.¹ A summary of their advice is appended to this report as Appendix 4.

The institution states that the essential minimum level of rights from the Convention on the Rights of the Child must be ensured in both the European and the Caribbean Netherlands as soon as possible. Although they do allow the Dutch government to differentiate in regulations, endorsing unequal treatment, they make this conditional on ‘objective justification’ and compliance with the minimum standards from the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In their advice, the institution explains the assessment framework that is to be used for that.

The advice makes it clear that the Dutch government should work towards the same level of protection of children’s rights both in the Caribbean and in the European Netherlands. It may then be necessary – and sometimes even better – to regulate a certain policy area differently in one region than in the other. Realization of children’s right at the same level does therefore not automatically mean that this realization is to be shaped identically in both parts of the kingdom.

¹ See www.mensenrechten.nl/publicaties.
CHILDREN’S RIGHTS ON BONAIRE
Child on Bonaire
Introduction

This part of the report contains the results of the study conducted on the island of Bonaire,\(^1\) and will address the following eight subjects:

- Family and parenting
- Education
- Health
- Safety
- Recreation, play, and leisure time
- Participation
- Housing conditions
- Financial situation.

Each section will first outline the current situation, and subsequently assess the situation from three perspectives:

- How do children and adolescents view the situation?
- What do experts say about it?
- What does the literature tell us about it?

The picture this paints of the situation will then be offset against the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which specifies minimum standards for each of the aspects of children’s lives.

At the end of this chapter, you will find a general conclusion about the children’s rights situation on the island of Bonaire.

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\(^1\) In the same period UNICEF studied the children’s rights situation on both the two other islands making up the Caribbean Netherlands (St. Eustatius and Saba) and the three other islands in the Caribbean part of the kingdom: the independent countries of Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten. Separate reports have been published on these studies.
Family and parenting

Parents are generally the most important persons in a child’s life. They are the architects of their family’s composition and their children’s upbringing. Family and parenting therefore form the basis of children’s development.

Fortunately, there are a lot of children who grow up safely, happily, and without any major problems. However, there are also many children who find themselves in less fortunate circumstances, such as divorced parents, domestic violence, financial problems, or other issues on which they, being children, have no influence whatsoever. Often, these problems also have repercussions on other aspects of children’s lives. The lack of a safe, stable, supportive, and healthy home base will have a negative impact on a child’s life, just like the opposite situation will give a child a good start in life. Adverse financial circumstances will have consequences for the family and parenting situation. Poor living conditions will also put a strain on family relationships.

The subject of Family and parenting must therefore be seen in conjunction with other subjects addressed in this report.

Following a brief outline of the current family and parenting situation, this chapter will present children’s and adolescents’ views on this situation, as well as what experts and literature tell us about it. Before ending with a conclusion, this chapter will relate the findings about the current situation to the relevant UNCRC requirements.

1 Current situation

1.1 Family situation
There have been numerous developments in the area of family and parenting on Bonaire. Developments up to early 2013, as well as the current situation, will be outlined in the following.

1.2 Youth and Family Centers
In October 2011, a Youth and Family Center (CJG) was opened on Bonaire. The Bonaire CJG is a foundation that is the result of the merger of four organizations: Sebiki, Bonairiaanse Jeugdzorg (Bonairian Youth Care), Porta Habri and Fundashon Mariadal’s youth health care operations. Aside from being a low-threshold walk-in care facility, the Bonaire CJG also runs a toy lending library, and can provide information about courses and personal advice. It caters to parents, local residents, youths, and professionals.

1.3 Parenting support
Users and professionals of, for example, child care, leisure organizations, and after-school programs can turn to the CJG with questions about growing up and parenting. A separate facility has been set up for educators and teachers through the Expertisecentrum Onderwijszorg (EOZ, Center of Expertise for Education Care). The CJG regularly has

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1 Response to Parliamentary questions by the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations following a letter about the visit to the Caribbean Netherlands, on the date of 1 September 2011. House of Representatives. Session year 2010-2011 32 500 IV no. 49. Vierde rapportage Nederland aan het Comité voor de Rechten van het Kind (2012).

2 Vierde rapportage Nederland aan het Comité voor de Rechten van het Kind (2012).
internal meetings to discuss issues and determine whether they themselves can offer the help needed through their parenting support services. Cases with a heightened level of difficulty are submitted to the case group (see 1.4, Youth Care Case Group). Parenting support can also be organized in the community (See 1.5, Community care).

The Bonaire CJG has a Temateka (toy library) that lends out various board games.

Triple P has been implemented as the basic methodology. Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) is a parenting support approach that is used in various countries. This methodology seeks to instil a positive parenting attitude, and can be used both for parenting support and for counselling in the case of more serious problems. Professionals from the realms of education, care, the police, child care, and youth protection on the three islands have meanwhile been trained in this methodology.

In the fall of 2012, a positive parenting campaign was launched on Bonaire, with a view to raising awareness of the normality of having questions about parenting, showing people where they can turn with those questions, and teaching parents the basic principles of positive parenting. This campaign draws on the Triple P positive parenting methodology.

Triple P is a system of five consecutive levels with increasing intensity: level 1 is a public campaign about parenting and child development, while level 2 can comprise a presentation or personal advice for parents who have come in with a specific question. The three subsequent levels consist of workshops and courses aimed at strengthening parenting skills of parents of children with early-stage, serious, or multiple behavioral problems, possibly in combination with other family issues.

1.4 Youth Care Case Group

On Bonaire, cases of problem children and adolescents are handled by a case group. Cases can be submitted to the case group by any of three parties: education/EOZ, the CJG, or judicial authorities. The case group meets weekly and meetings are chaired by Jeugdzorg en Gezinsvoogdij Caribisch Nederland (Caribbean Netherlands Youth Care and Family Supervision). Case group members always include the secretary, a behavioral scientist, and a pediatrician (on call).

The case group assesses care options that best suit the care issue at hand. Options can include parenting support, community-based (ambulant) care, foster care, placement in a residential care facility, or a combination of various forms of care. Furthermore, the case group can also decide that assessment by a psychologist or child or adolescent psychiatrist is required. If required on medical grounds, care will be covered by the local health insurance authority (Zorgverzekeringskantoor).

The case group can also decide to report a case to the Guardianship Council when they feel the child’s safety is at risk. Provisional care can then still be provided as the Guardianship Council assesses the case.

The case group will assign the family in question a case manager by mutual agreement. This case manager will act as the single point of contact for care provided to the child and the family, staying on top of the situation and coordinating care when there are various providers involved in caring for the family. The basic principle is always ‘one family, one

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3 Vierde rapportage Nederland aan het Comité voor de Rechten van het Kind (2012).
4 Information received in an email from Stan van Haaren, 20 December 2012.
5 Vierde rapportage Nederland aan het Comité voor de Rechten van het Kind (2012). Also see www.positiefopvoeden.nl.
If a child has been assigned a family guardian, this person will by definition also be the case manager.

As soon as a decision has been made that youth care is needed, and a case manager has been appointed, a case file will be generated in the JeugdlinQ registration system. Anyone with access to this system can enter the name of a client to see whether or not this person already has a case manager, and if so, who that is. This prevents situations where various care workers start a care program independently from each other.¹

A case group has also been set up for cases of adolescents who have (or are likely to) come into contact with the criminal justice system. Links have been established between civil law and criminal law chains to cover all bases in youth care.²

1.5 Community care

Jeugdzorg en Gezinsvoogdij Caribisch Nederland (Caribbean Netherlands Youth Care and Family Supervision) offers care in the community. Provided in people's home situation, this kind of care is targeted on amplifying parents' competencies and their network to re-enable them to adopt a positive parenting attitude towards their child. Community care workers work according to a care plan, which is generally based on the Triple P system, and they can also rely on the support of a behavioral scientist.³

Aside from that, there is also the Opstap(je) family assistance program, which works with neighborhood mothers. Opstap(je) uses home visits in a program that improves communication between parent and child and provides guidance for the active stimulation of the child’s development. Opstap caters to children aged between four and six, while Opstapje provides assistance for parents of children of preschool age. Each neighborhood has a neighborhood mother. Families enter the program through their local school or upon referral.

In June 2012, 53 people on Bonaire received community care. In the first quarter, 26 requests for community care and foster care support were submitted, of which nineteen were admitted. The remaining cases were referred to other care options, while one of the persons for whom a request had been submitted rejected the care.

1.6 Supervision order

When there are concerns about a child’s safety, the Guardianship Council will launch an investigation, reporting its findings and issuing its advice regarding a child protective order to the court. When the court issues a supervision order for a youth, this youth will be assigned a family supervisor. This family supervisor will share parenting responsibility with the parents and guarantee the child’s safety. Together, parents and supervisor will compile an action plan that both parties will adhere to.⁴

In the first quarter of 2012, the Bonaire family supervision authority had 115 clients. Family supervision cases are handled by four family supervisors, making it just over 28 cases per supervisor.⁵ There have not been any cases where parents were relieved of their parental responsibilities. There are, however, several long-term supervision orders in

² Letter of the Minister of Security and Justice dated 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80.
⁵ Two additional family guardians were employed later which the Ministry of Security and Justice has promised to fund.
place. In the first quarter of 2012, four new cases were submitted to the Guardianship Council, and nine further new cases followed at the beginning of the second quarter.¹

1.7 Custodial placement

In cases where a child cannot live at home, be it temporarily or for a prolonged period, the youth care authority will first explore options of placing the child in foster care. This can be with a family from the child’s own network, or a family from the youth care authority’s files. Parents, foster parents, and the child will then be counseled by a community care worker.

Bonaire has 47 foster families that currently have a foster child in their care. Foster care information sessions are organized for all foster parents, and there is also structural foster care and support available on request. Foster parents have a designated contact. There were ten families receiving foster care support.²

Whenever foster placement is not an option, adolescents can be placed in a 24-hour accommodation facility for boys and girls aged between twelve and eighteen that opened in late 2010 and is called Kas di Karko. This house offers eight regular places to provide shelter in the event of a family crisis.³

In the first quarter of 2012, there were nine requests for new placements at Kas di Karko. Of these nine requests, two actually materialized by June 2012. Of the remaining seven, five concerned adolescents with a low to very low IQ. Due to the composition of the care team at Kas di Karko, there was not much they could do for these children. These cases were discussed with the FKPD (an organization that focuses on mentally impaired persons), and they expect to be able to open a home for adolescents soon. At present, mentally impaired persons can only be placed in a 24-hour facility from the age of seventeen.⁴

Aside from that, (pregnant) girls can since April 2011 go the Rosa di Sharon home, which is subsidized by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport. Before April 2011, girls had to go to Curacao for care. The Rosa di Sharon home can offer accommodation, counseling, and education for a maximum of eight girls.

On 1 July 2012, Stichting Project (Project Foundation) opened a long-stay home that is also subsidized by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport. This home offers room for eight adolescents who have displayed problematic behavior.⁵

1.8 Teenage mothers

In comparison to the Netherlands, Bonaire has a relatively large number of teenage mothers. These are generally girls who have neither a job nor qualifications, partly due to the simple fact that they were too young for that when they became a mother. One of the causes of teenage pregnancy being a relatively common phenomenon is the lack of sex education, which is also believed to underlie the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents on the island. Programs at schools and through organizations have meanwhile been launched to try to educate children about sex.

The Sentro Hubentut i Famia center has a counseling program for teen moms to support them both in their role as mother and in their role as a young person working on their future.

¹ Information received in an email from Justine Verschoor, Youth care and Family Guardianship Caribbean Netherlands in June and July 2012.
² Information received from Justine Verschoor, Youth care and Family Guardianship Caribbean Netherlands in June and July 2012.
⁴ Information received in an email from Justine Verschoor, Youth care and Family Guardianship Caribbean Netherlands in June 2012.
⁵ Information received in an email from Justine Verschoor, Youth care and Family Guardianship Caribbean Netherlands in July 2012.
1.9 Child abuse and domestic violence

On Bonaire, child abuse is reported either to the Guardianship Council, the CJG, the youth care agency, or the police.¹

A conscious decision was made to not immediately implement an intensive approach to child abuse – as is in place in the Netherlands – but to instead first build up a solid youth care infrastructure and raise positive parenting awareness among parents.²

In June 2012 and January 2013, several conferences focusing on child abuse were held on the BES islands (Bonaire, St. Eustatius, Saba), in which all chain partners took part. The Caribbean Netherlands Youth Care and Family Supervision agency had brought in the Netherlands Youth Institute to lead these conferences. The objective was to get the subject of child abuse on the agenda. Child abuse is considered a problem that requires urgent attention. The results of the first series of conferences are currently used to make an outline plan that will have to chart a course for subsequent steps toward a comprehensive approach to dealing with child abuse.³

The subject of child abuse has turned out to be a sensitive one, because not everyone goes by the same definition of child abuse. Due to the small size of the community, virtually everyone knows someone who has been abused or who has perpetrated abuse. This creates a complex interplay of loyalties. On top of that, the islanders tend to employ a relatively rough parenting style. And then there is also the sensitivity of the conference being considered yet another initiative launched from the Netherlands and perhaps even as an implied negative appraisal of the islands.⁴

The Netherlands’ fourth report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child states that creation of an infrastructure to tackle child abuse (reporting, referral, and interventions) has been scheduled for the first half of 2012. Information about child abuse for the general public is planned for 2013.

Building work on an infrastructure is currently ongoing by transferring knowledge and setting up (collaboration) structures. Committees of representatives from various sectors have been set up on Bonaire to further flesh out the priorities that emerged from the conferences.⁵

Fighting domestic violence comes under the responsibility of the island authority (See 1.7, Custodial placement). There are no refuge centers for (adult) victims of domestic violence. It is unclear whether facilities on Curacao are open to the people of Bonaire.

The number of domestic violence incidents on Bonaire reported to the Dutch Caribbean Police Force saw a significant increase in 2011. In 2011, a total of 46 cases were registered, against 25 incidents of domestic violence in 2010. Police and public prosecution service spokespersons do add, however, that these figures are only the tip of the iceberg. There are, however, several caveats to registration in the police’s Actpol system.⁶

¹ Information received from Justine Verschoor, Youth care and Family Guardianship Caribbean Netherlands in July 2012.
² Letter of the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations concerning the visit of the Queen and memorandum by Ortega-Martijn. House or Representatives, session year 2011-2012 3300IV No. 37. Appendix 1: Reaction per policy domain.
⁴ Information received in an email from Stan van Haaren, Nederlands Jeugdinstituut, 21 December 2012.
⁵ Information received in an email from Stan van Haaren, Nederlands Jeugdinstituut, 21 December 2012.
The 2006 *Communities that Care* survey held among pupils aged between thirteen and eighteen showed that 5% of adolescents on Bonaire had been subjected to sexual abuse.\(^1\)

A 2007 study asked 412 Bonaire high school pupils in the eleven-to-eighteen age bracket to fill out a questionnaire about domestic violence.

Of these pupils, 6.3% stated that they were sexually abused by a family member. In 42% of these cases, the abuse consisted in inappropriate touching, while 38% were cases of forced sexual contact, 19% were cases of indecent assault, and 1% was rape. Abuse was most commonly committed by (step)fathers and uncles. In none of the cases in the questionnaire did the victim report the abuse.

Pupils were asked whether they had ever been hit by their (step)mother or (step)father. Nearly half (48.8%) of the pupils surveyed revealed that they had been hit by their step(mother). 11.8% of pupils had been hit once or twice over the past year, and 3.5% over five times. These percentages were slightly lower on the question whether they had ever been hit by their (step)father. Of the pupils surveyed, 2.8% said that they had hit their (step)mother, and 6.5% that they had hit their (step)father.

The pupils were also asked whether their parents ever hit or threatened each other. Of all pupils, 12.4% said that their (step)father had hit their (step)mother. In the case of 0.7% of pupils, this had happened more than five times over the past year, while 3.4% of pupils answered that this had happened once or twice. Percentages are slightly lower for the reverse situation of the (step)mother hitting the (step)father.\(^2\)

### 1.10 Child care

Responsibility for child care lies with the island authority. Unlike their counterparts in the European Netherlands, parents on Bonaire do not receive a child care allowance. Child care organizations do however sometimes receive subsidies from public entities.\(^3\)

The following will provide an overview of current child care facilities, including after-school programs, for children aged between zero and twelve. For after-school activities, refer to the section on Recreation, play, and leisure time.

A 2010 study looked at the educational quality of child care on the five islands that make up the Netherlands Antilles, offsetting its findings against those from a study conducted in 2007. Drawing information from observations at child care facilities, questionnaires, and interviews, this study concluded that although there was improvement, the educational quality of child care was still below par. This is down to, among other things, the available space and use of that space, lack of material, the kind of activities on offer, group size, interaction between the educational employee and children, and the lack of structural inspections. The conclusion was that although the educational High/Scope program was indeed having a positive impact, it was being executed inadequately.\(^4\)

According to a poverty survey in the Caribbean Netherlands, about half of all children on Bonaire go to day care. There are about sixteen day care centers on the island, which cater to around 450 children. Two of these day care facilities are state funded, while the others rely on parent contributions. Day care charges vary from one site to the next, and average around 150 dollars per child per month for five days a week of day care.\(^5\)

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3. Two of the 16 shelters receive subsidies in the form of budget support. Information received in an email from Riet Sealy, 7-3-2013.
As part of the Bonaire Social Economic Initiative (SEI), a Child Care on Bonaire project has been instituted. One of the aims of this project is to raise the quality of at least five of the day care centers to the level intended by the island authority.1

The Bonaire CJG runs the Kaleidoscope course.2 Kaleidoscope is an educational methodology for young children aged between zero and six that is applied, among other places, at day care centers and playgroups. Kaleidoscope is a translation and adaptation of the American HighScope program.3

1.11 Legislation
Needless to say, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child applies in full to the children of Bonaire.

The Dutch Youth Care Act, on the other hand, does not apply in the Caribbean Netherlands. A decision was made to first further develop youth policy in the Caribbean Netherlands before actually designing legislation for the Caribbean Netherlands. The Youth Care Act leaves open the possibility of introducing specific regulations for youth care in the Caribbean Netherlands. The developed youth policy approach will then be anchored in law through an administrative measure, while regulations for youth protection would subsequently be adjusted accordingly. Youth protection is, however, still subject to provisions from the Dutch Civil Code. Two regulations of the country of the Netherlands Antilles under which a guardianship council and family supervision have been instituted have furthermore been adopted.4

The Antillean Civil Code (Section 247) specifies that parental authority encompasses an obligation and right of the parent to take care of and raise their minors. In this context, taking care of and raising also includes a concern and responsibility for the child’s mental and physical wellbeing, as well as to foment the development of the child’s personality. The Penal Code for Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba contains provisions about abuse and sexual violence. Abuse is defined as intentionally injuring a person’s health (Section 313). Even so, physical punishment at schools, at home, and at juvenile institutions is not explicitly prohibited.

As far as domestic violence is concerned, the Domestic Exclusion Act does not (yet) apply in the Caribbean Netherlands. A victim of domestic violence can, nonetheless, petition a civil court to impose a restraining order against the perpetrator.5

Bonaire has a child care ordinance governing only the island. This ordinance stipulates that the island’s administration will set quality requirements for child care. Bonaire’s child care ordinance specifies requirements for safety, hygiene, food, group sizes, educational work, the teacher-to-child ratio, and the space.

In order to make intra-national adoption provisions as implemented in the Netherlands also applicable in the Caribbean Netherlands, a Regulation has been included to add Title 12a to the Civil Code for Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. This addition assigns tasks and

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1 Response to questions by members Hachchi and Koşer Kaya (both D66) to the ministers of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and of Social Affairs and Employment about child daycare on the BES islands. House of Representatives, session year 2010-2011 no. 3435.

2 Information received from Justine Verschoor, Youth care and Family Guardianship Caribbean Netherlands in June 2012.


4 Response to parliamentary questions by the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations following a letter about a visit to the Caribbean Netherlands, on the date of 1 September 2011. House of Representatives, session year 2010-2011 32 500 IV no. 49. Vierde rapportage Nederland aan het Comité voor de Rechten van het Kind (2012).

5 Response of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the request by the Committee to banish the discrimination of women, in its concluding comments (CEDAW/C/NLD/CO/5, paragraph 52), to provide information within two years about the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 27 and 29.
responsibilities to the Ministry of Justice. The Placement of Foreign Children for Adoption Act governing the European part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands partially also applies on the island of Bonaire.1

1.12 Policy and activities

The Youth and Family coordinator, professionals, and services on the island and youth care professionals from the mainland have drawn up plans for preventive youth facilities, youth care, and youth protection for each island.

The preventive part consists in setting up a Youth and Family Center that will serve as both a youth health care facility and an information and counseling facility. The preventive aspect of the plan also seeks to create possibilities for positive leisure time use for young people.

The curative part of the plan consists in setting up youth care and further bolstering family guardianship services and the guardianship council. The basic methodology selected for all youth workers is that of Triple P.2

The education premises master plan also covers day care facilities. In this plan, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science took on responsibility for overdue maintenance on day care premises.3 At a later stage, the Ministry dropped child care from its plans for community schools.4

Activities

- A Youth and Family Center was opened in 2011.
- Youth workers and behavioral scientists were appointed.
- The Kas di Karko home was opened and the Rosa di Sharon home and the Stichting Project home were both granted subsidies.
- A youth care case group was set up.
- Youth care workers, as well as teachers and other professionals who deal with young people took Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) training.
- A positive parenting campaign was launched at the end of 2012.
- The JeugdLinQ IT system was implemented at the CJG and youth care, family supervision, and youth health care facilities.
- Conferences about child abuse were held in June 2012 and January 2013.

1.13 Organizations and responsibilities

Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport
The Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport is responsible for policy in the area of youth care.

Ministry of Security and Justice
The Ministry of Security and Justice is responsible for policy in the area of youth protection and domestic violence, which also covers family guardianship. Given Bonaire’s small scale, implementation of family guardianship measures has been bestowed on the Caribbean Netherlands Youth Care and Family Guardianship/Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport.5

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1 Vierde rapportage Nederland aan het Comité voor de Rechten van het Kind (2012).
4 Information received in an email from Riet Sealy, 7 March 2013.
Caribbean Netherlands Youth Care and Family Guardianship Service
Acting under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport, the Caribbean Netherlands Youth Care and Family Guardianship provides community-based youth care, foster care, residential care, and family guardianship for parents and children with parenting and growing-up problems. Bonaire has a total of three units: youth care and foster care in the community, a residential facility (Kas di Karko), and family guardianship services. The islands of Saba and St. Eustatius each have one unit in the form of a Youth and Family Center that also offers preventive youth care and family guardianship.¹

Island authority
The island authority is responsible for the execution of preventive youth care and youth health care, as well as for fighting domestic violence and providing child care and after-school programs.²

Youth and Family Center (CJG)
The CJG offers information, counseling, and parenting support for parents and professionals. The Bonaire CJG is a foundation that is the result of the merger of four organizations: Sebiki, Bonairiaanse Jeugdzorg (Bonairian Youth Care), Porta Habri and Fundashon Mariadal’s youth health care operations.³

Guardianship Council
The Guardianship Council falls under the Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland, and is in charge of investigations into cases relating to family guardianship and parental authority, adoption, visitation arrangements, disputed parenthood, and (suspicions of) child abuse. The Guardianship Council’s remit also includes child maintenance: they collect and pay child support every month, provide assistance in filing child support petitions with the court, and mediate, seize property, or execute court-ordered compulsory measures to ensure child maintenance is paid.⁴

Kas di Karko home
Kas di Karko is a 24-hour shelter run by the Caribbean Netherlands Youth Care and Family Guardianship for boys and girls in the age bracket of twelve to eighteen years who cannot live at home. It offers room for eight adolescents in its regular shelter and has two further places in its urgent shelter.⁵

Fundashon Rosa di Sharon
Fundashon Rosa di Sharon is a home for girls that is subsidized by the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport.

Stichting Project home
This home offers room for eight adolescents with behavioral problems. This home, too, has been awarded a grant by the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport.

Child care organizations
The island’s child care organizations take care of child care, which includes after-school programs, for children aged between zero and twelve.

³ Vierde rapportage Nederland aan het Comité voor de Rechten van het Kind (2012) and Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Response to parliamentary questions following letter about the visit to the Caribbean Netherlands on the date of 1 September 2011.
Children on family and parenting

Of the children surveyed, most are happy with how they are raised and how their parents are with them. They love their parent(s) and generally do not consider them overly strict or only when they need to be. The children say that they are given sufficient freedom and are happy that they are (in most cases) allowed to socialize with friends of their own choice. Some of the children surveyed indicate that they have little communication with their parents and also eat separately from them, but that they are fine with that.¹

'I don’t think I have been brought up strictly at all. My mom is really kind to all of us. She thinks that it’s very important that we finish our school education. I think it’s really sad that my mom is away so often away because it feels much better when she’s just at home. At lunchtime my mom comes and picks me up at school, then we go home and eat together. I really enjoy that.' (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

If I play hooky, my mom just says that I mustn’t do such things and that is the end of it. My mom isn’t strict. Sometimes she involves me in stuff. I like that. We have no problems with each other at all. We get on well together.' (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

The families in which the children surveyed grow up are characterized by highly diverse family structures. Relatively few children grow up in a ‘standard’ family with their biological father and mother. The father is often absent, and has in some cases been substituted by a stepfather. This sometimes leads to tension in the family.

Many of the children have brothers and sisters from different parents. These siblings sometimes live, work, or study elsewhere. In the case of some of the children, their grandparents live with them or even raise them. Many of the children say that ‘everyone on the island is related.’ Many of the families have members that come from various parts of the world.²

Contact with their biological father is a point of concern for many children. This is sometimes down to the mother blocking contacts, sometimes to the father being out of the picture (and living elsewhere), or to contact having been lost for unclear reasons.³

‘My mom is generally not very strict. The only area where my mom and I do have issues is that I want to see my dad and talk with him. My mom doesn’t want that at all. She doesn’t have any contact with my father, and sometimes it seems that she just wants to keep me for herself because she missed me for a long time when I was living with my aunt.’ (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

Some of the children could (during the first years of their lives) not live with their mother. Their mothers were only teenagers when they had them, and unable to take care of them. Teenage pregnancy is mentioned as a problem, because it is relatively common, and because children feel too little effort is going into preventing it.⁴

‘The biggest problem is that young girls without work or qualifications have children. This is mainly due to the lack of sex education.’ (child, Bonaire)

One single child from the respondents admits to having little to no contact with her mother. Her mother lives elsewhere or is unable to take care of her child.⁵

¹ See quotes 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 121.
² See quotes 151, 153, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159.
³ See quotes 122, 123.
⁴ See quotes 169, 170, 205.
⁵ See quote 154.
‘I’ve never held it against my mom that she moved to Curacao. Although I was very sad, I knew it was better for all of us if my parents were not near to each other.’ (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

There are also children among the respondents who complain about the absence of their parent(s) and a lack of attention from their parent(s).¹

‘I think that children and teenagers don’t get enough attention. Parents should learn to give their children more attention.’ (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

There are also children whose parents are absent, physically and/or psychologically, to such a degree that it seems to be a case of neglect. These children report that they are left to their own devices and have to find attention and food themselves. Such situations may be down to the parents being too wrapped up in their own problems, or having to work a lot, or to other causes.²

‘My mother doesn’t cook. She leaves me some money instead. Every day. So I go out to get something to eat. Sometimes I save the money and look around the house for something to eat. Some biscuits or cornflakes, for example. My favorite food is bean soup.’ (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

Violence in the family situation is mentioned by various children, and both between parents and in the relation between parent(s) and child. What stands out is that many children consider smacking to be something that is part of parenting and they must have ‘deserved’ it.³

‘My two younger sisters don’t have the same father as me. When I went back to live with my mom, we lived together with the father of my two sisters. He hit me very often and treated my mom very badly. In the beginning I was afraid to do anything, but after a while I went to my aunt and I told her everything. She then called the police, who came and spoke with him. That, unfortunately, didn’t help. My ten year old sister is his favorite child, in complete contrast to me and my youngest sister, so we were always beaten and she wasn’t. It kept going on, and eventually I decided I wasn’t going to accept it any more. I can’t remember how old I was, but one night I called the police and told them what was going on. They then came and took him away. He was detained for three days before being released, but he wasn’t allowed to come near us. I wasn’t happy that he was released so quickly, but at least he wasn’t allowed to live with us. To this day, he’s been trying to get custody of my 10 year old sister.’ (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

When they have a problem, children tend to turn to their mother, another family member, or a teacher at school. There are, however, also many children who say they do not want to share their problems with anyone, because that would mean ‘the whole island finding out about it.’⁴

‘If I’ve got a problem or need anything, I usually go to my mom. My mom listens to me and tries to help solve the problem. I can also talk to the teachers at Forma about my problem. They are also very kind and help me solve my problems. But usually I talk about any problems with my mom and we don’t mention it to anybody else.’ (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

Some of the children who turn to an organization for help when they have problems at home feel they are not immediately heard or helped.⁵

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¹ See quote 38.
² See quote 37.
³ See quotes 69, 70, 71.
⁵ See quote 229.
'When I had problems with where I was living and I went to the Guardianship Council to let them know how bad things were, and that I needed somewhere else to live to avoid aggravating my problems, they were not immediately willing to help me. However, I persisted because I knew that if I continued to live where I was living at that time, things would go wrong, otherwise I don’t think they’d have helped me so quickly.' (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

Children who suffered major problems at home and are now living in a shelter home confirm that they have found peace there. They are also getting the attention they so badly need, as well as the food they need. Although they experience the regular routine as strict, they do concede that it is benefiting them.1

‘On Saturdays I always go home. I chat with my mom and my brothers. I don’t see them much, and Saturday is my day so I have to make the most of it and enjoy it. I go out with my mom to say hello to other members of the family.’ (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

Nearly all of the children surveyed have to do household chores, such as sweeping the floor, clearing up, washing the dishes, and cooking.2

3 Young people on family and parenting
The young people surveyed point out that there are many children on Bonaire who receive insufficient attention from their parents. (Single) parents are at work all day, and too tired afterwards to give their children the positive attention they need. Consequently, children spend a lot of time with each other, without parental supervision.

The adolescents claim that many children barely receive any stimulation at home. Help with school work is lacking and there’s no one to provide guidance in children’s thinking about their future.3

‘I see on Bonaire that lots of children do not get enough attention from their parents. Perhaps the parents work all day and come home, make food for you and then go out again. The children stay home and watch TV.’ (adolescent, Bonaire)

Young people claim that parents on the island suffer from ‘parenting diffidence.’ Given the culture of the islands, parents find it hard to have proper talks with their children, especially about sensitive subjects, such as sex. The way parents see the world is poorly aligned with the way their children see the world.4

‘I think that, because of the culture we have on the islands, parents don’t really know how to talk to their children about sexuality.’ (adolescent)

Teen pregnancies are a regular occurrence on the islands. The adolescents surveyed put that down to various causes. One is that parents do not talk to their children about sex and emotions, and do not teach their children about sex. Another reason they mention is the lack of parental attention many children experience. Girls compensate for that by seeking attention from boys. The third reason they put forward is copycat behavior among girls. If you have a cute baby, you will get attention, and every girl wants attention.

Poverty is also mentioned as a reason behind the proliferation of teen pregnancies. Boyfriends promise to get them things in return for sex.

1 See quotes 230, 231, 232.
2 See quote 6.
3 See quotes 53, 54, 75.
4 See quotes 11, 12.
Finally, religion and spirituality also come into the teen pregnancy issue. Handing out condoms or openly discussing sex are, according to the adolescents, condemned by the church.¹

"Teenage pregnancies are common on all the islands." (adolescent)

Young people noted that violence as part of parenting and between parents is commonplace on the islands. This violence sometimes even involves the use of a belt. The adolescents also note that domestic violence remains hidden behind closed doors.

Some of the adolescents think smacking your child is a normal part of parenting. Instead of condemning it, they consider it an ‘innocent corrective intervention’ and ‘part of the culture.’ They do see, however, a clear link between the parenting styles of successive generations: children tend to copy their parents’ behavior.²

"It can happen that a child is beaten by her mom every time she makes a sound. You get hit with a belt, which is normal here. If a father goes crazy, he grabs his belt and he hits all his kids." (adolescent)

The young people deplore the fact that there is no central reporting center for abuse or maltreatment, as there is in the Netherlands. They also feel there are still not enough agencies where children can anonymously go for help and which tie in with the specific culture and situation on the island.³

4 Experts on family and parenting

According to the experts that were consulted, the upbringing of many children on Bonaire is under severe strain. Experts have major concerns about the child-rearing environment of children on the island. These concerns are prompted by various issues that are, to varying degrees, making that children do not (or cannot) feel safe at home, are unable to develop fully, or are even impaired in their development.

The experts point out that there is very little data available about the child-rearing environment of children on Bonaire. It is, for example, unknown how many children are raised by one or both of their parents⁴, how many children have behavioral problems or problems at home. Aside from that, it is also impossible to get a comprehensive idea of the child maltreatment situation. Despite that, the experts are unanimous in their opinion of the child-rearing environment.

Many of the problems identified by the experts are closely interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Despite the many efforts to improve the situation, it is still alarming. The experts indicate that the problems are highly persistent, embedded in the culture, and passed on from generation to generation.

The following describes the main bottlenecks identified by experts.

4.1 Violence in parenting

Nearly all experts surveyed agreed that many children on Bonaire are growing up in a violent environment that is plagued by an authoritarian parenting style. Most children on the island are doing fine, but some are regularly beaten at home, suffer sexual abuse, are shouted at, humiliated. There are also cases where children witness violence between parents, or get caught up in that violence. All these forms of violence can be classed as

¹ See quotes 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 205, 206, 207.
² See quotes 72, 73, 74, 75, 76.
³ See quotes 77, 78, 234.
⁴ In the interest of readability, the text always refers to parents, but this also includes single parents or other child rearers.
neglect or child abuse. Estimations of the number of ‘serious problem families’ where violence is used vary widely. Two figures that are doing the rounds are 300 serious problem families with violence, and 300 families with debt issues.¹

There are various circumstances that increase the likelihood of child abuse occurring: poverty, working multiple jobs, common practice of using physical force in parenting, example set by parents, young parents, stagnating identity development.

The parenting style in many families is harsh (see 4.4, Parenting style), a corrective smack is part of local custom and some parents even resort to using a belt and buckle to discipline their children.

Maltreatment often goes hand in hand with neglect (see 4.2, Lack of attention and neglect). At school, too, children are confronted with violence (see Education). Tackling child abuse is often still very difficult, experts have found.

‘Our counselor arrived and saw a little boy, four years old, with a print of a hand still visible in his face because he had been hit so hard. By the mother’s partner. She took a photo, said that it was unacceptable and went to the Guardianship Council (Voogdijraad) so that could investigate it. She also reported it to the police. After endless time and investigations nothing happened. A common occurrence.’ (expert)

The problems children experience due to violence in parenting vary widely. Experts see direct links between, for example, behavioral problems, criminal behavior, and teen pregnancy and the child-rearing environment.²

‘On the islands there are many circumstances that increase the risk of child abuse, such as poverty, multiple jobs, the culture of strict parenting, role model behavior of parents and young parents. Although these circumstances do not legitimize child abuse, they do make it clear that there is an increased risk of child abuse.’ (expert)

### 4.2 Lack of attention and neglect

A major problem mentioned by virtually every expert surveyed is that children on Bonaire simply receive too little attention. Children are often left to their own devices. They have to find things to do, feed, and raise themselves. In some cases, this goes so far that it can be considered physical and/or emotional neglect. Neglect is a form of child maltreatment.

The reasons underlying parent’s lack of attention for their children differ widely and it is often down to a combination of factors. It is mostly not a matter of unwillingness, but rather of inability, problems, feeling shame in asking for help, or a lack of time. (Single) parents sometime work multiple jobs and have to work more than full time to keep the family afloat financially. They come home late, with zero time or energy left to dedicate to parenting, while the child has already been on its own until then, especially when there are no other adults around – such as a grandparent or other safety net. Like their parents, children are on their own.

Given the limited attention parents give their children, many parents have no idea what is going on in their children’s lives. Children are not given enough positive structure in their lives, boundaries are largely lacking, and the direction children do receive from their parents is often accompanied by violence and exhibitions of power (see 4.1, Violence in parenting).

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¹ Child maltreatment: every form of, for the juvenile, intimidating or violent interaction of a physical, mental or sexual nature, actively or passively forced upon the juvenile who is in a relationship of dependence or subordination, resulting in grave damage or the risk of grave damage to the juvenile in the form of physical or mental damage.

Children who get too little attention or are even neglected altogether get into all sorts of trouble or suffer behavioral problems, sometimes because they are hungry, because they seek attention from other people, or because of other reasons. The situation of some children is so harrowing that they would be placed in care, if that were possible. Many children are continuously stuck in ‘survival mode’, according to one of the experts.\(^1\)

‘There are many single-parent families where the children are usually left to look after themselves because the mom has to work fulltime to pay the bills. When mom gets home in the evening, she is so tired that she doesn’t feel like dealing with the children.’ (expert)

4.3 Lack of parental control and social safety net
The experts note that any kind of social structure is lacking on Bonaire. Combined with the fact that many parents work and come home late, this leads to many children being out and about late into the night.

After-school facilities and child care are not subsidized, as a result of which there are few after-school programs for children (whose parents generally cannot afford them). Although there are after-school programs, many of the experts class these as subpar, claiming they lack an educational approach and work with unqualified volunteers. In 2013, twenty after-school program workers will take a course to qualify as educational (social) worker.

Day care for children up to the age of four is too expensive for many parents. The quality of child care varies: they employ unqualified staff, there is no regulation, they have to make do with limited resources, and children’s safety is not guaranteed. Children at some day care facilities are even believed to be maltreated. In 2013, work is ongoing on strengthening the educational climate at day care centers, while new centers will be opened that meet quality requirements.

The wider family, such as grandparents or the neighborhood, used to help out in raising children. This has gradually diminished, partly due to the socio-economic situation that forces grandparents to keep working and due to increased individualization of society.

There is a huge need for ‘anchor points outside the family’ for children, the experts say. They qualify the child-rearing environment at home and at school as very weak, and consider it incumbent on other organizations and persons to support the children. What is needed are safe places for children.\(^2\)

‘The general opinion on the islands is that guidance at home often fails and that there are few or no after-school activities for children and teenagers.’ (expert)

4.4 Parenting style
As described above, the type of parenting that many children on Bonaire are faced with is characterized by physical force and an authoritarian style. There are, however, further aspects that are important, according to the experts. It starts with parents’ take on their role as educator. They think in terms of parental power. Parenting generally equals commanding, with a discourse of imperatives, ‘do this, don’t do that’, albeit without clear boundaries. Communication between parents and child is not part of this kind of parenting. Of course, the parents love their children, but they never show them their affection. Children expect punishment every time their parents speak to them. There is a lack of trust between parents and their children. Parenting is in no way geared towards stimulating positive development of the child. Children do not feel safe and become passive.

\(^1\) See quotes 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52.

\(^2\) See quotes 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 119, 120.
Parents find it important how their children present themselves to the outside world, such as in their school results and decent behavior, but problems are hardly ever, if at all, discussed. Children have to solve their problems themselves, but are also taught not to share their problems with others.

Many parents are at a loss as to how to raise their children, let alone know how to do it positively. This can, especially in dealings with adolescents, lead to major problems. Children see on TV and the internet that smacking or not being listened to is not ‘normal,’ and rebel against their parents’ parenting style. It is not customary on the island for parents to discuss parenting with each other, let alone ask for help.

Experts have identified differences in the way boys and girls are raised, which is partly related to the absence of fathers in children’s upbringing in many cases (see 4.5, Child-rearing in father-absent families). Boys are believed to be indulged more, set fewer boundaries, and given less household chores than girls, as a result of which boys fail to form a sense of responsibility, which is likely to cause problems for them later in life. Some of the experts see a clear connection between this insufficiently developed sense of responsibility and the role boys, once they themselves have become fathers, play in the raising of their children. It also reverberates in the degree to which boys go down the route of delinquency. Girls, on the other hand, learn that they are responsible and have to take care of their family and secure an income.

The parenting style is typically something that is passed on from generation to generation. The way parents raise their child will largely be duplicated in the way this child raises its own children. Attempts are currently made to teach parents positive parenting (Triple P: Positive Parenting Program) through parenting support. This will, however, take considerable time.¹

‘Parents find it difficult to set limits which results in two extremes. One is based on power and hitting. The other is ‘let them go.’’ (expert)

### 4.5 Child-rearing in father-absent families

In many families on Bonaire, fathers are conspicuous by their absence. The reasons for that vary widely. It often means that children are raised by only their mother or by their mother and her new partner. In fact, the mothers themselves often keep the fathers away from their children.

If there is contact between child and father, the father often doesn’t know how to raise his child. They give their children money, but no (emotional) support. Sometimes the mother doesn’t even want the father to take a hand in raising their children.

Especially in the case of boys, it turns out to be hard to grow up without an adequate role model and without direction. Boys become ‘the man of the house’ and soon start behaving the way they think a man should behave, which often leads to disrespectful behavior that results in problems with the mother.

The absence of males in child-rearing also extends to education, where nearly all teachers are female.

Pregnancy and parenting courses are therefore now increasingly trying to get fathers actively involved in raising their children from the start.²

‘Fathers should be more active and get involved with parenting. At the moment they provide money but don’t know how they should bring up children. They don’t show love.’ (expert)

¹ See quotes 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36.
² See quotes 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137.
4.6 Socio-economic situation and poverty
All experts point to the socio-economic situation that many families find themselves in and poverty as fundamental bottlenecks. Some claim that the situation has worsened since 10/10/10.

The experts identify various reasons why families descend into poverty: low wage, limited assistance, rapidly rising cost of food and maintenance, high energy costs, poor job prospects, only one parent responsible for raising children, alcohol, drug, or gambling addiction. This will be covered in greater detail in the Financial Situation section.

Poverty has a direct effect on the lives of children and is considered a highly significant stress factor in family life. According to the experts, poverty is one of the circumstances that increases the likelihood of child abuse occurring.

Poverty also leads to children coming to school hungry and without a packed lunch. Children who are regularly hungry are stifled in their development, experts say. There are schools and day care centers that provide breakfast for pupils who don’t get breakfast at home.

Some mentioned very extreme cases, where mothers prostitute themselves and their daughters to get the money they so desperately need.¹

‘Lack of money is a major cause of problems in the home. It results in parents not encouraging their children. Children get the idea that it’s better to get a job straight away, or that crime gives more results than going to school.’ (expert)

4.7 Family composition
There are few complete families. Mothers often have to raise their child or children on their own or together with a new partner.

Getting married is not common, but living together is. It is common for men to have children with different women. As a result, children often have several brothers and sisters from different fathers.²

‘Ordinary people live together and have kids. Kids here, kids there, that’s normality.’ (expert)

4.8 Parents’ problems
Experts list various problems of parents that are affecting their children’s upbringing. These problems are particularly detrimental in combination with other issues, such as neglect and the socio-economic situation. Problems highlighted by the experts include drug and alcohol abuse, as well as gambling addiction. They also mention problems between parents following a divorce/separation. In 2011, a total of 59 divorces were registered on Bonaire. There is no information available about other relationships that were ended.

Several of the experts also make reference to the problem posed by the fact that there are many intellectually disabled parents. These parents generally have multiple children and cannot handle raising them. There is no adequate assistance for these parents.³

‘What I generally come across are young people who grow up in families with violence, alcoholism and drug abuse.’ (expert)

4.9 Teenage pregnancies
Teenage pregnancy is a regular occurrence on Bonaire, although the experts do say that it is less so than a few years back. They do not have exact figures of the number of teen pregnancies because these are not registered accurately. Experts estimate that one in five births is to a teenage mother. There are young girls who have their first child at the age of

¹ See quotes 138, 139, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150.
² See quotes 160, 162.
³ See quotes 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168.
thirteen, but most are aged between fifteen and seventeen. Their second child usually follows within two years. Adolescents often skip the ‘making out’ stage, and many girls have sex at a very young age.

The primary reasons underlying the large number of teen pregnancies are, according to the experts, girls seeking the attention and love they are not getting at home and their low self-esteem. Attention from a boy or man and sex gives them – if only temporarily – the attention and love they need. Aside from that, having a baby and being a mother awards them status and gives them a sense of self-respect. Some experts also put it down to the way these girls were raised, with parents shirking their responsibilities and not realizing what raising a child entails.

Sex education, or rather the lack of it, is another reason that could be leading to young girls getting pregnant. Sex is a taboo subject, also because the church holds sway over the island. Adolescents will not go to a pharmacy or family doctor to get contraceptives, because the church does not allow the use of contraceptives and the whole island would know about it. Sexually transmitted diseases are also common among adolescents on Bonaire.

Young adolescents who have a child are mostly not able to adequately raise that child. They also lack the financial resources needed to raise a child. Getting assistance for these girls is often still quite a challenge. Where (grand)parents used to be able to help out, they now also have to work to be able to get by.

There is, however, a home for teenage mothers on Bonaire where girls can go for help. The experts have seen good results from counseling that focuses on empowerment. Girls are motivated to build their future to be able to give their children a better future.¹

‘I think they know how to prevent it. But then it isn’t allowed because of beliefs. Or the guys think it’s nonsense. Then they bind themselves to somebody by getting pregnant. At least, that’s what they think. And the sixth time, they still think that.’ (expert)

4.10 The community
Bonaire is a small society of over 16,000 people. Virtually everyone knows each other and family ties are strong. The community may be characterized as ‘closed.’

Living on a small island in a confined community creates a difficult child-rearing environment. Everyone watches each other and knows everything about each other, making it hard to keep things private. There is a lot of gossip. At same time, no one is inclined to (autonomously) expose abuses or discuss tricky subjects, as that will always have consequences, such as feuds, bullying, or exclusion. Experts refer to this as a ‘culture of silence.’ Children are also drawn into that culture, as their parents tell them what they can and cannot talk about with others.

Experts also see a ‘shame culture’ on the island: there are various things that are hidden behind shame, causing taboos to endure for years. Child abuse, sex, and teen pregnancies, or parenting assistance are such taboo subjects.

The combination of silence, shame, and gossip makes growing up on the island a real challenge for many children. Especially when there are problems at home and a child needs help or is placed in care.

At the same time, tourism, television, the Internet, and other means of communication have introduced a new world onto the island, one that clashes with the island’s culture and is - for that reason alone – highly attractive to children.

Experts have seen this situation lead to the rise of depression among adolescents. A lack of prospects and peer pressure has become too much for some adolescents, who end up retreating, spending a lot of time in bed and in front of the TV or on their computer.¹

¹ See quotes 179, 180, 181, 182, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 208.
'All the problems typical of developing countries can be found on the islands. In addition, there are the problems typical of small islands. The people are almost all related to each other or know each other. It's like being under a microscope.' (expert)

Religion has major influence on Bonaire. It makes many subjects a taboo, such as sex or contraceptives. Churches are, on the other hand, also meeting places where values are taught, and which can therefore play a role in raising awareness of child abuse, the experts think.2

'Faith has a very strong influence here. Because of faith, sexuality is not discussed. They are teenagers, and what parents most want is to keep them separated. They are not allowed to interact with each other, and if anything happens, all the parents are amazed and think “How is that possible?” (expert)

Experts list various aspects that affect child-rearing and which they relate to ‘the culture.’ Islanders sometimes still struggle with the legacy of the past. Some are still sensitive about the island’s former rulers, ‘the whites.’ This sensitivity can reveal itself in various ways, such as through submissiveness or the exact opposite, arrogance, and reverberates in the child-rearing environment.

The role of men is also linked to the island’s slavery past, which is thought to have conditioned men to have children with as many women as possible. They never married, and that is still the norm. Some men’s attitude toward girls and women is not based on mutual respect: they assume women – including under-age girls – are available for sex.

Experts consider it the result of cultural conditioning that parents and children on the island have very low self-esteem and fail to develop their own identity, which may be part of the legacy of slavery. Some experts go as far as to say that there is a collective inferiority complex, which is passed on from parent to child.3

4.11 Parenting support and help with problems

Shame keeps many parents from asking for help when they need it or when they have problems. Children are taught not to wash their dirty linen in public. As a result, when problems finally do come out, a lot will already have gone wrong. Some social workers use a Pandora’s Box analogy: opening it will expose great misery.

Several initiatives have been taken in Bonaire to help parents raise their children and tackle parenting problems. These are achieving results. Experts point out that offering help is not easy. First of all, trust and the promise to maintain someone’s privacy as best as possible are essential. Besides that, social workers need outstanding conversation skills to be able to get people talking who are not used to talking, or unwilling to talk, about taboo subjects, such as child maltreatment. Various ideas on how to tackle child maltreatment have been developed and are currently being implemented.

The Youth and Family Center plays a key role in this context, together with the other organizations and professionals, such as the Guardianship Council and schools. Experts indicate that the problem of deficient care and the social process that is needed to better organize care has been seriously underestimated in the Netherlands. According to these experts, far more additional care workers are needed to be able to handle the problems. They stress the importance of performing an accurate needs assessment for the island and not simply copying systems that are used on the mainland. No short-term campaigns, but sustainable solutions instead, along with a preventive approach.

1 See quotes 212, 216, 219, 222, 223, 225, 227, 228.
2 See quotes 218, 224.
3 See quotes 213, 217, 220, 221.
Many children are not aware of the rights they have. Children who are looking for help still often find it hard to figure out where to go for help. When asking for help, they would prefer to ask someone who is not an islander. That is because they experience it as threatening to ask neighbors, family members, or acquaintances for help.

There are ideas for a crisis hotline for children, or another service that children can contact at various times. But the referral destination such a hotline or service could use remains unclear. Bonaire now has a youth psychiatrist who can counsel children.

Experts state that it is often very difficult to get parents to change their parenting style. If you were to apply Dutch standards, you would end up having to place many children in care, they say. However, placing children in care is very difficult on Bonaire. People are reluctant to offer themselves as foster families, because they are afraid of repercussions from the parents. Bonaire now has a shelter for children with behavioral problems, which is run by Stichting Project. There are also shelters for teenage girls, Rosa di Sharon, and the Kas di Karko home.

‘There is a house in Bonaire for teen moms or girls in trouble in general. Even if they aren’t pregnant. They used to have to go to Curacao.’ (expert)

Many of the experts are concerned about the quality of collaboration between persons and official entities. Although collaboration is generally considered necessary in order to be able provide adequate care, getting collaboration right is still a challenge.

The experts agree that recording and documenting everything that is related to child-rearing is highly important. At present, insights into most aspects of child-rearing are lacking, such as family composition, the number of children faced with violence and child maltreatment, teenage pregnancies, etc. Although there are registration systems for certain sub-areas, comparability and sharing of information in these systems falls short. A baseline measurement is needed for all these aspects.¹

‘Sometimes I have a child who says, “I want to know something, but I don’t know who to ask.” When I ask if they can ask it to their mom they say, ”No, she’d start hitting me.” Or, ”No, don’t tell her.”’ (expert)

5 Literature on family and parenting

There have been several studies that have yielded information about family and parenting on Bonaire. Human rights committees have also spoken out on the matter several times. A detailed overview of the contents of these reports and other literature is provided in Appendix 2 and is also available on the website to which the appendix refers.

One of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, for example, is to support parents and educators in any way possible to enable children to take advantage of the rights awarded to them by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.²

In their 2012 report submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Dutch government outlines what they are doing or still intend to do to meet the Committee’s concerns.³

The following will summarize findings on family and parenting from various studies and other literature.

² See literature 16.
³ See literature 74.
5.1 Family composition

Literature on family and parenting shows that although a considerable number of children on Bonaire grow up in single-parent families, most children grow up in a two-parent family. It also emerges from the literature that there are various risk factors for the child-rearing environment, such as insufficient authority, neglect, and sexual abuse.¹

A 2010 study concludes that instead of single mothers, the term to use is fluid family relations. This study also sees insufficient income and poor levels of education, and family composition far less, as the cause of many problems. Mothers on Bonaire and the Windward Islands get less support from their environment than their peers on the other islands, and they often have a negative self-image.²

Human rights committees have expressed concern about the difficult situation of single-parent families, as well as about the lack of financial support.³

A recent Poverty Exploration showed that families often live in homes that are too small for the number of family members, which may lead to unhealthy living conditions where children inadvertently witness adult life. It furthermore indicated that poverty is the underlying reason for the problems of families from which children were placed in care. Single mothers with multiple children are mentioned as a category that is struggling more than others. Fathers often do not contribute toward household expenses, forcing mothers to take full-time jobs and to move in with family. Children are left unsupervised, and a place at a day care center is unattainable financially.⁴

5.2 Violence and neglect

The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends taking measures to stop violence and abuse in parenting and implementing a ban on physical punishment. The committee also expressed serious concern about the lack of a central reporting center and data about violence and child abuse at home, at school, at day care, at hospitals, and at other places.⁵

Other human rights organizations have also called for action against domestic violence.⁶

In the 2006 security plan for Bonaire, the inadequacy of parental guidance is seen as the main reason behind adolescents derailing. Parents themselves are young and inexperienced. Many problem adolescents come from weak family structures and had to cope with the combined issues of poverty, affection deficit, violence, abuse, and/or addiction in the family.

Violence in society is also mentioned as an underlying problem. It is alleged that there is insufficient help for the large number of single teenage mothers, existing incest problems are still under taboo, and there is insufficient shelter and help for children who are removed from parental custody.⁷

Several studies highlight the link between anti-social behavior (violence, youth delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse, truancy, sex-related problem behavior, and depression) and problems within the family.⁸

A 2006 survey among high school pupils showed that 5% of pupils on Bonaire had suffered sexual abuse, while 34% had been harassed.⁹

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¹ See literature 106.
² See literature 105.
³ See literature 18.
⁴ See literature 33.
⁵ See literature 16, 64.
⁶ See literature 44, 18, 17.
⁷ See literature 79.
⁸ See literature 8, 60.
⁹ See literature 8.
A 2007 study tried to map domestic violence on Bonaire, but failed to quantify it. The reasons underlying domestic violence on Bonaire should, according to the researchers, not exclusively be sought in the balance of power between men and women, but also lie in the culture of the island, where violence is more common. They also point to socio-economic problems.\(^1\)

Another study from 2007 into the nature and extent of domestic violence on Bonaire, which surveyed over 400 high school pupils, revealed that over half of the children surveyed felt they could turn to their parents for help. Over a quarter said there was a lot of swearing and shouting at home, and 6.7% had been confronted with sexual abuse by a family member. Half of the children had been smacked at some point. Violence between parents also occurred.\(^2\)

Domestic violence records of the police and public prosecutor’s office (2012) show a sharp rise in the number of domestic violence incidents in 2011 (up to 46 cases). The police and public prosecutor suspect, however, that this figure still only scratches the surface, as victims are reluctant to report the abuse.\(^3\)

A different study confirmed that violence is still widely used as a parenting tool. There are no laws prohibiting that. The Antillene Civil Code governs the island and does not explicitly prohibit physical punishment at school, at home, and at juvenile institutions.\(^4\)

In a recent report submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Dutch government suggests that family as a social institution is crumbling and parents are insufficiently committed to their children. The report links this to the large number of single-parent families and parent(s)’ necessity to work long days to earn a living. As a result, parents are not at home when their children come home from school in the afternoon. The report also establishes that there is poverty on the island.\(^5\)

### 5.3 Social safety net

The literature makes reference to the absence of a social safety net on Bonaire. It also shows that although the educational quality of day care and after-school programs has improved, it is still not good enough. This is attributable to, among other things, the available space and use of that space, lack of material, the kind of activities on offer, group size, interaction between the educational employee and children, and the lack of structural inspections. There turns out to be more demand than supply, while day care opening hours are poorly aligned with the hours parents work.\(^6\)

### 5.4 Parenting style

A 2011 study establishes a link between high school dropout rates and the degree to which parents fail to adequately respond to their children’s needs, calls for help, and mood, the degree to which parents supervise their children’s actions, and the degree to which parents engage in positive communication with their children. Poverty on Bonaire, particularly among single-parent families, plays a key role in this context.\(^7\)

The reasons for parenting problems vary widely, as shown by the literature: financial problems, insufficient knowledge of parenting and communicating with children, lack of structure in parenting, time restraints, low level of education, psychological problems,

\(^1\) See literature 42.
\(^2\) See literature 98.
\(^3\) See literature 32.
\(^4\) See literature 46.
\(^5\) See literature 74.
\(^6\) See literature 70, 52, 64, 41, 18.
\(^7\) See literature 101.
relational problems, addiction, absence of a social network, poor housing (in a bad neighborhood). Good support for parents and children is essential and should be set up.2

5.5 Teenage mothers
The personal situation and experiences of teenage mothers were the subject of various studies. The majority of teenage mothers surveyed still lived at home or with family. They responded that they would have liked to have had more emotional and moral support from their parents, as well as more information, advice, and counseling.3

Yet other literature shows that teenagers do not, inconsistently, or incorrectly use contraceptives when having sex, and that the number of abortions is high. Adequate sex education for teenagers is lacking and the dominance of religion on Bonaire stands in the way of the distribution of contraceptives. Human rights committees have pressed for improvements in this area.4

A 2011 study shows that the number of teenage mothers on the BES islands is extremely high in comparison to the Netherlands and other European countries. But this figure is still relatively low in comparison to other nations in the Caribbean and the Americas. The number of teenage mothers has been fairly high on Bonaire for several years now. Poverty, insufficient education, and dropping out of school are identified as key causes of teenage pregnancies.5

The literature also points out that (teenage) fathers are insufficiently involved in teen pregnancies and ensuing parenthood.6

The Dutch government recognizes the sexual behavior between teenagers (and teenagers and adults) as undesirable and problematic.7

6 The Convention on the Rights of the Child on family and parenting
The child-rearing environment is a decisive factor in children’s development. Parents are crucial actors in that environment, which is exactly the assumption from which the drafters of the Convention on the Rights of the Child departed. On many occasions in the convention, parents are mentioned (in)directly. As the persons with primary responsibility for realization of the rights from the convention, as the persons with primary responsibility for raising and caring for their children, for protecting children, etc.

Articles 5 and 18 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child bestows responsibility for children on both parents. Parents are required to provide their child with ‘appropriate direction and guidance,’ factoring in the child’s capabilities as these develop as the child grows up. This means that parents have to respect the rights of the child in a way that is aligned with what a child is able to do at a specific age.

In raising a child, parents must respect the child’s human dignity. The Convention on the Rights of the Child does not provide a parenting formula. It works on the assumption that parents, with the support of others, endeavor to make sure their children can develop as best as possible, whereby the child’s best interest must always be the starting point.

1 See literature 64.
2 See literature 16, 41.
3 See literature 43, 107.
4 See literature 108, 100, 16, 18.
5 See literature 106.
6 See literature 64.
7 See literature 74.
Parenting responsibility is thus closely intertwined with the best interests of the child (Article 3), the right to safe and undisturbed development (Article 6), and the right to be heard (Article 12). And also, with the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27).

The role of parents is also addressed in other articles of the convention. Such as in:

- Article 7 (right to a name and to know and be cared for by his or her parents),
- Article 9 (right to live with parents, and conditions for separation of child from parents),
- Article 14 (freedom of thought, conscience, and religion).

On the question whether hitting, an ‘educational smack’, is condoned as a parenting resource, the convention is crystal clear: it is not! The state must take social and educational measures to protect children against all forms of physical violence (Article 19).

As said, the Convention on the Rights of the Child bestows responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child on the parents. In Article 18, however, the convention adds that the state must guide and help parents in their parenting duties. This can be in form of parenting courses or other kinds of support.

This same article also stipulates that the state is required to (temporarily) take over parents’ duties when they fall short in their care for the child or are unable to adequately care for the child.

In the case of children on Bonaire, the following aspects are particularly important:

- Parents have primary responsibility for the creation of an environment for their child that serves the child’s best interests.
- Parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of their child. In order to enable them to adequately do so, the state must take appropriate measures to support parents.
- Family life must be protected.
- Child must not be separated from his or her parents.
- Protection of children against child abuse.

7 Conclusion

The description of the current situation and comments on that situation from children, experts, and literature clearly shows that there are serious bottlenecks in a range of areas relating to family and parenting.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that the situation in terms of family and parenting on Bonaire is currently not up to the minimum standard set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Hard work is going into improving the situation, but this is a lengthy and difficult process. First of all, parents need to be confident that they have the ability to raise their children to be responsible and respectful citizens. Apart from that, both parents and children need to know that they can rely on support and that there is no shame in asking for help. To actually do so, they first need sufficient trust in the official entities on the island.

Child care will also have to improve to be up to the standard specified in the convention, and that goes for both day care facilities and after-school programs in various forms. This concerns both quality and their availability, also to parents who currently cannot afford it.

Protecting children against violence is already a priority in the current policy, and will have to remain a priority to reach the standards set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Also on several other points, additional efforts are required to catch up and offer children the safe environment envisaged by the convention. Needless to say, many of these kinds
of measures will have to tie in with measures in other areas, such as poverty reduction (see chapter on Financial Situation) and adequate housing (see chapter on Housing).
Child on Bonaire
A good education is an essential prerequisite for children to be able to develop. The right to an education is therefore a fundamental right that every child has. Alongside the family, school is also referred to as the second child-rearing environment. Children spend a significant part of their day at school. The way children are treated and ‘brought up’ by their teachers determines to a large degree how they feel and are able to develop. Many children also rely on school for interaction with peers, which also plays a crucial role in their lives.

The way their education is organized, and the quality of that education, has a direct effect on children’s prospects for the future.

This subject is, of course, closely connected with other subjects covered in this report. Children with problems at home are generally also troubled by these problems at school and vice versa. Health problems can also affect children’s learning ability. Children who grow up in a family without the financial means to buy sufficient food often come to school hungry and have to learn on an empty stomach. Living in an overcrowded house without a quiet spot where a child can retreat will make it hard for the child to do his or her homework.

This chapter will first outline the current situation in the area of education, followed by children’s and adolescents’ views on this situation, as well as what experts and literature tell us about it. Before ending with a conclusion, this chapter will relate the findings about the current situation to the relevant requirements from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

1 Current situation
With the implementation of the Caribbean Netherlands Education Acts on 1 August 2011, an educational model based on the model in place in the European Netherlands was rolled out.

1.1 Preschool education
Responsibility for child care lies with the island authority. Various day care organizations on Bonaire use the Kaleidoscope preschool education program. Kaleidoscope is an educational methodology for young children between the ages of zero and six that is applied at day care centers and playgroups. Kaleidoscope is an adaptation of the American High/Scope program.¹ For further details about child care on the island, refer to the chapter on family and parenting.

1.2 Elementary education
Elementary education in the Caribbean Netherlands is subject to quality requirements, including regulations regarding the subjects pupils have to study, the attainment targets, the number of hours of class per year, teachers’ qualifications and competency, pupil and parent participation, the school plan, and the annual report.

The attainment targets provide guidelines and minimum requirements for the education offered and the level of knowledge and skills children are expected to attain. Elementary schools can choose their own method to achieve these attainment targets. The attainment targets for subjects such as arithmetic and language are the same as those in the Netherlands. For subjects such as history and geography, attainment targets have been adapted to match the local Caribbean situation.

The following subjects are compulsory for all children in elementary education in the Caribbean Netherlands:

- Papiamento (for Bonaire)
- English (for all three islands)
- Dutch
- Arithmetic and mathematics
- Certain knowledge areas (such as classes about geography, history, nature (including biology), social relations (including political science) and religion and spirituality)
- Creative self-expression (for example through arts & crafts, and music classes)
- Promotion of social skills, including behavior in traffic
- Promotion of healthy behavior
- Sensory and physical exercise.

Elementary schools are free to also incorporate non-compulsory subjects into their curriculum, such as Spanish, religious education, or philosophy.\(^1\)

Elementary education on each of the islands uses two languages of instruction with equal status. In the case of Bonaire, these languages are Dutch and Papiamento.\(^2\)

Bonaire has four catholic elementary schools with a joint board (Kolegio Papa Cornes, Kolegio Kristu Bon Wardador, Kolegio Luíz Bertrán, Kolegio San Bernardo), two public elementary schools with a joint board (Watapana School, Kolegio Reina Beatrix), and one non-denominational elementary school with its own independent board (De Pelikaan). There is also one private Dutch-language elementary school (De Aquamarin).

According to plans, the Papa Cornes school will become a so-called Community School that provides more than just education. This will see the school relocate to a new building, one that incorporates facilities for child care and sports.\(^3\)

## 1.3 Secondary education

Secondary education on Bonaire comprises employment-oriented training, pre-vocational secondary education, senior general secondary education, and pre-university education.

Employment-oriented training takes four years, preparing pupils directly for the job market, and is intended for pupils to whom the learning programs of pre-vocational secondary education are not suited.

In pre-vocational secondary education, pupils receive two-year basic training, followed by a specific curriculum focused on the profession and program of their choice. There are four learning programs:

- The theoretical program: a diploma earned after completing the theoretical program entitles the student to enter vocational training (level 3) and middle-management training

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1. Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. 03.0 Wet primair onderwijs BES. Folder.
2. Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. 03.1 Wet primair onderwijs BES. Folder.
(level 4) in senior secondary vocational education. A student holding a theoretical program diploma may also enter senior general secondary education.

- The mixed program: in terms of the level of education, this program closely approximates the theoretical program, preparing pupils for vocational and middle-management training (levels 3 or 4) in senior secondary vocational education. A student holding a mixed program diploma may also enter senior general secondary education.

- The middle-management vocational program: this is a practice-based program that prepares pupils for vocational and middle-management training (level 2 or 3) in intermediate vocational education.

- Basic vocational training program: this program prepares pupils for basic vocational training (level 2) in intermediate vocational education.

Senior general secondary education takes five years to complete and is intended to prepare pupils for higher vocational training at a university of applied sciences. Pre-university education takes six years, and is intended as preparation for university education. Pupils in senior general secondary and pre-university education can select one of four profiles: nature and technology, nature and health, economy and society, culture and society.

Given the small number of pupils, schools on Bonaire are not required to offer all training levels, programs, industry options, and profiles. Schools have to make their own choices to suit their student base.¹

Secondary education on Bonaire is offered by Scholengemeenschap Bonaire (SGB, Combined School of Bonaire). The SGB is made up of four units:

- The Junior College: grades 7 and 8.

- Pre-vocational secondary education (basic vocational training program, middle-management vocational program, theoretical middle-management vocational program, and work-study programs in the areas of engineering & technology, economics, and hospitality – grades 9 and 10) and employment-oriented training (grades 7 to 10).

- The Liseo Boneriano, which offers senior general secondary education (grades 9 to 11) and pre-university education (grades 9 to 12).

- Senior secondary vocational education (see 1.4, Secondary vocational and higher education).

In total, around 1,350 pupils have enrolled at the school.²

Bonaire also has a very small private secondary school: E-college. This school provides education at senior general secondary and pre-university level, as well as the theoretical middle-management vocational learning program. This school has between twenty and thirty pupils.

In February 2012, the SGB and the Expertisecentrum Onderwijs Zorg (EOZ, Center of Expertise for Education Care) teamed up to set up a preparatory class for sixth graders from elementary education. This class caters particularly to pupils who, due to certain learning disadvantages and/or social and emotional factors, are not yet ready for secondary education. The preparatory class is taught at the offices of the EOZ, by teachers provided by Scholengemeenschap Bonaire.³

In 2015, Bonaire will switch to Dutch final examination. On Bonaire, classes in pre-vocational secondary education, senior general secondary education, and pre-university education are taught in Dutch. Papiamento and English respectively can, however, be

¹ Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. 04.0 Wet voortgezet onderwijs BES. Brochure.
³ http://www.eoz-bonaire.org
used as a supporting language. The language of instruction in employment-oriented education, which does not have exams, is Papiamento.1

1.4 Secondary vocational and higher education
In 2011, 391 pupils in the Caribbean Netherlands received student aid to support them through their education. Of these pupils, 87 were studying on Bonaire, 173 on the other islands of the Caribbean part of the Kingdom (Curaçao, Aruba, St. Maarten), 21 in the U.S., and 105 in the Netherlands.2

Senior secondary vocational education comprises one-to-four-year vocational programs with four educational levels. For senior secondary vocational levels 3 and 4, the language of instruction and examination is Dutch. For levels 1 and 2, however, the school board can choose to use Papiamento as the language of instruction and examination. Dutch would then be taught as a separate subject.3

On Bonaire, senior secondary vocational education is offered by the SGB, FORMA, Mariadal, and the Aviation Maintenance Technical School (AMTS). The SGB offers training focused on the industries of business services, well-being, hospitality, and engineering & technology, and has from 2012 also been offering training in the area of sports & exercise and media.4

FORMA offers senior secondary vocational training for level-1 hospitality assistant, construction assistant, and professionally qualified assistant. Their courses have no admission requirement relating to previous education.5

The Mariadal center is a training provider in the area of care, while the AMTS offers a private aircraft maintenance technician course.

Bonaire also has a higher professional education institution that runs a teacher-training program for elementary education. This institution is a branch of the University of the Netherlands Antilles (UNA), which is based on the island of Curaçao. Since September 2009, Christelijke Hogeschool Ede (CHE, Christian University of Applied Sciences of Ede) has been running a dual Social Educational Services course at higher professional education level on Bonaire, in which pupils from Krusada and other organizations have enrolled.6

Bonaire is also home to the private St. James School of Medicine (SJSM).7 The U.S. Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) has, however, ruled that the SJSM must be recognized by Dutch authorities by 1 October 2013, but the school has so far not been successful in meeting the relevant requirements.8

1.5 Social Opportunity Pathways for the Young (SKJ)
In 2006, the Netherlands Antilles implemented the ‘Sociale Vormingsplicht’ (mandatory social training) for young people aged between 16 and 25. Efforts in this area were further reinforced by the act on non-compulsory Social Opportunity Pathways for young people aged between 18 and 25 in January 2011. When young people in the 18-to-25 age bracket have been out of education for over a month without a valid reason, are not enrolled at

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1 Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. 04.2 Wet voortgezet onderwijs BES. Brochure.
2 Overview of WSF-BES 2011 grants to pupils leaving the islands for further studies abroad.
3 Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. 05.1 Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs BES. Brochure.
6 http://gemeneet-edecitysite.nl/link/1/nieuws/1617725/570_CHE+opleiding+SHP+start+duale+opleiding+op+Bonaire.html
an educational institution, do not have paid employment, and have not minimally attained a qualification at level 1 of intermediate secondary vocational education, they will be encouraged to take part in an opportunity pathway. The aim is to enable these young people to get a basic qualification or, if that turns out to be impossible, find suitable work. An opportunity pathway lasts at least six months and no more than two years (with the option of applying for one six-month extension). Participants receive a monthly allowance, as well as a contribution towards the costs of child care if they have children. Whenever a young person enrolled in a pathway fails to live up to his or her end of the deal, the allowance may be suspended. On Bonaire, Social Opportunity Pathways are run by FORMA.

1.6 Care and education for pupils with special educational needs

In the Netherlands, the central approach is to keep pupils who need additional support in regular education as much as possible and give them the specific attention they need in that setting. Student aid for these pupils with an accompanying system for needs assessment will not be introduced in the Caribbean Netherlands. Neither do the Caribbean Netherlands have the kind of special education facilities that have been introduced in the European Netherlands under the Expertise Centers Act (WEC) or schools for special elementary education. Bonaire’s former special education school, the Watapana School, has meanwhile become a regular school.

To set up internal care structures for pupils at schools, two internal counselors/care coordinators have been trained for each school. Additionally, teachers are given the opportunity to take a course on how to deal with pupils with learning difficulties and behavioral problems.

Bonaire has a Center of Expertise for Education Care (EOZ) that has the capacity to help teachers and pupils with specialist support. Besides counseling in the community, the EOZ can also provide pupils with (short-term or long-term) support on its own premises.²

The EOZ on Bonaire employs various professionals. Community educational counselors help the school and pupils whenever classroom problems or learning difficulties arise. Social workers at school are available for consultation every week. Their job is to talk to pupils, parents/legal guardians, the school, and teacher when there are problems outside the school. Behavioral scientists are potentially brought in to investigate and conduct tests.³

Bonaire has a preparatory class for pupils who, due to having fallen behind in their learning and/or social and emotional factors, are not yet ready for secondary education. This preparatory class is taught at the offices of the EOZ and provided by the Scholengemeenschap Bonaire (SGB).⁴

Children and adolescents whose behavioral problems are keeping them out of regular education can turn to Stichting Project’s Rebound Center, which helps children aged nine to fifteen and adolescents of fifteen years and older.

At this center, children and adolescents receive – during school hours – guidance and education that matches their specific needs in a placement of a maximum of two years. Stichting Project works closely together with Bonaire’s Center of Expertise for Education Care (EOZ) and the Scholengemeenschap Bonaire (SGB) in providing these services. The pupils get both group-based and individual education, training and supporting them in their pursuit to improve their behavior. After successfully coming through the rebound

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¹ Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. 06.0 Sociale Kanstr-projecten Jongeren (SKJ) Caribisch Nederland. Brochure.
process, they return to a regular school. The center has room for a maximum of 24 pupils per site.¹

Children who have dropped out of regular education, or who simply cannot keep up, can enter one of Stichting Project’s work-study programs. These cater specifically to children with behavioral problems, social and emotional problems, or limited mental capacity. The first year consists in training focused on social skills, working together, languages, and sports. These children also attend practical lessons and get the opportunity to familiarize themselves with different professional sectors. In the second year, they can choose the Catering and Hospitality, Technology and Green, or Aqua Leisure program. During that year, the children also acquire extensive hands-on experience, for example in Stichting Project’s own teaching restaurant or at actual companies. Over the third year, the pupils are supported in finding their way around the job market or choosing further education.

The foundation that provides care for the disabled (Fundashon Kuido pa Disabilitado) runs a special class for mentally impaired people.

### 1.7 Children’s rights education

Human rights are covered in the attainment targets for secondary education in the Caribbean Netherlands. Schools are free to set (learning) objectives and select their teaching material in working towards these attainment targets. Children’s rights are not explicitly mentioned in attainment targets for education.

### 1.8 School attendance

Under the Compulsory Education Act for Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba, children are of compulsory school age from the age of four up to the age of sixteen. If an adolescent has not yet obtained a basic qualification by the age of sixteen, he or she will remain obliged to obtain a basic qualification up to the age of 23. A basic qualification is obtained by completing pre-university, senior general secondary, or senior secondary vocational education (level 2). Attendance officers from public entities monitor and enforce mandatory school attendance. Each island has one attendance officer. Schools must report enrolments and deregistrations, as well as attendance by children of compulsory school age and adolescents who are under an obligation to obtain a basic qualification, to the local attendance officer. Primary responsibility for the child always lies with the school and the parents. In the event of unfounded absence, parents and pupils aged twelve and over will be held liable. The parents of a child of compulsory school age or a child who is subject to an obligation to obtain a basic qualification and/or the child himself or herself will be considered to have committed an offence and will risk being imposed a penalty if the child is not enrolled at a school or training center or fails to attend the school or training center. Children can also be sentenced to community service or receive a learning-based sanction.²

The CJG, youth care agency, and Bonaire Center of Expertise for Education Care have entered into an agreement to join forces in offering parents and children help through schools at an early stage to prevent children dropping out of education. The Guardianship Council – which cases can be referred – is also a party to these arrangements.³ Also within the criminal justice chain, collaboration agreements have been made between the Guardianship Council, the public prosecutor’s office, the police, the school attendance officer, and schools to deal with truancy and minor offenses.⁴ School absenteeism is often

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² Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. 02.0 Leerplichtwet BES. Brochure.
³ Letter by the Minister of Security and Justice, dated 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80.
⁴ Letter by the Minister of Security and Justice, dated 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80.
settled through a HALT settlement, a legal device introduced in 2010 that requires the child and his or her parents to appear in court.¹

In the 2006 survey of pupils entitled Communities that Care, the percentage of children and adolescents who skipped school more than once over the four-week period prior to the survey was 50% on Bonaire.²

In May 2012, the minister for Education, Culture, and Science submitted attendance figures for Bonaire, Saba, St. Eustatius to Dutch parliament.³ School attendance data was still recorded differently on the islands in that time, making them difficult to compare. Initiatives have meanwhile been taken to improve registration and tackling of truancy. This data put the percentage of unauthorized absence at Scholengemeenschap Bonaire at 29% for boys and 20% for girls. It is unclear what exactly these figures tell us, but the assumption is that it concerns the percentage of pupils who were absent without a valid reason once or multiple times.

1.9 The Dutch Inspectorate of Education
The Dutch Inspectorate of Education regulates schools for elementary education, secondary education, secondary vocational education, and social opportunity pathways for young people. Given that education in the Caribbean Netherlands still has to complete an adaptation period to bring it into line with the new situation, the emphasis will initially be on oversight in the area of quality improvement monitoring. Oversight is based on improvement plans drawn up by schools and institutions for the 2011–2016 period. Over this period, the inspectorate shall subject the quality of education to annual assessments, keeping a close eye on schools’ efforts to improve.

The Dutch Inspectorate of Education also has a team of confidential educational inspectors, which also covers the Caribbean Netherlands. Parents, pupils, teachers, school boards, administrations, but also confidential counselors can consult a confidential educational inspector when serious problems in the area of sexual harassment and sexual abuse, physical and psychological violence or discrimination or radicalization have arisen at or around the school. A confidential educational inspector provides information and advice, and can, if required, also guide affected persons through the process of lodging a formal complaint or reporting the matter to the authorities.⁴

1.10 Homework assistance
The Stichting Jeugdwerk Jong Bonaire (Young Bonaire Youth Work Foundation) organizes a varied array of after-school activities for children and adolescents in the age bracket from twelve to twenty years. They can provide tutoring and help any child with their homework. Coached by subject teachers and activity counselors, children who attend these services are required to do their homework every day from 3pm to 4pm. The foundation currently has 265 registered children and adolescents. Every day, 150 children and adolescents come to the center. The parental contribution for these services is income-related, amounting to anywhere between $10 and $100 per semester. Aside from

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this service, there is also a limited number of private teachers who offer homework assistance at home.1

1.11 Commuting to and from school
Refer to Public Transport in the Recreation, Play, and Leisure Time section.

1.12 Cost of education
In exceptional cases, people who are entitled to welfare can rely on special assistance benefits to cover the cost of a school uniform. Whether or not a case can be classed as an exceptional one is determined by the Social Affairs and Employment unit of the civil service for the Caribbean Netherlands.2

Adolescents from Bonaire who go to school in the Netherlands can, alongside the regular student aid, apply for a once-only start-up allowance. Young adults can, on certain conditions, also apply for student aid to cover a college education in the U.S. or elsewhere in the Caribbean. For further details, refer to the Financial Situation section.

1.13 Other education
The Ban Boneiru Bèk Foundation tries to encourage people of the Caribbean Netherlands, as well as others who are sympathetic toward the island of Bonaire and know the culture and language, to come to Bonaire and make a contribution to the island's society. One of the foundation’s activities is to organize an annual college and vocational fair. The foundation also posts job vacancies on Bonaire on its website, and tries to draw attention to issues that returning Bonairians face.3

1.14 Legislation
Needless to say, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child applies in full to the children of Bonaire.

On 1 August 2011, the Compulsory Education Act for the BES islands, the Elementary Education Act for the BES islands, the Secondary Education Act for the BES islands, the Adult and Vocational Education Act, and the Adult and Vocational Education Act for the BES islands came into force.

Other education-related legislation stipulates, among other things, that education must comply with attainment targets, as well as the number of required hours of teaching. This legislation does, however, not specify a teaching method: that is left to the school to decide. The Education Inspection Act, as adopted as part of the first BES Islands Amendment Act, bestows oversight responsibility for the quality of education on the Inspectorate of Education.

1.15 Policy and activities
In 2009, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science launched, in unison with schools, a program for the improvement of education. This initiative has, among other things, already seen schools start regularly assessing their pupils’ level. These tests have shown an upward trend in pupils’ level.

In March 2011, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science agreed on the ‘Education Agenda for the Caribbean Netherlands: working on quality together’ with the schools of Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. This education agenda outlines and formulates the objectives schools want to attain with their teaching. The overall aim is to get the quality of education at schools in the Caribbean Netherlands to a level that is acceptable by Dutch

1 B Letter by the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment to the House of Representatives, dated 22 June 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2010-2011 33000 IV no. 76.
2 Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. Informatiekrant Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, Saba. October 2010, number 8.
3 http://www.banboneirubek.nl/
and Caribbean standards. Through the education agenda, the parties have agreed on the following five priorities:

1. Raise quality
2. Bolster the quality of teachers, school management, and school boards
3. Customize education care
4. Attractive vocational education
5. Get enabling conditions in order.

School boards and management have detailed the agreements in improvement plans, setting out what they will be doing to reach an acceptable level within five years. They can rely on support from the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science throughout, which is, among things, making school coaches available.¹

Activities
The main activities in the area of education are:²

- School coaches have, in collaboration with the PO Council and the VO Council (sector organizations of elementary schools and secondary schools respectively), been hired to support schools.
- A Center of Expertise for Education Care (EOZ) has been set up.
- Internal counselors and care coordinators have been trained by schools internally. School boards and school management will be supported by a process supervisor in creating their education care structure.
- Funds made available by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science have been used to improve conditions at school, such as furniture and teaching materials. Workshops on how to use the new teaching materials were organized and taken. The Stichting Leerplanontwikkeling (Curriculum Development Foundation) is assessing methods used on the islands for suitability for achievement of Dutch attainment targets.
- Education housing plans have been drawn up. Public entities and the government on the mainland will together invest 41.5 million dollars. New school buildings have been built on the islands, while several existing ones will be renovated and refurbished. On Bonaire, the senior general secondary/pre-university education section at the SGB moved into a new building, while refurbishments and new buildings for the other sections are currently being prepared. New buildings and refurbishments for elementary school premises are also being lined up. Preparations for the Community School (Papa & Cornes), for example, are also underway.³

Since 1 January 2011, schools receive lump-sum funding. In that same year, schools received a once-only additional financial allowance (of USD 7 million) for school material, such as: school books, teaching methods, playing materials, school furniture, digital boards, etc.

From 2012, schools are receiving further additional funding (USD 1.3 million per year) to improve teachers’ wages. Additional funds have also been made available for the recruitment of teachers from the European Netherlands or elsewhere in the region (over USD 6 million for a three-year period).⁴

In order to improve Dutch language skills on the island and help pupils who have fallen behind catch up, digital programs have been implemented at schools to enable pupils to

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2 Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba. Voorjaarsrapportage 2011.
3 Information received in an email from Lidy Kooij on 15-3-2013
work on an individual level (Starttaal program by Deviant). The SGB has designed a language plan and Dutch is increasingly used as the language of instruction at this school.\(^1\)

### 1.16 Organizations and responsibilities

**Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science**

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science is responsible for educational policy on the islands. The ministry makes sure enabling conditions are in order and offers support in the execution of policy.

**Public entities**

Public entities are responsible for pre-school education, enforcing compulsory attendance and qualification, school premises, and arranging pupil transportation.

**Schools**

The schools are responsible for providing education.

**Dutch Inspectorate of Schools**

The Dutch Inspectorate of Education monitors the quality of elementary education, secondary education, secondary vocational education, and social opportunity pathways for young people. The inspectorate also employs confidential education inspectors.

**Center of Expertise for Education Care (EOZ)**

The EOZ is responsible for providing specialist support to teachers and pupils. Besides community-based care, pupils can also receive (short-term or long-term) support at EOZ's premises.

**Raad voor Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt (ROA, Education and Job Market Council) for the Caribbean Netherlands**

The Education and Job Market Council (ROA) for the Caribbean Netherlands is a foundation that was set up in 2012 to ensure alignment between vocational education and trade and industry in the Caribbean Netherlands. The ROA for the Caribbean Netherlands is based on Bonaire, and also has consultants on Saba and St. Eustatius. Students in vocational education are required to do an internship at one of the accredited work placement companies. Accreditation of these work placement companies is one of the duties of the ROA for the Caribbean Netherlands. Other duties include providing guidance and advice to these companies in teaching pupils, helping reflect job market developments in the curriculum, and monitoring alignment of courses with the employment situation. The ROA also nominates courses to the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science for accreditation and funding.\(^2\)

### 2 Children on education

The children surveyed highlight a wide range of matters concerning education on Bonaire. They refer to practical matters, such as money for school materials or transportation to and from school. Children often have to take the bus or be driven to school very early, although they do not consider that a problem.\(^3\)

“We haven’t got a car at home. I get the bus to school every morning. It picks me up at 6:15 at the church in Rincon. If I oversleep, I have to try to catch another bus, which costs two dollars, or I see if I can get a lift.” (girl, 13 years, Bonaire).

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\(^1\) Information received in an email from Lidy Kooij on 15-3-2013.


\(^3\) See quotes 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293.
Other comments by children concern the following subjects.

2.1 Educational offering

Many children are positive about what they are offered at school. They like the subjects that are taught. This is seen mainly among the youngest children. Some older children who struggled at secondary school are very happy with the offering of the Stichting Project. They point to the variation in the classes, the subjects focusing on traditional methods, the attitude of the supervisors, and the fact that pupils’ personal situation is always factored in. They would like to see schools that work in the same way as Stichting Project does.

Some mention the support classes taught through their secondary school. The survey also showed that children find that there is insufficient, if at all, guidance about matters such as sex and further education options available at school.¹

‘I like to go to school. For example, I’d like to go a school like the Project Foundation every day. Not the Bonaire School Community, that’s boring. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)’

School environment

When it comes to the way people are around each other at school, secondary school pupils in particular have a clear idea. They claim the environment at Scholengemeenschap Bonaire (SGB) is not always a pleasant one, but that does not go for all forms of secondary education on offer there. Ever since the different forms of secondary education were separated on the school’s premises, pupils have seen improvement. Some complain about the school being filthy, and that pupils on housekeeping duties are required to clean.

Although younger pupils in elementary education do mention bullying, it is not seen as a major problem.

Needless to say, the school environment is highly important in terms of pupils’ sense of safety (see the section on Safety). Pupils also mention the degree to which they are given a say in the organization of the education as a factor that determines the atmosphere at school (see the Participation section for more about this).²

‘It is good that there is a distinction made between basic general secondary education, vocational education (AGO), senior general secondary education and pre-university education by different T-shirts as uniforms, but of course there are people who bully you on the basis of that distinction. For example, I am studying the senior general secondary education/pre-university education course and get called a nerd by some and stupid by others. But since we are all at the Bonaire School Community and follow different levels, there must be something to differentiate us’. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire).

2.2 Pupils

Some children make reference to problems (at home) that are causing them to do less well at school. Some are unable to control their anger, while others have trouble concentrating. These pupils can turn to the Stichting Project, who will try to get them back on track.³

‘Although I’ve been at the Project Foundation for a long time, I still can’t deal with my anger properly. As a result, I’m not ready to go to the Bonaire School Community.’ (boy, 12 years, Bonaire).¹

¹ See quotes 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 331.
2.3 **School attendance and dropout rate**

Truancy is an issue at secondary schools, the pupils surveyed say. Some do confess to skipping school now and again. Peer pressure plays a role in that context. As soon as truancy gets out of hand, the school takes action. When it comes to social or psychological problems that are causing children to stay away from school, the care team at school can help.¹

‘I like school but there are a lot of kids who gladly look for trouble. They come to school, but not to learn. They come to play hooky and make problems for other people. Nobody has ever tried to make problems for me. Sometimes I skip school. And sometimes I follow others and let them influence me. I’ve been told this a lot of times, but when I’m confronted with it I hesitate.’ (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

2.4 **Homework**

The absence of homework assistance is a problem for some children. There are also children who have the problem of being given computer-based home assignments when they do not have a good computer at home, while others rue the fact that they never get assigned homework.²

‘Sometimes I get homework. When I get it at the Project Foundation, I do it. When I get it at the Bonaire School Community I sometimes do it and sometimes don’t. If I don’t, I make up an excuse for the teacher, and say that I had to go to work or play soccer. I get no assistance with my homework, which is why my mom wanted to send me to the Netherlands, so I can get more help from school.’ (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

2.5 **Teachers**

The children surveyed are generally positive about their teachers at school and at the *Stichting Project*. They are good at explaining the material, do fun activities, have rules they stick to, and are nice. Only a few pupils are forthright in their negativity about the teaching, calling the teachers unpleasant and incompetent in dealing with children. There were also one or two children who stated that they have a teacher who shouts at or even smacks pupils.³

‘All the teachers at school are friendly and I think that they teach us well. We have an equal number of Dutch and Antillean teachers. I like the fact that it is such a mixture!’ (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

2.6 **Future**

Many children think about what they want to do after they finish school. Some want to go to Curacao or the Netherlands for further education. Others dream about what they want to be when they grow up, mentioning professions such as hairdresser, gynecologist, cook, or fireman. There are also children who have no idea about their future profession. Others are exclusively focused on school for now. In the words of one fourteen-year-old girl: ‘My priority in life now is to finish school first.’

The question of whether they want to stay on Bonaire or return at a later stage is one many children still find difficult to answer. They find it hard to imagine what it would be like to leave their island and their parents, and simply prefer not to even think about that now.⁴

‘I can cook a little bit myself. Now I am learning to cook at school. I want to specialize in it. Originally, I wanted to work at the port and guide the ships in and moor them. If Freewinds

¹ See quotes 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 388.
² See quotes 390, 391, 392, 393.
³ See quotes 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 406.
3 Young people on education
The young people surveyed did not say much about education on Bonaire. The only thing they mentioned is the issue of the absence of sex education at elementary school, while children are indeed already sexually active at that age. This is covered in greater detail in the Family and Parenting section.¹

‘There should be more sex education. Even at primary school. It is now a major problem in primary schools.’ (adolescent)

4 Experts on education
The experts surveyed note that the size of schools on Bonaire varies from very small with thirty pupils (E-college) to very large with 1,350 pupils (SGB public secondary school). Class sizes also vary widely.

The government is responsible for the public education system, with school boards also playing a determining role in education. According to the experts, the influence of politics on schools has diminished, which they consider a positive development.²

4.1 Quality
When quizzed about the quality of education, the experts note various different things. They have seen a lot of investment pumped into improving the quality of education in recent times. They refer to measures taken to improve the level and make education more attractive, as well as the desire to provide good education. They are also seeing that children feel safer, and that children are offered a more structured educational environment. The new Center of Expertise for Education Care is also having a positive effect. There are, however, still quality differences between schools, but these are not great.

Until several years ago, not a lot of effort went into education, experts say. It will therefore take some time for the quality to be up to the desired level. And it is imperative that it does, as only then will children get the opportunities they deserve, according to the experts.³

4.2 Educational offering
The experts are not very enthusiastic about the options open to children on the island in terms of education. This is partly down to the island’s small scale. They point out that children are not expected to excel and that the education is not very challenging. Options for further education on the island are also limited.

There is also limited after-school care and homework assistance for pupils. Experts claim that after-school programs reach no more than under one third of secondary school pupils. The other pupils hang out on the streets or at home after school, where they are sometimes also required to take care of younger siblings.

² See quotes 294, 295, 296, 297, 298.
In order to provide proper guidance for pupils with problems in regular education, a referral committee has recently been set up, in the hope that better coordination will ensure children end up in education that suits them.\(^1\)

### 4.3 Language

Experts identify language as a focus point. There are a few experts who paint a very positive picture, suggesting that children who grow up on Bonaire have great linguistic capability: ‘Children here are very linguistic. They speak and understand Papiamento, Dutch, Spanish, English (thanks to television). How rich does that make you?’

Others do see problems. They are seeing pupils failing to properly master their languages, reducing their further education options. The experts mention several reasons for language problems. Dutch is the language of instruction in (secondary) education, and this should therefore be the language spoken in class. The experts are doubtful whether all teachers actually do. Papiamento is widely spoken at home and at school, and it is also the language of instruction at most elementary schools.

Digital programs that have recently been rolled out are enabling secondary school pupils to individually work on getting their language skills up to standard (\textit{Starttaal} program).

Dutch language deficiency among pupils is, according to some experts, further worsened by the absence of a reading culture on Bonaire. Children do not read books, but rather watch TV or surf the web. This has, on the other hand, given them better English skills.

Children’s poor mastery of the Dutch language leads to them lagging behind in their school work. They are, for example, unable to keep up in subjects such as mathematics.

Solutions the experts come up with include better tutoring and additional lessons. There are also experts who argue that all classes should be taught in English.\(^2\)

‘You notice that kids are not dumber than in the Netherlands, but because of the language they can’t keep up with certain subjects.’ (expert)

### 4.4 School environment

It does not always go without saying that the school environment on Bonaire is a positive one, according to the experts. They mention, among other things, problem behavior of pupils, threats, fights, and unmotivated pupils. This is closely linked to many pupils’ home situation, the experts say. Also refer to the Family and Parenting section. Nevertheless, the experts do see some improvement, partly thanks to the reorganization of the different forms of secondary education within the secondary school.\(^3\)

‘When I arrived here three years ago, there really were a lot of fights. It was virtually an everyday occurrence. The school had not yet been divided. It was a large area where everybody was mixed up. So the first thing we did was to split everything into units, at the physical level too. We separated areas with fences. Everybody has their own place.’ (expert)

### 4.5 Pupils

As mentioned above, experts see a clear link between pupils’ home life and their behavior or problems at school. Many pupils lack any kind of motivation to do well at school and are not supported by their family. Some are also afraid of adults. The first step is to earn their trust, only then can they learn.\(^4\)

\(^1\) See quotes 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 327, 329, 330, 629.
\(^3\) See quotes 357, 358, 359, 360, 361.
\(^4\) See quotes 368, 377.
'Young Antillean children who arrive at school are not excited. Their eyes are dull and fearful. Only after a while, if you treat them respectfully, will they start to shine. And you make use of their abilities, even if they are lacking on a cognitive level.' (expert)

There are also pupils with serious (psychological) problems for which adequate help and counseling are not available on the island. Children with a physical or mental impairment are a group not seen by experts.

The support provided by the Center of Expertise is characterized as positive. To actually help children, support services and education should be working more closely together. ¹

‘The children don’t get the basic rest they need at home. The involvement of parents in the cognitive development of their children is virtually non-existent. Education has a bad name in society and people don’t trust it. It’s more a problem of mentality.’ (expert)

4.6 School attendance and dropout rate
There is no data on how often pupils skip school or how many drop out, the experts point out. Many of the schools simply do not record this information. Pupils who leave school without a qualification have, of course, fewer possibilities in life.

The Compulsory Education Act came into a force a few years ago, giving the school attendance officer the authority to impose a fine for truancy. This has, according to the experts, improved the situation. The (digital) registration of truancy by schools themselves has also improved over the past period. In the past, it would sometimes happen that a child was kept at home to take care of siblings, without the authorities doing anything about it.²

4.7 Teachers
As far as teachers are concerned, the experts are less positive than the pupils. Many teachers’ approach does not match their pupils’ needs. They are either too directive, with insufficient knowledge and insufficient respects for the children and their rights. This tends to be the case for teachers from the region. Or they fail to set adequate boundaries and want to be friends with their pupils. Teachers who have this problem tend to be the ones who have come from the Netherlands. Neither approach – repressive or no boundaries – works, the experts claim. Schools are now working with teacher coaches and Triple P, positive parenting, in trying to strike the right balance.

Another problem is high teacher turnover. Some teachers come for only a year (or two).³

'I noticed that teachers came straight to the Bonaire School Community from the Netherlands, which led me to think, “you’ve heading for a fall”. Because they had a completely different attitude to the students. Much friendlier and so on. After six months, they were nervous wrecks. They couldn’t maintain control because those children aren’t used to being treated like that. They are used to strict rules, and the teacher telling them, “We’re going to do it like this”.’ (expert)

4.8 Future
Whether a child’s future is on the island or elsewhere depends on many factors, the experts say. Many feel the island has little to offer young people. However, moving to another country on your own requires courage. Very few adolescents leave the island to enter higher education, and the ones that do tend to be pupils from senior general secondary/pre-university education. Experts would like to see a good college and

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¹ See quotes 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376.
² See quotes 384, 385, 386, 387, 389.
³ See quotes 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405.
vocational fair on the island to enable children to get an idea of the options open to them for their future.

In some cases, there are circumstances that complicate the transition to higher education or a job. These circumstances include children’s poor mastery of the Dutch language and problems in their development. These are particularly complicating factors when they are indeed required to behave like adults, for example because they have become a teenage father or mother.

Many sixteen-and-seventeen-year-olds fall between two stools. There is a social opportunity pathway (social education), but that is, since recently, only open to adolescents from the age of 18. Sixteen-and-seventeen-year-olds have to go back to school, where they will then need special guidance, which sometimes causes problems. Stichting Project, FORMA, and SGB have teamed up to find solutions for these pupils.

Young people who went abroad to study sometimes come back to Bonaire — after a few years. Mainly girls do. In many cases, this creates a difficult situation as they are required to pay back student loans at a rate that is based on earning capacity in the Netherlands, where wages are higher than on Bonaire.¹

‘From January onwards, we can only deal with 18-plussers. When the social opportunity trajectory was a Dutch Antilles project known as social training duty (sociale vormingplicht), it was for 16 to 24 year olds. Sixteen and seventeen year olds are now stuck in no-man’s land. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science says, rightly, that they should go back to school, but they are often in situations with multiple problems. Young people in these situations don’t fit in school.’ (expert)

5 Literature on education

5.1 General
A 2011 perception survey of parents and pupils shows that neither group doubts the use and necessity of education. Parents value what the school and books look like, how teachers are with the children, whether their child is bullied, and they find safety in and around the school also very important. They are pleased that the education system has been brought into line with the Dutch model, that schools are accredited and inspected from the Netherlands, and that politicians have (virtually) no influence on the teaching. They do add, however, that they don’t want the teaching to become too Dutch either, and that it should always be consistent with the situation on Bonaire.

What pupils find most important is that the school functions properly, with good teachers, classrooms, computers, and teaching methods.

Since October 2010, the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture, and Science is responsible for education policy on Bonaire. The Dutch education system is the starting point, although it is adapted to the situation and culture of the island. The government’s report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2012) claims that education is one of the Dutch government’s four priorities. This prioritization came after the discovery in 2009 that the quality of education left much to be desired, that learning performance was dropping behind, that there was widespread truancy, that there was a lack of adequate facilities, and that school premises were in a poor state of repair.

Several enabling conditions, such as furniture and teaching material, have been improved and work is currently going into improving the quality of teaching (see 5.2, Quality). And

up to 2015, the government and various public entities will also be pouring considerable investment into school buildings. On Bonaire, these funds are used to build a new senior general secondary/pre-university education section at the Scholengemeenschap Bonaire (SGB) and for preparations for the Community School (Papa Cornes).

In a 2012 study, educational scientists were critical of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, condemning their failure to listen to the wishes and needs of islanders. According to these experts, legislation and regulations leave insufficient room for schools on Bonaire to design their own curriculum.

These same experts are equally dissatisfied with the performance of public entities, which they criticize for insufficiently fulfilling their duties and responsibilities in the area of school maintenance and pre-school and after-school education. These entities are also reproached with making insufficient resources available.

Other studies have shown that the lack of resources is also an issue when it comes to innovation and coordination in education, manpower, after-school programs.1

5.2 Quality
In 2008, the Dutch Inspectorate of Education ran a study in the Caribbean Netherlands to assess the basic quality of education on the three islands. At the time, the inspectorate qualified the quality of education on Bonaire as inadequate and ‘very weak.’ Only private elementary education on the island offered adequate basic quality. Aside from that, the inspectorate also flagged up risks caused by the absence of a pupil monitoring system and information about dropout rates.

Over the period from 2011 to 2016, the inspectorate will evaluate the quality of education in the Caribbean Netherlands on an annual basis, keeping a close eye on all improvement efforts. In 2011 and 2012, all schools on Bonaire were subjected to such inspections.2

In the Education Report that covered the 2010-2011 school year, the inspectorate found that many schools had started executing planned activities from the school improvement plan. Learning performance on technical reading and arithmetic/mathematics were up on a previous measurement. Despite that, most schools are greatly lagging behind their Dutch counterparts.

Many schools struggle to attract qualified teachers, and retain these teachers for the long term. Teacher turnover is high and many teachers are not qualified or not fully qualified for the teaching they do. A number of schools are hampered by a shortage of teaching materials and resources (books, IT). Schools are struggling to, given the starting conditions of many of their pupils (language spoken at home and language environment) and conditions at school (insufficient teachers who speak Dutch and lack of suitable educational offering), appropriately meet the statutory requirement of using Dutch as the language of instruction.3

The individual inspection reports from 2012 for the seven elementary schools on Bonaire paint a varying picture of the degree to which these meet the quality requirements and are managing to achieve improvement. The various forms of secondary education at the Scholengemeenschap Bonaire have, according to the inspectorate, made improvements on various points in 2011, but are still not complying with quality standards on several other points. The Junior College, the lower grades of the Scholengemeenschap Bonaire, however, had made little demonstrable headway by 2011. They had, though, started several improvement efforts. The quality of education at Forma, the institution for social

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1 See literature 26, 28, 30, 64, 74.
2 Several reports by the education inspectorate on the Caribbean Netherlands in 2011 and 2012 are available on the inspectorate website: http://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/onderwijs/Caribisch+Nederland/rapporten#01
opportunity pathways, has improved significantly since 2011, according to the inspectorate. The 2011 inspection report stated that the EOZ had got off to a good start.

Of the citizens of Bonaire who took part in the 2011 perception survey, 40% feels education has improved since 2010, although a majority (57%) thinks it has yet to get better. One year further, and 56% says that education has improved, while 70% thinks it will get even better. Free books, better premises, higher quality of teaching, and more further education options were all mentioned as improvements.

Another survey from 2012 shows that a lot has changed for the better in education over the past few years. Education professionals are positive about these changes. Investment has gone into schooling, coaching, teaching materials, classrooms, and buildings, and this has brought improvements. Only teachers in secondary education in particular are less enthusiastic (see below).

The objective set by the government’s report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2012) is to get the quality of education in the Caribbean Netherlands to an acceptable level by Dutch and Caribbean standards by 2016. In 2011, an education agenda with targets for five years was agreed by schools and public entities. Learning performance has meanwhile showed improvement and hard work is going into improving quality.¹

5.3 **Offering**

In 2006, the educational offering and customized options for children who need special (secondary) education fell short, as shown by the security plan for Bonaire published in that year. Children who need special education are particularly vulnerable and susceptible to criminal influences, the report states. These children cannot be expected to hold their own at the large combined school, and this would lead to problems.

Children’s rights are not a fixture in the curriculum of schools on Bonaire.

In 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child pressed for measures to improve conditions for disabled children to give them equal opportunities. The committee also calls for sex education at schools to prevent teenage pregnancy, as well as for support for teenage mothers in education.²

5.4 **Language**

A 2010 study of Dutch language skills showed that only a small portion of pupils had the target level of Dutch just before their final exam at that time. Reasons for this poor level of Dutch were found both with the pupil or at home and with the teacher. But only very few pupils who were struggling with the Dutch language had the opportunity to get extra help with that at school. Seeing as it has turned out that many children want to pursue further studies in the Netherlands (30 to 40%), the researchers recommend support for these children in this area.

Another study (2011) shows that parents on Bonaire are concerned about the use of Dutch as the language of instruction within a larger English-speaking environment.³

5.5 **School environment**

The 2008 NGO report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that the majority of children feel their opinion does not count at school. Also refer to the Participation section.

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¹ See literature 106, 27, 29, 28, 30, 54, 74.
² See literature 79, 64, 16.
³ See literature 26, 6.
A 2011 study shows that parents, too, feel insufficiently heard at and informed by the school. This same study also shows that parents on Bonaire are concerned about safety at school.

There is no data available on violence and abuse at schools, although we do know that it happens. The Committee on the Rights of the Child expresses concern about this in its closing statement of 2009, recommending inclusion of a ban on physical punishment in the law and enforcement of such a ban. By 2012, physical punishment had not yet been explicitly prohibited at schools.  

5.6 Pupils

A study that dates back to 2006 shows that a section of children on Bonaire is exposed to risk factors at school (such as falling behind in their learning, lack of a bond with the school). Poor school performance, a high percentage of pupils repeating a grade (49%), sexually risky behavior, truancy, and depression were all highlighted as problem behavior.

A 2011 study shows that pupils are indeed aware of the importance and necessity of schooling, and consider school an opportunity to make and meet friends and leave the island.

Some pupils come to school hungry. Many schools have set up facilities to give children something to eat. It is hard to concentrate on an empty stomach.

Research into why Antillean boys trail behind girls in terms of school results (2010) shows that this pattern starts as early as at elementary school. Reasons for this difference are found in upbringing and in the school culture and the majority of teachers being female.

The government’s report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2012) makes reference to the opening of the Center of Expertise for Education Care (EOZ) for each of the three islands in the summer of 2011. Pupils who need it can get additional help here. Internal counselors and care coordinators have been trained to take stock of the extent of the need for this kind of care.

5.7 School attendance and dropout rate

A 2006 study shows that truancy was widespread at the time. Pupils primarily put that down to the fact that they do not feel a bond with the school. A 2011 analysis shows that pupils who do not feel committed to school are at greater risk to display violent and delinquent behavior in the future.

A 2008 study by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education shows that information about dropout rates is lacking. This study furthermore revealed that education and job market are poorly aligned due to many pupils dropping out.

The 2008 NGO report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child offers the following reasons for the high dropout rate among boys in particular: less interest and perseverance, getting a job at a young age due to social and economic circumstances at home, absence of intrinsic motivation, less support from parents, school too difficult. Girls were believed to receive clearer direction as part of their upbringing, they are required to help out at home, and do their school work while boys play outside. The dropout rate is highest in the 14-to-18 age bracket. In 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child called for efforts to reduce the dropout rate.

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1 See literature 26, 46, 64, 16.
2 See literature 106, 26, 71, 33, 64, 74.
Over three quarters of teenage mothers has no qualification, a 2010 study shows. They have dropped out of school because they felt ashamed, because they were unable to stay focused on their education, because of the response they got from the school, or because having to care for their baby meant they simply had no time for school.

Research into the role of family and parenting in children dropping out of school on Bonaire (2011) shows that family composition in itself is not a determining factor when it comes to truancy. Family members do, however, have an influence on truancy and dropping out. Children with parents who are basically clueless about parenting and education, and who are insufficiently committed, are more likely to skip or drop out of school. Forced by their financial situation, some parents want their child to contribute to the family income.

Positive parenting and friends, on the other hand, have been shown to encourage children to go to and stay in school.¹

### Homework
Research from 2011 shows that many parents find it hard to help their children with their homework. They work full time, are on their own in raising their child, have little education themselves, or there are other priorities in the family.²

### Teachers
In 2006, the security plan for Bonaire referred to Scholengemeenschap Bonaire’s teaching staff as unmotivated and unwilling to engage in extracurricular activities. A lot seems to have changed since then.

The 2008 NGO report about the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that teachers need support in navigating through changes in education, claiming that there are not enough qualified and experienced teachers. This is linked to the salary and public image of teachers.

As of 1 January 2012, teacher salaries were increased substantially, as shown by the Education Inspection Report of 2012. Educational practice at Scholengemeenschap Bonaire is classed as adequate in part, while work is going into getting all teachers appropriately qualified.

A 2011 study shows that pupils rate teachers who set strict boundaries higher than teachers who do not. Parents, on the other hand, are satisfied with the teachers in elementary education, albeit less so with teachers in secondary education. They feel teachers in secondary education are insufficiently interested and motivated, and shy away from contact with parents.

Another study (2012) shows that education has seen major improvement (see above), but that teachers are still cautious. That could be explained by them receiving insufficient support in assimilating changes in education. This means that they are often on their own when it comes to implementing changes in their class. This study did not reflect that Scholengemeenschap Bonaire has had teacher coaches since the end of 2011.

The government’s report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2012) describes the application of Triple P methodology within the teaching profession.³

### Future
A 2009 study shows that there is still a lot of ground to make up when it comes to aligning education with Bonaire’s job market. Employers attach little value to diplomas and often

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¹ See literature 106, 101, 8, 60, 43, 64, 16, 18.
² See literature 26.
³ See literature 26, 28, 30, 79, 64, 74.
pay only the minimum wage. A lot of jobs are occupied by workers from elsewhere and interns. The education on offer also often does not match labor needs. There is, for example, not enough trained staff available for jobs in engineering, tourism, or hospitality.

A 2011 study shows that students look at two things when deciding whether or not to return to Bonaire after they have finished school and higher education: suitable work and salary.¹

6 The Convention on the Rights of the Child on education

The right to education is extensively covered in various articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 28 and 29). These make it clear how important this right is considered to be. The convention stresses there must be equal opportunity for all children. Alongside children’s right to education there is children’s obligation to attend school: compulsory education.

In Article 29, the convention outlines the focus of education and which objectives it must attain.

For children growing up on Bonaire, the following elements in particular are crucial:

• The state shall ensure good quality education and access to education.
• The state shall commit to combating school dropout.
• The school shall incorporate the child’s cultural identity and language into the teaching.
• Classroom discipline shall be administered in a manner that is consistent with the child’s human dignity and in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Verbal or physical violence shall not be used at school.
• The education shall enable the child to develop his or her talents to their fullest potential.
• Access to information is crucial.
• Children must be able to retreat at home to do their homework.

Education-related articles are closely connected to other rights awarded in the convention, such as non-discrimination (Article 2), the best interests of the child being a primary consideration (Article 3), the right to development (Article 6), and the right to be heard (Article 12).

7 Conclusion

The account of the current situation and what children, experts, and the literature have to say about it, justify the conclusion that education on Bonaire currently does not meet all requirements set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

There are several issues that will require extra attention over the coming period, such as the overall quality of education, the fight against school dropout, the focus on the child’s cultural identity and language, the manner in which discipline is maintained at school, children’s opportunities to develop their talents, access to information, and opportunities of being heard at school.

Major steps are currently being taken to improve the situation and bring it up to the minimum standard set by the convention.

¹ See literature 26, 10.
Child on Bonaire
From the moment a child develops in its mother’s womb, its health is crucial. But also after a child has been born and as it grows up, health is essential. Health can never be separated from life and development.

According to the World Health Organization, the concept of health is to be taken broadly to include not only the absence of disease or ailments, and be considered a ‘state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being.’

For that reason alone, health is closely linked to other subjects covered in this report, such as families’ financial situation and the way they live. Children who grow up in poverty often do not have enough (healthy) food to eat and are confronted with unhygienic living conditions. These circumstances impact on their health.

This chapter will first outline the current situation in the area of health care on Bonaire, followed by children’s and adolescents’ views on this situation, as well as what experts and literature tell us about it. Before ending with a conclusion, this chapter will relate the findings about the current situation to the relevant UNCRC requirements.

1 Current situation

1.1 Health care and health

At this point in time, there is no clear picture of the state of health on Bonaire, comparable to that produced by the foresight study on health care (Volkgezondheid Toekomst Verkenning, VTV) that is published for the European Netherlands by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (Rijksinstituut voor Volkgezondheid en Milieu, RIVM).

The intention is for Statistics Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, CBS) to conduct a health survey among the population of the Caribbean Netherlands in June 2013. The Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport has initiated studies as part of infectious disease control. Nevertheless, adequate and recent data in many health-related areas is currently lacking.

This chapter’s description of the current situation has therefore been based on the little information that is available about health on Bonaire.

Health care on the island is split up into curative health care, youth health care, public health care, care for the disabled, and mental health care. Since the transition of 2010, the Dutch government has been responsible for health care on Bonaire.

Islanders have access to health insurance.

Besides the ‘usual’ health risks, children on Bonaire are also exposed to a number of specific health risks. This chapter will briefly focus on sexual health, obesity and diabetes, alcohol and drug abuse, and a number of other health risks.

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2 Email from Pieter de Coninck, project secretary Caribbean Netherlands, International Affairs Directorate, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, on 5 February 2013.
1.2 Curative health care
Nearly all health care on Bonaire is provided through the Fundashon Mariadal facility. This facility comprises the following services: the San Francisco Hospital, the Kas di Kuido nursing home, and the (residential) care center called Sentro Salú Convent. The Sentro di Salú is home to several services, including community nursing, obstetric and maternity care, youth health care, and school-based health care. The hospital has 36 beds. Since 1 January 2011, this facility has been working together with the VU Hospital and the Amsterdam Medical Center in the Netherlands, while the number of basic specialties has been extended, adding internal medicine, surgery, anesthesia, gynecology, pediatrics, and psychiatry. And in early 2012, Bonaire’s kidney dialysis center became operational. For all other specialist health care, patients mainly go to hospitals on Curaçao, Aruba, and in Colombia.

There are several primary care physicians active on Bonaire. There are also several dental practices.

1.3 Youth health care
Bonaire’s early childhood clinic is located at the Youth and Family Center (Centrum voor Jeugd en Gezin, CJG). Preventive parenting support is provided and youth care is coordinated from the CJG. Pregnant women and possibly their partners can also take pregnancy classes there.

Access to youth health care for slightly older youths has not yet been properly arranged. Youth care is still underdeveloped on some points. Adolescents looking for help with sexual health issues, psychological problems, and other delicate issues come up against major barriers. There are various reasons why adolescents are hesitant to go to their family physician. Physicians tends to be judgmental about their behavior or actions, parents can find out about visits to a primary care physician through the insurance, the requirement of parental consent for medical treatment is observed more strictly. There is a need for low-threshold and free care or counseling for young people (through school).

In 2012, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) committed to helping Bonaire conduct a study into children’s health on the island.

1.4 Public health care
Prior to the transition, public health care was not widely available on the islands. Public health care is the responsibility of the island authorities, in a way that is similar to how Dutch municipal authorities are responsible for public health care services in their municipality. On 1 February 2012, two coordinators from the Municipal Health Service of The Hague started their work in blazing a trail for a broader roll out of public health care on the BES islands. They are helping island authorities raise the quality of public health care and the local medical assistance organization (Medical Assistance in the event of Accidents and Disasters) to the desired level. The National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) is also closely involved in these efforts.

1.5 Care for the disabled
The Fundashon Kuido Pa Personanan Desabilita (FKPD-ATV) organization offers residential care for mentally and physically disabled children – and adults – on Bonaire. This organization also provides day care and daytime activities for disabled children.

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1 Website Fundashon Mariadal: http://www.fundashonmariadal.org/
2 Letter from the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport to the House of Representatives concerning health care on the BES islands dated 19 January 2012.
3 Email from Melissa Diaz, GGD Den Haag, 27 March 2013.
4 Letter from the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport to the House of Representatives concerning health care on the BES islands dated 19 January 2012.
5 Email from Pieter de Coninck, project secretary Caribbean Netherlands, Department for International Affairs, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 5 February 2013.
1.6 Mental health care

Novadic Kentron was commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport to draft an action plan for an integrated and structural approach to mental health care, including addiction treatment. The health insurance agency will bring in a provider that will execute the plans in consultation with all parties involved.¹

The Christian foundation called Krusada has a walk-in reception facility for addicts. They also have motivational sessions with addicts, provide information, and perform drug testing. Krusada also offers a bed, bath, and bread facility. This foundation can accommodate twelve addicts, who not only receive therapy, but also have the opportunity to enroll into a course or training and get work experience.² The foundation claims there are far more addicts than they can help.

Aside from that, a halfway house was opened on 5 July 2012. People can live here, while receiving counseling, to bridge the gap between care and living at home. It offers room for five persons.³ In October, a temporary second facility was taken into use, where two persons will live until December 2012. Krusada intends to open further halfway houses in the future, in collaboration with the probation service and judicial authorities. Apart from that, Krusada also has work experience places. Krusada does not receive any government grants.

Krusada has little to do with under-age addicts; they only get about one minor a year who needs clinical assistance, and these are generally 17-year-olds.⁴ In 2012, Krusada acted as a time-out facility for a minor from Kas di Karko on two occasions.⁵ This is partly down to the fact that there are few facilities on the island, and the available facilities therefore have to be used creatively.

Krusada points out that the reception facility for addicts comprises only one group, with addicts of different ages. The foundation therefore wonders whether it would be wise to place a minor in a group of seasoned addicts. Given that there are no adequate facilities for young people and their specific issues, Krusada remains in the background.

Krusada also provides information to so-called opportunity adolescents at Fundashon Forma, and has plans for its own outpatients’ department, although these are currently on hold. The work experience places are developing fast, and the foundation already has a greenhouse for vegetables and a woodwork and metalwork workshop. These places are reserved for internal clients and external participants with addiction-related problems and prisoners.

Bonaire lacks mental health care facilities other than those listed above. In some cases, psychiatric care is provided through regular care channels (primary care physician) or referred for admission in the Netherlands. Bonaire is served by visiting psychologists and a full-time psychiatrist.⁶

1.7 Health insurance

As of 1 January 2011, anyone who lawfully resides or works in the Caribbean Netherlands is automatically covered by the compulsory Caribbean Netherlands Health Insurance. This also goes for people up to the age of thirty who have left the island for educational reasons. This health insurance covers, among other things, primary care, medical specialist care, hospital admission, paramedic care, dental care, medication, medical devices, obstetric care, maternity care, transport of the sick, and long-term care relating to old age.

¹ Letter from the minister of Health, Welfare and Sport to the House of Representatives concerning health care on the BES islands dated 19 January 2012.
² http://www.krusada.nl/
³ See www.krusada.nl.
⁴ Email from Mr. K. de Kruijf, coordinator Work experience & Resocialisation, Krusada Foundation, on 18 December 2012.
⁵ Email from Mr. K. de Kruijf, coordinator Work experience & Resocialisation, Krusada Foundation, on 18 December 2012.
⁶ Email from Pieter de Coninck, project secretary Caribbean Netherlands, Department for International Affairs, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 5 February 2013.
a disease, or a disability, regardless of whether this care is provided at a residential facility or at home. This health insurance also covers the costs of medical referral to doctors outside the Caribbean Netherlands with whom the health insurance has a direct or indirect contract. Insured parties who are on an income that exceeds the personal tax deduction amount will be liable to pay an income-related premium for the health insurance. Employers also pay a premium for their employees' health insurance. These premiums are levied and collected by the Dutch Tax and Customs Administration.

In December 2012, the Minister of Health announced his intention to eliminate coverage for physiotherapy and dental care on the island from 1 January 2013. This move was prompted by the rapid increase in care expenditure in the Caribbean Netherlands and a broader need for government spending cuts. After protest – about the quick implementation of this change – a decision was made to push back implementation of this change.

1.8 Sexual health

It is highly important for children and adolescents to live a 'sexually healthy' life and learn how to do that. Efforts are underway on Bonaire to tackle worrying trends in this area, such as sexual abuse, unplanned (teenage) pregnancies, abortions, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Sexual health is one of the priorities set by the governing councils of the Caribbean Netherlands and the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport. The Municipal Health Service will be launching various activities between 2012 and 2013 to raise awareness of sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases.

After having taken stock of the situation and interpreting signals from the community, the Municipal Health Service concluded that the state of sexual health of the population of Bonaire is worrying. The current state of affairs in terms of children's sexual health on Bonaire is as follows:

- Stichting Jong Bonaire (Young Bonaire Foundation) and the Youth and Family Center organize activities for the targeted group of adolescents in this area. These activities are optional and use materials of over ten years old.
- Sex education is currently not a fixture in the regular curriculum at schools. A sex education program is currently being prepared for introduction at elementary schools. Professionals say sex education is also required because some young people have a distorted idea of sex.3
- There is little knowledge about the scope and effect of existing prevention activities or about the sexual behavior and risks of adolescents and their attitude toward safe sex.
- A system for STD and HIV monitoring is absent.
- The number of teenage pregnancies on Bonaire is high. For more information about this subject, please read the section on Family and Parenting.
- The number of provoked abortions is high, even though it was illegal on Bonaire until recently. A 2010 study shows that at least 25.4% of all pregnancies end in an abortion. Exact figures are lacking. In October 2011, the Termination of Pregnancy Act came into force on the BES islands. This triggered some controversy. Since the summer of 2012, the Fundashon Mariadal has been authorized to perform abortions.
- Since 2012, all forms of contraceptive are covered by the health insurance, making them more easily available, which is hoped to bring down the number of unwanted pregnancies. It is unknown whether this has actually led to an increase in the use of contraceptives (among adolescents).

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1 Http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/120/de+zorgverzekering+(algemeen).html
2 Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. Health insurance office. Informatiebochure zorgverzekering voor verzekerden van de Zorgverzekering Bonaire, Saba en Sint Eustatius. As per 1 January 2011.
3 See newspaper Trouw, 2 May 2012, Liever les in gebruik van de pil.
• There is, according to stakeholders including the police, a high incidence of sexual abuse. However, the exact scope of this problem is unknown. Willingness to report sexual abuse is thought to be low due to the shame factor. It is unknown whether, and if so which, protocols are used to handle cases of sexual abuse. If reported, sexual abuse is often handled by a male primary care physician. This is an obstacle for girls who have gone through a traumatic experience with men.

• As far as intolerance and discrimination in relation to sexual inclination are concerned, there is barely any information available.¹

1.9 Obesity and diabetes
There are many cases of obesity and diabetes on the island. VU University Amsterdam has mapped obesity levels on the island and arrived at a figure of about one hundred cases of morbid obesity.² Bonaire has an outpatients’ clinic for diabetes sufferers and also a foundation for diabetes. Agreements have been made to further flesh out and execute the ‘Bonaire active’ program. There turns out to be a need for greater awareness and insight in the area of a healthy lifestyle.³

1.10 Alcohol and drug abuse
Formally, the task of preventing problematic alcohol and drugs consumption lies with the island authority itself. There is currently no specific policy in place to prevent problematic alcohol and drugs consumption. There are only a few initiatives taken by the Stichting Verslavingszorg (Addiction Services Foundation) and Psychiatry Caribbean Netherlands (Novadic Kentron)

The Licensing and Catering Act that specifies age restrictions for alcohol sales to young people in the European Netherlands, is not (yet) in force in the Caribbean Netherlands. There is, however, legislation in place that restricts liquor advertising on radio and TV: The Liquor Advertising on Television and Radio Decree for the BES islands, which was taken from Netherlands Antillean legislation.⁴

1.11 Other health risks
In other areas, too, children on Bonaire are at a heightened risk of health problems. Some of these are currently being tackled. There is, for example, greater attention for dental health, which was absent before, while efforts are also going into raising awareness of the importance of a healthy diet.

Many consider dengue fever to be a problem on Bonaire. A major outbreak has been looming for some time now, and malaria experts have urged the Netherlands to offer help. The action group Bonaire Dengue-free has even called the situation alarming.⁵

1.12 Legislation
Needless to say, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child applies in full to the children of Bonaire.

The Health Insurance for the Caribbean Netherlands stems from the Healthcare Insurance Decree for the BES islands and the Health Insurance Entitlement Regulations for the BES islands.

⁴ Email from Pieter de Coninck, project secretary Caribbean Netherlands, Department for International Affairs, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 5 February 2013.
⁵ Eén Vandaag television news program, 16 January 2012.
The Medical Treatment Contracts Act (WGBO) is regulated through the Civil Code for the BES islands.¹

1.13 Policy and activities
The Administrative Agreement of 20 November 2008 sets out the medium-to-long-term plan for health and housing on the BES islands. This plan covers 26% across the full scope of care, health care, and youth. The Administrative Agreement also contains other agreements, such as realization of a 24-hour facility for urgent care and taking stock of what is needed for public entities to be able to adequately perform tasks in the area of public health after the transition (manpower, expertise, and resources).²

A choice was made to create a care structure that is comparable to the Dutch situation, where care institutions are private sector parties and (first) responsibility for the care institution lies with the Board of Directors and the Supervisory Board.³

Activities
- As of 1 January 2011, the compulsory health insurance under public law for the Caribbean Netherlands was introduced for medical and exceptional medical care for the people of the islands.
- Subsidies from the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport were invested in medical infrastructure (buildings, equipment, and ambulances) and in staff training.⁴
- The hospital on Bonaire has entered into a partnership with the VU hospital and Amsterdam Medical Center in the Netherlands, which has brought more basic medical specialties to Bonaire.
- Kidney dialysis facilities have been set up at the hospital on Bonaire.
- As far as highly specialist care is concerned, agreements were made at the end of 2010 and 2011 with hospitals on Curaçao and Aruba for the Leeward Islands and with the hospitals of St. Maarten and Guadeloupe for the Windward Islands.
- Novadic Kentron was commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport to draft an action plan for an integrated and structural approach to mental health care, including addiction treatment.⁵
- Funded by the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport, the Municipal Health Service of The Hague has started, on 1 February 2012, helping the island authorities in setting up a public health care structure and Medical Assistance in the event of Accidents and Disasters (GHOR).⁶
- A central control room has been set up for the three islands on Bonaire to direct the emergency services of the police, fire departments, and ambulance.

1.14 Organizations and responsibilities

Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport
The Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport is responsible for health care policy.

Island authority
The island authority is responsible for public health care and Medical Assistance in the event of Accidents and Disasters (GHOR). Funded by the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport, the Municipal Health Service of The Hague has started helping island authorities in setting that up from 1 February 2012.

¹ The agreement regarding medical treatment: art. 446-468 Burgerlijk Wetboek, boek 7, afdeling 5.
² Decision list BES administrative meeting, 20 November 2008 in The Hague.
³ Letter by the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport to the House of Representatives dated 8 October 2010. House of Representatives session year 2010-2011 31568 No. 81.
⁴ Kingdom Representative for the public bodies of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba, Voorjaarsrapportage 2011.
⁵ Letter by the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport to the House of Representatives about healthcare on the BES islands, dated 19-1-2012.
⁶ Letter by the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport to the House of Representatives about healthcare on the BES islands, dated 19-1-2012.
Local health insurance authority (ZVK)
The ZVK is part of the Caribbean Netherlands’ civil service, and has offices on each of the three islands. The health insurance authority has been up and running since 1 January 2011 and focuses on executing the health insurance, including the procurement of care, keeping records of insured parties, providing information to insured parties and care providers, and supporting insured parties when medical care is provided outside the Caribbean Netherlands. 1

Fundashon Mariadal
Fundashon Mariadal is the umbrella organization for care providers on Bonaire, offering community and urgent care, hospital care, various forms of specialist care, and other care.

Youth and Family Center
Youth health care on Bonaire is provided through the Youth and Family Center.

Stichting Krusada
Stichting Krusada has voluntary admission places for addicts on Bonaire.

Fundashon Kuido Pa Personanan Desabilita (FKPD-ATV)
This foundation offers residential care, daycare, and daytime activities for mentally disabled children and adults on Bonaire.

2 Children on health
Most of the children surveyed have little to say about the subject of health. Like other children and adults, they only stop and think about their health when they or family members are faced with health problems. Very few children make a direct link between a healthy lifestyle, exercise, and health. In the words of one twelve-year-old boy: ‘I like doing sports because it gets me into shape, and that’s good for my health.’

Most children say they are never or rarely sick. The times they were sick were cases of the flu. Or because they had hurt themselves in a fall.2

When asked about their family physician, the children respond positively. But they are a lot less satisfied with the care they received in hospital on the rare occasion they had to go there for medical assistance. They find the hospital dirty, smelly, and don’t rate the care on offer.

    Specialist assistance or operations are only available off the island. They have to go to Curaçao, for example, for that.3

‘One time I had to get medicine from the doctor but in fact I’m never sick. I had to go to hospital once to have my arm seen to after I fell on a nail. I was helped immediately.’ (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

When asked about their eating habits, some children reveal that they don’t get any breakfast at home. A number of these children get a sandwich and some fruit at Stichting Project. Children who do have breakfast at home, have cornflakes or bread with sausages, while others point out that theirs is a healthy diet, with vegetables and fruit every day.4

Children surveyed say they don’t drink alcohol or only very little. Some confess to smoking a cigarette now and again. Although they do know a lot of people who use drugs, the children surveyed say they would never do drugs.5

1 Kingdom Representative for the public bodies of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba, Voorjaarsrapportage 2011.
2 See quotes 433, 434.
3 See quotes 437, 438, 439, 440, 441.
4 See quotes 457, 458, 459.
5 See quotes 469, 470, 471.
'Personally, I don’t drink. At my confirmation ceremony I drank a glass of wine. Sometimes I smoke. I smoke my grandfather’s half butts. I will never take drugs.' (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

3 Young people on health

Young people highlight the lack of sex education. See the chapter on Family and Parenting.

4 Experts on health

The experts that were surveyed for this study have a lot to say about the subject of health and health care on Bonaire. Their comments cover several sub-areas. Of these sub-areas of health, teenage pregnancies and sexual health are covered in the Family and Parenting section.

4.1 Sickness

Experts point out that a poor diet is one of the causes for widespread obesity on Bonaire. Another observation concerns the way people deal with sickness. The experts have found that people on Bonaire are a lot quicker to seek medical assistance than people in the Netherlands.

4.2 Health care

The experts highlight the problem of some medication no longer being covered, causing some parents not to be able to afford them. The fact that undocumented people are not entitled to health insurance is also mentioned as a bottleneck by one of the experts.

The experts surveyed view youth health care for young children positively, including the clinic that takes care of vaccinations. They also mention the pediatrician at the hospital, the child psychiatrist who visits the island once a month, and the arrival of good health care materials ever since Bonaire became a special municipality.

They also praise dental care on the island. People used to have to pay for that themselves, which meant many children went without. However, since people have access to dental care, there has been a long waiting list of several months.

‘I notice in Rincon that there are children running around with rotten teeth. Something must be done about dental care.’ (expert)

Additional physicians and specialists are still to come, further feeding experts’ optimism. What’s still lacking is a confidential physician.

4.3 Food

The food children on Bonaire eat is something the experts worry about. Widespread poor nutrition, lots of junk food, unhealthy or unbalanced diets, not enough fruit and vegetables.

Many children come to school without having had breakfast, while others don’t bring a packed lunch to school. Malnutrition is a problem, as is overnutrition with unhealthy food, which leads to obesity.

‘Bread meals are distributed in schools because parents can’t afford bread for their children.’ (expert)

1 See quotes 435, 436.
The experts identify different causes for children’s insufficient (and irregular) eating or unhealthy diet. The first reason they flag up is the high cost of healthy food. ‘An apple costs just under a dollar here’, one physician tells the survey, while chicken and rice are cheap and therefore eaten widely. Fruit and vegetable are available, but very expensive on the island.

A healthy diet is simply not an issue for many parents. It’s in the culture, according to the experts, not to worry about food. ‘Rice, beans, peas’ is on the menu and that’s nice and easy. In the words of one expert: ‘A one-sided diet is unhealthy, but also cheap.’

Many parents do not realize how important food is for health. Experts stress the importance of providing information to people, while also looking for alternatives to healthy foods such as broccoli, because many families simply cannot afford them. Some experts call for hot lunch meals at school. Some of the schools serve their pupils bread-based meals.

One expert also mentions children’s low self-esteem, which is causing eating disorders such as bulimia.¹

4.4 Alcohol and drugs

The experts do not see any major problems with alcohol for most children on Bonaire. A small group does have drink-related problems that are linked to other (family) problems, crime, and influence of the wrong friends.

‘If we have school parties here, then there are bottles here and there, but nothing extreme.’ (expert)

There were drug-related problems, with dealers around schools, but these seemed to have waned of late.²

5 Literature on health

The literature raises various points relating to the health of and health care for children on Bonaire.

5.1 Sickness

A 2003 study of youths on Bonaire shows that many children are exposed to risk factors (also see below). A relatively large number of children on Bonaire worry about their future and sexually risky behavior, with truancy and depression highlighted as resulting problem behavior.

It is unknown how many disabled children there are on Bonaire, and how these children are cared for, and whether there is special care for these children and support for their parents. Public life seems fairly inaccessible for these children, as shown by the NGO report about the Convention on the Rights of the Child from 2008.

In 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed its concern about the fact that disabled children still face obstructions, such as access to public buildings and public transport. The committee recommends measures to ensure that disabled children can fully take part in public life.

The abovementioned NGO report also shows that it is unknown how many children on Bonaire have HIV or aids. There are children who have been infected through their mother. Patients are treated on Curaçao.

¹ See quotes 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 472.
² See quotes 472, 473, 474, 475, 476.
A 2009 study among children aged between 4 and 16 on Bonaire shows that many children on the island are overweight. On average, 24.4% of boys are overweight (including obesity) and 9.9% are obese. Of all girls in that same age bracket, 32% are overweight, and 13.7% are obese.

A quick scan from 2009 gives advice on how to promote sports and exercise on Bonaire. Two reports from 2009 present a study and a plan to promote cycling on Bonaire. ¹

5.2 Health care
A 2011 perception survey shows that the population of Bonaire was critical of parts of the medical care available on the island. Their criticism concerned several aspects: medication that is no longer covered following the introduction of the pharmacist’s formulary, medical referrals to Colombia and Guadeloupe (instead of to St. Maarten and Curaçao) that are complicated by cultural and language issues, the financial settlement of costs advanced by patients or counseling costs, waiting times for various medical specialists and the dentist.

People were positive, however, about the inclusion of dental care in the health insurance’s coverage, and that proof of ID is all that is needed to get the required care.

In 2012, islanders were again asked how they feel about medical care on the island. This time, a more positive view emerged. However, there is still criticism of the shortage of medical specialists on the island, poor information, waiting times, costs, and the language barrier in case of medical referrals.

The NGO report about the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2008) shows that Bonaire did not have a pediatrician or youth physician, child physiotherapist, child psychologist or psychiatrist in the period covered by the report. Neither were there facilities such as an intensive care unit. There was a part-time gynecologist and a medical specialist came in one morning a week. A pediatrician was available on the island once a month. Children who needed help urgently were sent to Curaçao.

At the time of the report, the hospital lacked a dedicated pediatric floor or room, and parents could not spend the night near their child. Nursing was, however, classed as very child-friendly.

Health care for undocumented children is also a focus point. Families without a residence permit are not covered by the health insurance. They can, however, use preventive health care facilities. In emergencies, they will be treated in hospital, but the costs are not covered. Parents can generally not afford the specialist medical care or medication their children need. In 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern about undocumented migrant children’s access to health care.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) pressed for enforcement and monitoring of legislation on termination of life. The committee particularly calls for attention for the position of children aged 12 and over, and for newborns with serious congenital disorders. ²

5.3 Food
Mothers on Bonaire are insufficiently aware of the importance of breastfeeding to their children, as shown by the 2008 NGO report about the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Childbirth classes do include guidance on this, but there are no organizations on the island encouraging mothers to breastfeed and helping them with that.

¹ See literature 106, 50, 67, 114, 75, 78, 77, 100, 16.
² See literature 27, 29, 100, 16.
In 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern about the low number of mothers that exclusively feed their newborns breast milk.¹

5.4 Alcohol and drugs
A 2003 survey of youths shows that a large number of children on Bonaire use drugs and consume alcohol. A relatively large number of children smoke marihuana more than once a week.

The NGO report about the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2008) states that there is no data available on the use of drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes and the effect of awareness campaigns. The claim is that information on the issue is not provided at school on Bonaire, while addicts are sent to Curaçao.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) is worried about the amount of narcotics and other substances adolescents on the island are using.²

6 The Convention on the Rights of the Child on health
The Convention of the Rights of the Child stress the importance of the right to health in several articles. The convention first states that every child has the inherent right to life, and that states must ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child (Article 6).

It also stipulates that the best interests of the child must always be a primary consideration in all decisions concerning children (Article 3).

The convention specifies an obligation to guarantee the development of children on the island to the greatest extent possible. That means that the government must go to every effort to ensure children can develop in safety and undisturbed.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child grants children a right to a healthy life and facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health (Article 24). This also goes for children on Bonaire. The following is key in this context:

- Adequate access to health care, from which not a single child may be excluded.
- Adequate guidance on prevention of health risks.
- Disabled children receive additional care (Article 23)
- Protection against dangers to health, including child abuse, exploitation, drugs (Articles 19, 33, 34, 35, 36).
- Additional help when the child has fallen victim to violence (Article 39).

The right to health and health care is closely linked to the right to adequate nutritious foods (Article 24) and the right to an adequate standard of living and social security, including access to medical facilities and a healthy living environment (Articles 26 and 27).

Article 12 of the convention is also important in the context of health. When it comes to decisions regarding the child’s health, such as in case of a medical treatment or examination, both the child (if it is able) and parents must be enabled to express their views on it. Children are informed and have a say in deciding their medical treatment. In legislation, this has been reflected in the medical treatment contract in the Civil Code for the BES islands.

In separate explanatory notes to the convention, the Committee on the Rights of the Child further fleshes out the right to health (care). The committee stress the importance of a

¹ See literature 100, 16.
² See literature 106, 8, 100, 16.
safe and healthy living environment for adolescents, their own input, and promotion of a healthy lifestyle.\(^1\)

The committee also formulates what needs to be done for young children up to the age of seven. Children need protection and to grow up in a healthy, hygienic, and safe living environment without stress.\(^2\)

Health care for disabled children needs to be adequate and part of general health care facilities to prevent children being ostracized and stigmatized. They must have access to treatment by a multidisciplinary team. Every effort must be made to prevent disabilities.\(^3\)

The committee is of the opinion that – besides the family – public health care must protect children against violence. Primary care physicians and emergency services must prevent, report, and combat child abuse.\(^4\)

The committee is currently working on further guidance on the right to health.\(^5\)

7 Conclusion

The current situation and what children, adolescents, and experts have to say about it show that a lot needs to change to reach the minimum standards set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the area of health (care).

First of all, the huge lack of information about health aspects stands out. This is making it impossible to adequately respond to serious health issues of children and properly align facilities with needs.

Prevention of health problems is an important focus point, for example when it comes to providing guidance on a healthy lifestyle, including sexually healthy behavior and healthy eating and exercise.

Access to (youth) health care for slightly older children also needs significant improvement to come up to the standard specified by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Youth care will have to be developed further and barriers will have to be broken down to enable children to exercise their right to health care. And alternatives need to be sought for situations where children, due to the small scale of the island, are afraid to seek help.

There are also challenges in the area of care for disabled children, children who have become victims, and in the area of protection of children against wide-ranging health risks.

In some areas, it will be difficult to offer sufficient adequate health care on a relatively small island. In those cases, other possibilities will need to be sought to guarantee children on Bonaire can exercise their ‘right to enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment and rehabilitation of health.’

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\(^4\) Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011). *General Comment no. 13, The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, CRC/C/GC/13*.

\(^5\) Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013). *General Comment 15. The right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (Article. 24)*.
Various aspects relating to (the sense of) safety are covered in other sections. Domestic violence and abuse, for example, are discussed in the Family and Parenting section, while bullying is covered in the Education section. In the chapter on Recreation, Play, and Leisure Time, both children and experts point to a clear link between boredom and juvenile crime. Alcohol, drugs, and unsafe sex are all discussed in the Health section.

This chapter will mainly provide information about safety on the streets, (juvenile) crime, and prevention and fighting of crime. After a description of the current situation, this chapter will go into what children and experts have to say about safety on Bonaire.

In the area of safety, there is widespread collaboration with the other two islands of the Caribbean Netherlands.

1 Current situation

1.1 Safety overview
The description of the current situation covers several different matters. It gives a brief account of general crime and juvenile crime levels, as this partly determines islanders’ (sense of) safety. Prevention, combating, and the approach to (juvenile) crime are, of course, also covered. The description of the current situation offers an overview of how the legal system is organized, insofar as relevant to the situation of children. It also offers information about the juvenile criminal law that juvenile delinquents face, about aftercare, and victim support, and about immigration and human trafficking. The description ends with a review of legislation, policy, and a list of organizations and responsibilities.

The most up-to-date figures and data available in this area were used to compile this account.

1.2 General crime picture
The following provides a description of crime figures from the public prosecution service and the Caribbean Netherlands’ police force. This information mainly comes from the Registered crime on Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius 2008-2011 report by the IPOL service of the Netherlands Policy Agency (2012).

As far as Bonaire is concerned, this captures crime registered by the police force and public prosecution service between 2008 and 2011.

The report focuses predominantly on (policy) spearheads formulated by the public prosecution service and the police force, which are: offences against property, violent offences, and juvenile crime. In the case of offences against property, the data concerns burglaries of private homes and business premises, robberies, theft, and theft from and of vehicles. Violent offences are murder and manslaughter, acts of violence in public, physical abuse, and threats.

There are several caveats to be aware of when it comes to registration in the Actpol police system. Not all incidents are entered, incidents may have been counted twice,
some incidents may have been settled through personal mediation, and not all incidents are reported.\textsuperscript{1}

Refer to the Family and Parenting section for information about domestic violence and child abuse.

Every year, around 2,000 incidents that took place on Bonaire are logged in Actpol (the Caribbean Netherlands Police Force’s registration system). The majority of these registrations concern offences against property, which has seen a substantial rise over the years. In 2008, nearly half of all registrations (48.7%) are offences against property, which had risen to nearly three quarters (71.1%) of registered incidents by 2011 (see Table 5).

The most registered type of offence against property in 2011 was theft (without breaking and entering, and theft from vehicles), followed by house burglary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>841 (48.7%)</td>
<td>1,102 (54.4%)</td>
<td>1,247 (61.5%)</td>
<td>1,402 (71.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House burglary\textsuperscript{2}</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business premises burglary</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>1,009</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft from motor vehicle</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>217 (12.5%)</td>
<td>180 (8.9%)</td>
<td>200 (9.9%)</td>
<td>277 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery\textsuperscript{3}</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse\textsuperscript{4}</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>69</td>
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<td>Domestic violence</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>Murder/Manslaughter</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Weapons/Fire Arms</td>
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<td>Violence in public</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile</td>
<td>29 (1.7%)</td>
<td>23 (1.1%)</td>
<td>9 (0.4%)</td>
<td>28 (1.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minors</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other\textsuperscript{5}</td>
<td>641 (37.1%)</td>
<td>722 (35.6%)</td>
<td>571 (28.2%)</td>
<td>265 (13.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,728 (100%)</td>
<td>2,027 (100%)</td>
<td>2,027 (100%)</td>
<td>1,972 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textit{Table 5: Figures and percentages of offences to property, violent offences, and juvenile crime registered by Caribbean Netherlands Police Force Bonaire for 2008-2011.}\textsuperscript{6}

After a slight drop in 2009, the number of violent incidents registered was up in subsequent years. In 2011, 14% related to violent offences. Of the different kinds of violent offences, threats where registered most often in 2011, followed by physical abuse and robbery. Registered occurrences of other forms of crime showed a sharp drop. In 2008, 31.1% of all registered crime concerned other kinds of offences, while that percentage had dropped to 13.4% of the total by 2011.

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\textsuperscript{1} Department of IPOL, Korps Landelijke Politiediensten (2012). \textit{Geregistreerde criminaliteit op Bonaire, Saba en Sint Eustatius 2008-2011.}

\textsuperscript{2} Theft includes all instances of theft without burglary and theft from vehicles.

\textsuperscript{3} Armed assaults (atrako’s) are counted as robbery.

\textsuperscript{4} This concerns abuse without the use of arms. If a weapon is used, the incident is counted under weapons/fire arms.

\textsuperscript{5} This covers drug offenses, fraud, forgery, money laundering, illegal immigration, human trafficking, handling stolen goods and traffic violations.

\textsuperscript{6} Department of IPOL, Korps Landelijke Politiediensten (2012). \textit{Geregistreerde criminaliteit op Bonaire, Saba en Sint Eustatius 2008-2011.}
Most offences are committed in Playa, which is the center of Kralendijk and where many islanders and tourists go for entertainment. After Playa, Antrioil and Nikiboko are the areas with the highest crime rate, although crime in Antrioil and Nikiboko was down considerably in 2011. At diving locations, crime consists mainly in offences against property, generally theft from divers’ parked cars.

Cases registered with the BES islands’ public prosecution service paint a picture that differs from that of police registrations. Although the police system shows a sharp rise in the number of offences against property (from 841 registered offences in 2008 to 1,402 in 2011), the number of cases registered with the BES islands’ public prosecution service shows a rise in 2009 (151) followed by a drop in 2010 (144) and 2011 (97).

Based on the available figures, it turns out that between 6% and 14% of incidents of offences against property reported to the police lead to a case registered with the BES islands’ public prosecution service. Looking at the cases that are brought, it becomes clear that the police focuses mainly on serious offences, such as violent offences and sex offences, the number of cases of which was up significantly in 2011. In 2010, the number of sex offence cases stood at nine, while this number rose to eleven in 2011. For violent offences, the number of cases registered with the BES islands’ public prosecution service is relatively a lot higher. Every year, between 70 and 140 violent cases are registered. In reality, the number of violent offences is even higher, as the BES islands’ public prosecution service classes ‘atrakos’ (armed robbery) as offences against property.

The number of cases submitted to the BES islands’ public prosecution service every year varies widely.

There was a drop in 2010, followed by a rise in 2011, resulting in a higher number of cases settled in 2011 (327) than in 2008 (290).

In 2011, there was insufficient evidence in 40 of the 327 cases. When breaking down Bonaire’s public prosecution service’s cases against suspects based on the kind of offence, what stands out is that in 2011 more violent offences and homicides were settled than offences against property, while this was the other way round in previous years. The share of other offences, however, in cases settled did remain reasonably stable.1

In a 2008 victims survey on Bonaire, 71.5% of respondents indicate that they have been victim of crime. Over a quarter of respondents on Bonaire, 26.9%, said they were a victim of crime in the year 2007/2008. Nearly one quarter of respondents on Bonaire, 24.1%, revealed that their house had been burgled at some point in their lives, with 6% saying it happened to them in 2007/2008. Further, 14.3% of respondents on Bonaire said they were robbed at some point in their lives, with 7.6% saying it happened to them in 2007/2008. Of all respondents on Bonaire, 8.2% answered that they had been attacked or threatened, with 3.5% indicating that that was in 2007/2008.

As far as the willingness to report crime is concerned, 39% of people who fell victim to crime in 2007/2008 actually reported it to the police. 73.1% of respondents on Bonaire say they would report a burglary to the police. And 43.6% would report theft to the police, while 54.8% would report an assault of threat.2 The report ‘Registered crime on Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius’ by the Netherlands Policy Agency points out that the low willingness to report crime is down to various reasons, such as doubts about the effectiveness of the police, the small scale of the island, and fear of reprisals. Police spokespersons have, however, pointed to improvement in the area, which is believed to be partly due to new regulations that empower citizens to complain about the actions of the police.3

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The 2011 perception study for the Caribbean Netherlands asked islanders whether they feel that the island is safer or less safe since the transition. About 39% of citizens found that the safety situation had got worse, while 30% felt safety had improved. This was linked to discontent with the functioning of the police.

One year down the line, people’s sense of safety has increased. In 2012, 48% are of the opinion that the island has got safer since 10/10/2010. 18%, however, say the opposite.

1.3 Juvenile crime situation
As becomes clear from Table 5, registered crime involving a minor decreased on Bonaire in 2009 and 2010. In 2011, there was a slight increase up to 28 registered under-age suspects (1.4%).

The number of under-age suspects registered with the public prosecution service is dropping rapidly. In 2008, there were 41 under-age suspects, while in 2011 this number had dropped to 26. This drop is related to a change in approach that was implemented in 2010. This new approach focuses on preventing minors aged between twelve and eighteen having to appear in court (see tackling juvenile crime).

Some adolescents commit burglary and more and more youths are using and selling drugs. The police lacks the capacity to solve burglaries and tackle the drug usage and dealing. Young people know that. There is a small group of minors who commit serious violent offences, such as atrakos (armed robberies). In 2010, there were many fights at schools that involved serious violence. In the early months of 2012, only five such fights were reported. This improvement is thought to be owed to the HALT settlement that the islands’ public prosecution service has started offering young offenders, which involves them doing community service or educational tasks.

What is particularly striking is that Spanish-speaking under-age migrants barely feature in juvenile crime figures. This is probably due to the fact that their parents have come to the island to work and, being migrants, are fearful of local authorities to some degree. Under-age migrants of Dutch descent, on the other hand, are increasingly posing a problem.

The Security Bonaire plan of 2006 signals that the number of at-risk youths, dropouts, and potential delinquents is growing. Insufficient parental guidance, pupil support, and after-school programs are leading to at-risk youths, dropouts, and juvenile delinquents being identified and intercepted too late, and subsequently to them (unnecessarily) going off the rails. Children in special education are particularly vulnerable and susceptible to criminal influences, and that while there is insufficient adapted schooling and support for this group of children. Many problem adolescents come from weak family structures and had to cope with the combined issues of poverty, affection deficit, violence, abuse, and/or addiction in the family.

In 2006, the Communities that Care survey was conducted among adolescents aged between thirteen and eighteen on the five islands of the Netherlands Antilles: Curaçao, Bonaire, St. Maarten, St. Eustatius, and Saba.

This survey showed that delinquent behavior and violence among young people was the least prevalent on Curaçao, followed by Bonaire.

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A quarter of Bonairian youths surveyed said they had been in a fight and/or admitted to having beaten someone up at some point. The percentage of adolescents that reported to sometimes or regularly carrying a weapon was 14% in the case of Bonaire. Of all adolescents surveyed on Bonaire, 3% said they had threatened someone for money, while 11% admitted to shoplifting. The percentage of youths that revealed that they had once been apprehended by police was 8% on Bonaire.

1.4 Crime prevention
Creating opportunities for positive leisure activities on the islands is part of the Minister of Health, Welfare, and Sport’s policy. For information about after-school activities, refer to the section on Recreation, Play, and Leisure Time.

In 2011, a Center for Youth and Family (CJG) was opened on Bonaire. The CJG provides parenting support, as well as community-based help.

In early 2012, the Positive Parenting campaign was launched under the responsibility of the Minister of Health, Welfare, and Sport, and in collaboration with local authorities, to introduce parents to a different way of parenting.¹

In case of concern about a child’s safety, the Guardianship Council is responsible for conducting an enquiry, reporting its findings and issuing its advice regarding a child protection order to the court.

When the court issues a supervision order for a child, this child will be assigned a family guardian. When a child cannot live at home temporarily or for a prolonged period of time, options of placing the child in foster care will first be explored. If foster care is not a viable option, children on Bonaire can since 2010 also be placed at Kas di Karko. This is a 24-hour shelter for boys and girls aged between eight and eighteen.² Furthermore, (pregnant) teenage girls can be placed at the Rosa di Sharon home, which is subsidized by the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport. In July 2012, a home was opened where adolescents with behavioral problems can stay long term. This home was set up by the Stichting Project using subsidies from the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport.

For further information about parenting support, community care, and family guardianship, refer to the section on Family and Parenting.

Public entities are tasked with enforcing compulsory school attendance. Each island has one attendance officer. The level of school absenteeism is high, and cases are often settled through a HALT settlement, for which adolescents and their parents have to attend a hearing.³ The CJG, youth care agency, and Bonaire Center of Expertise for Education Care have joined forces to offer parents and children help through schools at an early stage to prevent children dropping out of education. The Guardianship Council – to which cases can be referred – is also a party to these agreements.⁴ For further information about school attendance, refer to the Education section.

1.5 Combating crime
The Caribbean Netherlands Police Force has stations on each of the three islands. In tackling frequent and mid-level crime, the islands’ public prosecution service, the police, and the island authority have made offences against property, violent offences (including sex offences and street robbery), and juvenile crime the policy spearheads.

¹ Letter by the Minister of Security and Justice of 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80.
⁴ Letter by the Minister of Security and Justice of 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80.
The Caribbean Netherlands Police Force is still under development. The force currently has 115 employees, including seven police trainees, of a total intended number of 152 FTEs, comprising both police officers and administrative staff.

The police on Bonaire is also (temporarily) supported by fourteen FTEs from the Royal Netherlands Military Constabulary and two FTEs for management implementation. Understaffing is particularly pressing at the Caribbean Netherlands Police Force’s executive services, such as Investigation, Basic Community Policy and Intake, Information and Operational Support, where there are forty vacancies.¹

The Royal Netherlands Military Constabulary is furthermore also responsible for border control at the three islands’ airports and sea borders. On top of that, the Royal Netherlands Military Constabulary takes on police duties at the airports and community policing support on Saba and St. Eustatius.²

1.6 Tackling juvenile crime

In consultation with the public prosecution service, the Guardianship Council developed three intervention models in 2010: the HALT settlement, the public prosecutor model, and the judge model, all as ways of dealing with minor, medium-level, or serious offences. These are used to try to prevent minors ending up in court.

In the first phase of the model, a minor who has committed a minor offence (truancy, common assault, minor theft) can be punished. The public prosecution service has authorized the bario director (community police officer) to decide on a punishment, which will mostly be a HALT settlement.

In the second phase, a criminal offence will be reported to the police. In that case, the Guardianship Council will guide the public prosecutor on the nature of the settlement. The third phase sees the under-age suspect appear before a judge. These three intervention models are offered on each of the three islands.

The chain-based intervention model appears to be a success, considering the drop in the number of minors registered with the public prosecution service from 14% in 2009 to 8% in 2011. Police figures on the number of minors involved in incidents, however, showed a significant rise in 2011 on 2010. In 2011, 106 of the 150 reported incidents were settled through a HALT session, of which 97 ended in a sentence, order, or reprimand. This approach is also giving authorities greater insight into which adolescents are (co-)offenders or initiators and which are merely followers, as well as into the causes of juvenile crime. And finally, the approach is having a positive effect among pupils in terms of school attendance.³

Parties within the criminal law chain, namely the Guardianship Council, the public prosecution service, the police, the school attendance officer, and schools, have agreed to tackle school absenteeism and minor offences at school. A case group has also been set up in 2001 for cases of adolescents who have (or are likely to) come into contact with the criminal justice system. The case group involves close collaboration between the various chain partners on the ‘front side’ of the youth chain. A youth care case group was also set up. Indirect links were established between civil and criminal law chains to close gaps in the youth chain.⁴

1.7 Judiciary

The BES island’s public prosecution service is in charge of enforcing criminal law and other tasks specified by law on Bonaire. The public prosecution service’s primary task can be

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⁴ Letter by the Minister of Security and Justice of 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80.
subdivided into three sub-tasks: investigating criminal offences, prosecution for criminal offences, and supervising the implementation of sentences. The public prosecution service decides whether and for which criminal offences someone will be tried.\(^1\)

Cases coming to trial for the first time are generally handled by the Court of First Instance. These cases are generally heard by one judge. In organizational terms, the court is part of the Common Court of Justice of Aruba, Curaçao, St. Maarten, and Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. It has offices on Bonaire, Curaçao, and St. Maarten, while there are also once-monthly sessions on Saba and St. Eustatius.\(^2\)

Bonaire’s only judge is both delegated judge and civil-court judge for cases involving youths. Once a month, a judge from Curaçao comes to Bonaire to handle criminal trials, including juvenile cases. Due to the islands’ small scale, there are no dedicated juvenile court judges in the Caribbean Netherlands. Neither are there child-friendly facilities at the public prosecutor’s office and courts.\(^3\)

The Common Court handles appeal cases tried and sentenced at first-instance courts. Appeal cases are handled by multiple – three – judges.\(^4\) The court and associated court registry are based on Curaçao. In principle, the Court can have sessions on any of the islands. Several times a year, the Court handles appeals on Bonaire.\(^5\)

The Supreme Court of the Netherlands (hereinafter: Supreme Court) is the court of cassation for the Common Court of Justice of Aruba, Curaçao, St. Maarten, and Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. The Supreme Court is based in The Hague and is the Netherlands’ highest court. The Supreme Court is authorized to quash sentences by the Court. Not all sentences by the Court can be appealed before the Supreme Court. Cassation cases brought before the Supreme Court will not see the go over the cases again, but only address the so-called questions of law: have the law and procedural rules of law been applied properly by the court? Procedures before the Supreme Court come with mandatory legal representation.\(^6\)

1.8 Legal aid
Anyone whose annual earnings stay below $12,500 can request free legal aid from the Caribbean Netherlands Civil Service. In most cases, a personal contribution is not payable. In case of a dispute with an employer, a personal contribution is payable.\(^7\)

1.9 Juvenile sanctions
Both in the Caribbean Netherlands and the European Netherlands, the age of criminal responsibility is twelve.\(^8\)

The following sanctions are available for adolescents aged between twelve and sixteen:

- HALT settlement
- Reprimand
- Financial penalty
- Supervision order under criminal law

\(^3\) Information received in an email from Leo Tigges, liaison for the BES islands, Department of Security and Justice, 6 August 2012.
\(^4\) http://www.gemhofvanjustitie.org/. Consulted on 24 October 2012. And information received in an email from Justine Beumer-Gonggrijp, public prosecutor, public prosecution office Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, 2 April 2013.
\(^7\) http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/192/recht+op+kosteloze+rechtsbijstand.html
\(^8\) Wetboek van Strafvordering BES artikel 477
• Placement in a state educational home (comparable to placement in custodial institution for juvenile offenders, applied in exceptional cases)

The following sanctions are available for sixteen-years-olds and seventeen-year-olds:

• HALT settlement
• Reprimand
• Financial penalty
• Special conditions for a conditional sentence (such as Electronic Monitoring)
• Learning punishment (Anger management training)
• Community punishment order
• Counseling process by youth probation service
• Custody
• Electronic Monitoring in the event of Leave or Conditional Release
• Placement in a state educational home (comparable to placement in custodial institution for juvenile offenders, applied in exceptional cases)
• Supervision order under criminal law

Minors aged sixteen or seventeen who have committed a crime can be tried as adults both in the Caribbean and the European Netherlands.¹

Electronic monitoring has been available as a sanction option in the Caribbean Netherlands since January 2012. This monitoring happens from the Netherlands using GPS tracking.²

On Bonaire, Krusada offers besides care for addicts also work experience placements. These are seeing rapid development and attempts are made to realize (closer) collaboration with judicial authorities to get (former) prisoners and convicted persons a place in work projects. Like in its care offering, Krusada focuses these services on adults.

1.10 Youth probation
Since June 2010, the Guardianship Council has been authorized to perform youth probation tasks on all three islands of the Caribbean Netherlands. In 2011, the Guardianship Council entered into a partnership with the Caribbean Netherlands Probation Service for coordination of juvenile issues on Saba and St. Eustatius. One of the service’s employees has been stationed on Saba. This person coordinates the youth case group on the two Windward Islands and sentences intended and imposes by the public prosecutor or court.³ Given the increase in workload, this employee has been focusing on adults since late 2012. Investigators of the Guardianship Council on Saba and St. Eustatius are taking over youth probation duties.⁴

1.11 Juvenile detention
In 2008, the Custodial Institutions Agency renovated Bonaire’s existing detention center. At the end of 2010, the Custodial Institutions Agency extended the existing facility, taking the temporary capacity to 76 detainees, and adding a ring wall, security measures, visiting room, exercise yard, and offices. At the request of the public prosecution service (to prevent early releases and convicts never even going into custody at all), the police, and local authorities, capacity for a further 36 places was added in 2012. At the start of 2013, total capacity stood at 112 places.⁵

¹ Wetboek van Strafrecht BES, artikel 41 septies.
³ Letter by the Minister of Security and Justice of 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80.
⁴ Information received in an email from Leo Tigges, liaison for the BES islands, Department of Security and Justice, 6 August 2012.
Adults and juveniles are detained separately. A daytime program has been set up to ensure inmates have activities during the day, such as exercise, sports, recreation, and labor. There are educational facilities for both adults and minors, initially only for a trial period of two years (August 2011 – August 2013). Costs thereof are covered by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science. One teacher from the Scholengemeenschap Bonaire (high school) has been freed up to teach minors and adults up to the age of 24 years for several mornings a week. This teaching covers both regular subjects and literacy classes. Two days a week, a psychologist is on hand at the institution as part of the multidisciplinary team that visits the institution every week. The psychiatrist comes to the institution at least once a month and is also on call.

In collaboration with the Government Buildings Agency, the Custodial Institutions Agency is currently preparing new judicial facilities on Bonaire and St. Eustatius. Both these facilities will be multifunctional ones. They will be intended for both adult males and females, boys and girls, and persons in custody who need additional care. The new facility on Bonaire has a capacity of 107 places and the new facility on St. Eustatius will have a capacity of eighteen places. Both facilities are scheduled to be completed in 2015.

In July 2011, a report was issued as part of progress reporting on the recommendations of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) on the level of facilities at the custodial institution in the Caribbean Netherlands. Observers were satisfied with the current state of the custodial institution and the major headway made at the premises and in terms of the availability of expert staff. As far as that is concerned, the custodial institution meets national and international standards. Some criticism was expressed regarding the possibility of family members from St. Eustatius and Saba visiting inmates on Bonaire due to the large distance. Video contact through Skype has recently been introduced as a solution to this problem.

1.12 After care
After care for adolescents who are released from custody on the islands is provided by the probation service, provided it concerns a judicial measure (conditional release). There are barely any possibilities for after care on a voluntary basis. A ‘sheltered housing’ facility is lacking.

1.13 Victim support
On Bonaire, volunteers working for the Victim Support Agency (Bureau Slachtofferhulp) provide free support to victims and other parties affected by a criminal offence or a traffic accident, such as witnesses and surviving relatives. The Victim Support Agency offers practical, legal, and emotional counseling. The Victim Support Agency also advises parents and people affected on how best to help children or adolescents who have been through a shocking event.

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1 Letter by the Minister of Security and Justice of 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80.
Information received in an email from Leo Tigges, liaison for the BES islands, Department of Security and Justice, 6 August 2012.
5 Response to Parliamentary questions by representatives Ortega-Martijn and Schouten to the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and the State Secretary of Security and Justice about the detainees from Saba and St. Eustatius in Bonaire. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 no. 1603.
6 Information received in an email from Leo Tigges, liaison for the BES islands, Department of Security and Justice, 6 August 2012.
7 Informatiekrant Bonaire, Sint Eustatius en Saba. Editie 13, June 2012.
1.14 **Immigration**

The Netherlands’ Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND) has an office on each of the BES islands to receive residence permit or naturalization applications.

In 2011, 5,553 applications for a residence permit were submitted to the IND (refer to Table 6). Another 51 naturalization applications were submitted, of which forty were granted. The IND on the BES islands did not receive any applications for asylum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of application</th>
<th>Number submitted</th>
<th>Number granted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provisional residence permit application</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed-term residence permit</td>
<td>1,522</td>
<td>1,487</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixed-term residence permit extension</td>
<td>1,775</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent residence permit</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>297</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admission by law</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension of admission by law</td>
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<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement of non-application</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa return</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,553</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,411</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6: Production 2011 IND Caribbean Netherlands.*

Figures of the Royal Netherlands Military Constabulary show that around 82 persons were denied entry at the border, of which 63 persons were deported from the Caribbean Netherlands.

At the end of 2010, Bonaire had 15,666 inhabitants. Of this population, 63% was born in the former Netherlands Antilles, 19% in Central or South America, 11% in the Netherlands, 2% in the U.S. or Canada, and 5% in other countries.

Over the past ten years, the population of Bonaire grew by nearly fifty percent, mainly due to immigration. Thirty years ago, the percentage of persons born in the Netherlands Antilles stood at 93%.

1.15 **Human trafficking**

In the area of human trafficking – which includes child trafficking – a covenant is currently being fleshed out between the island authority, the public prosecution service, the police, the Military Constabulary, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and Labor Inspectorate. This covenant will enable information sharing between the various parties to make the fight against human trafficking and smuggling more effective. Various other

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1 Appendix to letter from the Minister for Immigration, Integration and Asylum, dated 10 February 2012. House of Representatives, Session year 2011-2012 no. 31 568 no. 97.
2 Information received by email from Michelle Verplancke, Senior/Deputy unit manager Immigration and Naturalisation Service Caribbean Netherlands, 3 December 2012.
3 Appendix to letter from the Minister for Immigration, Integration and Asylum, dated 10 February 2012. House of Representatives, Session year 2011-2012 no. 31 568 no. 97.
4 Letter by the Minister for Immigration, Integration and Asylum of 1 February 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 no. 31 568 no. 95.
Chain partners are also involved in these efforts, such as the special task force, the coast guard, customs, and the fire department.1

Every six weeks, the parties come together for a meeting on human trafficking chaired by the human trafficking response coordinator for the BES islands, Bonaire’s public prosecutor. These meetings are used to share information and make plans. One of these plans is for the police to set up a human trafficking database, which will allow collection and analysis of information from the various chain partners about possible cases of human trafficking.

The Military Constabulary organizes training sessions for staff of the relevant chain partners, and soon the special task force will too. In 2012, the Center of Expertise for Human Trafficking and Smuggling in the Netherlands organized a two-day course for the public prosecution service and Military Constabulary. Funding for such efforts is often an issue as the Caribbean Netherlands does not have a budget for this, and there is no funding from the central government in the Netherlands either.2

Bonaire’s Victim Support Agency has offered to take on the reporting center role for victims of human trafficking.3

CoMensha has been appointed by the European Netherlands’ Human Trafficking Task Force to be its buddy for the Caribbean part of the kingdom. In this capacity, CoMensha will maintain contacts with the various chain partners on the islands.4

In its buddy role, CoMensha is approached with a request from the islands for help about three times a year. This organization also arranges training sessions at the Scholengemeenschap Bonaire. CoMensha has found that children have little faith in police efforts in this area, and are afraid that the police does not take them seriously.

CoMensha reports that figures on human trafficking on Bonaire are not available. Several of the chain partners do suspect, however, that there are alarming situations on the island. Reports of children that are thought to have fallen victim to ‘sugar daddies’ and ‘sugar mamas’ can, however, not be substantiated with facts. Although there is a policy on paper on how to tackle human trafficking (including child trafficking), implementation of the policy in practice is still far from effective.5

In September 2012, three people were arrested on Bonaire following suspicions of human trafficking. These arrests were the result of an investigation by the Military Constabulary, for which they questioned between one hundred and one hundred and forty women. These women had worked as prostitutes at Pachi’s Place for several months.6

Work is currently going into a campaign to raise awareness of human trafficking, which is set to be launched on Bonaire around the 18th of October (Anti-Trafficking Day).7

1.16 Legislation

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2 Information received in an email from Justine Beumer-Gonggrijp, public prosecutor, public prosecution office Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, 2 April 2013.
3 Kingdom Representative for the public bodies of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba, Voorjaarsrapportage 2011.
5 Information received in an email from Judith Keller, CoMensha, 18 March 2013.
6 Information received in an email from Leo Tigges, liaison for the BES islands, Department of Security and Justice, 6 August 2012.
7 Information received in an email from Justine Beumer-Gonggrijp, public prosecutor, public prosecution office Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, 2 April 2013.
The general principle before the transition was that existing Netherlands Antillean law was to remain effective as much as possible. These laws were, as far as possible, directly converted into Dutch legislation, administrative measures, or a ministerial schemes. This also goes for legislation in the area of safety.

The Code of Criminal Procedure for the BES islands specifies how offences are prosecuted. This code stipulates, among other things, that someone can be tried for an offence committed before he or she had reached the age of twelve.

The Penal Code for the BES islands specifies what is considered a criminal offence and what sentences offences may carry. There is no separate criminal law for youths, but the Penal Code does contain sections that are relevant to trying minors (sections 9, 40, 41, 479 to 498).

The Caribbean Netherlands Police Force is governed by the Kingdom Act for Police on Curaçao, St. Maarten, Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. The Kingdom Act for the Common Court of Justice organizes the administration of justice on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba, as well as on Curaçao, Aruba, and St. Maarten.¹ The set-up, organization, and management of the public prosecution services on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba is laid down in the Kingdom Act for Public Prosecution Services on Curaçao, St. Maarten, Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba.²

The Security Act for the BES islands regulates the organization of the fire department, disaster response, and crisis management for Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba (BES islands). It also specifies which subjects have been left to the countries under the Kingdom Act for Police of Curaçao, of St. Maarten, and of Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba.³

From 1 January 2011, the merger of the three guardianship councils into one single Guardianship Council for the Caribbean Netherlands is regulated by the Civil Code for the BES islands (section 238, book 1). The Guardianship Council Degree for the BES islands came into force in April 2012.⁴

Admission and deportation of aliens is regulated by the Admission and Deportation (BES Islands) Act. Legislation on foreign nationals was amended as part of the transition. The main amendments were: introduction of an authorization for provisional residence and the re-entry visa; the possibility of submitting a request for protection; charges for residence permit applications for the Caribbean Netherlands; increase in the level of legal protection against immigration law measures that follow the Dutch model.⁵

### 1.17 Policy and activities

- Additional staff has been hired by the police, public prosecution service, and Guardianship Council.
- In consultation with the public prosecution service, the Guardianship Council developed three intervention models in 2010: the HALT settlement, the public prosecution service model, and the judge model, all as ways of dealing with minor, medium-level, or serious offences.⁶

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¹ [http://www.eerstekamer.nl/wetsvoorstel/32017_rijkswet_gemeenschappelijk](http://www.eerstekamer.nl/wetsvoorstel/32017_rijkswet_gemeenschappelijk)
² [http://www.eerstekamer.nl/wetsvoorstel/32018_rijkswet_openbare](http://www.eerstekamer.nl/wetsvoorstel/32018_rijkswet_openbare)
³ [http://www.eerstekamer.nl/wetsvoorstel/32207_veiligheidswet_bes](http://www.eerstekamer.nl/wetsvoorstel/32207_veiligheidswet_bes)
⁴ Information received by email from Atie de Vrij, Policy adviser, Judicial Youth Policy directorate, Ministry of Security and Justice, 4 April 2013.
⁵ Letter from the Minister of Immigration, Integration and Asylum, dated 1 February 2012. House of Representatives, Session year 2011-2012 no. 31 568 no. 95.
• Parties within the criminal law chain, namely the Guardianship Council, the public prosecution service, the police, the school attendance officer, and schools, have agreed to tackle school absenteeism and minor offences at school.¹

• A case group was set up in 2010 for adolescents who have come (or are in danger of coming) into contact with the criminal justice system to enable intensive collaboration between the various chain partners ‘on the front side’ of the youth chain. A youth care case group was also set up. Links were established between civil and criminal justice systems to cover the entire youth chain.²

• Since June 2010, the Guardianship Council has been handling youth probation tasks on all three islands of the Caribbean Netherlands.³

• Bonaire’s custodial center was done up and extended in 2008 and 2010.⁴ A daytime program was designed for the center, which has also started offering educational services to inmates.⁵

• New multifunctional custodial institutions are currently being built on Bonaire and St. Eustatius. These are expected to open in 2015.⁶

• The capacity of the current custodial institution has been expanded using container cells pending the construction of new buildings.⁷

• A central control room has been set up for the three islands, which is based on Bonaire, and which directs emergency services provided by the police, fire department, and ambulance service.

• The police force is working on a multiple-year training plan with a view to training staff up to the required level and introducing new knowledge into the force.⁸

1.18 Organizations and responsibilities

Ministry of Security and Justice
The Ministry of Security and Justice is responsible for judicial youth policy, including juvenile crime and policy in the area of victim support, probation, disaster response, police, fire department, and immigration.

Governors of public entities
Governors of public entities on the three islands are responsible for maintaining law and order, crisis management, and disaster response. The police force comes under the authority of the governor of the relevant public entity as they maintain law and order and execute emergency response duties.

Kingdom Representative
The Kingdom Representative can be brought in by the governor as an intermediary in case of a fire, disaster, or a crisis and requests for military assistance. The police and Military Constabulary can also turn to the Kingdom Representative with such requests. In the event of a disaster, crisis, calamity with impact that reaches beyond an island, the Kingdom Representative can direct the actions of governors. He or she can also intervene...
in the event of a state of emergency. The Kingdom Representative also sees to it that public entities’ disaster and crisis plans are in order.1

**Caribbean Netherlands Police Force**
The Caribbean Netherlands Police Force has stations on each of the three islands. The police’s main duties are to maintain law and order, prevent and investigate offences, and relief work.2 The police force comes under the authority of the governor of the relevant public entity as they maintain law and order and provide emergency relief services. When investigating criminal offences, the police force comes under the authority of the joint procurator general for Curaçao, St. Maarten, and Caribbean Netherlands. In an organizational sense, the police force is part of the Directorate-General for Police of the Ministry of Security and Justice.3

**Fire service**
Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba have one shared fire service made up of three local brigades. The fire service is the implementing entity for basic firefighting, emergency relief services, and disaster response.4

**Royal Netherlands Military Constabulary**
The Military Constabulary is responsible for border control, policing airports, and supervising civil aviation security. The Military Constabulary also supports police services on Saba and St. Eustatius. As part of the aforementioned duties, the Military Constabulary is also in charge of fighting migration and drugs crime.5

**Public Prosecution Service for the BES Islands**
The BES islands’ public prosecution service is in charge of enforcing criminal law and other tasks specified by law on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. The public prosecution service’s primary task can be subdivided into three sub-tasks: investigating criminal offences, prosecution for criminal offences, and supervising the implementation of sentences. The public prosecution service decides whether, and if so for which criminal offences, someone will be tried.6 The public prosecution service for the BES islands does not come under the Joint Board of Procurators General for Curaçao, St. Maarten, and the Netherlands (the BES islands).7

**Supreme Court of the Netherlands**
The Supreme Court of the Netherlands is the court of cassation for the Common Court of Justice. The Supreme Court is based in The Hague and is the Netherlands’ highest court. It is also the highest court for Aruba, Curaçao, St. Maarten, and the BES islands in terms of civil and criminal law.8

**Common Court of Justice for Aruba, Curaçao, St. Maarten and for Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba**
The Common Court administers justice in the first instance, as well as handles appeal cases on the islands.9

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5 Ministry of Justice, Letter to the House of Representatives about the status of judicial facilities on the BES islands as per 10 October 2010, dated 4 October 2010.
7 Ministry of Justice, Letter to the House of Representatives about the status of judicial facilities on the BES islands as per 10 October 2010, dated 4 October 2010.
Caribbean Netherlands Custodial Institutions Service
The Caribbean Netherlands Custodial Institutions Service implements, on behalf of the Minister of Security and Justice, sentences and custodial measures imposed by a court. At present, the service has only one site on Bonaire with capacity for 76 men, women, and minors. New custodial facilities are currently being built on Bonaire and St. Eustatius.¹

Guardianship Council for the BES islands
The Guardianship Council for the BES islands protects the interests of children whose development and upbringing are under threat. The council conducts independent investigations, plays an advisory role in legal procedures, can propose measures or sanctions, and collects child support. The council also offers pre-trial assistance to adolescents in pre-trial custody.

The Guardianship Council works closely together with other entities such as youth care and family guardianship, the probation service, the police, the public prosecution service, and the judiciary. The council has introduced three intervention models, including the HALT settlement, and is responsible for probation services for minors.²

Victim Support Agency
Volunteers working for the Victim Support Agency provide free support to victims and other parties affected by a criminal offence or a traffic accident, such as witnesses and surviving relatives. There is a Victim Support Agency on each of the three islands.³ The Bonaire office has expressed a willingness to also serve as a reporting center for victims of human trafficking.⁴

Law Enforcement Council
The Law Enforcement Council is an intranational body of Curaçao, St. Maarten, and The Netherlands. This council is in charge of general inspections of the effectiveness and quality of various services and institutions that are part of the judicial chain on Curaçao, St. Maarten, and Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. This council also supervises the effectiveness and quality of judicial collaboration between Curaçao, St. Maarten, and the Netherlands insofar as it concerns the BES islands.⁵

Caribbean Netherlands Unit of the Immigration and Naturalization Service
The Immigration and Naturalization Service Unit in the Caribbean Netherlands handles residence permit and naturalization applications. Each of the three BES islands has an Immigration and Naturalization Service Desk.

Caribbean Netherlands Civil Service
The Civil Service in the Caribbean Netherlands is in charge of assessing requests for free legal aid.

2 Children on safety
Various of the children surveyed say they feel unsafe on Bonaire sometimes. In the street, when there’s a fight, when people are drunk, or when they are harassed. Or at home, where some children say they fear burglars or being attacked. The children know there is crime on the island, but thankfully not all have been directly confronted with it. Some children say they feel the level of safety has deteriorated.

³ Informatiekrant Bonaire, Sint Eustatius en Saba. Editie 13, June 2012.
⁴ Kingdom Representative for the public bodies of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba, Voorjaarsrapportage 2011.
Other children say they feel very safe and are not bothered by fights or drunk people. They feel Bonaire is generally quiet and pleasant, especially compared to Curaçao, where they feel you do have to be careful not to get shot.¹

‘I feel safe in Rincon. Even though I sometimes see drunk people on the street walking around or fighting over domino games because people are so drunk. They then throw bottles at each other or get their guns out.’(girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

‘Safety on Bonaire is declining sharply. You can’t leave the car doors open anymore. You need alarms everywhere, at home and in shops. Otherwise they can break in. It didn’t use to be like this. I am definitely afraid. I don’t like going out on the streets alone anymore. Especially not around my neighborhood.’(girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

Children also have an opinion on juvenile crime. They say there is little to do on the island, causing children to get bored. Children then start doing criminal things out of boredom. Children draw that same conclusion when asked about recreation, play and leisure time on the island.²

One girl shares that many of her female friends are treated badly by their boyfriends. She confronts these boys and tells them to stop doing that.³

One of the children surveyed states that the way juvenile crime is tackled is far from adequate.⁴

3 Young people on safety
The young people surveyed say a different approach is needed to prevent (juvenile) crime. In their opinion, what is needed is better alignment of the approach with the local situation on the island, as well as an assessment of what people really need in terms of help, guidance, and facilities.

4 Experts on safety
Experts say safety on Bonaire has deteriorated and that crime has increased. They hear about street robberies and conclude that the times of walking the streets at night undisturbed and leaving your windows and doors unlocked are well and truly over.

Like the children surveyed, the experts refer to boredom among many children and adolescents as a cause of crime. Boredom drives groups of adolescents to go and do something exciting, and that something is often of a criminal nature. This concerns mainly boys. Boys enjoy greater freedom, it is thought, while girls are given chores at home. Refer to Family and Parenting for more about this.

Shoplifting is, according to the experts, not very common, because shops have a lot of staff and there is ample social control.⁵

‘A lot of young people hang out on the street and come into contact with other young people. Then they think up something to do, and that is often something criminal.’(expert)

As far as prevention of juvenile crime is concerned, experts highlight the positive results of the HALT scheme. They are particularly pleased with the fast response rate and fine

¹ See quotes 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 486, 487, 488, 489.
² See quote 490.
³ See quote 491.
⁴ See quote 505.
⁵ See quotes 485, 492, 493, 495.
collaboration between the different entities. There are hearings where parents, Guardianship Council, youths, Youth and Sex Crime investigators, and others work together in getting children back on the straight and narrow. The community director initiative for neighborhoods is also well received.¹

There are, according to the experts, no facilities on Bonaire to deal with more difficult cases. There is no center for these children and they are sent to the Netherlands or Curacao. That takes a lot of time to organize. It also means these children no longer see their families, which, in turn, only aggravates their problems. The Guardianship Council, Youth Care, and Family guardianship Agency are looking into the necessity of a center for juvenile delinquents. The question is whether the number of youths involved justifies such an institution and whether it will be possible to attract appropriate staff.²

‘The island is small and the government believes that investment in this type of institution isn’t necessary. It is precisely this type of institution that can solve a lot of problems in all kinds of areas.’ (expert).

5 Literature on safety

The literature devotes ample attention to the subject of safety and the wide-ranging aspects that influence safety and people’s sense of safety.

Many of these elements relate to other aspects of children’s lives discussed in this report. The subject of (domestic) violence against children at home, for example, is covered in the Family and Parenting section. This section also states that the situation in which children grow up in a family has an effect on whether or not they develop ‘problem behavior’ in other areas. The lack of attention at home, for example, may affect the way a child behaves at school.

Safety also comes up when children are asked about education. The section on education provides more information about that under the header of school environment. Issues such as bullying, fighting at school, and other safety (or sense of safety) aspects are mentioned in that section.

The subject of safety also plays a role in children’s health (see the relevant chapter for more information). After all, unsafe or even dangerous behavior has a direct effect on children’s health. Whether it be unsafe sexual behavior or drug and alcohol abuse. The latter can, in turn, have an effect on children’s (subconscious) decision to display criminal behavior. This is how both subjects are closely interrelated.

The link between boredom and juvenile crime is also a subject that comes up, in the chapter on recreation, play, and leisure time to be exact.

The same goes for the link between children’s actual living situation and safety in and around the home. Refer to the chapter on housing conditions for more information about that.

So what will the following sections address? In the following, you will find the literature that provides information about safety in general, such as street safety, as it affects children’s – and their parents’ - living situation on the island.

5.1 Safety in general

Adequate and recent data on many aspects regarding children’s safety is largely lacking. In its closing remarks of 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child calls for the development and implementation of a data collection and evaluation system.

¹ See quotes 497, 498, 499, 503.
² See quotes 500, 501, 502.
The 2008 NGO report on the Netherlands Antilles also states that adequate data on children’s safety is unavailable. There is, for example, no information about child death rates, causes of death, and suicides among youths.\(^1\)

A report on home life on Bonaire for 2011-2015 shows that people in Bonaire’s neighborhoods are insufficiently benefiting from economic developments on the island. This comes to the fore in, among other things, unsafe situations in and around the home. The report claims this, in turn, leads to mischief, criminal behavior, and people feeling unsafe.

The 2012 Poverty Exploration shows that large groups of people having to live together due to poverty also comes with safety risks.\(^2\)

5.2 Crime

Needless to say, crime does not always target children, but it does partially determine the safety of children and the family in which they grow up.

In its closing remarks of 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child fears that race discrimination will continue to exist. The committee urges comprehensive protection against discrimination based on race, skin color, sex, language, religion, political or other views, national, ethnic, or social origin, possessions, disability, descent, or other status in any part of the kingdom. The committee also presses authorities to intensify awareness campaigns and other activities aimed at preventing discrimination and, if necessary, step up affirmative action for children from certain vulnerable groups, such as children from minority groups. In the committee’s view, the authorities must take all measures required to ensure that cases of discrimination against children from all sections of society are eradicated effectively.

The committee also expresses concern about the fact that manslaughter is among the main causes of death of older children on the islands. Although the committee does not specify which island(s), they do call for an investigation into this problem and elimination of the causes.

Aside from that, the committee recommends making violence against children and corporal punishment at home, school, and day care prohibited by law and enforcing this ban in all situations (see Family and Parenting).\(^3\)

In 2007, the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights condemned the absence of information about (sexual) exploitation of children. This committee also expressed concern about the absence of protection against violence and rape for boys.

The NGO report about the Netherlands Antilles submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2008) also highlights that data about (sexual) exploitation and child labor is lacking. On Bonaire, there are thought to be cases of very young children being forced to work in their parents’ business, but these occurrences are not reported to the police.\(^4\)

In its assessment of the Netherlands, a 2011 U.S. Department of State report on human trafficking also focuses on the situation on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. The BES islands are identified as a transit location and final destination for women and children who have fallen victim to human trafficking, as well as for men and women who are victim of unfree labor.

Female prostitutes on the islands are highly likely to fall into the hands of human traffickers, as are unsupervised children on the islands.

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1 See literature 81, 100.
2 See literature 33, 111.
3 See literature 16.
4 See literature 100, 18.
Local authorities and the Dutch government have not reported any possible victims of human trafficking. During the period covered by this study, there were no prosecutions or convictions for human trafficking on the islands.

The government provides support for human trafficking reporting centers on St. Maarten and Bonaire. There have not been any awareness campaigns specifically targeting potential customers of sex workers on the BES islands.¹

The 2009 statistical yearbook provides data from a survey conducted among victims on Bonaire in 2008.

On Bonaire, 71.5% of respondents stated that they had been the victim of a crime at some point in their lives. Over a quarter of respondents on Bonaire (26.9%) stated that this was in the year 2007/2008, of which 39% said they reported the crime to the police. Nearly a quarter of respondents on Bonaire (24.1%) answered that their houses had been burgled, with 6% saying that had happened to them in 2007/2008. And 14.3% of respondents on Bonaire also stated that they had been victim of personal theft, with 7.6% saying it happened to them in 2007/2008. Of all respondents on Bonaire, 8.2% said they had been attacked or threatened in their lives, with 3.5% saying they suffered something like that in the past year.

As far as the willingness to report crimes is concerned, 73.1% of respondents on Bonaire say they would report a burglary to the police. And 43.6% said they would be willing to report personal theft to the police, while 54.8% would report an attack or threat. The statistical yearbook also contains figures on the number of crimes from the different categories reported to the police in 2006.²

### 5.3 Youths

The literature about juvenile involvement in crime paints the following picture.

A youth survey from 2003 and 2007 shows that a large section of children on Bonaire is exposed to risk factors, including threats to their safety and possession of weapons. A relatively large number of children feel unsafe in their neighborhood (17%) and say they carry a weapon when they go out (7%). Protective factors offer insufficient counterweight. The degree of violence and juvenile delinquency is a cause for concern. The risk factors and problem behavior are closely interrelated.³

The 2006 Security Plan for Bonaire contains an analysis of the security situation on the island, highlighting that the number of at-risk adolescents, drop-outs, and potential delinquents is growing. Insufficient parental guidance, pupil support, and after-school programs are leading to at-risk youths, drop-outs, and juvenile delinquents being identified and intercepted too late, and subsequently to them (unnecessarily) going off the rails. Children in special education are particularly vulnerable and susceptible to criminal influences, and that while there is insufficient adapted schooling and support for this group of children. Many problem adolescents come from weak family structures and had to cope with the combined issues of poverty, affection deficit, violence, abuse, and/or addiction in the family. The approach in getting these parents positively involved in their children’s lives is, according to counselors, teachers, and pupils, inadequately aligned with the perceptions of the relevant group of parents, to whom this approach is barely getting through.

The shortage of resocialization and after care alternatives aimed at supporting (former) inmates in their return to society on Bonaire is felt particularly by the growing group of young convicts.

According to the Security Plan, the number of minors involved in common petty crime is increasing at an alarming rate. The police has adopted a more perpetrator and

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1 See literature 102, 56, 57.
2 See literature 14.
3 See literature 106.
A community-based approach in tackling this. The number of violent offences in
relationships is up and calls for an integrated approach.

Nearly all judicial organizations indicate, according to the Security Plan, that they lack
the manpower and resources to be able to adequately perform their core duties and
innovating projects. There is too little information provision, specialist youth care, and
care accommodation for problem youths and under-age criminals. Collaboration between
judicial and social services is inadequate.

The Security Plan opens possible avenues for solution and provides an implementation
framework.¹

A large survey among pupils aged between thirteen and eighteen in 2006 shows that
about a quarter of children on Bonaire has been in a fight and/or been involved in beating
someone up. 14% of children on Bonaire admitted to sometimes or regularly carrying a
weapon.²

3% of children on Bonaire said they had threatened someone for money, while 11%
admitted to shoplifting. The percentage of youths that revealed that they had been
arrested was 8% on Bonaire. The percentage of children who said they had been harassed
at some point was 34%.

A 2011 article shows that violent and delinquent behavior is very common among children
on the islands. Boys are twice as likely as girls to display this kind of behavior. The
strongest risk factor turns out to be whether a child has friends who engage in anti-social
behavior. A history of problem behavior in the family and parents’ positive attitude
toward anti-social behavior also turned out to be risk factors. A lack of connection with
the school, family management problems, and a lack of organization on the island also
provide a fertile breeding ground for violent and delinquent behavior. On the other hand,
possibilities for positive involvement in the family and strengthening of the family bond
were shown to help reduce the likelihood of delinquent and violent behavior.³

A study (2007) of the various types of crime on Bonaire shows that the youth
unemployment rate is high by international standards (2004: 36.8%).
The majority of cases of murder and manslaughter are committed by perpetrators aged
between 13 and 32 years, with minors aged between 13 and 17 being responsible for 11%
of such cases. Minors are involved mainly in offences against property, but are also
responsible for a large share of violent burglaries. Nearly all violent burglaries are
committed by young people aged between 12 and 26 years. When it comes to drug
offences, minors and young people even outnumber adults.⁴

The 2008 NGO report on the Netherlands Antilles shows that the criminal offences most
commonly committed by children are robbery, violent theft, and use of weapons. Such
offences are often committed while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Juvenile
perpetrators were often children who no longer attend school due to bad behavior or
economic circumstances. Juvenile delinquents generally had poor contact with their father
and were growing up in a family headed up by their mother.

Adequate (and recent) data is lacking in a range of areas. There was, for example, no
information available about children up to the age of twelve who have committed a
criminal offence, the number of children prosecuted by the police, the number of children
who have been witness to a criminal offence, the number of children arrested (or caught
red-handed). Neither is there any information about the lives of juvenile delinquents after
they leave prison, recidivism figures are lacking.⁵

¹ See literature 79.
² An article based on this 2010 research cites other figures on the carrying of weapons. See literature 60.
³ See literature 8, 60.
⁴ See literature 42.
⁵ See literature 100.
Police records for 2008 to 2011 (2012) show crime registered by the public prosecution service and the Caribbean Netherlands Police Force. For more on this, please refer to the Current Situation section (section 2) under ‘General crime picture’ and ‘Juvenile crime situation’.

In its fourth report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2012), the Dutch government makes reference to the situation of youths on the islands in 2009.

They have seen that there is ample aggressive and maladjusted behavior among adolescents of high school age and that “more adolescents” were coming into contact with the police and judicial authorities. At the same time, the island also had insufficient facilities to adequate act in response to these developments. The Dutch government points out that youth care and youth probation was lacking and that the quality and quantity of youth protection left much to be desired. To deal with these issues, a plan was drawn up for each island. These plans place the central focus on several elements, such as prevention, parenting support, youth health care, expansion of positive leisure activity possibilities, youth care, possibilities of (temporarily) removing children from their family, bolstering of youth protection, Guardianship Council, and Family guardianship.

5.4 Approach and sanction
The following literature in particular provides information about the approach to tackling crime on Bonaire.

A 2011 perception survey shows that people are relatively critical of the functioning of the police in the Caribbean Netherlands. People consider the police presence on the streets to be insufficient and have seen crime rates rise and safety fall since 10/10/2010. On balance, people are dissatisfied with the police’s performance. This translates into a decreased sense of safety on the islands (30% feel safety on the island has improved since 10/10/10, while 39% find that is has become more unsafe).

A subsequent survey in 2012 shows that people are more positive about the police. Police presence has been stepped up, and police performance has improved. As a result, the sense of safety on the islands has improved since 2011 (48% feel safety on the island has improved since 10/10/10, while 18% feel that the island become less safe).

People are generally positive about the fire service, which also improved in comparison to 2011.

The government report on the elimination of discrimination against women (2009) describes a lack of manpower and resources for an effective fight against human trafficking.

In 2009, the Committee on Human Rights expressed its concern about the fact that human trafficking is not a separate criminal office. The committee on the elimination of discrimination against women expressed the exact same concern in its final remarks in 2010.

In response to these concerns, the Dutch government reports in 2012 that it has made all forms of human trafficking punishable in the Criminal Code for Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba. It has also taken measures to facilitate a more effective fight against human trafficking.

In 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child stated that the minimum age for the most serious forms of child labor on the Netherlands Antilles (fifteen years) was too low.

1 See literature 32.
2 See literature 74.
3 See literature 27, 28.
4 See literature 51, 73, 17, 66, 37.
and in contravention of international standards. Their recommendation is to review this and to apply the International Labor Organization Convention on the elimination of the worst forms of child labor (No. 182), as well as the International Labor Organization Convention on the minimum age for admission to employment, to all sections of the Convention party.

The committee is also concerned about the absence of a comprehensive national strategy for the prevention of trafficking and sexual exploitation of children.

In its fourth report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2012), the Dutch government states that it will maintain the age limit of fifteen years in its definition of child labor. The 2000 Labor Act for the BES islands makes a distinction between children (persons under the age of fifteen) and young persons (persons aged fifteen and over, but under eighteen). Child labor is prohibited. The regime governing young persons is more lenient, they are not allowed to perform labor before 7am and after 7pm. Youths are also not allowed to perform hazardous labor. Hazardous labor is defined in the Employment of Young Persons Decree for the BES islands.¹

In 2007, the Council of Europe’s European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) visited a prison and police cells on Bonaire.

Their conclusions after the visit were as follows: Inmates complained about the way they were treated by police officers: beating, kicking, verbal violence, long detention in a police cell (sometimes as long as eighteen days), excessive use of violence when arrested at home, and rough physical treatment of family members, little contact allowed with family, lawyer, or doctor.

The committee found the police cells in Rincón to be in a reasonable condition. Ventilation, a bell to call officers, and possibilities for inmates to get some air were, however, lacking. The committee was less pleased with the cells at the Kralendijk police station: dirty, faulty sanitary facilities, dirty mattresses, no bell to call officers, and no possibility of getting some air or exercise. These cells have since been improved.

The CPT found the atmosphere at Bonaire’s prison complex to be good, and inmates did not complain about anything. At the time of the visit, there were no under-age inmates at the prison. The committee considered staffing levels to be too low, and ascertained that there were not enough beds, forcing some inmates to sleep on mattresses on the floor. There were no activities for inmates, other than watching TV, and they could not get exercise every day. Medical care was lacking because the nurse was on long-term leave.²

In 2010 and 2011, reports were published about the implementation and execution of improvements after the CPT’s visit to the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba in June 2007. The main conclusions about Bonaire are:

- A new police cell complex was built in Kralendijk, and the old police cell complexes in Rincón and Kralendijk are no longer in use.
- Facilities and medical care at the penitentiary institution had been improved significantly, with hygienic circumstances in good shape and adequate staffing levels.³

The 2008 NGO report on children’s rights in the Netherlands Antilles highlighted several bottlenecks. One such bottleneck was the lack of resources and manpower at the islands’ prisons. There were reports of children sharing cells with adult inmates. Education at the prisons was still impossible.

¹ See literature 16, 74.
² See literature 40.
Another bottleneck was that there are no child-friendly hearing rooms on Bonaire, although this was solved creatively in collaboration with other organizations. Neither were there special protection programs for children who had witnessed an offence. A recurring problem was that of the absence of recent and adequate data in a range of areas (see above).¹

In a 2009 graduation study, the researcher calls for the current prison system on the BES islands to be expanded with a multifunctional judicial institution with all facilities (except for detention for medical reasons), both on Bonaire and St. Eustatius.

The current Netherlands Antillean prison system has only one supervisory body. A formal right of complaint for forensic patients and detained youths is also lacking. There is no data available about the nature of complaints, there are no consistent internal rules, and communications with inmates is poor.

The Council for the Administration of Criminal Justice and Protection of Juveniles should be given a role and implement improvements. However, this council does not have any duties under legislation that applies to the BES islands.²

In 2009, the Committee on Human Rights expresses its concerns about conditions at Bonaire’s prison and the treatment of inmates by police in the prison.³

In its closing remarks in 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child concludes that the Netherlands maintains the reservation on articles 37 and 40 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These reservations allow it to try children aged sixteen and over under adult criminal law under certain circumstances, and consequently make exceptions to the right to legal aid. The committee urges the Dutch government to revoke these reservations.

The committee reiterates its concern about the fact that sixteen-and-seventeen-year-olds on the Netherlands Antilles can be sentenced to life imprisonment. The committee calls for application of juvenile criminal law and abolishment of life sentences for juveniles. Apart from that, the committee urges authorities to ensure that deprivation of liberty for juvenile offenders be used only as a last resort and that sentences be as short as possible.⁴

In their fourth report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2012), the Dutch government indicates that youth probation activities were launched on Bonaire in June 2012. Bonaire’s Guardianship Council has recruited an employee specifically for that purpose. This person has, in close consultation with the public prosecution service, developed three intervention models: the HALT settlement, the public prosecution service model, and the judge model, all as ways of dealing with minor, medium-level, or serious offences (see Current Situation for explanation).

On October 10th, 2010, new BES legislation came into force on the islands. The islands have their own Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure, while the Prison System Act for the BES islands was also implemented, although this currently governs only adults.⁵

An inspection report by the Law Enforcement Council (2012) highlights a range of problems regarding the crime reporting process at the Caribbean Netherlands Police Force. The crime reporting process has not been described, general guidelines for reports and/or quality standards for the treatment of people reporting a crime are lacking, reports are not registered consistently and structurally, rooms at Bonaire’s Playa police station where people report crime are in poor condition, the quality of (registration of) reports is

¹ See literature 100.
² See literature 49.
³ See literature 51.
⁴ See literature 16.
⁵ See literature 74.
often inadequate, police only sporadically report back to reporting parties, and reporting parties and victims are not always referred to the required assistance and counseling.¹

6 The Convention on the Rights of the Child on safety

Safety is a basic factor in a child’s physical and social functioning. If safety is absent, the child will also not be able to exercise his or her other rights. All rights formulated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child relate to a child’s safety.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child therefore devotes ample attention to children’s safety and protection of children against breaches of their safety. These rights are minimum rights and also apply to children growing up in the Caribbean Netherlands.

The Convention focuses on guaranteeing children’s safety and health in the various spheres covered in this report. Needless to say, not all articles are equally applicable to the situation of children on Bonaire.

• Every child has the inherent right to life and development (see Family and Parenting): Article 6.
• Children must be protected against discrimination: Article 2.
• Children’s safety in their family environment must be guaranteed and they must be protected against all forms of violence, including child abuse (also refer to Family and Parenting): Articles 5, 9, 18, 19.
• Children must be protected against abduction: Article 11.
• Children must be protected in terms of safety in their living situation and have a right to privacy (see Living Conditions): Articles 16, 27.
• In situations where parents have handed over the care of their children, children must also be protected, such as in child care or when a child is temporarily placed elsewhere (see Family and Parenting): Articles 18, 20, 25.
• Children’s safety at school must be protected (see Education): Articles 28, 29.
• Every child must be protected against harmful influences that form a threat to their health and therewith to their safety, such as alcohol and drugs (see Health): Article 33.
• Children must be protected against child labor, unsafe work, and against human trafficking: Articles 32, 34, 35, 36.
• Children who due to their actions come into contact with criminal law, and are consequently detained, must be treated with humanity: Articles 37, 40.
• Every child who is a victim must be protected, helped, and supported: Article 39.

7 Conclusion

It is, at this point in time, impossible to compile a comprehensive picture of the realization of all children’s rights in the realm of safety as formulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is down to the absence of many relevant details. A conclusion that can be drawn is that there are various factors in areas that have a negative influence on the safety of children on Bonaire and even form a threat to their safety. Some of these factors are related to children’s situation at home (see Family and Parenting), while others relate to the situation at school (see Education) or the limited possibilities for constructive leisure activities (see Recreation, Play, and Leisure Time).

The way children who have come into contact with criminal law are dealt with has improved over the past year. Improvements have also been implemented at the island’s custodial institutions. There are, however, still major challenges, such as in the area of prevention and after care. Resources needed to tackle these areas are currently lacking.

¹ See literature 81.
On a number of points, legislation governing the island does not comply with the minimum requirements specified by the Convention on the Rights of the Child for adequate protection of children and to offer them the safety they are entitled to. A ban on corporal punishment, for example, is lacking. And trying sixteen-and-seventeen-year-olds under adult criminal law and the possibilities of life imprisonment for young people in that age bracket is not consistent with the minimum requirements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The new approach on Bonaire with a more effective focus on juvenile offenders, however, is well aligned with the philosophy of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: an educational approach for young offenders.
Recreation, play, and leisure time

The subject of Recreation, play, and leisure time is closely related to many other subjects addressed in this report, such as family and parenting, education, and health.

The degree to which children are able to enjoy their right to recreation, play, and leisure time has a considerable impact on whether they will be able to develop healthily.

Alongside family and school, the domain of leisure time is sometimes referred to as the third child-rearing environment. After all, that is when children learn to interact with peers and organize their free time, their own time. This is an indication of how important this subject is.

1 Current situation

1.1 Recreation, play, and leisure time on Bonaire

There is only scant information available about the options open to adolescents on the island. The following will present, based on the available information, an overview of what's available in terms after-school programs, sports, cultural activities, playgrounds, libraries, religion, and public transport.

1.2 After-school programs (from age 4)

The Stichting Jeugdwerk Jong Bonaire (Young Bonaire Youth Work Foundation) organizes a varied array of after-school activities for children and adolescents on Bonaire in the age bracket from twelve to twenty years. With a total of 265 children registered, the center is visited by around 150 children and adolescents every day.

The activities on offer include (water) sports activities, cultural activities, and activities focused on general development. The foundation regularly organizes events and sports tournaments, as well as workshops for parents, and also provides social counseling for both parents and youths.

Jong Bonaire looks for host families and provides mediation services to enable adolescents to go to college in the U.S., covering college tuition for the first year.

Since 2011, the foundation has also been running a summer program. They can furthermore provide tutoring and help any child with their homework. Coached by subject teachers and activity counselors, children who attend these services are required to do their homework every day from 3pm to 4pm.

Since 2013, Jong Bonaire has been opened during evening hours for young people aged up to 27 years. Jong Bonaire has set up the Sports and Exercise course in conjunction with the level 2/3 senior secondary vocational education section at the Scholengemeenschap Bonaire. Aside from that, the foundation has also launched the Coach Active project in collaboration with the NSIB (Netherlands Institute for Sports and Exercise) to enable drop-outs to get an entry-level qualification for level 1 senior secondary vocational education. As part of this program, these adolescents organize activities at community centers, turning these drop-outs into role models in their own community.
In 2013, Jong Bonaire also opened a learning, residential, and work center for adolescents aged between 18 en 27.1

Aside from funding from the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport (2012: $400,000), Jong Bonaire also receives a subsidy of $113,698 from Bonaire’s public authority. The parental contribution for these services is income-related, amounting to anywhere between $10 and $100 per semester.2

Since September 2011, the FESBO3 foundation has been running an after-school program for elementary school children aged between four and twelve. These children attend the foundation’s program on school days between 1pm and 5.30pm. The intention is to also extend this care to holiday periods. FESBO currently has 460 children registered. There is a waiting list. Since August 2011, FESBO has been receiving a $449,816 grant from Bonaire’s public authority for after-school care for children aged between four and twelve. Parents pay $5 per child per school year.

Besides this kind of large-scale out-of-school care, there are also a limited number of after-school facilities at private homes. These are focused mainly on helping children with their homework.4

1.3 Sports

In 2009, DSP-groep was commission by the Netherlands Institute for Sport and Exercise (NISB) to perform a quick scan of the sport and exercise situation on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba, funded by the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport. The study showed that there are sufficient public sports facilities on Bonaire, including an artificial-grass soccer pitch and a concrete athletics track, a baseball and softball field with bleachers, a swimming pool, two gymnastics rooms, six playing fields in neighborhoods, and a sports center. However, the quality of these facilities is often not up to Dutch standards. The swimming pool has meanwhile been declared unfit and closed.

Bonaire’s public authority has meanwhile launched catch-up efforts by, among other things, restoring the dilapidated soccer fields. An artificial soccer field was installed at the stadium in Rincón, as well as better floodlights. An artificial-grass field has also been laid in the North Saliña neighborhood, while the artificial-grass field of the Uruguay soccer club in the Antriol neighborhood was also restored, just like Little League’s baseball field in the same neighborhood.5

There are also several commercial facilities, such as a fitness center and water sports facilities. Bonaire has relatively many small sports clubs that are organized informally. Consequently, the quality and continuity of such clubs is poor. And yet, the presence of relatively many smaller clubs is still necessary to be able to have a league.

The study highlighted the absence of a structure of volunteering on Bonaire, meaning that few people do work for a sports club without pay. Soccer, volleyball, baseball, softball, basketball, and table tennis are the most popular sports on Bonaire. Windsurfing and scuba diving are popular too. Clubs charge their members little to no membership fees. Members generally help their clubs financially by contributing to rent payments for the club’s accommodation and to covering the costs of organizing competitions. Pupils in elementary education have physical education, although these classes were not taught by qualified teachers in 2009.6

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1 Information received in an email from Ilona Burgers, manager of the Stichting Jeugdwerk Jong Bonaire, on 29 March 2013.
2 Letter from the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, dated 22 June 2012, to the House of Representatives. House of Representatives, session year 2010-2011 33000 IV nr. 76.
3 Fundashon Federashon Sentronan di Bario Boneiru.
4 Letter from the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, dated 22 June 2012, to the House of Representatives. House of Representatives, session year 2010-2011 33000 IV nr. 76.
5 Information received in an email from Ilona Burgers, manager of the Stichting Jeugdwerk Jong Bonaire, on 29 March 2013.
The NISB supports Bonaire in the area of sport and exercise. They have helped set up so-called exercise teams that organize and run sporting activities. These exercise teams focus on, among other things, running out-of-school sports activities. They also organize sports tournaments, sports days, and sports camps. The NISB has consciously chosen to implement sports and exercise activities through education. In 2013, the NISB and Bonaire’s public authority will join forces with the Indebon organization in organizing a Street League in Bonaire’s communities. The Street League project is intended for adolescents in the twelve-to-sixteen age bracket, forging closer relationships between the various communities and their inhabitants.

A 2010 study of cycling on Bonaire showed that few of the islanders use a bicycle to get around. The reasons for that are: absence of a ‘cycling mentality’, poor quality roads, behavior of other road users toward cyclists, lack of places where you can park a bicycle, high costs of bicycles.

Resources made available by USONA/SEI were used to do up three gyms.

1.4 Cultural facilities

Over the past few years, over ninety cultural projects on the six islands that make up the Caribbean part of the Kingdom received subsidies under the KulturA scheme. This scheme run by the Mondriaan Fund in collaboration with the Fund for Culture Participation, Performing Arts Fund, and the Dutch Foundation for Literature was intended for single investments in material, knowledge, or networking. It was supposed to strengthen the cultural infrastructure in the Dutch Caribbean islands and boost (international) exchange. The scheme stopped accepting applications in September 2012. Potential applicants can, however, still apply for regular funding from the participating funds.

The following will describe the cultural options children on Bonaire have. This is not an exhaustive list, but it does paint an initial picture of the island’s cultural offering for children.

Children on Bonaire can take music lessons, including piano and trumpet, at Bonaire’s school of music. Fundashon Plataforma Kultural and the Stichting Kunstzinnige Vorming Rotterdam (Rotterdam Association for Education in the Arts) have over the past year helped the Skol di Musika (School of Music) relaunch. In 2013, they started collecting instruments in the European Netherlands for Bonaire’s school of music. The private provider of guitar lessons, Elger, is based in the Skol di Musika, and also provides violin and quarta lessons. The school is also home to the folkloric youth music group Kara Kora.

Several churches and community centers also organize music-based activities for children.

The Foundation for Art and Culture on Bonaire mainly works to promote and educate about Bonairian culture and art. In 2012, the foundation opened a school of music in the neighborhood of Rincón. The vocal and music group Tutti Frutti in Rincón also comes under the foundation. The foundation runs the ‘Art and Culture at School’ project in close

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2 Information received in an email from Ilona Burgers, manager of the Stichting Jeugdwerk Jong Bonaire, on 29 March 2013.


5 http://regelingkultura.wordpress.com


collaboration with all schools, cultural organizations, and art organizations on Bonaire. This foundation uses programs customized to pupils in trying to encourage them to live and maintain Bonairean art and culture. Children engage in these activities outside school hours. Pupils can enroll in the program at school. The program comprises, among other things, dancing, singing, musical instrument lessons, and learning to make art. There is no charge for entering the program.1

De Fundashon Streanan di Boneiru organizes various activities, such as the Dia di Boneiru, a day a writing and performing songs about the culture of Bonaire. There are also plans to set up a theater workshop in collaboration with La Tentashon.

The Dance Sensation Foundation has been providing dancing lessons for children aged 4 and up since 2008. This school of dancing also organizes workshops at schools and as part of after-school programs. By the end of 2011, the school had around pupils.2

The Fundashon Plataforma Kultural was founded in 2010 to improve the island’s cultural infrastructure and intensify collaboration between organizations on Bonaire and with organizations elsewhere. In April 2012, the Plataforma Kultural was given a grant to look into whether there would be social support on the island for a Youth Culture Fund and for the writing of a founding plan.3 This fund responds to the issue of children and adolescents from poor families barely being able to engage in cultural activities. An action plan has been drawn up and the project is awaiting funding.4

Bonaire is home to the Bonaire Museum, the Mangazina di Rei open-air museum, and the Washington Slagbaai-Park museum.5 The Mangazina di Rei museum also organizes music lessons for children from Rincón.6

1.5 Other activities for children
The Bonaire Youth and Family Center (CIG) organizes activities for children and adolescents and has a Temateka (toy library) where children can borrow themed boxes of games.7 The Bonaire Youth Outreach Foundation, which is a Christian organization, also organizes activities for and by adolescents, including a weekly radio program, social activities, and information sessions about crime and sexuality. In 2010, this foundation had young people, with financial aid from UNESCO, made a film about HIV and aids.8

1.6 Playgrounds
Bonaire has the We Dare to Care playground. Free entrance.

1.7 Library
Each of the three islands has one or multiple branches of a library.

1.8 Religion
The majority of Bonaire’s population (77%) is Roman Catholic. There is also a small protestant community, and evangelical congregations are growing rapidly (about 10% of the population).9 What is striking is that Bonaire has no Jewish inhabitants, while the other islands, such as Curacao, do.

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4 Information received in an email from Marieke Knoel, Director of Mobiliteit in Muziek, on 2 April 2013.
6 Information received in an email from Marieke Knoel, Director of Mobiliteit in Muziek, on 2 April 2013.
8 Information from interviews with young people on Bonaire, https://www.facebook.com/NayzaMovie
9 http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonaire
There are three Roman Catholic and two Protestant churches on Bonaire. In the previous century, Jehovah’s witness and Seventh-day Adventists also settled on the island.

1.9 Public transport
Public transport on Bonaire is provided by busses and minibuses with an AB license plate. There are also a few taxis. Public transport does not adhere to a fixed timetable or fixed routes. People who want to use public transport are required to call the driver or know where a driver is at that time. Transport to school is provided for pupils at fixed times. Parents are charged for this.

Most employers (small ones and large ones) arrange transportation for staff members who don’t have their own means of transport. They do so in different ways: through their own corporate transportation service, by making arrangements with AB drivers, or by giving staff members a financial allowance to pay for transport.

Many other organizations, such as sports clubs, also have their own minibuses. Anyone who can afford a car will buy one. The people of Bonaire also like giving each other a lift. Public transport on Bonaire is not subsidized by the government.¹

In 2012, resources supplied by USONA/SEI were used to run a pilot of a fixed-route bus connection (from Rincón to Playa). Bus stops were built and a baseline measurement and assessment were performed for the bus route. There are no regular ferry services from and to Bonaire.²

1.10 Legislation

The Dutch Cultural Policy Act applies to the islands. This piece of legislation defines a framework for the provision of government subsidies for cultural purposes through culture funds. This allows artists, foundations, and institutions to apply for grants.³

1.11 Policy and activities
Creating opportunities for positive leisure activities is part of the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport’s action plan in the area of Youth and Family. The Jong Bonaire foundation on Bonaire is subsidized by the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport as part of that approach.

Responsibility for policy in the areas of youth work and after-school programs lies with the island authorities. They subsidize certain organizations, such as FESBO on Bonaire. Unlike their counterparts in the European Netherlands, parents on Bonaire do not receive a child care allowance.

The education premises master plan also covers child care facilities. The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science has taken it upon itself to ensure overdue maintenance of child care premises is cleared up.⁴

In 2009, DSP-groep was commissioned by the Netherlands Institute for Sport and Exercise (NISB) to perform a quick scan of the sport and exercise situation on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba, funded by the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport. Their study showed that none of the three islands had a sports policy plan.⁵ The NISB has teamed up with local stakeholders and authorities to develop a policy plan for the promotion of sports and

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² IdeeVersa (2012). Referentiekader Caribisch Nederland. Pagina 96
exercise on Bonaire over the period between 2009 and 2012. Helped by interns, the NSIB is currently trying to realize the objectives from the plan.1

The Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport asked ABC-advies to conduct an exploratory study of cycling on Bonaire, and outline possibilities of coming to a cycling plan. This report was subsequently fleshed out further by students to form a cycling plan.2 How this cycling plan is being implemented is unknown.

In 2010, the Bonaire authority drafted a culture policy document.3 This document specifies a policy vision, policy objectives, and enabling conditions. Spearheads from this policy include improvement of cultural infrastructure for young people by creating a ‘Plenchi pa Hubentut’ (meeting place for youths) and promoting cultural and artistic expression. Other spearheads are development of a curriculum and material for cultural education and training for professionals in the area of cultural education, realization of a new library, cultural center, and a national theater, as well as the organization of the Kingdom Games (culture and sport). It also contains an action plan with action points and activities, including a cultural needs assessment among adolescents, structural integration of music classes at all schools, improvement of the school of music’s infrastructure, and adaptation of community centers to improve and optimize their use.

In 2011, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science made an amount of EUR150,000 available per library for modernization and improvement of services to education. To receive this amount, each library was required to submit an action plan.4

1.12 Organizations and responsibilities

Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport
The Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport supports the island authorities in activities in the area of youth work and sports.

Island authorities
The island authorities are responsible for policy in the area of youth work, art, culture, museums, sports, public transport, child care, and after-school programs.

Youth and Family Center (CJG)
Due to the small scale, youth work services on Saba and St. Eustatius have been accommodated at the CJG. The Bonaire CJG also organizes activities for children and adolescents.

Netherlands Institute for Sport and Exercise (NSIB)
The NSIB supports Bonaire in the area of sport and exercise.

Stichting Jeugdwerk Jong Bonaire
The Jong Bonaire foundation for youth work offers a broad array of after-school activities for children aged twelve and over on Bonaire.

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FESBO

FESBO is the umbrella organization of community centers on Bonaire and offers after-school programs for children aged between four and twelve.

(Other) child care organizations

The child care organizations are responsible for offering child care, including after-school programs.

2 Children on recreation, play, and leisure time

Children surveyed on Bonaire told the study at length about their activities in their spare time. They do a lot of the things you would expect a child on an island to do, such as going swimming and to the beach. Children relax, watch TV, read, or do their homework. And they surf the net and play video games, of course. Some of the children have jobs or do chores around the house.¹

‘I like going to the beach in my free time. I love swimming. I also like skipping and watching television.’ (girl, 8 years old, Bonaire)

‘At the weekend I spend all day playing Xbox. Or work on Saturday and then come back and go swimming in the evening. Play Monopoly. Go to work on Sunday as well, and then do the same again, play Xbox or Monopoly.’ (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

A surprisingly large number of children complain about there being little for children of their age to do in the island. They find the offering too limited, and say a lot more should be done for young people. They do mention Jong Bonaire for children aged twelve and up as a positive exception, because that is “the only organization on the island” that does organize fun activities.

Boredom and ‘boring’ are words that the children use a lot. Some children make the link between boredom and juvenile crime. Children who have nothing to do, go looking for exciting things to do, and that often turns into mischief and criminal behavior.²

‘There’s no investment in youth. There should be things to do, lots of them. There’s nothing for us to do. Lots of young people want to study abroad and never come back because Bonaire is boring.’ (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

Sports are a great outlet for children. Soccer, softball, and fishing are particularly popular pastimes. They are also fond of dancing, swimming, and kickboxing.³

Like children elsewhere, children on Bonaire like to hang out with friends and just chill. Girls like chatting with their friends. Children on Bonaire also engage in digital chatting sometimes. Boys are more likely to go out and do something with their friends, such as go cycling or play soccer. Some of the older children go out in the town now and again, but some say even the town ‘has nothing to offer.’⁴

‘In my free time I usually ride my bike with friends or play soccer. If I’m free in the afternoon, I sometimes go on my bike to visit my father who lives in another neighborhood. My mom never goes with me because she doesn’t like it.’ (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

Sometimes I go out at the weekend. Usually I go to town. I don’t go out that often as I only

¹ See quotes 506, 507, 508, 509, 510.
² See quotes 517, 519, 525, 526, 538, 564, 566.
³ See quotes 539, 540, 541, 542.
⁴ See quotes 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554.
go to town if I really feel like it. In the city there’s nothing to do either. Sometimes there
are parties, but five parties are planned on the same night and then there is nothing for
months. That’s a shame, because the young people just get bored again.’ (girl, 16 years,
Bonaire)

As far as children’s wishes in the area of recreation, play, and leisure time are concerned,
children almost exclusively focus on what’s on offer. Top of their wish list: more activities
for children. They also come up with suggestions for activities: bicycle races, car races,
paintball, a soccer league/tournament, activities for youths, places where older children
can go out. And they also have ideas for extra facilities: a movie theater, a playground in
every neighborhood, more sports facilities, a zoo, a traffic park, a water park.
The children realize very well that Bonaire is a small island and that the possibilities are
therefore limited, but they would settle for just a few more possibilities enabling them to
develop and relax.¹

‘I think that there is little to do for children and youth on Bonaire. There should be more
things to do so that young people don’t hang around on the street and make trouble.’ (girl,
15 years, Bonaire)

Experts on recreation, play, and leisure time

Like the children surveyed, the experts surveyed say there is little to do for children on
Bonaire, and that particularly goes for children aged twelve and up. ‘There is nothing on
the island for adolescents,’ says one of them. Others list the island’s facilities, such as a
discotheque, movie theater, meeting place in a park, or a skate park. For children up to
the age of twelve, life on the island is a lot of fun, but older children soon find there are
insufficient possibilities for them to develop.

Experts set great store by a safety net for children when they are not at school or at home
(also refer to Family and Parenting), and have seen that such a safety net is currently
lacking. If children have the option of going to a safe place after school, because there’s
no one at home, you can identify problems at an early stage and will keep children off the
street. Experts therefore call on politicians to prioritize recreation and providing places for
children, such as soccer fields and places where they can hang out.
They say more activities need to be organized, also through schools.²

‘The island is nice for children until they are ten or twelve years old. Then I think it quickly
becomes too small and boring.’ (expert)

The experts, too, are seeing a clear link between boredom and problems. Boredom leads
to “misconduct and shenanigans.” Children who are removed from a certain place where
they hang out have nowhere else to go. It is a case of merely “moving the problem along,”
says one expert.³

‘Now they’re bored and looking for trouble. They want excitement.’ (expert)

Many experts praise services provided by Jong Bonaire. They organize ‘inspiring programs’
for children and adolescents from the age of twelve. This organization also encourages
children to stay on the straight and narrow. To all children who use this facility, it is a “fine
initiative.” The only problem is capacity.⁴

¹ See quotes 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567.
² See quotes 515, 522, 527, 527, 558, 559, 569, 573.
³ See quotes 521, 523, 524, 530, 533, 570.
⁴ See quotes 527, 529, 534, 537.
‘I think Young Bonaire offers good quality care to that target group. I think they have very inspirational programs for young people and that they have really continued to develop them in recent years. But there is obviously not enough capacity.’ (expert)

The island’s community centers could and should also offer facilities for children, precisely because they are based in the children’s community. The experts highlight, however, a number of bottlenecks that are causing community centers to not (sufficiently) meet this need. They mention that most community centers close at five o’clock, after which children are left to their own devices again. Only the community center in Rincón stays open later to allow children to play soccer there. Others say the community centers are not attractive enough to children. One underlying problem turns out to be the lack of resources, as a result of which community centers cannot do enough for children.

And yet, experts pin a lot of faith on using community centers. These should be open in the evenings, organize fun activities, and have a good supervisor on staff. That would provide structure. ‘Equipping each Centro di Bario (Community Center) with a table tennis table and a playground alone’ would already mean a major improvement, according to the experts.¹

‘There’s nothing on the island for young people. I started in the Centro di Bario eight years ago, and there was nothing there either. There is no money. They have been focusing on an Extended School in North Salina but it would be much better to invest in the neighborhoods.’ (expert)

‘For young people, it would be great if you could play billiards, ping pong and that sort of thing in the evening. If you had a good supervisor in every community center, it could have a preventive effect.’ (expert)

There are few playgrounds for small children. There is one in the city center, but mothers with small children have trouble getting there due to the lack of transportation.²

Experts recognize that Bonaire needs support from the national government for its cultural policy, even though that is basically a municipal affair. It is hard for the authority to raise funds for cultural activities.³

‘As far as cultural policy for children goes, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science says they can’t do anything because it is a municipal responsibility. However, every municipality has a need for national support. The BES islands are in danger of falling through the cracks.’ (expert)

In the area of sports, there are possibilities and developments. Some experts refer to the starting of after-school sports and play activities. Others point to sports clubs where children can play soccer and softball.

But there are few options on the island for children who want to play other sports. Sailing, tennis, or ballet are options that are open to children, but these are too expensive for many parents or it is logistically impossible for children to get there.

Some experts say the offering of sports activities is there, but that children prefer to sit around and hang out. “A sedentary culture. Under a tree.”

And the city holds great attraction to somewhat older children. They like walking around there. There are few possibilities for a night out. The disco at school is the only option for children to go dancing with their peers.⁴

¹ See quotes 528, 531, 535, 536, 571, 572.
² See quote 532.
³ See quotes 560, 561.
⁴ See quotes 543, 544, 545, 546, 555, 556, 557.
'You can do all kinds of activities here; sailing, tennis, swimming, soccer, baseball, ballet, music, you name it. But it all costs money. And you need transportation because it's spread over the island. One child can do that, the other can't. That doesn't help create a balanced society.' (expert)

4 Literature on recreation, play, and leisure time
The literature provides wide-ranging information about the subject of recreation, play, and leisure time. The following will provide a summary. Again, this subject is closely related to other themes covered in this report, such as education, family and parenting, and safety.

4.1 General
In their last report (2012) to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Dutch government raised a number of concerns regarding youths in 2009. These were related to a ‘crumbling’ family structure. The report makes mention of parents’ lack of commitment to their children, which is also down to the fact that there are many single-parent families and the parent(s) often works long days to earn a living. As a result, parents are not at home when their children come home from school in the afternoon. There is also poverty. And adolescents get bored quickly, while they are also facing a lack of prospects for the future.

The Dutch government has compiled a plan with various elements that focus on recreation, play, and leisure time. They announced that more possibilities for positive leisure activities will be introduced, that extra staff will be hired, and that the focus will be on improving quality. As part of this, existing foundations such as Jong Bonaire are receiving subsidies to organize leisure activities. These funds will ensure improvement of continuity and quality of programs and facilities. From 2012, the Youth and Family Centers have been working with youth workers who specifically target the age bracket of 12-to-18-year-olds. Activities that are organized can be both recreational and informational, where adolescents themselves can also suggest themes.¹

4.2 Leisure activity options
A study from several years ago (2003) commissioned by the Federation of Antillean Youth Care concluded that boredom among (older) children is a major problem on Bonaire. Adolescents meet up in the streets and there is drug use. At the time of that study, leisure activity options turned out not to be aligned with young people’s possibilities and needs.

Young children were found to mainly spend their free time ‘consuming,’ including watching TV and playing video games. As a result, children’s creativity is insufficiently developed, the study concluded.

Research from 2006 and 2009 shows that there are limited options for youths on the island in terms of sports, play, and leisure time facilities. The NGO report submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) also highlights the lack of diversity in after-school programs for children. Although there are organizations that offer activities, these are insufficiently structured and balanced. There are insufficient resources. For disabled children, access to activities and facilities is a bottleneck.

The Security Plan for Bonaire concludes that there is little to do for youths after school, as a result of which this group does not have a healthy, sporty, and instructive outlet.

Elementary school pupils can go to the community centers, where volunteer supervisors are, according to some, not always sufficiently professional and experienced.

¹ See literature 74.
High school pupils have fewer options. After-school programs for this group do not cover the entire island, and are too expensive for and insufficiently accessible to at-risk children from socially weaker areas. The varied sports and play activities organized by Jong Bonaire, the Bonairian Youth Care agency and Stichting Project, for example, are highly popular and effective, but they reach only a relatively small group of children.¹

An inventory of the situation showed that infrastructure and policy-based support in the area of sports and exercise on Bonaire are weak. A proper framework or well-thought out vision and sufficient collaboration between important partners in the area of sports was lacking. Due to sport’s low priority on Bonaire, a considerable section of the island’s population struggles with obesity and overweightness. To improve this situation, a policy plan was drawn up for the period 2009-2012. There are ‘exercise teams’ that organize and run after-school and out-of-school sports activities, sports tournaments, sports days, and sports camps.

The literature (2011) highlights many bottlenecks in this area: Bonaire has no specific budget for sport and exercise; government spending on sport consists in covering foundation and maintenance costs for accommodations and government staff for the sports service; there is barely any money available for promoting sports or organizing events in the sports industry; quality and state of repair of facilities is below par; there are relatively many small sports clubs with an informal organization structure and poor quality and continuity; physical education teachers are generally unqualified ‘experiential experts;’ there is no culture of volunteering on Bonaire.

The Poverty Exploration of 2012 shows that activities for adolescents, such as sports, singing, and dance, are generally free on Bonaire. Sometimes a small fee is charged. Children are not excluded when their parents cannot afford to pay the fee.²

4.3 Facilities in the community
A study from several years ago (2003) commissioned by the Federation of Antillean Youth Care shows that friendships and groups are formed mainly in the community where children live. These are not so much based on shared interests, sport, or other hobbies. The reason for that is that activities for children are often community-based due to the absence of adequate transportation.

The SIFMA’s report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) concludes that there is no social cohesion on Bonaire. Although there are community centers, these have insufficient equipment.

Literature from 2011 addresses the link between delinquent or violent behavior among adolescents and certain risk and protecting factors. The main predictor of violent and delinquent behavior turns out to be whether a child has friends who engage in anti-social behavior.

A report on the vision for life on Bonaire for 2011-2015 shows that people in Bonaire’s neighborhoods are insufficiently benefiting from economic developments on the island. This comes to fore in, among other things, a lack of facilities such as benches, children’s playgrounds etc. This, in turn, leads to mischief, crime, and people feeling unsafe.³

Research from 2010 shows that there is little public transport on Bonaire, but also that there is little demand for it. The existing demand can be satisfied by the current public transport offering. The study did see possibilities for improvements.

¹ See literature 67, 107, 79, 99.
² See literature 33, 76.
³ See literature 107, 60, 111, 99.
People on Bonaire do not ride bicycles for several reasons. A plan has been compiled to change that.1

4.4 After-school programs and child care
The Poverty Exploration of 2012 points to single mothers with multiple children as a category that is struggling. Given that mothers work more than full time, they have little time left to look after and supervise their children. Seeing as they cannot afford to put their children in day care, they have to improvise when it comes to child care. Older siblings, or other persons, are roped in to keep an eye on children. Sometimes, older children of fifteen or sixteen years of age have jobs to contribute to the family income.

Subsidized good-quality child care and after-school programs are considered crucial in fighting poverty and ensuring a good upbringing for children. Child care and after-school programs could offer a steady daily structure and upbringing. It would also guarantee children are fed properly and problems are spotted at an early stage.

Literature from 2012 about child care shows that day care facilities are mainly there for children of working parents of little means. Parents are therefore not charged, or only charged a small fee. However, there are bottlenecks: there is more demand than supply, staff training is not good enough, there are limited possibilities for activities (such as materials), and opening hours are a problem because many parents also work after 5pm and/or work flexible hours. Also refer to the Family and Parenting section.2

5 The Convention on the Rights of the Child on recreation, play, and leisure time
The time children above the age of five have to spend can be split up into the time they spend at school (see Education) and their free time. In their free time, children can play, do sports, take music or other lessons, dedicate time to their hobbies, and spend time with their friends or parents. Children of up to age of five do not yet have to go to school. An even larger part of their day is spent on playing.

Playing is essential to children's education, both physically and psychologically. Through playing, children learn to work together, solve problems, and express themselves. This makes it the basis for participation in recreational, sport-based, and cultural activities at a later age.

Sport is also very important in children’s development. It is important for both children’s physical development and in preventing obesity that children exercise responsibly. Aside from that, sport also serves many other purposes, such as building self-confidence, learning to work together and deal with both peers and adults, and learning to take part in society.

Participation in art and culture enables children to develop themselves in their community and gain access to a community outside their own.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 31) is very clear. Children, and therefore also children on Bonaire:

- Have a right to rest and leisure.
- Have a right to engage in play.
- Have a right to engage in recreational activities appropriate of their age.
- Have a right to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

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1 See literature 114, 75, 4.
2 See literature 33, 52.
The convention stresses particularly that the government must do its best to ensure that all children can exercise these rights: it is a basic need of children.

The right to recreation, play, and leisure time must be seen in correlation with Article 6, which lays down children’s inherent right to life and development. This article specifies an obligation to guarantee the development of children on the island ‘to the greatest extent possible.’ In correlation with the best interests of the child, Article 3, this means that the government must go to every effort to ensure children are able to develop safely and freely. Compliance with the right to recreation, play, and leisure time contributes to the realization of this right.

Needless to say, the right to recreation, play, and leisure time is also closely related to other rights and subjects from the convention. Realization of the right to rest, for example, requires that children grow up in an environment where they are able to sleep and relax. For that to be the case, it is essential that they live in an environment without violence and have privacy (see Family and Parenting), as well as that they have an adequate standard of living (see Living Conditions). Children need to be able to be safe everywhere, otherwise it will be hard for them to relax or play (see Safety).

Children have a right to access to information and must be protected from information and material injurious to their well-being, such as on TV and in movies (Article 17). Experts alert to the great amount of time children spend watching TV and on computers. Spending a large part of the day indoors in a passive state is not conducive to children’s physical health. Experts also urge caution with respect to children’s emotional development, because they are coming into contact with information that is not age appropriate or in line with their level of development. This is certainly an issue on the island, as many children spend a major part of the day without parental supervision (see Family and Parenting).

Article 14 specifies children’s freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. Parents shall provide direction to their children in the exercise of this right. Children may choose a religion or life principles if they are capable of doing so considering their level of development and age.

It is important for there to be adequate facilities for children, so that they do not get bored and end up in crime (also see Safety). Financial possibilities need to be available for participation in cultural and recreational activities or sports (see Financial Situation).

6 Conclusion

The realization of children’s right to recreation, play, and leisure time is under pressure on Bonaire in various ways.

The description of the current situation and children’s and experts’ take on that situation highlights several issues standing in the way of children exercising this right. These issues concern a range of aspects, such as lack of resources, facilities, and expertise – at community centers, for example – and other obstructions. Many of these issues can be solved, insofar as they do not concern physical impossibilities that come with living on a small island. This requires, however, recognition of the great importance of realization of children’s right to recreation, play, and leisure time, and with that of a safe ‘third child-rearing environment’ alongside that of the family and school.

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1 For a full overview of how Article 31 IVRK relates to other articles of the children’s rights convention: M. Blaak et al. (2012). Handboek Internationaal Jeugdrecht. Leiden: Defence for Children, p. 467. See also www.kinderrechten.nl
Child on Bonaire Recreation, play and leisure time
Participation

Participation concerns taking part in society. But it also means being committed and having a say in decisions, especially when these decisions regard a child.1

The description of the current situation in this area shows that participation is largely overlooked. There is little to report when it comes to current participation options for children on Bonaire; while the right to participation is, in fact, an essential one for children, as it recognizes that children are independent beings with their own needs and rights. Beings who have to learn to be an active part of the society in which they live. That is a step-by-step learning process, in parallel to a child’s development level and age. It is important to adequately guide children through this process, because they will not be able to do it all in one fell swoop when they turn eighteen.

Youth participation is not only important to children, but also to organizations and governments, and to society as a whole.

Participation is about children actively taking part in all areas of their lives: at home, at school, in health care, at sports clubs, in youth care.

There are five key concepts that determine the degree of children’s participation: information, consultation, advice, taking part in execution, (taking part in) decision-making.2

1 Current situation

1.1 Taking part
The following presents an overview of the options open to children on Bonaire for active participation in various aspects of society. It is a brief overview because both the options and information about them are limited. Participation at school and other areas will be covered first, followed by a review of relevant legislation and policies, and the final section will outline which organizations are active in this area.

1.2 Participation in decision-making in education
The Dutch Participation in School Decision-Making Act does not apply in the Caribbean Netherlands because the Dutch government feels the island’s participation structure is still insufficiently equipped for that.3

The Primary Education Act and the Secondary Education Act for the BES islands do provide for participation in decision-making at schools. The relevant sections of these laws have, however, not yet taken effect. Participation councils must be allowed to deliberate with the school authority about the general state of affairs at schools at least twice a year. In elementary education, the participation council must be made up of members appointed from and by staff and members appointed from and by parents. In secondary education, participation councils must be made up of members appointed from and by staff and members appointed from and by parents. The councils must deliberate with the school authority at least three times a year.4

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1 Youth participation concerns young people’s involvement with and say in matters that are relevant to them, such as aspects regarding education, afterschool care, leisure time activities (including sports and cultural activities), spatial planning, youth care and government policy (from: Jeugdthesaurus). See also www.nji.nl
3 Changes to (among others) the Secondary Education Act with respect to education quality, school hours and holidays. House of Representatives, session year 2010-2011 32 640 no. 7.
education, the participation council must also have members appointed from and by pupils.

A research report published by Research voor Beleid says most schools in the Caribbean Netherlands do not have a participation council yet, or are only piloting one made up of members of staff. Preparatory work is meanwhile underway. Pupils and their parents do, however, want to participate in decision-making in education.

Schoelengemeenschap Bonaire’s website states that all units of the organization have a student council and that there is also an overall student council for the whole school. The participation council made up of members of staff will be expanded with five parents and five pupils as soon as the parent and student councils are functioning smoothly.

1.3 Other activities in the area of children’s participation
The Jongeren van het Koninkrijk (Youths of the Kingdom) foundation, which was set up in 2011, has set out to improve social cohesion between citizens of all parts of the kingdom and to reflect on the future on the Kingdom. This foundation organizes social and substantive activities focused on young people.

The Federatie Antilliaanse Jeugdzorg (Federation of Antillean Youth Care) foundation coordinates a group of adolescents aged twelve and up that is known as HAK (Hubentud Aktivo i Konsiente). Adolescents from the HAK team are consulted for all activities, events, projects, and courses. However, this group is currently not active.

The Jong Bonaire youth work foundation is also active in this area. One of its objectives is to increase children’s self-reliance and enable them to make sensible decisions on their own. Jong Bonaire organizes numerous activities in which children and adolescents can actively take part and for which they are asked for input.

The Bonaire Youth Outreach Foundation makes radio programs by and for youths and runs charity activities together with youths. This foundation also organizes, together with young people, awareness-raising activities about sex, domestic violence, and crime. They have, for example, partnered with various adolescents to make a film about HIV and aids, as well as a play about life in the ghetto.

1.4 Access to information
Each of the three islands has one or multiple branches of a library. However, these branches do not offer all facilities, such as a connection to the Internet. To most children, the library is not attractive, as a result of which they make little use of it. Many children have the possibility of going online at home or at school to find information about subjects that interest them or they are required to research for school. Most children on Bonaire also have access to TV and radio.

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1 Wet Voortgezet Onderwijs BES, articles 57 and 58.
3 Information received in an email from Chris Frans, vice-chairman and secretary OCaN, 23 April 2013.
7 Information received in an email from Chris Frans, vice-chairman and secretary OCaN, 23 April 2013.
8 Compare Stichting Jeugdwerk Jong Bonaire, Jaarverslag 2012.
10 Information received in an email from Chris Frans, vice-chairman and secretary OCaN, 23 April 2013.
1.5 **Legislation**
Needless to say, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to children growing up on Bonaire.

Under the Secondary Education Act for the BES islands, schools are required to have participation councils that also include members appointed from and by pupils. The relevant sections of this law have, however, not yet taken effect.

1.6 **Policy and activities**
It is unknown whether there is, and if so which, policy in place to promote children’s participation in various aspects of society, such as at home, at school, in health care, or at sports clubs.

1.7 **Organizations and responsibilities**

*The Children’s Ombudsman*
The Children’s Ombudsman, which was introduced in the Netherlands in April 2011, checks whether children’s rights are respected by the government and private organizations in education, child care, youth care, and health care in the Netherlands. The Children’s Ombudsman makes adults and children aware of children’s rights and advises children and adolescents on how to stand up for their rights.¹ Other than that, the Children’s Ombudsman also receives complaints and alerts from adults and children. For the Caribbean Netherlands, the Children’s Ombudsman will be working closely together with the National Ombudsman.²

2 **Children on participation**
Several of the children surveyed on Bonaire feel their opinion does count at home. This mainly concerns matters such as their choice of clothing or clearing up at home. Some children say their parents never ask them what they think about something. ‘My mother never asks me anything at home’, says one fifteen-year-old boy.

At school, there are teachers who are interested to hear pupils’ opinion and these teachers are subsequently the first ones pupils turn to when they have personal problems. When it comes to the running of the school, children find it hard to change things and get their opinion and ideas heard. Attempts at raising issues often come to nothing. A student council could help, but one pupil questions the likelihood of one actually being set up.³

‘The only way to change the education system is to begin protest actions. Or go to the director. But if you do that, he’ll send you to the coordinator. But the coordinator does nothing, and you end up back at the director. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

‘It is important that a student council is set up in every school, but I don’t know if this is realistic. Our opinion doesn’t matter. Even when we are asked for our opinions, the teachers always win. Their opinions carry more weight than ours.’ (boy, 16 years, Bonaire)

Children would like greater say in the policy of the government or clubs. They want to be heard, in a debate or through other means, and want to be involved in solving the island’s problems. If they were to be heard, there would be greater clarity on what matters to children and adolescents, and that insight would be very helpful for policymakers, according to the children. They feel sidelined. ‘People in politics never ask us anything,’

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³ See quotes 595, 596.
one boy says. Little effort is made to involve children and they therefore feel their opinion ‘doesn’t count.’

A fourteen-year-old girl calls Bonaire Youth Outreach a positive exception. At this organization, adolescents do everything themselves, and this organization does not - in her words - ‘take the ideas of young people, make a film, and then say the film was made by adolescents, while these adolescents weren’t given any kind of role in making the film.’ At Bonaire Outreach, youths write the script, act, and edit themselves. They are also allowed to express their opinion and are also available to the outside world as a kind of authority on the views of children and adolescents.1

‘We really want to be involved in solving the problems on the island.’ (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

‘I think that youth organizations should demand more attention and should pay more attention. Because we know what is going on with young people, and if you cooperate and consult with young people, you can make real progress.’ (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

3 Experts on participation

The experts that were surveyed for this study say that children’s participation on Bonaire, both at home and at school and in other areas of the island’s society, still leaves much to be desired.

The experts see many obstacles blocking adequate children’s participation at home. Some experts point out that children are ‘underdeveloped’ in this area. They are not encouraged by their parents to have an opinion and express it. Emotions are not discussed and children are not asked how they are. They are not self-reliant, are not independent, and spend their time on superficial things. There are children whose role at home is mainly a supporting one, which consists in, for example, doing household chores or taking care of younger siblings, and who are not stimulated to develop their own personality.

Outside the family too, such as at school and in other areas of society, children’s voices are not heard and children are not involved in anything, the experts say. And children themselves also feel they are not listened to.

According to the experts, children currently do not have any kind of say in school matters. They are not involved in policy-making and the running of the school. One educational expert highlights the importance of children being allowed a say in decisions concerning their own school. This is the reason why a student council is being set up at the high school.

It would be beneficial if children were to have classes and training at school on children’s rights, because knowledge of these rights is currently lacking. Although the island does have an annual lantern parade to commemorate the day of the rights of the child (20 November), children ‘don’t really know a lot about children’s rights.’

There are plans to revive the youth advice council through the Federatie Antilliaanse Jeugdzorg (Federation of Antillean Youth Care) on Bonaire. Children who will be involved in that must be given a say and eventually enter into consultations with the island authority, says one expert.2

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1 See quotes 574, 575, 577, 578, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594.
2 See quotes 579, 579, 580, 580, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 586, 587, 588.
'Participation at home is particularly difficult because it requires parents to be motivated first. People are more concerned with the development of the island in comparison to the Netherlands than with listening to children’s opinions.' (expert)

'The youth is not encouraged enough to be involved in anything here. Talk to them, find out what they want!' (expert)

4 Literature on participation
There is not much literature on the subject of participation. Most research on this subject is part of research in other areas where participation is an issue, such as education.

A 2011 perception survey shows that participation in decision-making in education in the Caribbean Netherlands is virtually inexistent. Neither parents, nor children are heard.

Parents of children in high school, in particular, find it annoying that although schools often do listen, they subsequently do not act. Schools do not consult parents on school policy of their own accord. Parent participation in school committees is also a problem, as it has proven difficult to find parents with the right profile in terms of knowledge, experience, time available, and interest. The participation councils that are yet to be set up will face the same challenge.

Another study from 2011 concludes that communications are generally a one-way thing, from school to the parents and pupils. Some school directors and administrators have an idea of how to organize participation, others do not.¹

Research into drop-out rates on Bonaire (2011) shows a link between dropping out and the extent to which parents are responsive to the needs, signals, and condition of their children (responsiveness), the extent to which parents keep an eye on their children’s actions (monitoring), and positive communication from parents.²

In 2007, the then country of the Netherlands Antilles stated in its first report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child that children, parents, and others would be informed about children’s rights as part of a three-year campaign. The Youth Development Department would also organize a consultation session with children and adolescents (age 12-24) every two years. And education reform would include greater encouragement to children to express their opinion.

Another conclusion was that access to computers and information was not commonplace for all children. Children from socially and economically weaker families, and children from families of immigrants had less access to books, newspapers, and computers. Language can also be a barrier when it comes to access to information.

The Antillean government found that children were insufficiently protected against harmful TV programs on cable TV stations.

The NGO report (2008) also concludes that children’s participation is still a challenge in most areas. Organizations do have great willingness to make policy that puts children’s interests first. The NGOs say children need better protection against injurious information and that children should be asked for their opinion more. Schools should also devote more time to children’s rights.³

In their closing remarks of 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expresses delight at the planned media campaign for the Netherlands Antilles to raise awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The committee is concerned about the fact that there are no human rights organizations or ombudsmen in the Netherlands Antilles or on

¹ See literature 27, 28.
² See literature 101.
³ See literature 72, 100.
Aruba. This was before the political reform and before the remit of the National (Children’s) Ombudsman was extended to include the islands.

The 2012 report by the Dutch government therefore states that there is a Children’s Ombudsman in the Netherlands who supervises compliance with the rights of the child. For the Caribbean Netherlands, the Children’s Ombudsman will be working closely together with the National Ombudsman. Researchers of the National Ombudsman will, on behalf of the Children’s Ombudsman, take stock of complaints and signals from children and adults on the island, while the free National Ombudsman hotline will also be made available for cases for the Children’s Ombudsman.\(^1\)

5 The Convention on the Rights of the Child on participation

As argued in the introduction, children’s participation in society is an essential part of their ability to grow into an adult and active citizen.

That is also why the right to participation is one of the mainstays of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The central idea in the Convention on the Rights of the Child is that children must be able to take part in and contribute to society. This must be made possible in a wide variety of ways that are in keeping with children’s age and level of development, by:

- Listening to children
- Informing children
- Involving children in decision-making
- Taking children’s opinion seriously
- Protecting children against injurious information

Article 12 of the convention makes it very clear that we should not talk about children (as a juristic object) but rather talk to them: children are persons with legal rights. Children can help create insight into matters that concern them. Their best interests should then also be taken as the starting point (Article 3).

Children have a right to express their views freely, in all matters affecting them. Children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express them, and these views must be given due weight.

Article 12 cannot be seen separately from other rights awarded by the convention: all articles require respect for children’s right to be heard and taken seriously.

This is clearest in Article 3 (best interests of the child). After all, how can the best interests of the child be a primary consideration without having heard children’s views.

The link with Article 6 (right to life and development) is also a strong one. According to the convention, children will only be able to develop as best as possible when they are able to express themselves, voice their views, and learn that they are taken seriously.

This article is furthermore also closely related to other rights to participation. Article 13 specifies the right to freedom of speech, Article 14 describes the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and Article 15 regulates the freedom of association.

Article 17 awards children the right to access to information. Children must be informed using material that is consistent with their needs and level of development. They must also be protected from information that is injurious to their well-being.

In 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a comment on Article 12.\(^2\) In this comment, the committee stresses, among other things, that participation is an ongoing

\(^1\) See literature 16, 74.

\(^2\) Committee on the rights of the child (2009). General Comment no. 12, The right of the child to be heard. CRC/C/GC/12.
process: information must be shared ever more widely to create ongoing dialogue between children and adults. Every child must be enabled to participate.

A child’s biological age is not decisive in determining whether a child is capable of expressing his or her views. Other aspects, such as information, experience, and living environment, also contribute to the development of a child’s capacities to form a view, and should therefore be factored in when assigning weight to a child’s opinion. Even very young children can express an opinion, even non-verbally.

6 Conclusion
The description of the current situation and children’s and experts’ views on the matter show that when it comes to participation, there is still a lot of ground to be made up on Bonaire. Children on the island are not yet (sufficiently) seen as individuals with their own views. Society is not yet set up to listen to children, involve children in decision-making, and take their views seriously. This is related to the way children are raised (see Family and Parenting), the organization of education (see Education), and the way in which children are viewed.

It is also cause for concern that children on the island are very likely to be exposed to harmful information, via TV and internet, due to the absence of parental guidance.

However, various initiatives have been taken to better equip children to exercise their right to participation. These range from parenting support (Triple P) to giving children more say at home, the introduction of the Children’s Ombudsman, which will focus more attention on children’s rights (education), to initiatives by organizations aimed at involving children and adolescents in activities more intensively. Adequately informing children on their rights can also help enable children to claim a more active role in society.
Child on Bonaire
Housing conditions

A safe place to live is one of the basic conditions for children to be able to develop healthily and undisturbed. Children’s housing situation and environment determine their daily lives to a large degree. It goes without saying that there is more to housing conditions than the question of whether a child has a roof over its head. It is interconnected with several other issues such as safety, health, education, recreation, play, and leisure options, and finances. It will, for example, be hard for children to do their homework if there is no quiet place at home where they can do so; a child’s health can be at risk when the housing environment is unhygienic; and it is important for every child to have sufficient privacy. And, of course, living in decent conditions requires that the parents can afford a decent home.

This chapter will first outline the current situation and then go into what children, experts, and the literature say about it. This chapter will conclude by measuring the current situation against the Convention on the Rights of the Child and formulating a conclusion.

1 Current situation

1.1 Housing on Bonaire

The following will describe housing conditions on Bonaire. The housing that is available, the bottlenecks in getting decent housing, and developments in this area will all be covered. And you will also find an overview of existing legislation and policy and the responsible organizations in this chapter. The information is not elaborate for the simple reason that little data is available.

1.2 Housing conditions

On 1 January 2012, Bonaire’s population was 16,541, of which 4,060 were under twenty years old (24.5%).

Aside from these population figures for Bonaire (and their age and sex), there is no recent statistical data about islanders’ housing situation. There are only estimates and figures from Woonvisie Bonaire (Housing Vision Bonaire) documents and studies.

According to the Woonvisie Bonaire 2011-2015 (hereinafter Woonvisie) document, roughly 92% of Bonaire’s housing stock is privately owned, either by individuals or investors. Bonaire’s only housing association, Fundashon Cas Boneriano (FCB), manages 8% of the island’s housing stock, totaling 427 homes. Currently, 76 homes are being built, which are scheduled for completion by around mid-2013.

In October 2012, there was a waiting list of around two hundred people who were actively looking for housing. The Woonvisie document puts this number of people actively seeking a home at three hundred, noting, however, that the actual number of people

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3 Information received by email from the FCB, October 2012.
looking for housing is likely to be even greater. Due to scarcity and the housing FCB has available, many people who have been on the waiting list for years have lost faith in ever being eligible for a home. As a result, they stop renewing their annual registration. Estimations are that five hundred is a realistic number of people looking for housing. Expectations are that Bonaire’s population will grow over the coming years. And there is also the trend of families becoming smaller.¹

As soon as a home becomes available, FCB allocates it to a suitable candidate on the waiting list, based on how long they have been registered, their income, and social aspects.²

Unlike the population of the European Netherlands, people on Bonaire and the two other islands of the Caribbean Netherlands are not entitled to rental assistance. Tenants of social housing projects on Bonaire are never charged more than 30% of their income in rent. The public authority makes up the difference between the home’s cost price and the rent people can afford to pay FCB.³ Some of the social rental properties are occupied by people with higher income (in 2009, nearly a third of tenants earned USD1,400 or more).⁴

Home ownership is valued highly on Bonaire, and when people can afford it, they will therefore want to own their own home. The FCB on Bonaire is building 75 social rental properties, and has prepared a plot for the construction of 25 properties that will be sold. The intention is to get current tenants to move up to other properties. And the FCB is also working on preparations for a second new housing project comprising one hundred homes. Building work is supposed to start halfway through or at the end of 2013. The FCB also provides housing solutions for special groups of the population (through social services), such as the elderly, disabled people, young people, addicts, and psychiatric patients.⁵

The FCB also oversees projects aimed at improving quality of life in neighborhoods. This includes the refurbishment of day care centers and projects for major maintenance work. Awareness campaigns have been launched to draw attention to clean-up projects in the neighborhoods aimed at improving social cohesion. There are also plans for meeting and play areas in some neighborhoods. Resident participation is encouraged through the creation of residents’ committees. Aside from the FCB’s efforts, there are also projects run under the denominator of Integrale Wijkaanpak (Integrated Neighborhood Action) that intend to improve quality of life in Bonaire’s neighborhoods.⁶

The Exploration of Poverty in the Caribbean Netherlands⁷ describes that people often live with family to save on rent and utility bills. And many people who are on a minimum wage are behind on their rent and utility payments.

The FCB has many tenants with rent arrears. Out of a total of 432 tenants, 354 are behind on their rent payments. And of these 354 people, 270 are on a monthly income of below USD1,550. The FCB is looking to put people on an income of below USD1,550 on a debt management plan. These rent arrears stem from a time in the past when the policy was different. To encourage tenants to pay their rent on time, FCB gives those who manage to pay on time for a whole year a 50% discount on their rent for the month of December.

The number utility shut-offs by the Water en Energiebedrijf Bonaire (Bonaire Water and Power Company) increased in 2011 and 2012. 60% of shut-offs were down to people

² Information received by email from the FCB, October 2012.
⁵ Information received by email from the FCB, October 2012.
⁶ Information received by email from the FCB, October 2012.
being sloppy in paying their bills. These people pay up immediately after their service is cut. Around 20% of shut-offs is thought to be the result of people’s inability to manage their finances properly, while the remaining 20% is related to insufficient family income to be able to pay the bills. Pagabon, a prepaid power purchase scheme by Bonaire’s water and power company helps people keep their debts in check. Out of the total of 7000 power connections, 1,000 are paid through Pagabon. There are also people in the private customer segment who struggle to cover the costs of their housing, such as maintenance.

1.3 Legislation

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child also applies to children on Bonaire.

The island authorities are responsible for the creation and implementation of plans for the use of the available space. They do so by making development plans. The requirements these plans have to meet are laid down in the Spatial Development Planning Principles Act for the BES islands.

The Housing, Spatial Planning, and Environmental Management Act for the BES islands stipulates that island authorities can issue housing regulations for the allocation of housing and the structure of the housing stock. Bonaire has a housing regulation that regulates the housing system, but not yet one for housing allocation.

The Antillean rent assessment committee scheme of 1939 was converted into the Rent Assessment Committee Scheme Act for the BES islands after the transition. This scheme comprises provisions regarding regulation of rents and protection of tenants. The Woonvisie on Bonaire suggests that this scheme is outdated on several points.

1.4 Policy and activities

Unlike in the European Netherlands, rental assistance is not available to the people of the Caribbean Netherlands. However, rents for social housing are income-related: tenants pay a maximum of 30% of their income in rent. The Dutch government cites the different tax system on the islands as the reason behind the absence of rental assistance in the Caribbean Netherlands. The tax system in the European Netherlands uses several tax brackets and allowances (care allowance, child allowance, single-parent allowance, and rental allowance). The tax system that was introduced in the Caribbean Netherlands is simpler, because there are no tax brackets and people pay a flat tax without allowances.

In October 2010, the island’s council passed the Spatial Development Plan for Bonaire. The objective is to secure Bonaire’s values, qualities, and identity, and adequately incorporate new developments in the area of housing, working, and recreation into the island.

In 2011, the Woonvisie for the period from 2012 to 2015 was compiled for Bonaire. This Woonvisie sets priorities, include support for all those who are not able to meet their own housing needs. Other priorities are promotion of home ownership and creation of housing facilities for young people who want to return to Bonaire. Taking appropriate housing measures for special groups in society and starting an integrated community improvement drive are also mentioned among the priorities.

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4 Response to questions by Ortega-Martijn about the letter of the Own Your Own Home Foundation by the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 no. 3000.
The Dutch housing association Aert Swaens provides assistance for Bonaire’s housing association in applying for subsidies, entering into contracts, drawing up maintenance plans for their properties, and instilling payment discipline.1

1.5 Organizations and responsibilities

Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations
The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations is responsible for, among other things, construction legislation. Aside from that, the ministry’s role is an incentivizing and supporting one. They promote and support an integrated approach to communities on the BES islands through expertise and project subsidies.

The island authority
The public authority is responsible for availability of adequate and affordable housing for everyone, including social housing for those groups that, due to their income or other personal circumstances, struggle to provide adequate housing for themselves. The public authority enters into agreements with housing foundations that execute housing services in return for subsidies.

And the island authority is also responsible for providing a livable living environment, both in terms of physical accessibility (infrastructure, facilities) and in terms of social aspects.

Fundashon Cas Boneriano (FCB)
Bonaire’s social housing project is run by this foundation.

Aert Swaens
This is the Dutch housing association that supports Bonaire’s FCB.

2 Children on housing conditions
With great enthusiasm, the children surveyed share what their house is like and with whom they live there, and talk about the neighborhood they are growing up in.

There are children who share their bedroom with siblings, and children who share a bedroom with grandmothers and grandfathers. Some even share a bed with roommates.

For some children, sharing a bedroom is a problem when it’s time to do homework. Younger siblings who want to play make it hard to focus on homework.

Several children reveal that their mother is single or has a new partner who lives with them.2

‘Our house has two bedrooms. My mom and stepfather sleep in one room, and I sleep in the other with my grandma, grandpa and three brothers. I sleep with my youngest brother on one bed, and I sleep really well, for sure.’ (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

One seventeen-year-old girl says she lived with a foster mother for a year, until the woman’s granddaughter from the Netherlands came to live there as well, which created problems. She therefore moved to the Kas di Karko home. Given that this was a voluntary move, she was subject to other rules than the other children there. She now has to look for a place to live for herself because she’s about to turn eighteen.

A sixteen-year-old girl also says she lives at Kas di Karko, due to problems at home. Her behavior was “poor” and her father became aggressive and hit her. She finds the rules at the home strict, but otherwise likes living there. She now gets the love and attention she did not get at home. And she gets enough to eat there, which she didn’t always at home.3

2 See quotes 598, 599, 603, 608, 609.
3 See quotes 600, 601, 602, 604, 605, 606, 607.
‘Where I used to live, I didn’t get much attention or love. I do in the Kas di Karko shelter, though. And where I used to live there wasn’t enough food for everyone. There is at Kas di Karko.’ (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

3 Experts on housing conditions
The experts consulted for this study mainly point to the social and economic situation of families as a problem in being able to afford adequate housing. Over half of Bonaire’s population owns their home (60%). Those who do not, sometimes face a problem. There is widespread poverty and there are insufficient affordable homes for families and for first-time buyers on the housing market, such as teenagers. There is a waiting list for social housing.

As a result, families in certain neighborhoods live in ‘slum dwellings without sanitary fittings’ and in ‘degrading conditions.’ And poverty also forces large numbers of people to share homes that are far too small. This kind of ‘overhabitation’ has serious consequences for children. Among these consequences are an increased chance of incest, drug use, and stress, according to the experts. Children are unable to do their homework at home.1

‘Poverty and housing are major problems. The girl that I just mentioned lives in a house with her two children, her mom and three or four sisters. It is a small place with two bedrooms.’ (expert)

‘Living in a small home doesn’t necessarily mean that a child can’t develop properly. It’s the mentality of poverty that keeps things as they are. Children have to help so that bills can be paid. They have to look after their little brothers and sisters and keep the household going. That’s the priority, not school. The majority of the inhabitants of the island are not affected in this way, but it’s a persistent problem.’ (expert)

‘Starter homes are needed for young people. Homes that are affordable, also for teenagers who unexpectedly become pregnant and their partners.’ (expert)

4 Literature on housing conditions
The Woonvisie on Bonaire for 2011-2015 notes that the neighborhoods are taking insufficient advantage of Bonaire’s economic development. This comes to the fore in neglected homes, poorly maintained sandy roads, rampant growth of weeds, unsafe situations, lack of facilities such as benches and children’s playgrounds. This situation, in turn, leads to mischievous behavior, crime, and people feeling unsafe.

A 2011 study that assessed people’s wishes in terms of housing conditions shows that over half of all respondents are dissatisfied with the maintenance of their home. And 30% say they feel their home is too small for them. What two thirds of respondents are satisfied with is their home’s price/quality ratio. Most respondents (46%) like the neighborhood in which they live. About 32% do not, while 22% are neutral on the issue. Those who do not like their neighborhood mainly say this is because they do not feel safe there and due to the lack of green areas.

The Poverty Exploration describes that islanders on a low income struggle to find affordable housing. They often end up moving in with family to share the costs of rent and utilities. As a result, there are many cases of too many people sharing a home. Furniture is sometimes lacking, and there are not enough beds. Various respondents point out that this leads to an unhealthy housing situation: children witness all facets of adult life up close.

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1 See quotes 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621.
The poverty issue also comes to the fore in people being behind on their rent and utility payments. People have to choose which bills to pay, and which to put off.

The experts make several suggestions to improve this. People with higher incomes should be encouraged to move out of social housing on Bonaire. And homes for first-time buyers for young people and teenage mothers should be built on Bonaire. And back rents of people who are on a minimum wage on Bonaire should be purged, while a new regime should be introduced, one that prevents people from accumulating back rent.

The housing shortage is also highlighted by a study (2010) into the situation of teenage mothers. The majority of teenage mothers on Bonaire (65.5%) live with their parent(s). One of the reasons for that is that there is no suitable housing available for them. One solution professionals on Bonaire saw was to open a shelter home and housing for teenage mothers.

And older study showed that various families on Bonaire – and single-parent families in particular - lived in homes that are too small for them. The 2008 NGO report confirms this picture and mentions bad housing as a reason why parents are unable to adequately raise their children.

In 2011, the European Committee for Social Rights concludes that the right to adequate housing should be guaranteed. Only then can people’s right to family life in a stable environment be realized. Government policy should be targeted in ensuring sufficient housing stock, ensuring families have a home that is aligned with their needs, which is qualitatively adequate, and which has facilities such as water and electricity.

5 The Convention on the Rights of the Child on housing conditions

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has a number of provisions that apply to the housing conditions of children on Bonaire, leading to the following requirements:

- Undisturbed development.
- Growing up in care of parents.
- Respect for privacy and family life.
- Living situation must be healthy.
- Standard of living must be sufficient to ensure healthy development of the child.
- Living situation must offer space for play, rest, and leisure time.

Article 6 specifies children’s fundamental right to life and development. To actually be able to live and develop, certain basic conditions need to be met, such as growing up in peace – in a house.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child attaches great value to children growing up while in the care of their parents, and not being separated from their parents, and in case of divorced parents, children must maintain contact with both parents. This is described in Article 9.

The right to privacy (Article 16) is also a fundamental right. It protects children’s private life, family life, and housing against interference or intrusion by either the government or fellow citizens. In order to be able to enjoy privacy from other family members, sufficient space (in the home) is required.

Article 27 specifies the right to an adequate standard of living. This right is linked to the right to life and development (Article 6). An adequate standard of living concerns matters such as nutrition, housing, and clothing, but also other aspects required for the

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1 See literature 111, 44, 33, 11, 43, 105, 100, 41.
development of a child. Children need peace and quiet, for example, to be able to do their homework, and sleep to be able to concentrate at school. Poverty can lead to children being unable to exercise all their rights.

Article 24 contains the right to health. This right is formulated in broad terms. The basic idea is that children have a right to “enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health.” In that light, a clean and healthy living environment is indispensable, as is availability of food, clean drinking water, and hygienic sanitary fittings.

The right to leisure, culture, and recreation (Article 31) cannot be put into practice if enabling conditions are absent. Rest and sleep requires a living environment – including a bed – that allows it. To be able to play, children need sufficient, suitable, and safe space in and around the home.

Housing conditions are, of course, also closely related to the way in which children interact and are raised by their parents, with (the sense of) safety, to education, and to the financial situation. For more information about these subjects, please consult the corresponding sections.

6 Conclusion
The description of the current situation and children’s and experts’ opinions show that there are obstacles standing in the way of implementation of the housing conditions rights from the convention. The lack of financial resources and the consequences thereof are described, as well as the shortage of suitable and affordable housing on the island. Quality of life in some neighborhoods is also a cause for concern.

Growing up in poor housing conditions is leading to various bottlenecks for some children. Their right to privacy, for example, is jeopardized when they are unable to retire to a quiet place to be alone and have to live in a house that is too small. Children’s right to education is also at risk when they cannot get peace and quiet at home to be able to do their homework and get a good night’s sleep. And their right to health is under threat when housing conditions are inadequate, and living together with too many people in a small space potentially obstructs children’s development.

Parents are the first responsible parties when it comes to housing conditions and realization of associated rights. The convention is, however, also clear on those cases where parents are unable to assume their responsibility: that’s when the convention wants the government to step forward.
Financial situation

Rich and poor are relative notions. After all, it depends on what you compare a situation to. In assessing the situation in which children grow up, it is not particularly interesting to know whether an island and the people that inhabit it are rich or poor. It is far more important to assess whether children are able to exercise their rights. The rights laid down in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are minimum requirements. These minimum requirements have to be met to ensure children can develop into healthy citizens. The financial situation is therefore directly linked to other subjects addressed in this report. Without financial resources, children will not have food, diapers, a home, toys, educational material, sports facilities, medication, or health care, transportation, etc.

This chapter will first describe the current situation in terms of everything relating to money and families, as well as go over opinions of children, experts, and the literature on this situation. This current situation will subsequently be offset against the standards laid down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, after which the chapter will close with a conclusion.

1 Current situation

1.1 Money and family
The following will describe those aspects that are linked to Bonairian families’ financial situation: inflation, labor force participation rate, access to the labor market, taxes, social security, child maintenance, and assistance in kind. In some cases, this chapter will include a brief comparison to the situation in the European Netherlands for better understanding. Following that, the chapter will focus on the relevant legislation and policy, and list the organizations that are active and responsible in this area.

1.2 Inflation
In 2011, consumer prices in the Caribbean Netherlands were considerably higher than they were in 2010. This is down to, among other things, higher and new import duties for the islands. Average inflation on Bonaire in 2011 was 5.4%. This inflation was caused mainly by the price of food, non-alcoholic beverages, and transportation. In the first and the second quarter of 2012, inflation on Bonaire dropped sharply to 3.6% and 3% respectively. In comparison: inflation in the European Netherlands was 2.3% in 2011. In the first eight months of 2012, the European Netherlands’ monthly inflation figures stayed between 2.1% and 2.5%.

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In October 2012, State Secretary Weekers reached an agreement with the Caribbean Netherlands on an economic stimulus. This agreement will be submitted to the lower house of Dutch parliament as a memorandum of amendment to the Other Fiscal Measures 2013 bill, and it includes plans to extend the zero rate for basic necessities of life to cover more goods with a view to increasing people’s spending power. Tax on gasoline would be lowered by 10% to compensate for the lack of public transport. And property tax is to be cut from 1% to 0.8%, and cut from 0.8% to 0.4% for hotels on the BES islands.¹

In 2013, Statistics Netherlands will conduct a budget review on the BES islands to map household spending.²

1.3 Labor force participation rate
In the European Netherlands, an average of 5.4% of the labor force was unemployed in 2011. That was unchanged from 2010, when unemployment dropped virtually the whole year. This downward trend did not continue in 2011, however. Unemployment among young people aged between 15 and 25 stood at 11.7% in 2010 and 9.8% in 2011.³

The net labor force participation rate in the European Netherlands in 2010 and 2011 was 67.1% and 67.2% respectively. The net labor force participation rate reflects the percentage of people from the potential labor force who have a job of over twelve hours a week. Net labor force participation among men is higher than among women: 74.2% against 60.2% in 2011.⁴

Figures from Statistics Netherlands show that Bonaire’s net labor force participation rate was 66.6% in 2010. A little over five hundred Bonairians were unemployed in 2010, making an unemployment rate of 6.6%. And there were a further 3,100 people who were not active on the labor market at the time.

The labor force participation rate among men was considerably higher than among women, 71.8% against 61.2%. As far as unemployment is concerned, there’s not much different between men and women. 6.5% of men were unemployed, and 6.7% of women.

In 2010, 12.8% of 12-to-25-year-olds were unemployed. This percentage represents roughly one hundred young people. This unemployment rate is a lot higher than among middle-aged or older people, where the rate lies between 5% and 6%. Young people are also, in relative terms, more often not active in the labor market, mainly because they are in education. Over four in ten young people did already participate in the labor force.

Of all workers, 2,200 had a job in trade, transportation, and hospitality. That is over two thousand Bonairians engaged in these industries, which provide jobs for nearly 1,700 people. Bonaire’s second largest industry is the government and health care, which provide jobs for nearly 1,700 people.⁵

1.4 Income
In 2012, the minimum wage for employees aged 23 and over was €8.35 an hour for a 40-hour working week in the European Netherlands.⁶ And the average personal wage in the European Netherlands was approximately €22,100 in the European Netherlands in 2010.⁷

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¹ See Staatssecretaris Weekers en bestuurders Caribisch Nederland sluiten akkoord over fiscaal pakket, via website rijksoverheid.nl, 11 October 2012. Also see newspaper Trouw, 10 October 2012, Akkoord over lagere belastingen BES-eilanden.
⁵ CBS, Statline. http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=70957ned&D1=a&D2=0&D4=1,702&D5=0,D6=a&HDR=T&STB=G1,G2,G3&VW=T.
⁶ See Statesecretaris Weekers en bestuurders Caribisch Nederland sluiten akkoord over fiscaal pakket, via website rijksoverheid.nl, 11 October 2012. Also see newspaper Trouw, 10 October 2012, Akkoord over lagere belastingen BES-eilanden.
⁹ CBS, Statline. http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=70957ned&D1=a&D2=0,D4=1,702&D5=0,D6=a&HDR=T&STB=G1,G2,G3&VW=T.
¹⁰ CBS, Statline. http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=70957ned&D1=a&D2=0,D4=1,702&D5=0,D6=a&HDR=T&STB=G1,G2,G3&VW=T.
¹¹ CBS, Statline. http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=70957ned&D1=a&D2=0&D4=1,702&D5=0,D6=a&HDR=T&STB=G1,G2,G3&VW=T.
¹² CBS, Statline. http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=70957ned&D1=a&D2=0&D4=1,702&D5=0,D6=a&HDR=T&STB=G1,G2,G3&VW=T.
The poverty survey in the Caribbean Netherlands, commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, estimates that roughly half of all wages in the Caribbean Netherlands are above the minimum level.\(^1\)

A study of people’s purchasing power conducted by Ecorys and Curconsult states that Statistics Netherlands puts the average gross wage on Bonaire in 2010 at approx. $16,787 per year ($1,400 per month). Approx. 63% of the labor force makes less than the average of $1,400 a month. The study does note, however, that actual income is probably higher because many people have income from other sources alongside their jobs.\(^2\) The minimum hourly wage for an employee who is over 21 years old is $4.45 on Bonaire in 2012.\(^3\)

### 1.5 Access to the labor market

The poverty survey in the Caribbean Netherlands and the Caribbean Netherlands Frame of Reference state that public entities used to take care of assistance themselves prior to the transition, sometimes even hiring people who would otherwise not be able to find work.\(^4\) The Social Affairs and Employment Unit is currently in the process of launching employment programs in collaboration with the public entities. According to a representative of the Social Affairs and Employment Unit on the BES islands, it is difficult to find motivated candidates for these programs.\(^5\) In the fall of 2012, the Dutch government decided to stimulate employment by applying the social return concept in building projects on the Caribbean Netherlands. This increases the social impact of these projects. One example is the introduction of apprenticeships on building sites.\(^6\)

According to a representative of the Social Affairs and Employment Unit on the BES islands, registration of the unemployed and helping the unemployed find work has been “arranged on paper” by the public entity on Bonaire. In practice, however, this has proven not to work. Given that the unemployed are not entitled to welfare and many jobs on the island are undeclared, unemployed people would not benefit from being registered unemployed.\(^7\)

*Stichting Forma* and *Stichting Magazin di Rei* have been commissioned by the public entity to run a two-year project (2011 and 2012), funded by USONA/SEI resources, aimed at getting long-term unemployed people back to work. The public entity also subsidizes the *Stichting Forma* in the area of adult education. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment subsidizes a project by Forma that is intended for the semiliterate.\(^8\)

### 1.6 Income tax

Up to 2010, there was a so-called bracket rate for income tax in the Caribbean Netherlands. As of January 1\(^{st}\) 2011, most people pay tax at a rate of 30.4%. This rate also includes social security premiums and the health insurance premium. These premiums are therefore not charged separately. Income over $250,000 is taxed at a rate of 35.4%.

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4. Information provided by email by Huub Bouwen, unit head SZW BES-islands, October 2012.
5. Information provided by email by Huub Bouwen, unit head SZW BES-eilanden, October 2012.
7. Information provided by email by Huub Bouwen, unit head SZW BES-eilanden, October 2012.
People are entitled to a personal tax deduction of $10,813. The following amounts can be added to this personal deduction:

- $1,386 per child, up to a maximum of two children.
- $1,222 for persons of sixty years and over.

There are various tax deductions. Mortgage interest and home maintenance expenses, for example, can be deducted, as well as various personal and exceptional expenses. Mortgage interest is deductible only at the 30.4% rate, not at the rate of 35.4%.

Rental income is not taxed through income tax, but instead comes under property tax. Interest and dividend income are subject to an interest exemption of $5,000 and a dividend exemption of $5,000.1

1.7 Social provisions
The following provides a description of the main social provisions for families with children in the Caribbean Netherlands.

Child allowance: contribution toward the costs of child care and rearing
The Caribbean Netherlands offers its citizens a tax break called child allowance. As of October 1st 2011, families with one child can add $1,386 to their personal deduction of $10,813, while families with two children can add $2,772.2 Families are entitled to this child allowance for children who are seventeen years old or under at the start of the calendar year and who are part of the family.3 And there is also a child allowance for a maximum of three children of people entitled to assistance (Refer to Assistance).

In the European Netherlands, persons who maintain children are, on certain conditions, entitled to child benefits. In 2012, child benefits amounted to €188.57 per quarter for children up to the age of five, €228.89 for children aged between six and twelve, and €269.39 for children aged between twelve and eighteen. Other amounts apply for children born before 1 January 1995. In case of high expenses for children who do not live at home, such as for a disabled child, families may on certain conditions be entitled to double child benefits.

Children aged sixteen and seventeen are only entitled to child benefits if they are in education during the day and working on obtaining an entry-level qualification; if they are exempted from having to obtain an entry-level qualification; if they after having obtained an entry-level qualification are still in full-time education during the daytime; if they are unemployed after having obtained an entry-level qualification; if they after having obtained an entry-level qualification are unable to stay in education due to illness or a disability. The income of sixteen-and-seventeen-year-olds must furthermore be below a net amount of €1,240 per quarter. Entitlement to child benefits ends as soon as a child enrolls in higher vocational education or college.4

Besides child benefits, the European Netherlands also offers a child-related budget. Parents are entitled to this budget if the family income is not too high, they receive child benefits for the child, or if the child is sixteen or seventeen years old and maintained by the parents to a significant degree. The extent of the child-related budget is based on the family income and the number of children under the age of eighteen in the family. In case of a gross family income of up to €28,897 a family is entitled to the maximum child-related budget. If the gross family income is over €28,897, the child-related budget will gradually

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1 Belastingdienst Caribisch Nederland. Inkomstenbelasting. Informatiefolder.
2 Belastingdienst Caribisch Nederland. Wijzigingen in de Belastingwetgeving BES, een toelichting. Wijzigingen voor particulieren.
lower. In 2012, a family with one child receives a maximum of €1,017 per years, while a family with two children is entitled to a maximum of €1,478 per year.  

**Orphan’s pension: welfare for orphans**
In the event of the death of one or both of a child’s parents, children in the Caribbean Netherlands are entitled to an orphan’s pension. Children aged between 15 and 25 are only entitled to the orphan’s pension if they are disabled or in education full time or most of the time. In 2012, the orphan’s pension ranged between $186 and $269 a month, depending on the child’s age and on whether the child has lost one or both parents. The amounts also differ per island.  

**General Widows’ and Orphans’ Benefits Act: welfare for widows and widowers**
Widows and widowers in the Caribbean Netherlands are entitled to welfare under this legislation up to the moment they become entitled to a state pension. The amount they receive depends on their age and varies per island. There is a special scheme for disabled widows or widowers with one or multiple orphans. In 2012, they received a monthly payment of $555 on Bonaire.  

**Assistance**
Persons who are older than eighteen years of age and who have been living on the islands for at least five years, while also being unable to generate sufficient income to be able to provide for themselves, can apply for assistance. The amounts paid in assistance differ per island due to the differences in inflation. In 2012, the basic amount for Bonaire was $85 per fortnight.

Aside from that, there are also individual financial allowances: such as the allowance to enable people to live on their own, the child allowance, and an occupational disability allowance. On Bonaire, the child allowance for the first child amounts to $25. For the second and third child, the child allowance on Bonaire is $13. The child allowance for people entitled to assistance will end as soon as the child turns eighteen, or as soon as the child starts earning money himself/herself. People entitled to assistance do not receive a child allowance for children who do not live on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, or Saba. The occupational disability allowance amounts to $100 on Bonaire. In the fall of 2012, the Dutch government decided to increase the occupational disability allowance by 50%.  

Assistance recipients are allowed to earn additional income up to the minimum wage without being cut on their assistance welfare. 

Assistance recipients are, under the Assistance Decree for the BES islands, required to look for and accept work that is generally accepted and matches their ability, register for employment mediation at the governing council of the island authority, and use facilities for integration into the workforce made available by or through the governing council. They are also required to cooperate in assessments of their possibilities for integration into the workforce.

According to a representative of the Social Affairs and Employment Unit on the BES islands, roughly 250 people on the islands are on assistance welfare, of which 215 live on Bonaire.

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4. Information provided by email by Huub Bouwens, unit head SZW on the BES islands, October 2012.
The poverty survey in the Caribbean Netherlands lists the following figures regarding the number of people receiving this financial assistance: on Bonaire, 211 people receive financial assistance, of which 109 receive an occupational disability allowance, and 26 persons receive a child allowance.1 For the sake of comparison: figures of Statistics Netherlands show that 319,000 people receive this kind of welfare in the European Netherlands at the end of June 2012.2

In exceptional cases, assistance recipients can apply for exceptional welfare. The Assistance Act for the BES islands specifies that people may do so to cover funeral expenses, the cost of filling up a water reservoir, the cost of a school uniform, or the cost of a medically prescribed diet. The Social Affairs and Employment Unit of the Caribbean Netherlands Civil Service determines whether a case can be classed as an exceptional one.3 According to a representative of the Social Affairs and Employment Unit on the BES islands, around ten people received exceptional welfare in the past year.4 In the fall of 2012, the Dutch government decided to make more funds available for the exceptional welfare scheme to enable more people to use it, especially to cover the costs of school material.5

In the European Netherlands, people with insufficient income or capital to provide for themselves and who are not entitled to other forms of assistance, can apply for basic welfare. This will also factor in the income and capital of a possible partner, provided they share a household. In the case of a single householder, the capital must not exceed €5,685. For married persons and single parents, the capital is capped at €11,370. For a single householder, the welfare payment amounts to 50% of the minimum wage (in 2012 this was €634.80); for single parents it was 70% of the minimum wage (in 2012, €888.72) and for cohabitating couples together 100% of the minimum wage (in 2012, €1,269.60). Municipal authorities can in some cases deviate from these standard amounts for welfare payments. They can, for example, grant single householders and single parents an additional allowance of no more than 20% of the net minimum wage, while they can also give people who have been living on a low wage for a long time an additional allowance. Persons on welfare must comply with certain requirements, including the obligation to look for employment and accept job offers. Single parents with children below the age of five can apply for an exemption from the obligation to actively look for work. Whenever someone has other income, the welfare payment will be lowered accordingly. Persons below the age of 27 have to look for work for four weeks before they can apply for welfare.6

Municipal authorities in the European Netherlands can grant individual exceptional welfare to persons over the age of eighteen who have insufficient income or capital to pay certain necessary expenses. These include medical expenses, living expenses, school expenses, and sports club fees for children.

Municipal authorities can also grant category-based exceptional welfare to certain groups, such as the over-65s, the chronically ill, and the disabled. Conditions that have to be met to be eligible for exceptional welfare differ from one municipality to the next.7

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4 Information provided by email by Huub Bouwens, unit head SZW on the BES islands, October 2012.
**Severance pay: termination benefit**

Every employee in the Caribbean Netherlands who, through no fault of their own, is laid off, is entitled to severance pay (known as the ‘Cessantia’ benefit): a one-off termination benefit payment. An employer who lays off an employee is statutorily required to pay this severance pay. If the employer is bankrupt, or has been granted a moratorium, the Social Affairs and Employment agency will pay the severance pay.

Severance pay is calculated based on the most recent wage and the number of years of service. For the first to the tenth full year of service, severance pay amounts to one weekly wage for each year of service. For the eleventh to the twentieth full year of service, severance pay amounts to one and a quarter times the weekly wage for each year of service. For full years of service beyond twenty years, severance pay amounts to twice a weekly wage for each year of service.\(^1\)

**Sick pay: provisions for sick and pregnant employees**

Every employee in the Caribbean Netherlands is entitled to sick pay when they are sick or pregnant. Sick pay is paid for a maximum of two years when someone suffers from the same illness. Minimum sick pay is 80% of the employee’s daily wage. Employers are obliged to pay this. Employers can, in turn, apply for loss of income compensation from the Social Affairs and Employment agency, which will reimburse the 80% paid to a sick employee.

In case of pregnancy and maternity leave, employees are entitled to 100% sick pay. An employee is entitled to at least four weeks’ and at most six weeks’ leave prior to the estimated date of delivery (pregnancy leave) and at least six weeks and at most eight weeks leave after the actual date of delivery (maternity leave).\(^2\)

**Occupational disability**

An employee who due to an accident at work is fully or partially incapacitated for work is entitled to accident compensation. This entitlement starts on the day after the accident was reported. In case of full occupational disability, accident compensation amounts to 100% of the employee’s daily wage for the first year, and 80% of the employee’s daily wage for subsequent years. In case of partial occupational disability, accident compensation will be calculated based on the percentage of occupational disability.

If occupational disability lasts over a year, and the employee’s condition is not likely to improve, this employee can apply for a once-only payment. However, when the occupational disability percentage is 30% or more, this payment will only be granted in exceptional cases – at the discretion of the minister. In the event that an employee dies as a result of an accident at work, his or her surviving relatives may be eligible for accident compensation.\(^3\)

**Health insurance**

As of 1 January 2011, anyone who lawfully resides or works in the Caribbean Netherlands is automatically covered by the compulsory Caribbean Netherlands Health Insurance. This also goes for people up to the age of thirty who have left the island for educational reasons.\(^4\)

This health insurance covers, among other things, primary care, psychological care, medical specialist care, hospital admission, paramedic care, dental care, medication, medical devices, obstetric care, maternity care, transport of the sick, and long-term care relating to old age, a disease, or a disability, regardless of whether this care is provided at a residential facility or at home. This health insurance also covers the costs of medical

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\(^3\) Wet ongevallenverzekering BES.

referral to physicians outside the Caribbean Netherlands with whom the health insurance provider has a (in)direct contract.

Insured parties with an income that exceeds the personal deduction are required to pay an income-based premium. Employers also pay a premium for their employees’ health insurance. These premiums are imposed and collected by the Dutch Tax and Customs Administration.¹

**Child care allowance**

Unlike their counterparts in the European Netherlands, parents on Bonaire do not receive a child care allowance. Child care organizations do, however, sometimes receive subsidies from public entities. The fees parents are required to pay differ per island and per facility.

**Social housing and rent assistance**

The waiting time for social rentals is very long on the islands of the Caribbean Netherlands. Tenants in social housing pay a maximum of 30% of their income in rent. Housing associations on Bonaire have many clients who are behind on their rent payments. Please refer to the chapter on Housing Conditions for more details.

**Student support**

Students from the Caribbean Netherlands who go to college in the Netherlands can apply for Dutch student support. They can also, on certain conditions, apply for a single start-up allowance from the Caribbean Netherlands Civil Service. This start-up allowance consists in a performance-related scholarship and a loan. The maximum amount for the performance-related scholarship is $2,289.65 and for the loan is $4,579.31.

Students from the Caribbean Netherlands who want to go to college in the Caribbean or in the United States, and who meet certain conditions, can apply for student support from the Caribbean Netherlands Civil Service.

Students in level 1 or 2 secondary vocational education (SBO or MBO) may be entitled to a four-year non-repayable scholarship, while they can also borrow money alongside that. After this four-year non-repayable scholarship, students can continue to borrow money for three further years.

Students in level 3 or 4 secondary vocational education, higher vocational education, or college can apply for a performance-related scholarship and a student loan. After this four-year performance-related scholarship, students can continue to borrow money for three further years. The amount of the student support depends on the type of course and the country in which the student is enrolled.²

**Free legal aid**

Anyone whose annual earnings stay below $12,500 can request free legal aid from the Caribbean Netherlands Civil Service.

In most cases, a personal contribution is not payable. Only in case of a conflict with an employer will someone be required to pay a personal contribution.³

1.8 **Child maintenance**

When parents separate, they have to come to an arrangement for child maintenance. There is the option of asking the court, through the Guardianship Council, to impose a payment obligation. If the Guardianship Council is unable to mediate a child maintenance settlement, the case will go to court. The court will then decide how much the parent must pay. There are no standard amounts for that. The payable monthly amount is mostly around $125 per child, but when a parent cannot afford that, this amount can be considerably lower.⁴

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¹ Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland, Zorgverzekeringskantoor. *Informatiebrochure zorgverzekering voor verzekeraars van de Zorgverzekerings Bonaire, Saba en Sint Eustatius*. Per 1 January 2011.
In the European Netherlands, child maintenance is payable for children up to age of 21. When children aged between 18 and 21 work or receive student aid, this will affect the payable child maintenance amount. Child maintenance will always be reviewed by the court. Parents can, however, agree on an amount and then have this reviewed and ratified by the court. The courts have jointly compiled standards they use in child maintenance rulings: the so-called Trema standards. In assessing how much child maintenance should be paid, courts go by the assumption that children generally live with one of their parents.

The court will first determine what amount the person liable to pay child maintenance can afford to pay (ability to pay). The amount of money this person needs to provide for himself/herself is deducted from his/her net income. The difference between the net income and the income needed to cover fixed cost of living is the margin available for paying child maintenance. This amount can be used for child maintenance.

The court will subsequently assess how much the person entitled to receive child maintenance needs. The court will do so based on special tables. Child maintenance needs are determined based on, among other things, financial resources during the marriage and the income of the person entitled to receive child maintenance.

The income situation as it was just prior to the divorce will be taken as the starting point. The child maintenance need will be divided proportionally to both partners' income.  

Bonaire’s Guardianship Council has 295 child maintenance cases involving children and adolescents below the age of 21 on its books. In 153 of these cases, roughly half of all registered cases, child maintenance is actually paid. Of these 153 cases where child maintenance is paid, the monthly amount paid is in most cases between $100 and $200 per child. In 35 cases, the amount is below $100 a month. The lowest monthly child maintenance amount paid through the Guardianship Council is $27.93.  

1.9 Assistance in kind
The Breakfast at Schools program, an initiative by the Bonaire Rotary Club, provides meals for 350 pupils on school days. Including the after-school program, the program provides 480 meals every school day. Several elementary schools and day care centers, the high school, and Stichting Project all take part in the project.  

A donation by a U.S. donor enables Jong Bonaire to give 25 pupils a hot meal every day. Given that pupils are ashamed or sometimes bullied when other children find out they get their meal for free, Jong Bonaire uses a system where pupils cannot see whether a meal was paid by parents or the project.  

Churches on Bonaire occasionally help families, such as by providing food parcels. One of the churches has opened a food bank that provides food parcels to 250 families every month. The food bank is currently funded by AMFO, but the public authority will take over this responsibility from 2013. There are also further (private) initiatives by artists and hospitality businesses that support families and institutions that are struggling financially.

1.10 Legislation

The social security facilities outlined above are based on the following legislation: the Income Tax Act for the BES Islands, the Assistance Decree for the BES Islands, the General Widows' and Orphans' Act for the BES Islands, the Health Insurance Act for the BES

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Islands, the Accident Insurance Act for the BES Islands, the Student Support Act for the BES Islands, and the Severance Pay Act for the BES Islands.

The Elementary Education Act for the BES Islands furthermore stipulates that the public authority is to lay down rules for the provision of food and clothing, as well as transport facilities, for children who would otherwise not be able to regularly attend school.

The Employment Office Act for the BES Islands furthermore obliges the authorities of the islands to provide employment-finding services.¹

1.11 Policy and activities

Antillean legislation regarding social facilities has largely been preserved after the transition. Social facilities in the Caribbean Netherlands therefore differ from those provided in the European part of the Netherlands.

The Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands specifies that the islands can be subjected to rules and that other specific measures can be taken with a view to economic and social circumstances, the large distance from the European part of the Netherlands, their insular nature, small surface and population, geographic circumstances, the climate, and other factors that make that these islands are essentially different from the European part of the Netherlands.

In 2010, the then minister of Social Affairs and Employment, on behalf of the Dutch government, and delegates of the islands agreed that the extent of the minimum wage and welfare payments in the Netherlands shall not serve as a guide in defining a minimum wage and welfare for the Caribbean Netherlands. The development of welfare entitlements on the islands will be linked to the local development of the minimum wage. During these discussions between government bodies, the parties expressed the shared aim of further improving the minimum wage, the state pension, and assistance within the preconditions of economic capacity, balanced social relations, specific circumstances on each of the islands, and budgetary considerations in the Netherlands.²

On 10 October 2010, the amounts payable as financial assistance were raised to catch up with price index adjustments that should have been applied in previous years but were not. New welfare amounts were subsequently instituted as of 1 January 2012.³ Price trends were calculated for each island separately, and the welfare amounts were raised by the resulting percentage.⁴

As far as social and economic development is concerned, the Dutch government pursues an integrated approach. Responsibility for the formulation of social and economic policy lies with the island authorities in the first place. In a letter to the Second Chamber of Dutch Parliament dated 23 January 2012, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment writes that the island authorities’ organizational capacity is still insufficient for them to be able to handle policymaking. Changes to the composition of the governments of several islands and the limitation of the civil service are, in his opinion, the underlying reason for that.⁵

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¹ Letter from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment of 22 June 2012 to the House of Representatives about promises made by general consultation Caribbean Netherlands 30 January 2012.
² Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. Response to parliamentary questions asked by representative Van Gent (GroenLinks) about children’s allowances in the Caribbean Netherlands, 31 May 2011.
³ Regulation of 21 November 2011, Staatscourant 2011, 21373.
⁴ Letter by the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment of 23 January 2012 about a comprehensive approach to the socio-economic problems of the islands, the state benefits and the implementation. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33000 IV no. 54.
⁵ Letter by the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment of 23 January 2012 about a comprehensive approach to the socio-economic problems of the islands, the state benefits and the implementation. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33000 IV no. 54.
In 2012, it was announced that funding for Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius will go up. Funding for the islands of the Caribbean Netherlands is comparable to the funding of Dutch municipalities through municipal funds. This adjustment follows a study by IdeeVersa of the extent of funding in relation to the tasks islands are supposed to execute. Funding for the islands of the Caribbean Netherlands will be increased by over eight million dollar, taking it to nearly USD43 million.¹

And the relevant ministries have furthermore made €1,020,000 available for the three islands together for 2012. This money is intended to be used to finance local projects on the islands that are part of integrated social and economic efforts. Besides local governments, other organizations can also submit project applications, providing these are endorsed by the local government. Proposed projects must target improvement of quality of life, reintegration toward sustainable paid employment, and increasing social participation.²

In the spring on 2012, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment commissioned a study into poverty in the Caribbean Netherlands. This study showed that the situation at the bottom of society requires further improvement. In October 2012, the Dutch government and the local authorities of Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba discussed a number of initiatives aimed at improving the social and economic situation on the islands. This has led to the government making the following decisions:

- Entitlement to exceptional assistance will be extended to enable more people to use it, especially to cover the costs of school materials. Welfare for the occupationally impaired will be increased by 50% in comparison to the current level.
- Part of the costs of utilities, which are higher due to the small scale of the islands of the Caribbean Netherlands, will be apportioned to the European Netherlands. An independent regulator will be introduced to limit the burden of increasing costs on citizens and companies in the Caribbean Netherlands. Apportioning of utility costs was already commonplace in the European Netherlands. The aim is to regulate this through law for the Caribbean Netherlands as of January 1st 2014. During the transitional period of 2013, the Ministries of Economic Affairs and of Infrastructure and the Environment will provide a financial contribution to absorb increases in the costs of utilities.
- Jobs will be created by applying the concept of social return in state building projects in the Caribbean Netherlands. This increases the social impact of these projects. One example is the introduction of apprenticeships in building projects.
- Following surplus tax proceeds for 2011 in the Caribbean Netherlands, totaling around USD5 million, a package of measures was agreed with the Ministry of Finance to, on the one hand, boost people’s purchasing power and on the other provide an economic stimulus on the islands. Measures in this package include a property tax cut, reduction of tax on fuel, and an increase in the tax exemption for the basic necessities of life.
- A so-called E team will be set up on each of the islands of the Caribbean Netherlands. This is a partnership of the government and entrepreneurs on the islands aimed at further stimulating economic growth.³

Activities

- Stichting Forma and the Magazin di Rei foundation have been commissioned by the public authority to run a two-year project (2011 and 2012), using USONA/SEI funds, aimed at getting Bonaire’s long-term unemployed back on the job market.
- Ecorys and Curconsult have conducted a study, by order of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, into purchasing power in the Caribbean Netherlands.

² Letter from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment of 22 June 2012 to the House of Representatives about promises made by general consultation Caribbean Netherlands 30 January 2012.
• The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment commissioned an poverty survey in the Caribbean Netherlands.
• The national government has made €1,020,000 available for 2012 for projects that focus on tackling social and economic issues.
• There have also been activities in the realm of the economy, such as a study of market forces on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba, a revamp of Bonaire’s chamber of commerce, support for Bonaire’s tourist office by the Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions.¹
• As of 1 January 2011, the Caribbean Netherlands’ compulsory health insurance under public law was introduced to cover medical care and exceptional medical expenses for the islanders.

In his progress report of February 2012, the Kingdom Representative stated: ‘It is key that, as soon as this research [into price movements] has produced results, measures be taken soon in concert with the public authorities to keep prices under control and restore and retain purchasing power. If these measures are not taken quickly enough, and inflation keeps rising, the economically most vulnerable group of islanders will fall into a poverty trap.’

The representative also writes that simultaneous application of conflicting European Netherlands and Antillean standards may lead to inconsistent actions by the national government, and that it is key that the national government be consistent in their application of standards. This will inevitably require political choices: either the old Antillean standards, or the new Dutch ones. The example he provides is that of Antillean civil servants, who are earning salaries, while Dutch standards stipulate that civil servants are not allowed to work second jobs. The national government has thus unintentionally created a group of working poor among its own workforce.

And finally, the representative writes about obstacles that have arisen in the movement of persons and trade after the transition. The triple tax load weighs heavily on purchasing power. Agreements have meanwhile been made about that with Curaçao.²

1.12 Organizations and responsibilities

Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is responsible for setting the amounts to which welfare recipients are entitled, and has overall responsibility for social and economic matters.

Public Authority
The island authority is responsible for combating poverty in the broadest sense, alongside employment finding and labor force participation.³ The public authority is, furthermore, under the Elementary Education Act for the BES Islands, tasked with ensuring children of parents with limited financial means can go to school.

Caribbean Netherlands civil service – Social Affairs Unit
The Social Affairs Unit of the Caribbean Netherlands’ social service implements welfare schemes, grants work permits and dismissal permits, and performs inspections in the area of working conditions, minimum wage, illegal labor, and working hours.⁴

¹ Kingdom Representative for the public bodies of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba (2011). Voorjaarsrapportage 2011.
² Kingdom Representative for the public bodies of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba (2012). Voorjaarsrapportage februari 2012.
³ Letter from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment of 22 June 2012 to the House of Representatives about promises made by general consultation Caribbean Netherlands 30 January 2012.
⁴ Letter by the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment of 23 January 2012 about a comprehensive approach to the socio-economic problems of the islands, the state benefits and the implementation. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33000 IV no. 54.
Local health insurance authority (ZVK)
The health insurance authority is part of the Caribbean Netherlands’ civil service and focuses on implementation of the health insurance.

2 Children on financial situation
The children surveyed talk at length about their or their parents’ financial situation. Some say many things are expensive on the island. Food – and healthy food in particular – is costly. One thirteen-year-old girl suggests making food available for everyone and that people at least get bread for free. Another says that clothes and other things are also expensive on Bonaire and that there is limited offering. She prefers to go to Curacao. Some children feel that life has got more expensive of late. That’s what their parents say. ‘We cannot afford as many luxuries as we used to, because we still have to cover our monthly expenses,’ says one girl. And also: ‘My mother says we have to set priorities in life.’

Many children say there is ‘enough money at home’ to be able to eat every day and buy clothes. They do, however, sometimes have to carefully weigh up what to spend money on. The choice between a book or food is then a no-brainer.

Some children say that there are things their mother won’t get them, but that they then ask their dad, who lives elsewhere and is quicker to say ‘yes.’ One sixteen-year-old girl about this: ‘I know very well whom to ask when I want certain things, my mother or my father. That’s very convenient, because that way I always get what I want.’

A number of children get pocket money. There are children who have jobs to make a little money.¹

‘I help with sweeping up at my mom’s restaurant, and I get paid ten dollars. I put the money I earn into my piggy bank.’ (girl, 8 years old, Bonaire)

‘My mom works very hard to give all of her children food to eat and to give us everything we need. If I need something, my mom is able to buy it for me. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

3 Experts on financial situation
The experts consulted have a lot to say about the subject of people’s financial situation. They note that money problems often lead to other problems. And they have also found that various families on Bonaire suffer ‘terrible poverty’ and shame about their situation. ‘Many parents don’t have enough money,’ one expert summarizes the situation. And another expert says that he can smell on some people who come into his office to apply for welfare that they haven’t eaten in days.

The experts state that at the same time there are many (other) islanders who show off expensive things, such as BlackBerry phones. They put this down to the importance people attach to appearance. Poor spending choices are also mentioned as one of the causes underlying money problems. There are families who immediately spend their wages on a meal at ‘de Snek,’ and subsequently don’t make it to the end of the month.

Experts link some financial problems to changes to the political situation and developments over the past few years, pointing to inflation and dollarization, as well as the fact that the people of Bonaire now have to pay tax.

Aside from that, living on an island is expensive because everything has to be shipped in or things are not naturally available on the island. That goes for healthy food and fruit,

¹ See quotes 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632.
but also for water. ‘Everything is hugely expensive here,’ one expert points out. ‘Diapers, baby milk, everything.’

Some of the experts are surprised by the fact that parents in the Caribbean Netherlands do not receive child benefits, while parents in the European Netherlands do. One expert calls that ‘unequal treatment.’

Experts make a link between financial and parenting problems. They wonder how you can possibly support parents in their parenting when they are barely scraping by and are hungry.

Very serious issues, such as prostitution (in exchange for things), are also mentioned. Some of the experts know of cases of women offering to have sex with men in exchange for money or food, trying to keep the family going or ‘purely to survive.’ This happens behind closed doors and figures are therefore not available, but it does highlight the seriousness of the issue, experts say.

For organizations that work with children, lack of funds is also a recurring problem. It leads to problems in terms of continuity and undermines the support these organizations can offer children and families. Even merely offering children a simple sandwich can then prove difficult. Day care and child care organizations make exceptions to their policy to admit children whose parents cannot afford the fee, but there are limits, of course.

The experts call for structural solutions and a major catch-up effort to get all areas to the required (minimum) level. Some say Bonaire has been neglected for a long time, and that major efforts are now required to combat poverty. Children need to have the standard of living they are entitled to. This should be based on the actual situation to be able to assess who need financial support. The high cost of living, housing, energy, and water, as well as taxes on the island, should all be considered. ‘The way the island receives funds at the moment is simply not fair. Bonaire is not given a fair chance,’ according to one expert.

The issue of child maintenance after a divorce also needs tackling, according to the experts. At present, the onus is generally on mothers to ask their ex-husbands for child maintenance, with the latter often not paying and women being on their own financially. Fathers should automatically be required to pay for their children’s maintenance and not be able to shirk these responsibilities. When a father is not able to pay due to his financial situation, the government should chip in, the experts say.¹

‘Sometimes it’s very difficult to help people when they don’t even have the most basic things. If you’re hungry, you’re not going to be interested in sitting down and listening to people chatting. If you can sort the hunger out, things are much easier.’ (expert)

‘Poverty, there is terrible poverty. They hide it, they are all so ashamed.’ (expert)

‘I do understand that people can do the strangest things to get money.’ (expert)

4 Literature on financial situation

Research (2011) shows that poverty is an important issue on the islands. Apart from figures on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), adequate and recent data that could be used to accurately assess the extent of the poverty issue are lacking. And yet, it is clear that the financial situation of families and the islands themselves is often problematic. This is also confirmed by older research.

The Verwey-Jonker Institute bases itself on GDP figures in concluding that Saba is the poorest of the three islands, but also one of the richer islands in comparison to other Caribbean islands. In 2004, St. Eustatius was the richest of the three islands, and still seemed to be so in 2009. Compared to other Caribbean islands, Bonaire is also among the richer ones. In comparison to the European Netherlands, however, the islands of the Caribbean Netherlands are very poor.

Statistics Netherlands’ definition of youth unemployment as used for the former Netherlands Antilles is different from the definition used in the European Netherlands in terms of the age limit and demarcation.

An earlier study among youths (2006) showed that 7% of parents of children on Bonaire were unemployed.

In its report on the implementation of the European Social Charter, the government of the former country of the Netherlands Antilles describes that a method was used on Curaçao to define the poverty line. There are plans to apply this method to the other islands as well.

Other studies confirm the situation in terms of poverty on the island. The 2012 Exploration of Poverty shows that people on a minimum wage do not earn enough to be able to cover all their expenses. They therefore get additional jobs or seek help from family. Above half of all wages are at or just above minimum wage.

The general picture is that the lives of people on a low wage have become harder after the transition due to the increase in costs. Despite the government having brought welfare payments in line with inflation, people are unable to get by on their wage.

Poverty is causing numerous problems in families’ daily lives. They eat unhealthily because fruit and vegetables are expensive. There are children who are hungry. People on a low wage struggle to find affordable housing. Families move in together to be able to share the rent and utility costs, which often leads to too many people sharing a home. There are also people who are behind on their rent and utility payments.

One of the possible causes of financial problems that is mentioned is people’s poor money management skills and them setting the wrong priorities. People often get into debt to be able to purchase luxury goods.

Within the small society on the island, people help and support each other, with family, neighbors, and churches all playing a role. However, this social safety net is undermined by increasing individualization.

Single mothers often find themselves in a very difficult situation. Many fathers do not pay towards their children’s maintenance. Mothers sometimes feel moving in with family is their only option, living in already cramped conditions. Child care is too expensive for them and older children, fifteen-and-sixteen-year-olds, are forced to work.

A 2010 report states that you cannot actually refer to them as ‘single mothers,’ but should consider these situations fluid family relationships. The composition of families is in itself not the problem; insufficient income and a low educational level are highlighted as the causes of problems.

An earlier study, such as a 2008 NGO report on children’s rights on the islands, confirms the picture painted above, while adding that government support for parents, and young single mothers in particular, falls shorts, and that while child maintenance is often never paid.

The 2012 Exploration of Poverty provides various suggestions for improvement, such as: subsidized child care and after-school programs, making it compulsory for fathers to pay
child maintenance, affordable social housing, assistance in kind, joint and coordinated care by various organizations (such as specialist residential care or all-round family coaches), debt counseling, options for low-interest loans, monitoring by the bank, back rent rescheduling, effective price monitoring, (population) survey and agreements between the public authority and the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child previously (in 2009) recommended allocating additional resources to the identification and support of vulnerable families and children in the Netherlands. The committee pointed to the lack of resources in the Netherlands Antilles, such as for disabled children and children who need other forms of care. According to the committee, the emphasis should be on fighting poverty and pushing back inequality between the various parts of the Kingdom.

In 2008, the committee for economic, social, and cultural rights also pressed for efforts to push back poverty and provide support for (single) parents. The Council of Europe’s European Committee of Social Rights drew a similar conclusion in 2011.

In their most recent report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2012), the Dutch government also ascertains that there is poverty in the Caribbean Netherlands. They place responsibility for fighting poverty primarily with the island authorities.

Poverty has consequences in a number of different areas. In reference to teenage mothers, the study by Verwey-Jonker states that poverty is generally considered to be the main cause of young motherhood.

A 2012 study by the Netherlands Police Agency shows that poverty is considered a main cause of people perpetrating criminal acts. Spokespersons for the public prosecution service and the police point out that houses and companies are more and more often burgled for food. A father figure is often lacking from families, while the mother is forced to work multiple jobs and therefore has no time to dedicate to her children.

Another study that was run on Bonaire (in 2011) shows that most families’ financial situation impacts on school drop-out rates and the family and parenting situation. ‘The underlying poverty is greater than can be appreciated from the outside. Poverty affects the causes of school drop-out because of, for example, a lack of transport to school or children not having enough to eat and therefore not being able to properly concentrate at school. And adolescents get a job at an early age to contribute to the family income. The financial situation also affects parenting, especially in the case of single-parent families. A single mother who works two jobs to support her family has no time and energy left to spend on her children. She cannot muster the energy to get involved in school activities, supervise children, etc. Also when it comes to the need for help or additional knowledge and skills, lack of time is the main obstacle: a parent who works both during the day and in the evenings and has to cook a meal somewhere in between simply cannot find the time to attend a parenting course.’

Various recent studies of people’s purchasing power in the Caribbean Netherlands shows that the rise in fuel costs (additional transport costs) and the rise of other global prices, such as food and raw materials, have recently led to prices on the island also rising. Double indirect taxation – due to the concurrence of the new fiscal system for the Caribbean Netherlands and the fiscal system of St. Maarten and Curaçao – is also contributing to making everyday life on the island more expensive. A majority of the population has seen their purchasing power decline since 10/10/10.

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1 See literature 106, 33, 101, 11, 105, 32, 100, 16, 74, 19, 47, 41.
2 See literature 39, 27, 29.
5 The Convention on the Rights of the Child on financial situation

Without money, you won’t get anywhere. Money is needed to pay for the basic necessities of life, such as food, water, and clothes. And financial resources are also essential to be able to realize other rights, such as the right to education, health, and health care.

The right to an adequate standard of living is regulated in Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is linked directly to Article 6, the right to life and development. The convention stipulates that children should grow up with a standard of living that is adequate for the child’s physical, mental, intellectual, moral, and social development. An adequate standard of living includes at least a place to live, food, and clothes.

Parents are first responsible for providing these basics. However, when parents are unable to live up to their responsibility for whatever reason, the government is required to help. The convention obliges governments to provide material assistance and support programs (Article 27).

Children must also be enabled to – through their parents – benefit from social security (Article 26). The Dutch government has adopted a reservation to Article 26, under which children do not have an independent right to social security.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has on various occasions expressed its views on the risk of poverty to children and on governments’ responsibility in fighting poverty. Countries must not only develop strategies to counter poverty, they must also ensure that poverty does not do lasting damage to (the youngest) children.¹

6 Conclusion

On Bonaire, numerous children grow up in poverty, research has shown. As a result, children sometimes lack access to the most basic children’s rights, such as the right to food or clothing. Children and their rights are also under pressure in other ways due to families’ financial situation. Parents have to combine multiple jobs and have no time to properly look after their children, families are forced to live in small houses with too many people, there is no money for child care, resources to enroll children in after-school programs.

These are just a few examples of the consequences poverty can have for children’s lives. It is clear that this situation is not in line with the standards set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Conclusion

The study into the children’s rights situation on Bonaire concentrated on eight aspects in children’s lives on the islands that jointly determine their life: family and parenting; education; health; safety; recreation, play and leisure time; participation; housing conditions; and financial situation. For each topic, the report first sketches the current situation. This situation is subsequently assessed from three different angles: 1. Children and young people, 2. Experts and 3. Literature. The resulting picture is then tested against the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which formulates minimum standards for each area of life.

This chapter describes the results in brief and the available possibilities to improve the children’s situation.

1 Children’s rights on Bonaire

From the descriptions per theme, it emerges that the situation on Bonaire does not (yet) meet the applicable demands as formulated by the UNCRC.

Family and parenting
Many children on Bonaire are reared in a violent environment, where yelling and beating are the order of the day. The parents that treat their children in this way are often repeating what they learned from their parents. Some parents now realize that violence should not be part of childrearing; but for many it is unclear what the alternatives are. As a result of ‘childrearing diffidence’, some parents instead leave their children unchecked, who therefore begin to develop unrestrained behavior. Of course, many families are doing fine, but there are still many parents who do not communicate with their children. Children are not seen and respected as full family members. Many parents are so busy keeping their household financially afloat that they are hardly ever at home. And when they do come home, they are too exhausted to deal with the children. A social safety net, with care and support provided by third parties, is absent. Nowadays grandfathers and grandmothers also need to work to make ends meet. Some children suffer social-emotional neglect. Many of the interviewed children said they wished that their parents had more time for them.

Few families are complete. Many mothers raise their children on their own or with a new partner. Fathers are generally absent in childrearing, and in those cases often do not pay any alimony. This means that mothers face the task (financially) alone.

There are many new composite families, with siblings from different parents. Teenage pregnancies also occur frequently. These girls, who are sometimes still very young, are obviously not capable of adequately raising their children. If money and support are lacking, then this creates significant problems.

The small community on the island could be supportive of individual residents, and sometimes it is; but there is another side to this. Nothing can remain private, and there is a lot of gossiping, and a lot of personal shame. Religious faith continues to play a powerful
role here. The ‘closed’ character of the island community creates a complex childrearing situation. Problems often only become apparent after much has already gone amiss, making it difficult to offer help.

The situation regarding family and childrearing currently does not meet the minimum requirements stipulated by the UNCRC. Many organizations, such as the Youth and Family Centers, are working hard to improve the situation, but it is a long and difficult process. The parents must first of all feel confident that they are capable of raising their children in a positive manner, without violence, to become responsible and respectful citizens.

Additionally, both parents and children need to know that they can rely on support, and that there is no shame in calling on that support. To this end, they must have sufficient confidence in the organizations on the island.

Third-party child care must also improve, and this applies to both day care and after-school care, in their various forms. This is a matter of both quality and availability, also for parents who cannot afford such child care at present.

Protecting children against violence and neglect is already a priority in government policy, and it must remain a priority in order to attain the standards set by the UNCRC. Extra efforts will need to be made in other areas as well to remedy inadequate situations and to offer children the safe childrearing environment that the convention envisions.

Many of such measures are linked to measures in other policy domains such as combating poverty and providing adequate housing.

**Education**

The opportunities for education are limited on a small island. Bonaire has several elementary schools and one public secondary school. There are hardly any special education facilities. For virtually all continued education, the children need to leave the islands.

The quality of education requires improvement, and with the arrival of education expertise centers and inspectorates, improvements appear to be underway. On Bonaire education is conducted in Dutch, English and Papiamento. For some children, language problems create educational disadvantages which are difficult to remedy.

Many children have behavioral problems that are manifested in school. They often relate directly to the home situation. Schools are generally not equipped to help children with these problems.

Quite a bit of criticism is leveled at the teaching staff, particularly by the experts. They are either too authoritarian and directive or, conversely, do not impose sufficiently clear limits. They use verbal and physical violence, their tenure on the islands is too short, they offer the pupils too little encouragement, and involving the pupils seems unheard of. Of course there are positive exceptions to this picture as well, and these stand out for the positive changes they achieve among children, within a short space of time.

The education at present does not meet all the requirements set out in the UNCRC. There are various aspects that demand extra attention, such as the overall quality of education, special education, reducing school dropout rates, attention for the child’s cultural identity and language, how discipline is maintained in school, the opportunities for pupils to develop their talents, access to information, and opportunities to participate in school. Substantial steps are already being taken to improve the situation and bring it more into line with the minimum requirements of the convention.

**Health**

It is currently unclear how the islands’ youthful population is doing with regard to most health areas. This makes it very difficult to adequately respond to health problems and to ensure that the health care services meet the needs. For young children, the medical picture is becoming increasingly complete as they are monitored closely by the consultation center, which resides under the Youth and Family center. This is not the case for the older youth, while this population group does urgently need health-related...
attention. For example, there are concerns for their sexual health (including sexual violence, teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases), and for obesity and behavioral habits among youths. Children are reluctant to contact (family) physicians for help, out of fear that it will quickly become public knowledge across the island. This is a very particular bottleneck.

There is very little care, if any at all, for handicapped children and for children with mental health problems. Naturally, a small island cannot provide for all health care disciplines. To ensure that children do get the care they need, attempts are made to provide this care elsewhere. This sometimes leads to language problems, or problems with the costs.

Much still needs to be done to attain the minimum standards set out by the UNCRC regarding health and health care. The lack of information about practically all health aspects makes it difficult to draw up improvement plans, however.

Preventing health problems is one important attention point, for instance through public education with respect to a healthy lifestyle, including healthy sexual behavior, healthy nutrition, and exercise. Access to health care must improve substantially for the older youth, if this is to meet the UNCRC requirements. Youth care needs to be developed further to enable children to exercise their right to health care. Further challenges pertain to the care for handicapped children and for children that have been victimized, and to protecting children against a wide variety of health risks.

**Safety**

Whether a child is able to grow up safely depends on diverse aspects, both in school and out on the street. But safety starts at home, of course. Many children on Bonaire are confronted by domestic violence or maltreatment. Violence in schools is also a point of concern, and then especially in the relationship between teachers and pupils.

On Bonaire crime occurs more widely and even increasingly. Youngsters are involved in criminal activities such as burglary, drugs trade, armed robberies and violence, but it seems to be a small group.

The treatment of youthful delinquents has improved in recent years through the introduction of three penal responses, of increasing severity. The judicial organizations on the islands have also improved, now operating more on the principle that youth criminal law should be of a pedagogical nature.

Children on Bonaire feel less safe than those on the other two islands. They also feel that more should be done to tackle youth crime by organizing more leisure time activities for children and adolescents. The assumption is that as long as they are not bored, they won’t turn to crime. Experts fully support that idea.

To get a good picture of safety on the islands would require more up-to-date data. Such data are currently not registered, or not fully or inadequately.

On a number of points, legislation on the island does not meet the minimum requirements set by the UNCRC. Thus, there is no ban on corporeal punishment. Also, the application of adult criminal law to 16 and 17-year-olds and the option of lifelong imprisonment do not accord with the UNCRC. However, the approach that is currently applied on Bonaire, with a more specific treatment of youthful offenders, does reflect the philosophy underlying the convention.

**Recreation, play and leisure time**

Until the age of around 12, life on Bonaire offers children no end of things to do. Some children and experts even qualify growing up on the island until that age as idyllic. That is to say, if the children are fortunate enough to have parents or others who have enough time to play with them, to go chasing lizards or to go swimming in the clear blue tropical sea. Yet from the age of 12 on, most children want to have more entertainment. They want to chill out with peers, to undertake exciting activities, to discover the world. Then the world on an island is small and the range of things to do is limited in all areas.
For many children, sport is a way of venting their energy and a way of leaving the island once in a while, to compete with children on other islands. Children can engage in a limited number of sports. The same applies for musical activities and other forms of culture. The offerings and opportunities are limited.

Children’s right to recreation, play and leisure time is under pressure on Bonaire, in several ways; for instance due to a lack of facilities, resources and expertise among community centers, and to other hindrances. Many of these constraints can be solved, insofar as they are not imposed by physical or geographical circumstances. This does require acknowledging the importance of ensuring this right to recreation, play and leisure time, however, and this implies a safe ‘third childrearing environment’, apart from the family and school.

**Participation**

Children are generally not offered the opportunity to participate as full citizens. Not at home, not in school, not in the island society. The notion does not fit in with the authoritarian approach to childrearing that is often dominant, both in families and in school. This approach does not stimulate children to be self-sufficient and enterprising, but rather cultivates timidity and a lack of initiative. They wait to be instructed to do something, or for a yell or a slap to stop doing something. Yet at the same time, they are often left to take care of themselves when parental supervision is absent, and certainly when they leave the island for work or study. Then they are suddenly expected to be assertive and to take care of themselves.

Participation by children at home, in school and in their leisure time still requires a lot of attention to arrive at an acceptable level. Respect for children and for their special position should be central to this effort. Tailored to their age and level of development, children should gradually learn to participate in all segments of society.

A number of efforts are currently pursued to help children realize their right to participation. These range from childrearing support (the Positive Parenting Program, or Triple P), and the arrival of a Children’s Ombudsman to ensure more attention for children’s rights (education), to organizational efforts to involve children and adolescents more closely in activities. Properly informing children of their rights can help them find opportunities to participate in society.

**Housing conditions and financial situation**

There are not enough suitable and affordable dwellings on Bonaire. Many families therefore have trouble finding proper housing, particularly single-parent families. As a solution, family members often share a home. But in small and overcrowded dwellings, children get no rest and have little privacy. They are unable to do their homework properly, and must sometimes share a bed with a family member. In certain neighborhoods, the general living conditions leave much to be desired.

Much of this relates to the difficult financial position that many parents are in. Life on an island is expensive. Almost everything needs to be imported, which inflates the price. Moreover, the lack of public transport makes owning a car almost indispensable. At the same time worker’s wages are relatively low, certainly for people with low qualifications.

Parents do not receive child benefit like in the European Netherlands. Fathers that have left the family often do not contribute to the maintenance of their children.

Many parents and single mothers have multiple jobs. Yet even then, many struggle to pay for the monthly rent, utilities, diapers, food and other essentials. The cost of provisions like day care, after-school care, sports or other activities are prohibitive. In extreme cases, there is not enough money to buy (healthy) food or clothes, and children arrive in school hungry. Clearly, this situation does not meet the requirements of the UNCRC.
All in all
The various constraints are closely interconnected, and therefore pose a real risk to the development of children growing up on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba.

To bring the children’s rights situation on the islands into line with the Convention, these domains will need to tackled simultaneously.

2 Children’s rights in practice

The chapter on the UNCRC describes how the convention obliges the government to look after the children on Bonaire.

This effort should be based on the child’s interests.

The same minimum standards apply here as for children in the Netherlands: the principle of non-discrimination. The government is moreover obliged to organize additional care for the children of Bonaire where is concerns the remedying of any lag in education or development.

As said, the current situation on Bonaire does not (yet) accord with the UNCRC. In this report, the extensive sections on each theme indicate the rights that are affected. This elaborate overview served to create a precise understanding of the current state of affairs. Subsequently, a number of simpler principles can be applied with a view to practical action, based on the UNCRC.

The UNCRC makes clear that there exist direct and autonomous relations and obligations between the children parents and organizations on Bonaire and the national government (see the diagram on the left below). In other words, there is no question of any sort of hierarchy or devolved responsibility, as is sometimes thought (see diagram on the right).

According to the UNCRC, each party that impinges on the child has its own, direct responsibility with regard to that child: the parents, the state, and other parties as well. Article 3 paragraph 1 of the convention is crystal clear on this point.

The government, and each organization involved, must base its actions on the child’s own interests, making this its prime consideration.

This implies that the policy of the government and of each organization (on Bonaire) must be based on the child’s own interests.

Additionally, the government and each organization must take full account of the specific convention stipulations that create obligations in their own field, such as those concerning healthcare, education or recreation.
To determine which standards the government and organizations must apply in their policy, the *socially accepted standards* should serve as guiding principle. After all, the UN CRC applies to each child (non-discrimination). That means that the government and all organizations involved with children on Bonaire must assume the minimum standards that apply for all Dutch children. Making any kind of distinction between European and Caribbean Netherlands is completely unacceptable if it means that certain standards are not met.  

The government must *remedy any lag* in education or development, or otherwise.

### 3 Together is better

It is always easier to say that things are not going well than it is to ensure that they do work out well. The researchers are fully aware of this, and therefore present their findings with all due modesty. This is all the more proper, given the number of people and organizations on Bonaire that have been doing all they can since a long time. Nevertheless, the fact is that the current situation does not accord with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Just like it is a fact that absolutely everyone who has anything to do with the situation of children on the islands feels that these children deserve better, and that haste is required. The situation calls for everyone’s concern and cooperation, from a shared sense of urgency. It calls for solidarity with all children in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, wherever they may be. The UNCRC provides enough guidance and encouragement for this effort.

#### Parents, government and organizations

The primary responsibility for children’s healthy development lies with the parents. This applies equally on Bonaire. But if parents struggle to fulfill their responsibility, then surrounding organizations and the government must accept and exercise their own direct responsibility.

There are several aspects to the Dutch government’s responsibility to offer help, support and improvement.

First there is the distance, both geographically and socio-culturally. Everyone on the islands knows all about the well-intentioned civil servants from The Hague, arriving after a nine-hour flight to explain how things should be done, based on policies and experiences that simply have no basis on the islands. All professionals advocate the application of regulations and tools that do connect to the local situation. Although this isn’t easy to do, it is certainly not impossible.

Then there is the phenomenon of the discipline-based ministries in The Hague. Education, health care, security, housing and social affairs are well-defined and clearly separated policy domains, which works well in the political context of The Hague. But in the dynamic context of a small community on an island, where all the domains are interconnected, this compartmentalization is hugely counterproductive. Improving the children’s rights situation on the BES islands requires a shared sense of responsibility among all the separate ministries, and an integral approach to policy making and implementation. That the minister of Foreign Affairs and Kingdom Relations should have a powerful coordinating responsibility in this effort is so self-evident that it might almost be overlooked. Jointly with the Kingdom Representative and the Children’s Ombudsman, they can and must fulfill this role.

And then there is the temporary nature of everything that ensues from The Hague. Many good initiatives have the character of a plan, a project or a pilot. The funding is temporary,
the implementation is often temporary, but what bothers the local professionals most of all is that the posted personnel from the European Netherlands are often temporary as well. Just as they are beginning to understand how things work, they go away again or, as they usually say: they go back. Taking with them, all the knowledge and experience they acquired locally. Structural development and improvement is difficult for local organizations when, time after time, they feel like they have to start all over again.

Clearly, it isn’t easy. A small, relatively closed community on an island is not always amenable to suggestions and interventions. The Caribbean and European Netherlands share a complex history. In the European Netherlands it is also not uncommon to view the family as the cornerstone of society, which organizations and the government should be very cautious to interfere with. Yet a realistic assessment of the limited ability to engineer society – both in the European and the Caribbean part of the country – does not at all detract from the scope and nature of public responsibility.

Different situations, same standards
The situation on the BES islands is evidently unlike that in the European Netherlands. It is tempting, then, to adapt the standards to what is customary, and to what has always been considered acceptable. Of course things are done differently on a tropical island than in cold and rainy Europe. And who are we to impose our western standards on an island community on the other side of the world? Such considerations are extremely pernicious, precisely because they seem so obvious. But it simply isn’t right. The standards stipulated in the UNCRC are minimum standards that apply to the whole of the Netherlands. The Dutch government, in both the European and Caribbean domains, carries its own, direct responsibility for the implementation of the convention.

The situation also differs on each of the three islands. That is why the study has resulted in three separate reports, each highlighting the uniqueness of the respective island. These reports provide a basis on which to create or elaborate a coherent youth policy for each island separately. It is necessary in each case to determine what the island needs, how best to work together, and what measures can help improve the situation of the island’s children.

Guiding principles
This report does not offer specific recommendations. But it does make clear that there is much that needs to be done, and which parties are responsible for doing so.

Ten guiding principles have been formulated, for all people and parties involved in the effort:

1. Respect for the own language and culture of the island inhabitants and respect for the children’s rights go hand in hand.
2. Build on the strength and commitment of people and organizations on the island that have been dedicated to furthering the children’s interests for a long time.
3. Stimulate the collaboration between people and organizations on the island and with those from the European Netherlands who are responsible for ensuring children’s rights.
4. Participation of children and youths at all levels: involve the youth in the further mapping out of bottlenecks and the search for solutions.
5. Caution in applying additional rules from the European Netherlands.
6. Choose an approach that connects to the specific needs of the island and its children.
7. Realize that extra efforts and resources are required to remedy inadequate situations.
8. Initiate further research in all those areas where knowledge about children is lacking.
9. Organize the registration of data about children in areas for which adequate information is currently lacking.
10. Accept that it is a matter of great urgency that the children’s rights situation is improved within the foreseeable future, so that it complies with the minimum standards.

The study into the children’s rights situation on Bonaire has the character of a zero-measurement. This provides a foundation for UNICEF to exercise its mandate: to monitor compliance with the UNCRC. This does not mean that the children’s rights organization can now lean back and take it easy. It means instead that the responsible governments and organizations are pressed to roll up their own and their neighbors’ sleeves, more than ever. It is in the child’s interest.
APPENDICES
Appendix 1 – Quotes on Bonaire

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Family and parenting

1. My mom thinks it’s good that I’m often at the neighbor’s house. Sometimes I hardly see her. When she gets home, she calls out to me and says that she’s back. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

2. If I play hooky, my mom just says that I mustn’t do such things and that is the end of it. My mom isn’t strict. Sometimes she involves me in stuff. I like that. We have no problems with each other at all. We get on well together. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

3. I take the bus to the Project Foundation (Stichting Project) in the morning and after school I take the bus back home. When I get home, I have something to eat with my mom. I really like it when we eat together. My mom isn’t strict and I get a lot of freedom. I also get on well with my mom’s partner. Sometimes we go fishing together at the weekend. (boy, 12 years, Bonaire)

4. My brothers irritate me sometimes because they don’t listen to me. I get mad at them. Then my mom gets mad at me. Besides my mom, my stepfather is the person who corrects me the most, but my grandpa and grandma also tell me off about certain things. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

5. I think that my mom is a bit strict. She doesn’t let me do everything I want. For example, I really wanted to go on vacation to Curacao with a cousin, but my mom thought I was too young go alone. That sort of thing can make me angry. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

6. At home I help my mom wash the dishes and take clothes off the line. (girl, 8 years, Bonaire)

7. I don’t think I have been brought up strictly at all. My mom is really kind to all of us. She thinks that it’s very important that we finish our school education. I think it’s really sad that my mom is away so often away because it feels much better when she’s just at home. At lunchtime my mom comes and picks me up at school, then we go home and eat together. I really enjoy that. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

8. I liked it a lot in the Netherlands, but I wouldn’t want to go and live or study there when I finish high school. Mainly because I don’t want to leave my mom all alone. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

9. I live with my mom in a small house in Antriol. We have both got our own bedroom. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)
10. My mom lets me choose what I want to wear myself. But when she cooks, she only makes one thing. I can choose if I want to eat it, but if I don’t then I have to eat bread. In any case, I have to eat my greens. My mom makes sure I’m in bed by ten o’clock, but I leave the TV on until I get told off. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

11. I think that, because of the culture we have on the islands, parents don’t really know how to talk to their children about sexuality. (boy)

12. The mom doesn’t understand what her child is talking about. Children absorb information that originates and develops in a completely different context. Because of this, the experiences of children often cannot find any connection to the lives and beliefs of their parents. (boy)

13. Children, especially boys, are spoilt. (expert)

14. Some children are not ready to be independent. Take for example an immature boy whose family doesn’t give him guidance. He really can’t look after himself. (expert)

15. Young people live in a different world to their parents. The education here is quite authoritarian and any change is slow. The young people are simply fed up with it. The parents do not communicate so things just deteriorate. It makes me sad to see things done so carelessly. (expert)

16. The mother educates her child the way that she was educated. As long as everything is stable, no problem. It’s taboo to ask for help. (expert)

17. I grew up in Curacao. My father and mother were divorced and between lunchtime we went to our grandparents. And everybody would talk about stuff with us; uncle, aunt, grandmom, mom... I do it differently. I give my son structure. And I tell him everything, I explain everything, I have no taboos. My mom didn’t do that. (expert)

18. The people in the Antilles have always been strict. Some people spoil their children too much now. A little slap can help your child and used to be normal, but now parents just let their child off. A little tough love is good. (expert)

19. Parents used to come in to pick up their child, but now they just wait at the gate. Parents used to show more interest. They would come and thank me, but not any more. (expert)

20. J and G are going to parenting support. There, parents can learn to bring up their children without corporal punishment. But there are often more problems with teenagers. Because parents are so busy, they don’t bring up their children properly. When the children become teenagers, problems arise because those kids don’t listen any more. (expert)

21. Improvement could succeed if a strong statement could be made on the island through different perspectives that would put the family in a positive light. Lots of effort by both women and men on the basis of knowledge transfer. Hopefully they will look at the situation differently. (expert)

22. During their early development, children miss structure. Basic needs are ignored as long as the child doesn’t cause any problems. Children without structure later become the excitable children at school who are stigmatized as having ADHD. Later they become involved in criminal behavior (boys) and unhealthy relationships (girls in early sexual relationships with mostly older men). (expert)

23. Children are not put in first place, but instead after the needs of their parents. For some parents, children seem to be a nuisance. (expert)

24. Parents see school grades and results as being very important. And not much is talked about. What you see is that parents mainly look at the world around them: that the children do well in school, and are polite. Problems are rarely discussed. (expert)

25. Young people have to solve a lot of stuff themselves, or come to agencies like us. Sometimes they seek help at school but I don’t think that schools are really prepared. (expert)

26. Mothers bring up their boys completely differently to their girls. Boys are very spoilt and have no responsibility at home. That becomes really obvious when they get to the age of eighteen. They simply avoid any responsibility. The responsibility falls on the shoulders of the women: the children, the income everything. I think that women here certainly keep society going. (expert)
27. There is a lot of shyness around parenting. That in itself is sad, I think. Children do not express themselves here like they do in the Netherlands. They are afraid to open their mouths too quickly. (expert)

28. There is no structure here. The children are given food, for sure, but not an upbringing. That is the big problem and is particularly applicable to boys. Girls are not so bad. Girls don’t go off the rails so quickly, unlike boys. (Expert)

29. Parenting on Bonaire is strict. A correctional slap is part of it. This is also generally acknowledged and accepted. Parenting children is centered on instructional communication: "Don’t touch that, do this", assuming a strong hierarchical relationship between parents and children. Fear of losing authority and not being used to negotiating with children means that parenting children is often difficult and that parents sometimes feel that they are powerless. (Expert)

30. A number of issues cause problems at home:
  * Parents who have to deal with everything alone, usually mothers.
  * Financial problems.
  * Ignorance, simply not knowing how to deal with a 15 year old.
  * Parenting fatigue: a mother says at 10 in the evening, "I’m going to bed with a sleeping pill, I’ll see how things are tomorrow."
  * Embarrassment to ask for help.
  * Not talking for a long period of time. Talking is difficult here. I don’t have any problems. Nobody has any problems on this island. Everything is great.
  * The education system isn’t always perfect.

All these things together mean that we have severe problems on the island. From the outside it looks like a beautiful place, and indeed it is, but there is also a lot of misery. It’s very serious, yet a lot of things could be resolved so easily. We just make it complicated. (expert)

31. Parents find it difficult to set limits which results in two extremes. One is based on power and hitting. The other is ‘let them go’. (expert)

32. That gives cause for concern. In the sense that things depend a bit on how we bring children up and how we have always brought them up. You can’t rely on a man. So you have to be able to look after your children yourself. That is how boys and girls are brought up within the family. The girls help around the house and get given certain jobs. The boys have more freedom. They should help out sometimes but have fewer responsibilities. (expert)

33. I think that every child should be respected by its parents and those close to it. A newborn baby is treated incredibly well here, but as soon as it can walk it is left to fend for itself. The child then misses warmth and safety. (Expert)

34. I think that children are not taken seriously here when they communicate with adults. Communication is authoritative and not loving. Children expect punishment. Children don’t understand it if you are kind to them. They understand corporal punishment. (Expert)

35. Some children exhibit behavioral problems as a result of an accumulation of problems at home and not enough positive guidance. (expert)

36. The situation at home causes all sorts of problems. A lot of children have unstable situations at home. They are tired when they go to school because they haven’t eaten or slept well at home. They are not motivated to do well at school. Language can also be a problem if, for example, the parents only speak Papiamento. (expert)

37. My mother doesn’t cook. She leaves me some money instead. Every day. So I go out to get something to eat. Sometimes I save the money and look around the house for something to eat. Some biscuits or cornflakes, for example. My favorite food is bean soup. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

38. I think that children and teenagers don’t get enough attention. Parents should learn to give their children more attention. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

39. The situation at home is often bad. Addicted mom, no close family ties, moms with two jobs. Nobody looks after the children after school. Children roam the streets until someone comes home. (Expert)
40. There are many single-parent families where the children are usually left to look after themselves because the mom has to work full-time to pay the bills. When mom gets home in the evening, she is so tired that she doesn’t feel like dealing with the children. (expert)

41. In my opinion, the biggest problem with children and teenagers on Bonaire is the lack of attention. Parents often misjudge how much attention children and teenagers need. Many parents are unable to offer enough attention, leaving the kids to fend for themselves and make their own entertainment. (expert)

42. Most mothers don’t have much time. The child comes home at half past one. There isn’t much contact. Sometimes the family offers support. If they don’t even have that, then things are really tough. (expert)

43. Personally, I think that young children should be given more love and attention. Sometimes, they go to school without having eaten. Some parents don’t have any money and expect the school to feed their children. They take advantage of the situation, and send their child to school with nothing. (expert)

44. Some parents are really soft. They are tired when they get home and don’t want to say that something is not allowed. Inconsistent. Because parents are so wrapped up in other things and their work, they don’t notice how things are going with their children. (expert)

45. Housework takes a lot of time here. When you do the shopping you sometimes have to go to several supermarkets over the weekend. (expert)

46. I can imagine that if you are alone and have four young children to look after, it would drive you crazy. Not knowing how you are going to cope. (expert)

47. There are a lot of young people here on Bonaire who should be placed somewhere away from their homes, but there is absolutely nowhere. A beautiful new building was opened with great new equipment and at the same time there are young people who have nothing and nobody at home. There are problems because there are no parents around, or no attention is given. We all agree that some young people need to be removed from their homes but there is nothing. (expert)

48. There is definitely a problem with single mothers. They work very hard and have to deal with everything alone. Sometimes they work night shifts and only arrive home when their children have to leave for school. These children arrive at the school with their hair in a mess and are first sent away with a comb to sort it out. But some kids do manage to organize everything themselves. The children of many single mothers do not get enough attention. There is, however, after-school care. (expert)

49. Often both parents have a full-time job just to keep their heads above water. When children come home from school, grandma comes and looks after the kids. And grandma is a lovely person, but sometimes she has to take a nap. Then the TV is turned on and that’s that. (expert)

50. The role of parents starts at half past five. That leaves hardly any time for parenting. (expert)

51. Often the cause of a child’s problems that manifest themselves at school lies in a bad situation at home coupled with a severe degree of neglect. (expert)

52. Children are not brought up. Parents work. There is neglect. (expert)

53. On Bonaire I notice that many children do not get enough attention from their parents. Maybe the parents work all day, come home, make dinner then go out again. The children then stay at home and watch TV. (boy)

54. Often they have no father at home, and mom is working all day of course. When she gets home, she’s tired. (boy)

55. The island needs a social structure. At the moment, there isn’t one. (expert)

56. At child care, I see no delays in development because they are so small. Just very occasionally. Parents are withdrawn. If there is any problem, I report it to Sebili (Bonaire Center for Information and Education Regarding Child Care). Then we observe the situation together before contacting the parents. (expert)
57. There used to be family around such as grandfathers and grandmothers, but that is no longer the case. They have to work too. Children often end up all day in the nursery. (expert)

58. In my opinion, the first thing that should be tackled is child care. It is very important because you could carry out some pre-school education there which might help to get the children of our target group out of the vicious circle. Our project makes it accessible because we pay for the child care of the children. But the quality of child care is still far from what it should be, mainly because child care is not subsidized. They have to make do with very few resources which very quickly leads to the appointment of untrained personnel. That is of course dreadful for child care. The Sebiki foundation has invested a lot of energy in this area over the past ten years. Children are no longer tied to their chairs, they no longer have their mouths taped shut and that sort of thing. A lot of positive changes have been made, but in terms of quality there is still a long way to go. There is not enough security, not enough opportunities to play, not enough opportunity to display your emotions, and so on. (expert)

59. There is after school care, but I do not send my kids there because it’s all run by volunteers and the unemployed. Those are exactly the people that I think are unsuitable and who have no educational policy at all. It is all complete nonsense. Because I think that every parent needs good quality after-school care. (expert)

60. There are some quality standards, but if you sent an inspector around I guess 80% of the nurseries would fail. That isn’t acceptable, so there has to be an improvement plan drawn up where you can improve things structurally and say: in four years’ time, all the nurseries will reach a certain level. That support is still not present. (expert)

61. When the BES islands legislation was passed, child care over the next five years wasn’t included. I was really upset because an improvement program for schools from grade 1 was included and child care completely ignored. It is the foundation stone of education, but this policy means that problems just carry on being created. (expert)

62. It is well known that children are sometimes in difficult circumstances at home, with many parents always at work and no one to care for the children. This makes it even more important that children feel safe in the places where they are, such as at school, in after school care, in sports clubs, in the playground, and so on. Creating safe places will require extra attention. (expert)

63. In years gone by, neighbors were partly responsible for the education of the children in the area. In recent years, this has changed. Because of this, parents have less support. (expert)

64. You can see children in child care from seven in the morning till six in the evening. That’s not a good situation. A child has a right to a home, a family and attention. They want attention. And then you also have to consider that the quality of child care is not the best and will not improve until funding is made available. (expert)

65. If you have a walk in the afternoon in the local neighborhoods you can see them hanging around. There are hardly any adults about. Normally there are a couple of parents who keep an eye on things but there are very few adults at home during the day. The children come home from school when they come home from school, it’s one o’clock, or half past one. Mom has just enough time to greet them and eat. And she doesn’t get back home again until after 6 hours. (expert)

66. We also have parents who complain about the nurseries. That children are not treated properly. That they are treated too strictly. Even abused sometime. That there is no supervision. That there is no regulation. Our role is to assist the nurseries. We help them to do their work as well as possible. But, on the other hand, they also know that if they do something that is against the rights of the child, we will also speak to them. We go up to them and say: listen, this and this happened. We’d like to hear your side. And if we think that it happens repeatedly, and fail to see the person responsible offer any solutions, then we write a report. And I have said that if it isn’t resolved, I will write a black book about it all. That is what I tell everybody I meet. (expert)

67. We have no child care funding. So that means that parents have to pay for child care. If you have a low income, you can’t afford child care. Then you have a big problem. So basically the financial contribution parents make towards child care is too low for the nursery. They cannot afford to provide responsible child care. For parents it is too expensive. It’s very difficult to pay. So there’s a group that cannot pay and does not use child care. There’s another group that can afford it. But child care isn’t a choice, for most parents it is essential. (expert)
68. The general opinion on the islands is that guidance at home often fails and that there are few or no after-school activities for children and teenagers. (expert)

69. When I was seven, my parents split up because my father abused my mom. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

70. My two younger sisters don’t have the same father as me. When I went back to live with my mom, we lived together with the father of my two sisters. He hit me very often and treated my mom very badly. In the beginning I was afraid to do anything, but after a while I went to my aunt and I told her everything. She then called the police, who came and spoke with him. That, unfortunately, didn’t help. My ten year old sister is my favorite child, in complete contrast to me and my youngest sister, so we were always beaten and she wasn’t. It kept going on, and eventually I decided I wasn’t going to accept it any more. I can’t remember how old I was, but one night I called the police and told them what was going on. They then came and took him away. He was detained for three days before being released, but he wasn’t allowed to come near us. I wasn’t happy that he was released so quickly, but at least he wasn’t allowed to live with us. To this day, he’s been trying to get custody of my 10 year old sister. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

71. My mom is not strict. I get a lot of freedom, but I do know where the boundaries are. The only rule that applies at home is that I have to tell her where I’m going and what I’m going to do so she knows where I am. My father beat me three times really hard in my life. I hadn’t listened to him, and he became so angry that he started to hit me. That happened after we had agreed something and I broke the agreement. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

72. It can happen that a child is beaten by her mom every time she makes a sound. You get hit with a belt, which is normal here. If a father goes crazy, he grabs his belt and he hits all his kids. (adolescent)

73. The beating of children by their parents is not always abuse or maltreatment. I’ve often experienced it myself and see it more as innocent corrective action. (adolescent)

74. Correcting children by beating them is part of the culture, except when hitting takes extreme forms and the child has visible injuries to the face, for example. (adolescent)

75. Kids don’t get much attention from their parents. They see their father beating their mom and copy that sort of behavior. (adolescent)

76. The father beats the mom. If you see that as a boy, you think that it is the right thing to do because your father does so as well. (adolescent)

77. There is a lack of places on the island where you can report assault or abuse. (adolescent)

78. For example, there is no central emergency number to report abuse like in the Netherlands. (adolescent)

79. The biggest problems on the islands are poverty, sexual abuse, incest, child abuse, teenage pregnancies and single-parent families. If you ask for help, the whole island finds out straight away. Everyone knows that abuse is taking place but nobody does anything. (expert)

80. Child abuse is now being reported and that is a step in the right direction. (expert)

81. It’s difficult to raise awareness of child abuse. Parents become angry. It’s a taboo. (expert)

82. A major problem is child maltreatment, both verbally and physically. You are about to uncover some unpleasant things! (expert)

83. Usually the parents have little patience and immediately resort to violence if children don’t listen. Because they were also brought up in the same way, they use violence if something doesn’t happen the way they think it should. (expert)

84. My client responded instantly and hit his uncle. This boy grew up with so much violence around him that he knows no better than to resort to violence when words fail. (expert)

85. Take, for example, this sixteen year old girl. She has been abused at home for years. Her mom and little brother are also abused by the father. The girl has now said that she wants to press charges. She really wants to do it. (expert)
86. Our counselor arrived and saw a little boy, four years old, with a print of a hand still visible in his face because he had been hit so hard. By the mother’s partner. She took a photo, said that it was unacceptable and went to the Guardianship Council (Voogdijraad) so that could investigate it. She also reported it to the police. After endless time and investigations nothing happened. A common occurrence. (expert)

87. Two girls, fourteen and sixteen, poorly educated, like the mother. Deployed by the mother for prostitution. The case has been in the hands of the judicial system for a long time without much to show for it. There is also a little boy in the family who was taken into care. The girls are now in Kas di Kirk (Housing for teenage mothers). What should I do with them? It’s a small island. They need to leave this place. It all started when it was discovered that both the girls had venereal disease. The mother swore that nothing had happened, but you don’t catch that by going to the shops. The girls talk. Do the younger sister wanted to talk but the older sister wants to protect her mother. She is homesick and wants to go back. (expert)

88. Parenting is different here. Children are much more submissive. You really have to dig deep when it comes to issues where children have problems, such as child abuse. (expert)

89. You can’t just assume that the situation on St. Eustatius or Saba is the same as on Bonaire. I would like to see their caseloads and find out about the issues they are confronted with. Is it also related to poverty? We need to make policy in the field of child protection, so we need to know about it. I really hope that in the years that I can still do this, people will listen. Then there will be hope that children really do get protected. (expert)

90. I haven’t noticed much child abuse. (expert)

91. Children talk back when they get to six. Antillean mothers need to break the taboo and talk to their children. Not hit them. (expert)

92. Abuse. Some parents ‘sell’ their child to older men, as happened to an eleven year old girl. Or a mother sits in the bar with her daughter in order to send her away with men. That happens here on Bonaire. At one or two in the morning. That mother had severe learning difficulties. (expert)

93. I haven’t seen parents beating their children. (expert)

94. Nurseries must be subject to more control. And teachers must learn how to report child abuse. They don’t know how they should report it or discuss it with parents. The fact that the island is so small makes matters worse. (expert)

95. The culture in Bonaire is different to that in the Netherlands. The Dutch quickly see our parenting methods as child abuse. Our standpoint is: if there are physical signs, such as marks or broken arms, then there is a clear evidence of abuse. The child must then be examined by a doctor. Then we intervene. But a slap is different here to in the Netherlands. (expert)

96. Psychological abuse is often much worse, but more difficult to prove. (expert)

97. At the moment, things are very difficult because of the complexity. Children are victims of sexual abuse by adult men. Sometimes with the knowledge of the mother. Sometimes mothers find out but are so dependent that they turn a blind eye. (expert)

98. A adolescent here became withdrawn. Then I said to the mentor, “See if you can get her to open up, go and talk with her”. Each member of staff is also a mentor to a group of young people. After about three months, the adolescent finally began to open up. Afterwards the mentor contacted the social worker about how we should proceed. Eventually I was called in, and we made an appointment with the mother. The mother didn’t know that the stepfather had been abusing the child. Of course it happened at times that the mother was working or sleeping. We’re talking about a girl of sixteen. (expert)

99. When we talked about the stepfather, the mother also didn’t want her daughter to report it. “No, no, don’t, otherwise the whole island will know.” After many discussions with the daughter, she ultimately decided to be loyal to her mother and said, “I’m not going to report it”. Then our hands are tied. (expert)

100. That is obviously something where I think we need to put in a lot of work. That a girl is not put on the planet just to have sex, and that people should keep their paws off. That is a message that must
be drummed into men in particular. A bit of education all round, including from mothers to daughters and from mothers to sons. (expert)

101. Well, there is a lot of incest and abuse taking place. Sometimes motivated by poverty. Parents or mothers that force their child into prostitution. (expert)

102. Corporal punishment certainly still takes place. Meaning that children are beaten with a belt. Children who are neglected. (expert)

103. People are used to doing it like that. My unit manager too. He also grew up here and he said, “If we didn’t listen we got the belt, simple as that”. And then we look with our Dutch point of view and say, “That’s not allowed.” (expert)

104. That child comes from a family of six children and all six were put into care because they were neglected and abused. That actually happens a lot. Partly because people don’t know how to bring up children. (expert)

105. Considering the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a basis, it is important that child abuse is defined, and that everyone is made aware of what it is. Public awareness about child abuse and methods of parenting that do not involve violence is of great importance. The fact that parents are role models is central to this. It is necessary to invest in making people sensitive to personal values, and this applies to both parents and children. In addition, it is essential for children to acquire social skills and to learn to establish their own limits, especially in situations outside their comfort zones. In more general terms, it is about development of identity, integrity, standards and values. It requires a paradigm shift that doesn’t focus on deficits but focuses on talent. (expert)

106. In order to provide meaningful answers to the situation and the questions about tackling child abuse that are a consequence of it, it is important that a baseline measurement is carried out on the source and scope. Subsequently, targets and performance indicators can be formulated and the impact of policy and implementation can be measured. This gives feedback on the impact of all the interventions and allows us to understand if good things are being done. (expert)

107. Two things are explicitly mentioned:
* The parent support and parenting courses for prospective parents and parents who have just had a child. Parents learn how to deal with children in the context of positive parenting.
* Help to offenders. Teach offenders to deal with their children in a different way. (expert)

108. Formulate core objectives for the Dutch government and the island government in the context of tackling child abuse. These could then serve as frameworks in which the tackling of child abuse is shaped, and would also indicate the social and guiding responsibility of the government. (expert)

109. In cases dealing with child abuse, a larger number of professionals will always be involved. These cases must always be handled by more than one person. This means not only that responsibility should be shared, but that working agreements must be made to make this possible. In the context of improving quality, feedback plays a central role. This means feedback on both your own and others’ performance. Learning together is central to all this, because every case dealing with child abuse presents new challenges, not only on an individual level but also in terms of joint cooperation. (expert)

110. Designation of an official in each organization or institution helps maintain child abuse on the radar within the institution or organization, and also helps to keep understanding of treatment methods up to date. The designated person can provide advice, coaching and expertise, even in cases of child abuse where they are not directly involved. (expert)

111. Awareness in all areas related to parenting, as well as child abuse and what to do about it, is an important prerequisite in reducing the number of cases of child abuse. To achieve these ends, here are a number of suggestions:
* Initiate campaigns about positive parenting, parenting without violence and child abuse;
* Promote theatre performances (in Papiamento) in local neighborhoods in order to address issues such as parenting and child abuse;
* Use the media: radio, television, leaflets, posters and internet to provide information on parenting;
* Provide structured information about abuse and criminal liability;
* Provide information about helping offenders. (expert)
112. The number of domestic violence cases is much higher this year than last year. In the first six months of this year the number exceeded last year’s total. We do not know the reason. Maybe people are less afraid to report domestic violence, which often involves not only parents but frequently affects children either as witnesses or through involvement. (expert)

113. My concern is mainly in the field of child care and everything involving neglect and abuse. These are areas that we often have to deal with, but which do not get enough attention given to them. We often try to deal with things in a practical way. In particular, by supporting parents or defending children in certain situations. But we have never had the care structure necessary to carry things through. (expert)

114. We think that many juvenile behavioral problems and juvenile delinquency can be traced back to neglect and abuse. That is something I am sure about. (expert)

115. At the moment the contact point for counseling and reporting child abuse is at the Guardianship Council (Voogdijraad). We think that an intermediary is needed. People are not so quick to go to someone like that. (expert)

116. On the islands there are many circumstances that increase the risk of child abuse, such as poverty, multiple jobs, the culture of strict parenting, role model behavior of parents and young parents. Although these circumstances do not legitimize child abuse, they do make it clear that there is an increased risk of child abuse. (expert)

117. Many children have behavioral problems that are a result of lack of education, domestic violence, child abuse and financial problems. If the school fails as well, not much is left over. Environmental factors are more important than the child. (expert)

118. There are a large number of dysfunctional families where violence plays a role. We have already identified about 300 seriously dysfunctional families, in addition to about 300 families with debt problems. (expert)

119. About twenty managers of after school child care are receiving training in Social Education (SPW). (expert)

120. Child care centers that meet modern standards are on the way. In 2013, various projects are underway to strengthen the educational climate in childcare centers. (expert)

121. My mom and I live together. At home, everything’s going well. We have a good life. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

122. My mom is generally not very strict. The only area where my mom and I do have issues is that I want to see my dad and talk with him. My mom doesn’t want that at all. She doesn’t have any contact with my father, and sometimes it seems that she just wants to keep me for herself because she missed me for a long time when I was living with my aunt. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

123. Two years ago my mom and I had a big fight about contact with my father, but now she accepts that I want to be in contact with him. She still doesn’t agree with me, but we don’t fight about it anymore. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

124. Change must be made not only by fathers but also by mothers. The mothers often cling to the children. Here reigns the belief among people, for example, that if a man acknowledges that he is the father of a child, then he is entitled to the child. I always say that a child is not a piece of furniture. I have provided information several times. The law protects the child. The child has rights. The father has duties, just like the mother. Because the child has rights, the father and mother automatically have duties. The father can be addressed if he doesn’t look after the child. That is regulated by law, but nothing else is. Parental authority should be regulated separately, it is not automatically regulated when a father acknowledges a child. That is what a lot of people just keep believing, ‘then you are going to take my child away from me’. Parental authority is also seen as power. It is actually the wrong word. It should be seen as a responsibility. You do not have the authority to do what you want with the child. You need to set up a program, make policy, have vision. What do we want to change? Ad hoc solutions don’t resolve the source of the problem. (expert)

125. There are also many mothers who use their child to get the father back or to manipulate him. (expert)
126. Fathers are very easy going. They don’t interfere. (expert)

127. My son is nine and attends Reina Beatrix School. His father lives in the Netherlands and I live with my partner. My son has a lot of contact with his father. He goes on holiday to the Netherlands. (expert)

128. Fathers should be more active and get involved with parenting. At the moment they provide money but don’t know how they should bring up children. They don’t show love. (expert)

129. Moms are very dependent on the financial strength of men. This is particularly the case for women who have no education or who have been the victims of long term abuse. (expert)

130. Fathers are not family oriented but more child-oriented and relationship-oriented. Building a safe home is not their strong point. However, the impression remains that there are men who are family oriented. (expert)

131. Fathers are not involved in parenting, and do not have the skills to maintain contact with their children and thereby build up a relationship. Mothers also display a similar lack of skills. (expert)

132. One solution is to educate parents. The Triple P method is now used on the island, but the recent discovery in the Netherlands that this method reaches many more women than men is also applicable to Bonaire. Men sometimes do not want to be educated concerning their children even though it is exactly what is needed. More emphasis must be given to the role of the father, and that is where efforts should be concentrated. (expert)

133. It is also related to the fact that the father is often absent in many families. At a certain moment, the boys take over the role of the man of the house. They are rude to the mother. And if a father turns up, he just says that he only wants the best for his son. Except he isn’t there, because he is with another woman. So the boys get no guidance. (expert)

134. Here people don’t even think that it’s a problem if a man leaves his family. (expert)

135. There is already a law. It existed for alimony but it should be strengthened. For every child that is born, the father should be traced and made to pay $400 a month alimony as standard. Then he wouldn’t get out of his pants so easily I reckon. And the girl wouldn’t have to ask for help because the legal system would demand it. (expert)

136. What we trying to do is indeed emphasize the role of the father. By being present at the beginning in the pregnancy course. The women usually came alone. Now we encourage partners to come along. Not always, because some classes are for women. (expert)

137. Children can’t use their fathers as role models because they are absent. It is the same thing in the education system. In primary education, 90 to 95% are female. There isn’t a man to be found. I have fourteen staff members, all women. There is still a huge macho culture here. (expert)

138. I’ve also had clients who didn’t mind being detained because at least they had a roof over their heads and were given a three meals a day. That kind of declaration by adolescents does indicate that the situation at home isn’t as it should be. (expert)

139. I do feel that it is a vicious circle that will never be broken. It just goes on and on. Poverty. People want to participate. They want Blackberries. But I cannot imagine how mothers allow their daughters to prostitute themselves. Unbelievable, but it happens. I don’t know how. The mothers don’t always have learning difficulties. Sometimes the mother prostitutes herself too. (expert)

140. Living in a small home does not necessarily mean that a child can’t develop properly. It’s the mentality of poverty that keeps things as they are. Children have to help so that bills can be paid. They have to look after their little brothers and sisters and keep the household going. That’s the priority, not school. The majority of the inhabitants of the island are not affected in this way, but it’s a persistent problem. (expert)

141. It’s very confrontational to see really young kids come in suffering from hunger. It has an immediate effect on the whole development of the child. (expert)

142. Sandwiches are distributed at about 11. To the kids we know are suffering and don’t get given any food in the morning. That’s the way it is. (expert)
143. Major concerns in the context of addressing child abuse are the poverty that exists in different areas on the islands and the lack of affordable rental housing. Both factors have a direct impact on well-being and simultaneously cause a lot of stress within families. It is necessary from a policy perspective to look at this seriously, especially since it has a direct impact on how children are treated in a negative way. We need to establish some concrete facts: we can only understand what is happening by measuring things, and we must ensure through assessment that the implementation of policy can be followed. (expert)

144. There are currently many stress factors that impact on parenting:

* Low income and neglect because parents have to work to generate income (sometimes two or three jobs to earn enough money). Fatigue and feelings of guilt for not being there for the children affects the well-being of the parents and their levels of patience.
* The poorest people are really poor while prices for food and care are rising rapidly. Due to economic conditions people are forced to live together.
* Many people with low education have limited employment opportunities.
* People with low IQ (slightly mentally disabled) are very easy to influence, not only in the areas of alcohol and drug use, but also in the context of sexual abuse.
* There are many single-parent families where the parenting responsibilities and income responsibility lies with only one parent.
* High levels of alcohol, drug and gambling addiction, even within families. (expert)

145. What concerns me more is the socio-economic situation of our children. (expert)

146. It is very sad that there are still children who do not have anything to eat. It is something I see in nurseries in particular. That’s so wrong. You might think that this happens partly because parents don’t take their children seriously, or are not careful with money. But the child must not be made to suffer. For me, that’s all there is to it. You have to look after your children. (expert)

147. At the moment there are sixty children in the nursery who get a breakfast from the Rotary Club. These days that should no longer be necessary. That there are 250 children in schools who get breakfast from the Rotary club. (expert)

148. Lack of money is a major cause of problems in the home. It results in parents not encouraging their children. Children get the idea that it’s better to get a job straight away, or that crime gives more results than going to school. (expert)

149. There are often problems at home. One of these problems is poverty, which has seen a serious increase since 10-10-10. Addiction is another problem, to drugs or alcohol for example. (expert)

150. There are many cases of severe poverty and neglect. (expert)

151. I have a brother in the Netherlands. Next year, I might go and live in the Netherlands. Maybe. My mom must decide whether to send me or keep me here. I want to go. I’ve been wanting to go for two years because I have a lot of family and they all live close together. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

152. I’ve got two older brothers and a younger sister. My sister lives with my grandmom. I lived with my grandmom until a year ago, but because I get angry so quickly it eventually didn’t work out and I went back to live with my mom. My father lives in Rincon, so I don’t see him much now. My mom doesn’t work so she’s at home when I get out of school. (boy, aged 12, Bonaire)

153. I live with my mom, stepfather, grandmom, grandfather and three brothers at home. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

154. I’ve never held it against my mom that she moved to Curacao. Although I was very sad, I knew it was better for all of us if my parents were not near to each other. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

155. My ten year old sister didn’t listen to my mom. Only to her father. She lived with him for a while, but it didn’t work out so eventually she came back to us. (Girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

156. I get on well with the partner of my mom. He is very kind to my sisters and me, and he also treats my mom very well! (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

157. I live with my mom and dad and my two dogs. My half-brother and half-sister are both older than me and live in the Netherlands. I used to live in the Netherlands when I was younger. I miss the snow. And I can’t just go round to visit my brother and sister. (girl, 8 years old, Bonaire)
158. I’ve got two brothers. An older and a younger brother. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

159. I’ve got three older brothers. Two from my mom’s side and one from my father’s side. One of my brothers lives with my grandmom, another with my father and the youngest, who is 19, is in prison. He committed a number of thefts. He will be released in March. I miss him very much and I can’t wait until he is released. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

160. There are few complete families, and many single mothers. (expert)

161. My son would rather live in Curacao. But that has pros and cons. All my family lives there. Grandpa and Grandma live there. Maybe in a few years. (expert)

162. Ordinary people live together and have kids. Kids here, kids there, that’s normality. (expert)

163. What I generally come across are young people who grow up in families with violence, alcoholism and drug abuse. (expert)

164. Maybe an institution should be set up where parents with severe learning difficulties can be supervised. At their level. At the moment we can’t reach them. And they carry on having babies. You can’t tell them that they should get themselves sterilized. (expert)

165. We now have a mom who has already had three children taken into care. She is now pregnant for the fourth time. We had her tested and she has an IQ of 50. Basically, she operates at the level of an eight year old. It’s hard to explain to her that it’s not punishment but that she shouldn’t have any more children. The children have to be saved. (expert)

166. Mothers are deficient in parenting but are strong in nursing. It is increasingly clear that mothers sometimes do not want the child’s biological father to be involved in parenting. Although they do want fathers involved to pay alimony for maintenance and care. The child is usually confronted with conflicts of loyalty or suffers from the negative influence of one parent against the other parent. In 2010, there were 57 divorces on Bonaire, in 2011 the number was 59. Despite a slight increase, the rate remains stable. Relationships break down a lot and the children are the victims and often put at risk. (expert)

167. There are many factors that put pressure on parenting:
   * Low income and neglect because parents have to work to generate income. Sometimes they need two or three jobs to earn enough money. Parents are tired and feel guilty because they are not there enough for their children and have little patience when they are.
   * Income support is low while food prices are high.
   * Many people have a low level of education and therefore limited employment opportunities.
   * Parents and children with low IQs and learning problems are easily influenced by those around them.
   * There are many single-parent families where the parenting responsibility lies with just one parent, as well as the responsibility for income. (expert)

168. There are many parents with a very low IQ, partly as a result of inbreeding or lack of education. There are a lot of divorced parents. Social conditions are often difficult. Parents don’t provide structure and don’t bring their children up properly. Children bring themselves up. There are major financial problems. Poverty is widespread. (expert)

169. I would give more information to teen moms because they are a major problem on the island. Forma (institute for adult education) gives some help, and there is even sheltered accommodation for teen moms, but it seems like it is not enough. Young people need to learn that you should only have children if you have enough money to look after them, and if you don’t you should turn the TV on in the evening instead of getting up to other stuff. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

170. My mom had me when she was fifteen. I lived with my auntie until I was six because my mom couldn’t look after me. Then my mom went to court and made sure that I could go back and live with her. I still see my auntie as my mom because she looked after me when I was little. It feels to me like I have two moms. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

171. Young girls get pregnant because they need attention. They get it from older boys. (adolescent)

172. Teenage pregnancies are common on all the islands. (adolescent)
173. Girls are tempted to sleep with boys that offer them beautiful things and promises of a rosy future. When she gets pregnant as a result, it is usually the mom of the girl who cares for the child. (adolescent)

174. You see a lot of girls of fourteen, fifteen or sixteen on Bonaire in relationships with men who are 25 years or older. (adolescent)

175. The girls don’t get the attention they need from their parents, so they go and get it from older boys. (adolescent)

176. It can happen that when a young girl becomes pregnant, she is beaten by her parents because they don’t know how to handle it. (adolescent)

177. Girls copy each other’s behavior. They see lots of other pregnant girls at school and see the ‘cute’ babies. (adolescent)

178. Previous initiatives such as the distribution of condoms in schools on Bonaire by foreign organizations didn’t hit the right note with parents. They thought that this was encouraging their children to have sex. Religion and spirituality play a role in this regard, especially when it comes to parents. (adolescent)

179. One teenage mother was thirteen when she had her first child. When she was fifteen, she had her second. There are a lot of teenage mothers. This girl has a niece who has just given birth to twins. They all live huddled up together with parents who don’t bring them up properly. Really worrying. (expert)

180. Teenage mothers also have to deal with absent fathers. A teenage girl in this situation needs unconditional love and goes out looking for it. But she only finds conditional love. A good father can provide unconditional love. She needs that because she must be able to distinguish between conditional and unconditional love. But she can’t because she has never experienced unconditional love. (expert)

181. Teenage mothers are partly a consequence of this style of parenting, the evasion of responsibility. I’m quite outspoken in this regard. These are exactly the things that really must change. (expert)

182. A baby gives her status. They won’t easily admit it, but as sure as eggs most have regrets, because it’s not a doll. I have children myself and I think that parenting is the hardest thing there is. Really! You never have any guarantees. Even after your children have grown you still think and ask yourself if you shouldn’t have done it differently. You’ll always be their mother whatever else happens. And my children have all managed to find their feet, so I’ve got nothing to complain about in that respect. I think that it’s difficult. (expert)

183. The culture in the Antilles doesn’t favor informing children. For Antillean parents, sexual education is taboo. (expert)

184. Fifteen year old girl. Already had three or four abortions in Curacao, pregnant from the same boyfriend again and again. Now she is seventeen and has a two year old baby, again from the same boyfriend. She wanted a baby, but her parents wouldn’t allow it. Now the girl and her boyfriend are living together. In the morning, the girl goes to school. I don’t know why they wanted a baby so early. They really wanted it because they really like babies, but they are completely ignorant. (expert)

185. We always teach sex education before the regatta in October. Actually we wanted to hand out condoms but my manager said, “You mustn’t do that because the parents will be up in arms thinking that you’re encouraging them to have sexual contact.” I replied, “It’s not encouragement, it’s for protection if they’re going to do it anyway.” That isn’t acceptable. It’s a step too far. (expert)

186. I have also been involved in research on teenage pregnancy and I honestly think that at this moment Bonaire is really progressing, except in terms of poverty. (expert)

187. Nearly all the young people who visit us have children, usually more than one. These aren’t young people who accidentally become pregnant. These are young people who have formed a family at a young age. To a certain extent, it’s a subculture. That’s a very difficult vicious circle to break because it does actually have a function. For example, I’ve noticed that if a girl has children, she can suddenly bring herself to go to FORMA [Training Center for Adults] to be educated because she then has the motivation to take her life forward. My position is that children are born because most girls have
such low self-esteem, and they feel rejected by their families and schools and so become pregnant at a young age. Then they suddenly find themselves with a very important role in the South American culture, and that is the role of mother. That does actually give them self-esteem and status so they can take their lives forward. That should never be a reason of course. It should really be prevented, but it can work positively for the girls concerned. The only thing I find very problematic is that all the children, and I really can put my hand on my heart and repeat all the children, live way under the poverty line. (expert)

188. When I was working at Young Bonaire [Jong Bonaire] I dealt with two girls whose mother made them prostitute themselves. As a parent who worries about my own child in this respect, I do know that as soon as girls starts acting provocatively in the eyes of men, whether she is ten or nine or sixteen, than it said that the girl is ready for it. My sister in the Netherlands says that it’s ridiculous to talk with your eight year old daughter about such things. She sometimes wants to put lipstick on when we go somewhere, but I don’t allow it. At home I don’t mind, but outside the home, no way. And why not? I then explain to her exactly why not, because as her mother it’s something I worry about too. (expert)

189. Of the six islands, Bonaire then had the biggest problem of teenage pregnancies. We also have a very aggressive policy here. We always try to encourage them to use an IUD coil, because it also offers protection against venereal diseases. As soon as a girl agrees, then we make an appointment straight away and we also go with her to prevent her having a fifth or a sixth child during the time that she is here. These girls have reached the age of consent. These days they are always girls who have reached the age of consent, although it used to be different. Officially, you should then consult with the parents, but we haven’t always done so. We saw three children below the poverty line, one of which had already been put into a crisis foster care family. Are we then also supposed to consult with the parents? (expert)

190. When I arrived, a girl had to leave the school because she was a bad example for the other children. She went home and got no education. (expert)

191. Those old men lie in the sack with young girls, they get them pregnant, anything goes and everybody knows it. But when they get pregnant, it’s suddenly a bad example. (expert)

192. These days they go to school until a few weeks before the birth, just as if they were adults. And after giving birth they go back to school. In the spring we had one with twins who passed the exams. She went up to the stage with the twins. (expert)

193. It’s a lot more common here than in the Netherlands. Which doesn’t necessarily mean that it is bad. Although they should be better supervised. (expert)

194. I think they know how to prevent it. But then it isn’t allowed because of beliefs. Or the guys think it’s nonsense. Then they bind themselves to somebody by getting pregnant. At least, that’s what they think. And the sixth time, they still think that. (expert)

195. Obviously it used to be the case that a child was born, and then brought up by its grandmom. I think that things are different now, because everyone works. (expert)

196. Seventeen year old girl. Pregnant. Mom has learning difficulties, brother is in prison. The girl goes to FORMA. I ask her, “What are you going to do?” “Well, nothing special, just finish school.” They have no idea. She’s not very aware of what she is doing. We have invested a lot in her. She stayed with her grandparents for a year. She was with us, but she should have been removed from her home in order to really do anything. She had a boyfriend when she was fifteen years old, but mom and grandparents didn’t allow it. Ban everything and phone around the whole neighborhood, but then you go and do it secretly and nobody knows what’s going on. Now she’s pregnant from that boyfriend. She lives with her mom again. She might be admitted to a home for teenage moms, Kas di Karko. That’s really bad from a religious point of view. (expert)

197. Teen pregnancy is a status symbol. It’s about attention. The problem of Antillean youths is their low self-esteem which has reached rock bottom. If you have a belly and a baby, then you get attention. You get treated more carefully, and get more attention. Including from boyfriends and the like. (expert)

198. The number of teenage pregnancies on Bonaire is higher than in Curacao. It is a trend among young people. They think that it’s cool to show that they are moms. (expert)
199. I can see this affecting our teenage moms. There isn’t any low-cost housing. So they have to stay at home in a family with a mom and father. Then you’re in a very vulnerable position as a teenage mother. Sometimes there are other people living in the same home, and they all have an opinion about your child. They all have an opinion about you. Maybe you want to educate or treat your child differently. (expert).

200. It seems like it’s imposed, but actually it’s good. Because the abortion is carried out. At the moment there’s no guidance or supervision. A lot of people do it with spices and crazy things about which nobody knows the consequences. But psychologically, people are not yet able to accept it. So I’ve simply said it to people from time to time, and also spoken about sexuality and the taboos around it. It’s just sticking your head in the sand. You have a child of fifteen, sixteen, and say, “Oh no, mine doesn’t do that, that’s what the neighbors’ kids do.” Then you are suddenly confronted with a big belly. But to change anything will take many years. That’s why we have begun in earnest with training and sex education for children from a very young age. We teach them foremost that their bodies are temples, and they learn about values and standards. We explain to the parents that they should talk about their thoughts with their kids. If they find this difficult, then they can borrow books from us which explain things very simply. We explain to them about how they can talk to their kids. (expert)

201. You can see that they themselves were often neglected as children. They think: I’ll have my own child that I can love, and I’ll do everything better. But the situation which they are in often means that they usually can’t do it better. (expert)

202. I think you should invest a lot in empowerment. That is what I have done with teenage moms, for example. (expert)

203. They can be taught sex education and given all the information in the world, but the moment they have to take a decision they allow themselves to be influenced. We have very interesting conversations with our teenage moms. At a certain moment, you get to know them really well, and then they open up. There are a lot of myths that you just know are simply myths and not based on facts. But it is difficult to say so. So you have to find a way of discovering if it is true. Then they say, “Yeah but if I don’t have sex with a boy then he says ‘You don’t love me enough.’” (expert)

204. People have babies here without consciously thinking about it. It is a natural process to have them. They don’t think about the consequences of having babies. There are many teenage moms. A woman is only valued if she has babies and becomes a mother. You are only part of things if you have filled out and given birth. That is part of the reason why children have children at a young age. (expert)

205. The biggest problem is that young girls without work or qualifications have children. This is mainly due to the lack of sex education. (child, Bonaire)

206. Sexuality is not talked about at home. Parents see it as a taboo. Sex education is taught at the Jong Bonaire Foundation though. And at the Project Foundation. (child, Bonaire)

207. They should hand out condoms at school, or maybe install a condom machine. Abstinence and more information. In the form of an interesting film, for example, so that people remember it. (child, Bonaire)

208. One in five births involves teenage pregnancies. The percentage of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases is higher than on the other islands. (expert)

209. If I’ve got a problem or need anything, I usually go to my mom. My mom listens to me and tries to help solve the problem. I can also talk to the teachers at Forma about my problem. They are also very kind and help me solve my problems. But usually I talk about any problems with my mom and we don’t mention it to anybody else. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

210. I don’t really know of situations of domestic violence between parent and child. If I am threatened, I can go to my mom. Or to my Bonaire Youth Outreach club leader. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

211. I think there is a big gap between the kids who have made it and stay away from this place, and the kids who stay at home. (boy)

212. All the problems typical of developing countries can be found on the islands. In addition, there are the problems typical of small islands. The people are almost all related to each other or know each other. It’s like being under a microscope. (expert)
213. People have a huge inferiority complex compared to white people. This manifests itself in various ways, such as submissiveness or arrogance. (expert)

214. There is a collective sense of inferiority, which begins with education and school. Low self-esteem is passed on. (expert)

215. Despite the many problems within families, a sense of responsibility prevails on Bonaire. Young people feel very strongly that they must protect their families from danger. (expert)

216. Sometimes they indoctrinate their children. They say, “You can say this, but not that.” (expert)

217. It is a matter of culture. There is the legacy of slavery in which the men had to father as many children as possible, but could not be in a relationship or marry. If that carries on for generations, it becomes very difficult to change. People need to realize that it is in their interest to change. (expert)

218. Faith has a great influence here. Because of faith, sexuality is not discussed. They are teenagers, and what parents most want is to keep them separated. They are not allowed to interact with each other, and if anything happens, all the parents are amazed and think “How is that possible?” (expert)

219. It’s a very small island. Everybody knows everything about each other. You can’t keep anything hidden. That’s what makes it so difficult, because the parents don’t want it and the kids think, “I’m not allowed to go there.” (expert)

220. That’s the culture that can be traced right back to the days of slavery unfortunately. Three centuries ago, when slavery started here, the slaves weren’t allowed to marry. It was decided by the plantation owner, so there were no marriages. This habit has remained. It’s very unusual to get married here. Just a man, woman and children. There are very few nuclear families. (expert)

221. The child who we are now looking after in the house is from a family of six children. The children are from four different fathers. Even so, every time they think that they can make bonds like this. Incidentally, this was not a teenage mother. She was 24 when she first gave birth. Yet, time and time again, they carry on thinking that when they have a child they will form a bond with the man. (expert)

222. Bonaire is a relatively small community of about 15,000 inhabitants. This means that almost everyone knows each other. In addition, family ties are strong. A characteristic of the Bonaire community is that since there are so many family ties, and everyone knows each other, people are not inclined to discuss difficult issues. Such things are preferably avoided, because they always have consequences in terms of conflict or exclusion. In addition, in this sort of situation, economic links between parents or between a mother and her partner or a combination of both can be an important factor in explaining why difficult issues or difficult behavior are not discussed. On the one hand you could say that there is a culture of secrecy or culture of silence, while on the other hand it is also linked with shame. Taboos are not discussed, and child abuse is swept under the carpet. The culture of secrecy and shame requires that care assistance treats confidentiality extremely carefully when dealing with issues. In contrast, people tend to expect instant solutions and complain if they are not provided. (expert)

223. In addition, you always have to carry out your work professionally. This is because you’re on an island and it’s a relatively small community. You’re never anonymous. This aggravates matters, especially if your work as a professional is in the field of child abuse. Work supervision, peer review and supervision in terms of feedback on your performance and non-anonymity when handling child abuse are prerequisites for the well-being of professionals. (expert)

224. Churches and religion occupy an important place in life on Bonaire. The church is not only a meeting place, but a place for the conveyance of values. The involvement of the churches and their contribution in addressing child abuse has a major impact on the awareness of child abuse. (expert)

225. We’re on an island here. Family support and foster families are quite difficult because this is an island and before you know it they are at your house. That’s why it’s sometimes better if a child is placed out of the home. For many parents it is a relief because they are unable to do it themselves. (expert)
226. In fact it’s really strange. Homosexuality is accepted if you’re an adult. Everyone knows it: that man is gay. Otherwise, contact carries on as usual. It doesn’t matter. But if your child says that he or she is gay, then it’s a big problem. (expert)

227. A lot of things come down to perception. That’s the reasoning. We are a Christian community, but have to deal with laws on abortion or euthanasia. Abortions are carried out in the Antilles but we can’t talk about it. So we ignore it, because it doesn’t fit in with our culture or with our values and standards. (expert)

228. It’s very difficult for parents to ask for help. There are a lot of institutions such as Sebiki. The Guardianship Council, the Expertise Center Education Care Foundation (EOZ) or the school social worker. There are quite a lot of people on the island with learning difficulties who have a lot of children, and are unable to cope with the financial and emotional consequences. In addition, people are not monogamous. We don’t shut ourselves up in our homes at night. Having children is a natural process. (expert)

229. When I had problems with where I was living and I went to the Guardianship Council to let them know how bad things were, and that I needed somewhere else to live to avoid aggravating my problems, they were not immediately willing to help me. However, I persisted because I knew that if I continued to live where I was living at that time, things would go wrong, otherwise I don’t think they’d have helped me so quickly. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

230. On Saturday, I always go home. I chat with my mom and my brothers. I don’t see them much, and Saturday is my day so I have to make the most of it and enjoy it. I go out with my mom to say hello to other members of the family. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

231. When I was first staying at Kas di Karko, my behavior remained the same. After a few days it changed, but after another few days it returned to what it was. It’s because friends who have a bad influence on me keep coming to stay in the house. I hang out with them and follow them. Those are bad friends. At school I’ve got good friends that I hang out with. We can just have a good chat together and spend a bit of time with each other. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

232. In Kas di Karko I can’t really decide for myself what I eat or how I dress. You are allowed to choose your own clothes as long as they aren’t too sexy. As far as food goes, you have to eat what has been cooked. There isn’t a fixed time for going to bed. Everybody has to be asleep by nine on weekdays and ten at the weekend. If you’re tired in the daytime, you can decide if you want to have a rest. I think they are really strict about bedtime and eating what there is. If there are vegetables in it then you have to eat them too. And it’s always the same. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

233. More attention should be given to parents for carrying out certain things. (boy)

234. There are Youth and Family Centers (CIG) on the islands of St. Eustatius, Saba and Bonaire. These places are not accessible. They are not adapted to the local culture and situation. (boy)

235. At present, besides the Youth and Family Center, the Guardianship Council, the Probation Service and some teachers there is nowhere where children and young people can go for help with their problems. (expert)

236. A new employee who is very good at his job started recently at the Guardianship Council. (expert)

237. You only get to know about it much later. Things like incest. It’s very common. If it does become known, help is piecemeal. Everyone knows everyone. Before you can get a foot in the door and build up confidence... Parents don’t talk, neither do children, they are very loyal. (expert)

238. There is no assistance for girls who are abused at home. Not even for young people who are eighteen or almost eighteen and need guidance in living alone. (expert)

239. Before October 2010, we could still send children to the family guardianship services in Curaçao. Not any more. Now they ask, “Who’s going to pay for that?” (expert)

240. Basically, if children have problems, then you really have to go door-to-door. There are also no foster homes for teenagers. They only want young children. But these children also need a bit of love. (expert)

241. There is a house in Bonaire for teen moms or girls in trouble in general. Even if they aren’t pregnant. They used to have to go to Curacao. (expert)
242. A children's helpline could help. (expert)

243. When children are given attention, they start to bloom. It is so worthwhile! (expert)

244. Returning briefly to the Guardianship Council, there is now an intervention method integrated with the entire judicial network. A good structure has been set up, but it is dependent on certain individuals. That's always been a factor which has made things difficult here. Bonaire is a small island but quite complicated. The structure must not depend on individuals because that weakens it. More things must be documented. More emphasis should be placed on highly detailed documentation about the number of children concerned and how many teenage moms are involved. (expert)

245. I'm very pleased that the health center is also present in the Youth and Family Center because you can provide a sort of safety net for the child and prevent it disappearing off the radar, as is so often the case here. When the alarm is sounded, it's often late, or, to be blunt, too late. You tend to get alarms that things aren't going well with girls when they enter puberty, and with boys when they are about twelve. This means that there is certainly a previous history of ten or twelve years. (expert)

246. More than 95% of primary school teachers are female, for example. Because of this, the positive complementary role of the male is missing and there is no balance against hostility. I have also taught boys, including boys with learning difficulties. They're tough, but they are also vulnerable. They need to feel valued. I would say that is the human condition. Everyone wants to be appreciated, loved and treated with respect. (expert)

247. It is also important to point out that there are external influences. Bonaire has skipped a few phases. About 25 years ago we had two television channels here, one from Curacao and one from Venezuela. That changed from one day to another. Cable television arrived and as far as I can remember there were 24 channels in the beginning. That was in 1985 or 1986. Bonaire went from two channels to lots of channels, with completely different content. Mainly U.S. channels, including movie channels. No one informed, warned or supervised the spectators. "Beware, because the movie channels broadcast films 24 hours a day and it makes no difference to them if a violent movie at broadcast at three in the afternoon when your child is watching television. Be careful that your child doesn't watch certain channels, note the ratings." Nobody even knew what a rating was. I have explained to many people, parents who have children in the nursery, what R means. They had no idea. R means restricted and not for viewing by children. Then there is PG13, which means from age 13 up but with parental guidance, thus a parent present. They didn't know that they had to watch out for these things. The afternoon television in Curacao used to begin with a children's hour, but suddenly there was 24 hour television and the television became the babysitter. It has had a huge impact on Bonaire. It has not been supervised. It was all great fun, because the company had first tried to introduce cable television on Curacao, but Curacao didn't make it so easy for them, so they came to Bonaire. Bonaire said, "We're going to get something before Curacao, yeah!" Bonaire received them with open arms. That has happened with so many things and the pattern is continuing: media, music, carnival parades. Be careful with the kids! Earplugs in. It is beginning to sink in, but simply too slowly. It has gone on for too long, I was all alone in the wilderness crying out, "Be careful." (expert)

248. I remember well that we had submitted three projects: a sort of work-training project to give drop outs a second chance, a central alarm point or intake point for problems with children and young people, and a third project concerning parenting. We had worked very hard on them, and then the work-training project was given the go ahead. That was at FORMA, for social care. This is to show how you can do so much work but still only get allocated one project. We saw it all as very necessary, but then nothing happens. The fund in the Netherlands decides. I actually hoped that there would be a structural solution that was not dependent on the funds. That parenting would be a structural part of the budget. Sebiki has prepared a lot of things on paper for parenting support. They are also working on Opstap Opnieuw (Starting Over). (expert)

249. A children's helpline like the one on Curacao would be good here. Then they could be anonymous. Bonaire is small. If someone says something, then the whole of Bonaire finds out, which is something a lot of parents are scared of. (expert)

250. Sometimes I have a child who says, "I want to know something, but I don't know who to ask." When I ask if they can ask it to their mom they say, "No, she'd start hitting me." Or, "No, don't tell her." (expert)
Another problem is that there is no place to stay for children with problems at home. A place where they could stay longer than at Kas di Karko. That is a guest house. (expert)

It’s almost impossible to arrange foster families for Antillean children. Nobody dares to take on a child because everyone knows everyone. They fear that their parents will turn up and cause problems. (expert)

There are currently eight children who don’t live with their parents, but live somewhere else that was organized by the Guardianship Council and Youth Welfare. I now see children of children who were here earlier. (expert)

On Bonaire, we’re a step ahead of the other islands. That’s because of good cooperation and stability. (expert)

There used to be three child welfare investigators on Bonaire, but one has now left. Now there are three child welfare investigators, one nutrition assistant and three senior child welfare investigators. A few years ago the Dutch inspectorate paid a visit. The conclusion was that we operate at Dutch levels, but that we don’t have enough staff. The quality has improved since then. We now have a section that deals with punishments. We did make reports but not in terms of prevention. Now we also carry out do the preventive part of the HALT project (Dutch project to influence behavior of children and their parents). A very good employee set the project up. He has ten years of experience in Groningen in the Netherlands, but originally came from Bonaire. The project intends to keep youths outside the penal circuit. There is a good agreement in place with the SGB (Bonaire School Community), the school attendance officer, police and the prosecution authority. This has allowed us to tackle truancy, which has been greatly reduced. Because these days control is much better, and young people know it. (expert)

Officially, we at the Guardianship Council are also the AMK (advice and child abuse hotline). That still needs to be regulated by legislation. It is our task. We receive reports from doctor, the police, teachers and neighbors which we subsequently investigate. If it is not clear what is going on, then Youth Welfare intervenes with parents and children. If it is clear that abuse is taking place, then we have to deal with it. (expert)

Placements outside the home used to be in Curacao. These days there is Kas di Karko and housing for teenage moms. On Curacao there are behavior statements (VOG, established by the government). Mostly PBR (Project Reorganization) placements, very occasionally a supervision order (OTS). These are usually boys, and very occasionally a girl. Young people from Bonaire go there too. And sometimes one will go to the Netherlands. Previously (two years ago) youths were still put in prison with adults here. (expert)

Children don’t get criminal records. They have to do chores such as helping at school or at the animal shelter. (expert)

There is now also a psychologist working with Youth Welfare who came from Curaçao. And an educationist. We didn’t use to have this expertise. Now we can give help. Maybe not enough, but it’s a start. (expert)

Despite the developments in Bonaire, the situation for families, women and men is very limited. Investments are made in the infrastructure and institutions, but people on Bonaire remain in the same state. That is, by definition, unbalanced growth. (expert)

We’ve got Youth and Family Welfare here. Lots of institutions join together and try to work together. The door must remain open. Whether the population is going to make use of it is another matter. (expert)

Previously we had the GVI (Institution for Family Guardianship) and the Guardianship Council, who had a very bad reputation because they took children away of course. But it took a long time. You should have seen how neglected children were before they intervened. (expert)

There used to be a place called the Maria Höpner home. That was for boys and girls. I heard that parents just dumped their children at the front door and that they were then taken care of. It no longer exists. (expert)

We do now have Kas di Karko. In Dutch it’s called the guesthouse. In practice, mentally disabled young people end up there, because the IQ of the young people there or who have been there is under 65. I think that the group of young people who aren’t very intelligent is very large. (expert)
265. Professionals are expected to be reliable and to guard privacy. Building trust among the population is essential in order to provide good care and to respond to the needs of parents and children. In this, good conversation skills are also helpful, especially in cases of child abuse. Training and employment guidance play an important role. In addition, reporting and reporting obligations, especially in cases of child abuse, are crucial. (expert)

266. Many professionals have tough job responsibilities. A lot has to happen and a lot has to be done. It is important when dealing with child abuse to realize that the most important thing is not always doing more (more work, more reporting, more consultation), but doing things differently (organize it better). Keep it simple: no bureaucracy. (expert)

267. Make a difference by working together, getting together, respecting the methods of working you have agreed with each other, and securing this method (plan, do, check, act). This is also true at the institutional and organizational level: make agreements and write them down. However, you can also exploit the small scale: you can contact people directly and you can literally take the client by the hand and walk to the other organization. (expert)

268. A safety plan must always be made in situations where the safety of children is at stake. These plans include arrangements with parents and children, and possibly other adults in the family who play a role in ensuring and monitoring safety. (expert)

269. Every report about child abuse must be taken seriously, wherever it is made. Making sure that the message is well received and handled appropriately, quickly and professionally is a prerequisite in tackling child abuse promptly. (expert)

270. Rouvoet’s program ‘All opportunities for all children’ (Alle kansen voor alle kinderen) intended to place prevention and guidance in a framework. We wanted this program with common indicators to focus on the practice, the outcome and the welfare of children in practice. There were also other objectives, such as how to establish a Youth and Family Center. Such a center is a means to an end. It is also the model, to a certain extent, which I was hoping to implement when I came here. At that time I made a plan for all the islands. (expert)

271. Prevention is important. Parents are primarily responsible. Parents need to be helped and a child should not be taken away from its home hastily. (expert)

272. As for as Youth Care is concerned, we didn’t start by setting up a shelter but by deploying social workers to help families. We recruited five outpatient care workers and a behavioral scientist. We also did this on the Windward Islands, where we recruited three and two care workers, as well as a behavioral scientist and a child and adolescent psychiatrist. In fact, the structure in the three islands was the same. We also wanted a Youth and Family Center on all three islands, an easily accessible center where everyone could go and where both parenting support and health care is provided. (expert)

273. We had a four block model. Two preventive blocks and two curative blocks. The establishment of the Youth and Family Center and more positive opportunities for leisure activities are the two preventive blocks. The establishment of Youth Care and strengthening the protection of children through the Family Guardianship and the Guardianship Council are the two curative blocks. There wasn’t really any youth care on the islands. There was a dilapidated shelter but it was subject to a lot of criticism, so we wanted to do things differently. The overall framework for this four block model was collaboration with education, justice and social affairs. We also wanted to introduce a methodology, a common language, which has become Triple P. That is what the three islands wanted, and they had already heard about it. (expert)

274. The Youth and Family Center has been unsuccessful because they didn’t study how things are done on the island. (expert)

275. I can’t judge foster homes, but there is no 24-hour support. (expert)

276. A number of young people have been are placed in the Youth and Family Center, but they were later removed because they were uncontrollable. One boy finally ended up in the Netherlands. (expert)

277. Kas di Karko opened a year ago. There are a few young people there now, but there are a lot of problems. It is incomprehensible that there is nothing for the young people around whom everything is being done. (expert)
278. Youth Care make much too little use of the existing expertise here. There is too much imitation of the Netherlands' model, even though it doesn't work here. Here, youth are dealt with directly. You won't get anywhere by treating them with kid gloves. You have to tell young people exactly what they have to do. Using strict rules as a basis, you can work on accountability. (expert)

279. The Project Foundation focuses primarily on behavior and not on learning. A young person can only learn after he or she is able to sit on a chair. I would prefer to work on prevention with youth housing, and not wait until the only alternative is that they go to prison. (expert)

280. Lots more places are required to house young people away from their homes. At least two good shelters, in addition to Kas di Karko and the shelter for pregnant teenagers. A 'hands-off-my-body-shelter' (Blijf-van-mijn-lijf-huis) is also needed. There is no spare housing to accommodate families. A shelter for when a situation in the home gets out of hand. (expert)

281. It has crossed our minds that we need some sort of children's helpline. But if you think about it, where could you refer such a child to? (expert)

282. If there are children where you suspect that something is wrong, as there are in almost all the nurseries, you can always call us. Nursery teachers really are in a position to raise the alarm. But it is very problematic for nursery teachers because they have to go to the Guardianship Council. There was a recent case that really shocked me. A nursery teacher found out that the father of a disabled child had sexually abused the child in the shower. The teacher was very upset, and she went to the Guardianship Council. Then she came to see me. She was completely hysterical, so I tried to tell her that she had done the right thing. I spoke with the mother. Eventually it ended up in the hands of the law, but the ruling was unbelievable. The lawyer of the accused said that because the nursery teacher asked the child certain questions, that the child remembered certain things, and repeating them under further questioning didn't mean that they were true. Walked free. So no progress was made at all. It is in any case questionable if the best way to intervene is via the law, but what else is there? (expert)

283. I don’t say it to the nurseries, I say it to the government, the politicians and the people from the Netherlands who say, "Oh, in about five years we’ll see if the legislation has to be implemented here." That makes me mad. Then I think to myself, "You have no idea about what is going on here." (expert)

284. The ministries, for example. Typically Dutch, completely unaware of how things are in the real world. So I decided two years ago that I wasn’t just going to show them the attractive things anymore. KLM, for example, offered Sinterklaas presents for us to hand out. But they really wanted to hand them out themselves. So I took them round all the really primitive nurseries. They were completely shocked. They also went to the Maria Hoppner orphanage. They were shocked to see where the children were living. (expert)

285. Yesterday was another example. The parliamentarians were here, and I was invited to speak about social development and the future of the children, teenage motherhood, parenting etc. And I got five minutes. I thanked everybody kindly. If they seriously want to discuss things, I’d be only too happy, but speaking for five minutes is not on. (expert)

286. Another reason we wanted to set up Sebiki was to provide nursery teachers with training and a recognized qualification. We also asked the Ministry of Education to recognize it as a Higher Professional Education (HBO) course. (expert)

287. Our inhabitants have a low level of education. It has a big impact. We also see it in parenting support. It must be very concrete, very to the point and practical. Focused on the situation and with examples. That is the most successful method. But to simply talk about education, and then only the theory of it, is pointless. It’s only a small group. So what you see now is that the group remains on Bonaire. It’s like a vicious circle. (expert)

Education

288. In the morning I get a lift to school from my neighbor. First his daughter gets out, then his wife and then he drops me off. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

289. We haven’t got a car at home. I get the bus to school every morning. It picks me up at 6:15 at the church in Rincon. If I oversleep, I have to try to catch another bus, which costs two dollars, or I see if I can get a lift. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)
290. Our labs are a long way away from our classroom, which means we actually have to walk across the whole school to get from the one place to the other. It’s not only time consuming, but disturbs everybody having lessons in the places we have to walk past. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

291. I pay my tuition fees myself, so I want to have lessons for the money that I pay. Otherwise I might as well quit school and keep the money in my pocket. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

292. At the moment I have pretty long days at school. On Wednesday I start early in the morning and stay at school until ten. There is generally a bus between Kas di Karko and the school at the normal times. It goes to the school at seven in the morning and returns to Kas di Karko at two in the afternoon. For me this is quite inconvenient, because my lessons are at other times. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

293. If the supervisors have time, then they take me or pick me up. Otherwise I walk or ring a friend to give me a lift. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

294. We have 1350 students. A real mixture. From vocational education, through senior general secondary education (HAVO)/pre-university education(VWO) to secondary professional education (MBO). (expert)

295. There is a very small school called the E-college. There are about thirty pupils, aged between twelve and fourteen. If they are any older, they can’t have lessons there anymore. (expert)

296. This school has had a bad reputation for a long time. Especially among Dutch people. They would rather spend $15,000 per year on sending their children to the E-college. (expert)

297. Now we’re concentrating again with other things. Reversing the lack of investment. Since January 1, we have our own funding and financing. IT and everything that comes with it. There didn’t used to be much at all, of course. Now we are working on new buildings. HAVO/VWO is the priority. And then we’re going to get a Regional Training Center (ROC). (expert)

298. That lot at the Catholic school board are a right bunch. They are unbelievable. You can’t show any condoms or anything like that. Politics has been taken out of school. It used to be completely interwoven into the school. That was a disaster. The ones in power, the reds, they decided everything, and they decided school policy. That isn’t the case in Bonaire anymore, unlike in Saba and Statia (St. Eustatius). A politician can go there and tell them what to do. If that happened here, they would be kicked out. (expert)

299. I think the education in Bonaire is fine. I can’t make comparisons, but I think the level is normal. It’s not too hard or too easy for me, but just right. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

300. It’s a good sign that a different way of thinking has started in schools. There is also the will to provide good education, but a lot of the lessons they give are centered around their own values and norms. Making the leap to development-oriented education was too great. (expert)

301. Over the last year a lot has been invested in schools. Measures are being taken to improve the level of education and to make education more attractive. (expert)

302. Education is improving exponentially. Better investments. More attention given to youth. The Expertise Center Education Care Foundation for young people who get left behind. The four types of disability-specific special schools do not exist here although there are plenty of young people who really need it. I hope that the Expertise Center Education Care Foundation can do something about it. (expert)

303. Investments in education have never been made on the island territories. They talk about our children, but they don’t do anything about it. (expert)

304. I think that we’re on the right path in the school at the moment. You can see it in the children. They feel a lot better at school. The structure is a lot clearer. More clarity is important. (expert)

305. Since two or three years ago, we have been working with a sort of Cito (Central Institute for Test Development) test in primary schools. The first grade undergoes a Cito test. We hope to extend it to the second and third grade. We hope that it will show us if progression has been made. (expert)

306. The quality of education is increasing, so they will have more opportunities. (expert)
307. Because of faith, children in church schools are more accustomed to reading and reciting than those from the secular schools. But the differences are minimal. (expert)

308. The Project Foundation is fun. If only there was such a school where you could learn more and get ahead. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

309. I like to go to school. For example, I’d like to go to a school like the Project Foundation every day. Not the Bonaire School Community, that’s boring. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

310. I’m really enjoying myself at the Project Foundation, and I don’t mind that having to stay here. What I really like is that we do so many different things and that we can work one day a week in the teaching restaurant. I also really like making things with wood, and that is something else we do here. I’m also very glad that we have breaks between classes to do the things that we really enjoy. (boy, aged 12, Bonaire)

311. Even though there were some nice things, I’m glad I’m at the Project Foundation now. The group leaders are good people and are sympathetic to my situation. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

312. The only thing I don’t like is that Papiamento is a compulsory subject. I think they should make it optional because lots of pupils don’t like it and you won’t really need it in the future. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

313. I really like school. I love drawing and math. My favorite teacher is Mrs. Marlene. At school I have a few friends who sit with me in class. Rowenselyn, Tischainy, Nienke, Amara, Shalenda and Julienne. We are always together at school. (girl, 8 years old, Bonaire)

314. What I like about the Project Foundation is that we are taught in a small group and all get enough attention. I’ll miss this soon when I’m at the Bonaire School Community, but I’m ready for it. I also think it’s great that we can cook one day a week in the teaching restaurant with the supervisors. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

315. At the moment I’m an intern at Reina Beatrix and I help in the office with all the administrative work. In addition to the internship, I go to school one day a week for theory subjects. I really don’t like the internship because it’s just administration, something I hate doing. I eventually hope to study nursing. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

316. You can choose whether you go to extra lessons yourself. You do get a form to fill out though, and you do have to attend them. Just like normal classes, you can also get an A for absence or E for expelled. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

317. There should be more sex education. Even at primary school. It is now a major problem in primary schools. (adolescent)

318. I think that a specialist should teach children about their bodies. Not just about sex, but also about HIV, AIDS and other STDs. (adolescent)

319. Information is provided, but only in high school, even though children are already sexually active at a young age. (adolescent)

320. On the one hand, a small island is very safe, but on the other hand, little is expected of you, and it is not challenging. (expert)

321. Information is sometimes provided at school, but only in biology at high school. (expert)

322. It might help if there was a fund that would finance children’s studies. It would really help if there were more study opportunities on the island. At the moment everything is focused on construction, tourism, and secretarial services. (expert)

323. We provide secondary education for 30%. The remaining 70% is on the streets, at home, looking after their brother or sister, you name it. (expert)

324. We will soon completely finish the renovation. Then I think we will be able to deal with up to 300 enrollments and 250 attendees per day. When I came here, we had 150 young people enrolled and about 80 young people attending per day. (expert)
325. Another institution on the island is the Bonaire Youth Outreach Foundation, but that is founded on religious faith. Where they get their finances from is a mystery to me. (expert)

326. At that time, primary schools had after school care for ages six to twelve years. I don’t know if it still exists. They employed anyone they could find to go and do stuff there. It’s still like that, full of completely incompetent people. I don’t send my kids there. But it’s definitely a problem. (expert)

327. Educational care for children is unknown here. So if a child does something strange, it’s a nasty student. They don’t know if the child is autistic or has some other problem. The current methods don’t take the children into account. (expert)

328. The primary schools have after school care. Nurseries are also very well organized. It costs very little. (expert)

329. There is a referral committee that decides whether a child should be placed in special education or the Project Foundation. You often see young people who go to school and it doesn’t work out. After talking to the parents, we try to find a teacher who can tell us something about the adolescent. But we can’t find the right teacher. One says that he does not know the adolescent, the next can’t say anything, the next that he isn’t responsible, the next isn’t there at all. A lot of staff do appear, which in itself seems quite good, such as care coordinators etc., but it gets quite confusing. There are so many people who get involved with endless meetings without any improvements for the adolescent concerned. (expert)

330. On Statia the Expertise Center had to start from a baseline lower than on Saba and much lower than on Bonaire. The concept is the same on all the BES islands. The needs of the three islands are different. (expert)

331. Much more information should be provided at school. For example, on early school-leavers and teenage pregnancies, but also about education in general. (child, Bonaire)

332. Personally I think education on Bonaire should be in English. English is a global language and the young people tend to focus on English. After Papiamento you can first do English and regional Spanish, and then Dutch tailored to those who want to go to the Netherlands. It’s undemocratic to set an entire system for the benefit of a small group that goes away and doesn’t return. You need Dutch to be able to cope in society, but that can be taught. If you’re going to the Netherlands, you must first ensure that you understand and speak Dutch well. Then you have a chance of success. How many foreign students go to the Netherlands? They don’t speak any Dutch, but manage to study there. (expert)

333. Just one attendance officer is not enough. The Expertise Center Education Care Foundation wants to achieve something for the kids. Education was a real problem on Bonaire. I hope that it’s getting better. However, I would like to see more opportunities for extra tutoring for children, such as in Dutch. Children can’t progress because of the language. (expert)

334. Children don’t enjoy reading here much. There is no reading culture. Children are not good at Dutch. English is better because they watch television and use computers in English. (expert)

335. Papiamento is the dominant spoken language. The fear of losing their own identity results in many politicians putting more emphasis on Papiamento than on Dutch. In addition, many children get left behind because of poor connections between primary and secondary schools. (expert)

336. They speak a language that fell out of the sky. Dutch, English, Portuguese, it’s a mishmash. (expert)

337. Lessons must be given in Dutch at this school. So Dutch must be spoken in the classroom. I don’t believe that all the teachers do that. (expert)

338. The primary school exists to facilitate education, and there they have chosen Papiamento. But that’s all changing. They now say that in the second half of the primary school, lessons will be given in Dutch. (expert)

339. Dutch should not be taught as a foreign language, but as a second language. So it should be taught right from the start of school along with Papiamento. Then they’ll have a chance to learn it properly. (expert)

340. You notice that kids are not dumber than in the Netherlands, but because of the language they can’t keep up with certain subjects. (expert)
341. Even if primary school children can do sums quite well, when they come here they have problems. That is because they then have to do math, and for math you need language. (expert)

342. It would have been a lot better if they had chosen English here, I think. But they didn’t. The government itself chose Dutch. (expert)

343. The Pelican is a primary school for children from four to twelve years old. We are a young school: founded in 2004 as a private school, but always with the intention to be able to receive funding so that we could become public like the other schools on the island. Except that we teach in Dutch, while the other schools teach in Papiamento. Since 2010, we have received funding and fall under the authority of the local government and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. We have 183 pupils and there are 200 children on the waiting list. There is great demand for a school where lessons are given in Dutch. (expert)

344. When we were a private school, the children were still mainly Dutch because their parents could afford it. I have always fought for the child on Bonaire. I haven’t much interest in expats. That means we have a huge variety. Children from the Antilles, Peru, America, Norway, China, India, Ecuador. Their first languages are all different but Dutch is the language at school. (expert)

345. Children who want to study in the Netherlands need Dutch right from primary school. That gives them more options in the future, and means that they don’t have to worry about the language. (expert)

346. Children are very multilingual here. They speak and understand Papiamento, Dutch, Spanish, and English from the TV. How rich does that make you?! (expert)

347. There are two secondary schools on the island, the E-college and the Bonaire School Community. They are taught English there. Parents sometimes find it scary to send their kids to the Bonaire School Community because it’s so big. (expert)

348. Recently, students have been able to catch up in Dutch thanks to digital programs (Start Language by Deviant). In addition, the Bonaire School Community is implementing a language plan. Within primary education, lessons are increasingly given in Dutch. (expert)

349. I think that the Bonaire School Community is bad for the kids. Many children have gone astray. Some have ended up at the Project Foundation. Some kids at the Bonaire School Community lead other children astray. There’s a lot of mutual bad influence. Mischief. Setting off fireworks in the schoolyard. Fighting and other stuff. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

350. At the Bonaire School Community my behavior was OK, but the other kids kept winding me up so I insulted them and started to swear and push them around. I didn’t fight, but I stood up for myself. Then they sent me to the office, where they talked to me. First I was given a warning, and then they said I had to go to the Project Foundation. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

351. I think the other students in the senior general secondary education (HAVO) course are much more social than the ones in the pre-university education (VWO) course. Everyone was only interested in reading books and no one really talked to one another. At secondary school things are very different. During the break we all talk to each other, and between classes everyone has more contact with each other. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

352. I am happy that senior general secondary education and pre-university education are separated from the other levels, and that we are at a different location. I think that the students are very different and that the students from the lower levels are concerned about other things. When all levels were still together they used to call me a nerd. The other students weren’t bothered about learning, but I was. I didn’t like it that they said such things to me, but I didn’t do anything about it. Now my troubles are over, something I’m really pleased about! (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

353. Sometimes there is bullying at my school. I’ve even been bullied myself. I spoke to the teacher about it. (girl, 8 years, Bonaire)

354. In basic general secondary education (BAVO) there was a fight every five minutes. Even so, I think that in senior general secondary education and pre-university education we have got a lot more things, such as a new building. They are stuck in an old building, but I think that those in basic general secondary education should actually be treated equally. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)
355. It is good that there is a distinction made between basic general secondary education, vocational education (AGO), senior general secondary education and pre-university education by different T-shirts as uniforms, but of course there are people who bully you on the basis of that distinction. For example, I am studying the senior general secondary education/pre-university education course and get called a nerd by some and stupid by others. But since we are all at the Bonaire School Community and follow different levels, there must be something to differentiate us. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

356. At our school there isn’t any bullying. I don’t actually know how teachers and guards deal with fights. They stop them. There was even one time when a female teacher fought with a student. That is outrageous. I myself have never fought, I’m sweet. Sometimes I get into arguments. There are some students who think they are better than others and these go looking for fights. I stare at them intensely, and then it stops. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

357. Every six months, there are two parents’ evenings. Then the parents do turn up. (expert)

358. There is a lot of problematic behavior in schools. Teachers now have to spend more time on behavioral issues than on education. Teachers are threatened. Children themselves are not concerned with education but with sex, drugs and windsurfing. (expert)

359. When I arrived here three years ago, there really were a lot of fights. It was virtually an everyday occurrence. The school had not yet been divided. It was a large area where everybody was mixed up. So the first thing we did was to split everything into units, at the physical level too. We separated areas with fences. Everybody has their own place. (expert)

360. The uniform is partly to eliminate class distinctions. I don’t mind it. If you travel through South America, you see it everywhere. It also simplifies things. You can immediately see whether or not somebody belongs here. (expert)

361. In my opinion there have been a lot of directors. I was the sixth in ten years. Loads were carried out on a stretcher, so to speak. In a school like this, you either have it or you don’t. (expert)

362. The schools are dirty and there lists of chores that say we have to clean the school ourselves. (child, Bonaire)

363. I’ve been at the Project Foundation for more than a year. The school principal sent me to the Project Foundation as soon as I finished primary school in Rincón. She didn’t think that I should go to the high school because I get into fights so quickly. (boy, 12 years, Bonaire)

364. Although I’ve been at the Project Foundation for a long time, I still can’t deal with my anger properly. As a result, I’m not ready to go to the Bonaire School Community. (boy, 12 years, Bonaire)

365. I’m at the Project Foundation now. First I was at primary school in Rincon, but I kept having problems there. People talked badly about each other. I often got into fights. Not just with other children, but the teacher too. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

366. I’m studying senior general secondary education in grade 5, specializing in Economics and Society. I chose this specialization because I really love math. School is going well. When I was in elementary school, I was advised to do pre-university education, and I started the course. That went well until the third grade when I got in trouble with my mom about the contact I had with my father. I was worrying about it all day and not thinking about school, so I failed the tests. I was then advised to go to the senior general secondary education course, which suited me fine. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

367. Before I went to Forma, I was at the Project Foundation. After I finished at the Reina Beatrix primary school they sent me to the Project Foundation. I think they did that because I never paid attention in class, spoke to everyone a lot and wouldn’t listen. I was at the Project Foundation for three years and liked it more than Forma. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

368. Because of inbreeding, there is a relatively high number of learning problems on the islands. (expert)

369. The Expertise Center Education Care Foundation is an organization dedicated to providing additional assistance to children who need it. The intention is that teachers receive training so that they learn immediately if a child or young person is behind and needs additional support. (expert)

370. The overall motivation of children is very low. Especially with low-level education. (expert)
The children don’t get the basic rest they need at home. The involvement of parents in the cognitive development of their children is virtually non-existent. Education has a bad name in society and people don’t trust it. It’s more a problem of mentality. (expert)

I have noticed that for many young people, care and education must be integrated if you want to push them in a certain direction. (expert)

The Expertise Center Education Care Foundation has been here since August 1. It provides an educational location for children who are ready for secondary education but in social and emotional terms are still too young. Or there is something else going on which would prevent them from being successful in secondary education. We have classes of twelve children, who receive extensive support. (expert)

The Expertise Center Education Care Foundation itself exists primarily to test children. To assist care coordinators in their tasks. They are the ones we are educating. (expert)

We only have children here who could never return to secondary education. There are obviously children like this in the Netherlands too. Children with a psychiatric disorder. There’s nothing for them here on the island. There should be special education but the Ministry won’t allow it. (expert)

There are also children with mental or physical handicaps. I have no details. You never see them here, but they must exist. (expert)

Young Antillean children who arrive at school are not excited. Their eyes are dull and fearful. Only after a while, if you treat them respectfully, will they start to shine. And you make use of their abilities, even if they are lacking on a cognitive level. (expert)

I sometimes skipped school, but not much. When I had a bad day, I just skipped school. I would chill out under the tree. (adolescent, 15 years, Bonaire)

I really like school and I never play hooky. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

I notice that many people on the secondary professional education course play hooky, and don’t think like I do. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

It’s really stupid if parents keep their children at home for no reason. Going to school is a good thing for the development of the children. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

I like school but there are a lot of kids who gladly look for trouble. They come to school, but not to learn. They come to play hooky and make problems for other people. Nobody has ever tried to make problems for me. Sometimes I skip school. And sometimes I follow others and let them influence me. I’ve been told this a lot of times, but when I’m confronted with it I hesitate. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

I’ve been at the Project Foundation for a few months now, and generally it suits me very well here. I started at the Bonaire School Community but that didn’t go too well. Because I was on vacation when we had to pick up books, I had no books at the beginning of the year. Of course, all the teachers spoke to me about it. Because it wasn’t possible to get that books anymore, I had to do without. I was so tired of all the moaning from those teachers that I didn’t want to follow the course anymore. In the end I was just playing hooky the whole time. The head teacher spoke to me about it, and they sent me to the Project Foundation. Everything is going really well now, and I recently submitted a request to be allowed to return to the school. The people at Project Foundation think I am ready, so I may be back at the Bonaire School Community in January. I will attend the second grade of the vocational education course. I’m really happy that things have come so far and that both my parents are very proud of me. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire).

There are a lot of premature school leavers, with the result that children have no basic qualifications and their chances are small. (expert)

Failure is silent. The school generally makes no mention of truancy, because they are paid per student. (expert)

In 2008 the Compulsory Education Act came in force. The school attendance officer can now levy fines for truancy. (expert)
387. I've also heard about children who have simply been kept at home for years, or who have to look after a little brother or sister so stay at home and report sick. Nothing was ever done, until now. There is now an attendance officer who really does his best, but sometimes even he gets driven up the wall. (expert)

388. There is a care team at my school. Students with social and mental problems can go there, because lots of pupils play hooky because of their problems. The care team is really good. So is the dean. She tells you exactly how to handle things. (child, Bonaire)

389. The digital recording of pupil absenteeism by schools is now functioning as it should. (expert)

390. Sometimes I get homework. When I get it at the Project Foundation, I do it. When I get it at the Bonaire School Community I sometimes do it and sometimes don’t. If I don’t, I make up an excuse for the teacher, and say that I had to go to work or play soccer. I get no assistance with my homework, which is why my mom wanted to send me to the Netherlands, so I can get more help from school. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

391. The teacher gives a computer task and doesn’t ask if you have a computer at home. And if you don’t do your homework, you get punished. We've got a laptop at home but there are a lot of lines in the display. My brother dropped powder on the keyboard and now it doesn’t work properly. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

392. The group leaders at Kas di Karko help me with my homework. Otherwise I can get on with my homework quietly without problems. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

393. Parents can’t afford tutoring, and neither can they offer help themselves because they don’t have the time or they aren’t capable of doing so. (expert)

394. I like the working methods of the group leaders and the Project Foundation. They can explain things clearly and they do fun activities. There are times to do exercises, and times to talk as a group. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

395. I think the teachers at school are good. I don’t know what it’s like on the other islands, but the level suits me perfectly. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

396. All the teachers at school are friendly and I think that they teach us well. We have an equal number of Dutch and Antillean teachers. I like the fact that it is such a mixture! (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

397. I get on well with the teachers. If you’re a bit weak in certain subjects, you can now get extra lessons from the teachers. That is what I do. I like Biology, Health and Welfare, Papiamento and Dutch. English though... I’m not too good at it. I’m not too good at Spanish, either. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

398. Something I don’t like is that there is a teacher that hits us if we don’t listen to her. I recently said during an interview that I found it very annoying. She has since been spoken to about it and things have improved in the classroom. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

399. Things are going well at school. There are rules, but that’s okay, because there has to be discipline. And we also keep to the rules, so that’s a plus. There aren’t any children who don’t comply with the rules, or play hooky, etc. That doesn’t happen in my school. There aren’t any other problems. I feel good and I like going there. This year is the first year that I really get up in time so that I don’t arrive late. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

400. There is a big turnover of teachers. Teachers’ salaries were higher in the islands than in the Netherlands, and the classes are smaller (sixteen students per class), and there are working fewer hours (from half past seven to half past one). (expert)

401. We are confronted with the problem that teachers also have issues. So now I have two teacher trainers in school. They came to live on the island and are trying to train teachers about methods for handling children, something they don’t know about. (expert)

402. I think it is important that you look for people with whom you can run a school. It might sound bad, but you can’t find them among the Antilleans here at the moment, because they don’t know how education works in the Netherlands. How the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science Education functions or the demands of the inspectorate. (expert)
403. Things are 25 or 30 years behind here. Many teachers are still authoritative. They find it difficult to accept that children have rights. They also have difficulty in educating with respect. You must find the right balance. (expert)

404. Teachers and group leaders are trained in Triple P positive parenting, but it’s quite difficult for them. It’s either too strict or they have no control and set no limits. (expert)

405. I noticed that teachers came straight to the Bonaire School Community from the Netherlands, which led me to think, “you’ve heading for a fall”. Because they had a completely different attitude to the students. Much friendlier and so on. After six months, they were nervous wrecks. They couldn’t maintain control because those children aren’t used to being treated like that. They are used to strict rules, and the teacher telling them, “We’re going to do it like this”. (expert)

406. Education on Bonaire is downright bad. Unfriendly, incompetent teachers who don’t know how to deal with kids. (child, Bonaire)

407. I can cook a little bit myself. Now I am learning to cook at school. I want to specialize in it. Originally, I wanted to work at the port and guide the ships in and moor them. If Freewinds - a cruise ship - comes to Bonaire, then I’m going to moor it. Or other ships. Or be a mechanic. Those are the three things I want to do. Chef, mechanic or someone who moors ships. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

408. Besides anything else, I want to learn well. Preferably in Curacao but perhaps also in the Netherlands. I don’t exactly know what I want to be. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

409. At the moment it isn’t clear what I’m going to do when I finish school three years from now. Maybe I’ll live with my mom in Curacao for a while, or I might go to the Netherlands. Time will tell. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

410. I finished the lower general secondary education course last year and in August I’m going to start secondary professional education. At the moment I’m training to be a chef. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

411. Whatever else happens, I’m going to stay on Bonaire at least until I have completed this course. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

412. Next year I’m going to the Netherlands to continue my studies. I would like to study law in Den Bosch. There is no particular reason why I chose that school. I looked at all the different schools and then I thought: Den Bosch looks fun. I’ve stayed loyal to my first instinct. Soon I’m going to register so I can go to Netherlands in July with the scholarship students. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

413. I’m studying care and welfare in the third grade at the moment. Actually, I should be in the fourth grade, but because I had a bad report I remained in the third grade to repeat the year. I’d like to learn to be a hairdresser. I like combing hair. Do something fun with hair. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

414. I am focusing on school at the moment. Then, when I have my qualification, I can continue my studies in Curacao at the hairdresser training course. After a few years I’m going to work and then there will be a house and stuff. Then I’ll stay on Curaçao. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

415. When I finish school I want to go and work for my mom so I can help her. And then I want to work for the fire service. I’ve wanted to work for the fire service since I was small. Now when I think about my future, I think I’ll stay on Bonaire. I don’t want to leave my mom behind, so for now I will stay here. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

416. At the moment I don’t know if I’ll live on Bonaire forever, but the chances are high that I’ll never leave. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

417. When I finish school on Bonaire, I would like to continue studying in the Netherlands. I know what I want to be, but I haven’t decided yet if I’ll do a higher professional education course or go to university. I’m going to finish senior general secondary education here and then continue here with pre-university education. As long as I’m not fed up with it, otherwise I’ll have to do a higher professional education course. I want to specialize in Nature & Health and become a gynecologist. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

418. My current priority in life is to finish school. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)
Every year, about three hundred and fifty to four hundred young people go to the Netherlands to study. The failure rate of these young people is similar to that of Dutch youth. 20% come back, 80% of which are girls. (expert)

For students, the first step is the educational and professional markets. Then there is orientation for students towards colleges and universities in the Netherlands. The next step is supervision followed by internship. We see an internship as a way to introduce them to the labor market here and vice versa, which can help in getting a job. A second reason why we believe that training is so important is the documentation. There are a lot of jack-of-all-trades on the island, including myself. Time is limited, certain processes can be controlled but not executed, and this is where trainees could help. To determine how many families live in poverty, how many members such families comprise, what their situation is.

We try to make the transition from the Netherlands to Bonaire as smooth as possible, but it’s difficult because you’re dealing with things over which you have no control. (expert)

Employers often prefer a European Dutchman to somebody from here. We are trying to change these attitudes by stating that somebody here has added value because they can start working immediately. They don’t have to get used to things. If you contract somebody for three years, in the first year he must get used to things, in the second year he works, and in the third year he winds things down. (expert)

Most young people show a terrible lack of development. Even though, in terms of responsibilities, they have a very adult life at very young age, because all the women here became mothers at a very young age. (expert)

Employment is not a problem in itself, but if you want to offer jobs to lower skilled people there must be movement in the labor market, something that has actually always been ignored. We do this with our short courses department. We offer courses to adults who are already working but still want, or must have, additional training. (expert)

From January onwards, we can only deal with 18-plussers. When the social opportunity trajectory was a Dutch Antilles project known as social training duty [sociale vormingplicht], it was for 16 to 24 year olds. Sixteen and seventeen year olds are now stuck in no-man’s land. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science says, rightly, that they should go back to school, but they are often in situations with multiple problems. Young people in these situations don’t fit in school. (expert)

In practice, that is something which we do our best to coordinate with each other. Questions like, “Where does that adolescent belong?” or “What is the best place for him?” These are areas where FORMA and the Project Foundation do actually overlap a little. (expert)

I spoke with a girl who is now our class assistant. She’s going to study in the Netherlands. She wants to be a teacher. But she doesn’t indicate that she wants to return. She says there’s nothing to do on this island. It’s so boring for us. And until you are 25 or 30 years old, nobody wants that. You want to see things and go out. (expert)

There is actually a very small elite group. Looking at things objectively, then maybe there are two classes that go to study, while the rest remains on Bonaire. From the entire Bonaire School Community, maybe only 40 will go to the Netherlands. Only senior general secondary education and pre-university education. (expert)

I think that it is a positive development that more young graduates return to Bonaire. I see them back here. The first batch of students from the Bonaire School Community never returned. But now I see that young people go to the Netherlands to study, and that a large group comes back after a few years. (expert)

Young people who go to study in the Netherlands do not come back easily for a variety of reasons: partner, etc. More important, however, are the student loans that are difficult to pay back on Bonaire because the wages are so much lower. Write off their student loans! (expert)

Antilleans are afraid to apply because they worry that their Dutch isn’t good enough. (expert)

Creating the foundations takes a lot of time. Let people think by themselves on the island or get them to think along with others. Bottom up, not top down. Look for Antilleans that are suitable to come here. (expert)
Health

433. I like to play sports because it improves my condition, which is good for my health. (boy 12 years, Bonaire)

434. I’m never sick, but if I am sick then I have the flu. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

435. People here are sick here much more often than in the Netherlands, or so they think. They go to the doctor for everything. (expert)

436. There is a lot of obesity, partly because of the poor diet. (expert)

437. One time I had to get medicine from the doctor but in fact I’m never sick. I had to go to hospital once to have my arm seen to after I fell on a nail. I was helped immediately. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

438. In my opinion, the care provided by the general practitioner is good, but the care provided by the hospital is poor. I myself once had surgery at the hospital, and everything was very dirty and smelly. I was also a regular visitor to the lady with whom I was living, and I thought that the wards and the care were really bad. This should definitely be improved. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

439. I’m almost never sick, but last year I had a stomach infection which I couldn’t shake off. I went to the doctor and at first they didn’t know what it was. Then they gave me antibiotics, but that made it worse. Then they gave me another drug, fortunately, and that worked well, so now I’m completely better. I think that the doctor helped me a lot. I was never so sick that I had to go to the hospital, so I don’t know how well they look after you there. I do think that there’s always a foul smell in the hospital. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

440. If you are sick, you can visit the doctor. You have to make an appointment, because everybody else also makes appointments. If you are very ill, you may be given priority. But mostly they just see whoever arrived first. They get seen first. (Girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

441. For lots of things we have to go to Curacao because we don’t have our own medical specialists in Bonaire. In the hospital everything is old. In other countries, hospitals look really clean. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

442. On the BES islands, certain medications are no longer reimbursed since the system changed. Poor parents can’t afford it anymore. (expert)

443. Hospital care is sometimes a problem on Bonaire. (expert)

444. On the BES islands, healthcare insurance exists but is not available to those without documents. (expert)

445. Health care is well organized. The clinic provides vaccinations etc. The hospital has a new pediatrician. (expert)

446. If you’ve got an ID, you can go to the dentist. Before you had to pay for it, so nobody went. (expert)

447. You have to go to Curacao or Colombia for operations and treatments that are not available here. (expert)

448. There is a child psychiatrist who visits once a month, and is connected to the Mariadal Hospital. (expert)

449. There is a clinic, and parents regulate the health of their children themselves. (expert)

450. In terms of health care, we’ve made considerable progress. We don’t have to pay for it. (expert)

451. Medication is another problem for many young people. Parents say that it contains drugs and that they shouldn’t take it. There’s no continuity. (expert)

452. Now that Bonaire is a special municipality, healthcare is going to get much, much better. It is about material and that will be sorted out. (expert)

453. I notice in Rincon that there are children running around with rotten teeth. Something must be done about dental care. (expert)
454. There are three dentists on the island. They are good, but have a waiting list of six months. In the Netherlands there are annual dental checks that are reimbursed. Not here. (expert)

455. There is no child abuse pediatrician here. (expert)

456. Since 2010, everyone has had the right to visit a dentist. Healthcare works reasonably well. Doctors and specialists are being recruited. (expert)

457. At home, we eat very healthily. I eat fruits and vegetables every day. (boy, 12 years, Bonaire)

458. Every morning at half past ten at the Project Foundation we eat a sandwich and fruit together with the whole group. I always enjoy it! I don’t eat at home in the morning. (boy, 12 years, Bonaire)

459. At eight o’clock I have to go to bed. And at six o’clock in the morning I get up again. I have breakfast with cereal or bread and knackwurst. For school I get a peanut butter sandwich or ham and fruit. (girl, 8 years old, Bonaire)

460. On many islands, the kids get poor quality food. There’s a lot of junk food. (expert)

461. Many children come to school without having had breakfast. Others don’t take any lunch to school. Malnutrition is a fact, but so is poor nutrition where children are stuffed full with unhealthy things. It is noticeable that few children on Bonaire eat vegetables. (expert)

462. Eating disorders are a major problem, and can certainly be linked to low self-esteem and low self-confidence. Bulimia is indeed very common. (expert)

463. I think that nutrition education is very important, but at the same time you have to look at what can be done with a very limited budget. It’s all very well to chat about broccoli, but what if there isn’t any money? You have to look at the price of broccoli. You can’t afford that with your four hundred dollars, but what can you buy? What are the alternatives? I think that group deserves more attention. (expert)

464. I would like to see all the children provided with hot food at school lunchtime. That is what they get at the nursery. (expert)

465. When there is hot food, it’s usually rice with one slice of cucumber and a piece of chicken or fish if you’re lucky. That’s obviously very unhealthy if you get it every day. (expert)

466. I notice that children receive too much medicine “because they are always sick”. They just need decent food. Porridge every morning and a hot evening meal. Then they won’t be sick anymore. (expert)

467. Bread meals are distributed in schools because parents can’t afford bread for their children. (expert)

468. An apple here costs almost a dollar. Vegetables and fruit are either very expensive or not available at all. However, chicken and rice are easily available. Sometimes you see girls with premature breast development because of the hormones in the chicken. An unbalanced diet is not healthy but certainly cheap. (expert)

469. Sometimes I have a drink but I don’t go over the limit. It has to remain within limits. I don’t take drugs or smoke. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

470. Personally, I don’t drink. At my confirmation ceremony I drank a glass of wine. Sometimes I smoke. I smoke my grandfather’s half butts. I will never take drugs. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

471. I don’t take drugs. Sometimes when I go out I do drink alcohol, but I know my limits and I don’t go too far. I don’t want to go so far that I don’t know what I’m doing. I know a lot of people who take drugs, but I’ve never tried them myself. (Girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

472. Chronic drug users must be given specific support, which falls outside the scope of social training duty. Social training. They end up in youth shelters, juvenile detention or drugs rehabilitation. (expert)

473. Alcohol is widely consumed by young people. A couple of children with a supervision order and a problem with alcohol. They steal, get it from friends, hang out with the wrong friends. Another fifteen year old boy with a conviction hanging over his head. (expert)
474. We don’t have any problems with alcohol at school. Drugs are certainly present. That problem is less severe this year. You also see fewer dealers around the schools. (expert)

475. We don’t come across many problems with alcohol. I’m not sure why, maybe they just don’t like the taste. I don’t know. We’ve had boys in vocational training who were drunk, but those were merely incidents. (expert)

476. If we have school parties here, then there are bottles here and there, but nothing extreme. (expert)

Safety

477. I have actually witnessed fights, for example, in Nort di Salinja. They were drinking, and suddenly a fight started. That’s bad. It happens everywhere, but in Nort di Salinja it’s the worst. In Amboina, where I live, it’s quiet. People know each other and get on well together. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

478. Bonaire is quiet. You can sit somewhere quiet and chill. Not like Curacao where you have to watch your back the whole time because they can shoot you just like that as you walk past. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

479. I feel safe in Rincon. Even though I sometimes see drunk people on the street walking around or fighting over domino games because people are so drunk. They then throw bottles at each other or get their guns out. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

480. I never feel unsafe. I think that’s because people see my confident air and that stops them doing anything. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

481. I’m really against domestic violence and try to help those who are affected by it. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

482. A while ago there was a guy who was looking for a fight with me. I don’t know him at all and he doesn’t know me either, but for some reason he’s got something against me. I’m not afraid of him. During Regatta two weeks ago, he came looking for trouble with me the whole time. Fortunately I’m not very sensitive and can shrug it off. I’m not going in react because I can’t be bothered with all that stuff. I just walk away and do something else. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

483. Bonaire is very quiet. Aruba and Curacao are much more hectic. Here it is quiet after six o’clock. (expert)

484. This also affects another girl, who is seventeen years old. With older men, but it is sometimes unclear what the girl was up to. But we do feel that it is not a one-off event. (expert)

485. Crime has increased significantly in recent years. I heard that there have been a lot of street robberies in the past few months. That has changed. Previously you could walk on the street at night without problems. We slept with the doors open. I never locked the car. When I moved here, eighteen years ago, it was quiet. (expert)

486. I know there is a lot of crime on Bonaire, but fortunately it has never affected me. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

487. It hasn’t happened to me, but I’m afraid that they will break in during the evening and attack me. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

488. I’m not afraid when I walk down the street, but I don’t feel comfortable. In the evening I never go out alone on the street because I want to avoid anything happening to me. Once I was walking home from the Chinese restaurant and a car started following me with a couple of guys inside. These guys wanted me to get in and go with them, but I didn’t want to so I told them that I wouldn’t go with them. Then they said that they would drag me into the car and take me with them. Fortunately that didn’t happen in the end, and they drove off, but I felt unsafe at the time. (Girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

489. Safety on Bonaire is declining sharply. You can’t leave the car doors open anymore. You need alarms everywhere, at home and in shops. Otherwise they can break in. It didn’t use to be like this. I am definitely afraid. I don’t like going out on the streets alone anymore. Especially not around my neighborhood. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)
490. Many people go astray because there is hardly anything to do, so they go and make their own entertainment. Usually involving criminal things. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

491. A lot of my friends have let me know that their boyfriends mistreat them. When they tell me about these things, I normally go and talk to the guy and tell him that he shouldn’t hit. And if he carries on the same way, he’ll have problems with me. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

492. A lot of young people hang out on the street and come into contact with other young people. Then they think up something to do, and that is often something criminal. (expert)

493. Young people are always looking for more excitement. Something that can be provided by criminal activity. Young people come into contact with criminal behavior out of boredom. Especially guys who haven’t really been brought up properly at home and have more freedom than girls. (expert)

494. Young people are very involved in crime. Many young people we work with can’t wait for the things they want. They want that phone, and they want it now. (expert)

495. Young people don’t shoplift much, because there are lots of staff and social control. (expert)

496. If I was in charge, I’d make sure that there would be more things for children and young people to do to keep them off the streets and away from crime. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

497. This year there has been less bad behavior by young people. This is probably due to the HALT approach that was implemented a little while ago. This approach has organized sessions involving parents, the Guardianship Council, Youth and Morals [Jeugd en Zeden] etc. (expert)

498. Every neighborhood has its own police neighborhood director. (expert)

499. Until 1997, juvenile probation was part of adult probation and was not educational. On Saba and Statia, HALT has also been carrying this out for a year. On Bonaire, we can already see results. (expert)

500. There is no residential facility to deal with the hard core on Bonaire. They all have to go to the Netherlands or Curaçao, which takes a lot of time to organize. Children don’t see their families anymore, which clearly affects them. (expert)

501. The island is small and the government believes that investment in this type of institution isn’t necessary. It is precisely this type of institution that can solve a lot of problems in all kinds of areas. (expert)

502. One solution would be to open a residential facility on Bonaire. In other areas, things are going well on the island. There is now youth care, family supervision and the Guardianship Council. There is also efficient cooperation between these bodies and the prosecuting authority and the court, which allows young criminals to be dealt with quickly. (expert)

503. The HALT approach has been in use for a year. And those types of children and young people are reported immediately and immediate action taken. (expert)

504. We have included a pilot scheme with a children’s helpline in our program. We are going to start it up over the next two years. We think that it’s an excellent idea. (expert)

505. There should be more youth detention centers, more checks by police and more jobs. And more information and rehab clinics. (child, Bonaire)

Recreation, play and leisure time

506. At the weekend I spend all day playing Xbox. Or work on Saturday and then come back and go swimming in the evening. Play Monopoly. Go to work on Sunday as well, and then do the same again, play Xbox or Monopoly. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

507. In my free time I usually read books on the internet. There is a site which I always visit that has promos of books that I read. If I think the book is good, I ask my mom if she can buy it for me. If she can’t buy it, I call my father, and he buys it for me. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

508. I like going to the beach in my free time. I love swimming. I also like skipping and watching television. (girl, 8 years old, Bonaire)
509. In my spare time I rest, do my homework or go to yoga. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

510. The Kas di Karko group leaders usually decide what we do. And if there is an activity, you have to go along. It is actually fun. The whole group goes. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

511. I’m definitely not going on vacation. I’d like to, and I would visit Curacao. There is loads to do there. You can go shopping. There are lots of places to eat, such as KFC. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

512. Investments are concentrated on soccer, baseball and surfing. The latter is particularly popular with those with a high income. But there are also other sports, such as swimming and athletics, that deserve more attention. Bonaire has no official swimming pool for training and competitions. (expert)

513. There is a playground in Playa, and another in Terra Coror I believe. If you want to take the kids to a play area, then you have to drive there. This means that they are inaccessible for many children. (expert)

514. In every neighborhood there are community centers in beautiful buildings. Nothing wrong with them, but there is nothing there. People celebrate their birthdays in them. (expert)

515. You need to detect things early and do something about it. If young people could go to the community center after school, a lot of problems would be solved. (expert)

516. Sometimes activities are organized, but almost no one shows up. (child, Bonaire)

517. There is hardly anything to do for people my age on Bonaire. (Girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

518. I think there is little to do for children and youth on Bonaire. There should be more things to do so that young people don’t hang out on the streets and do bad thing. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

519. Many young people take a wrong turn because they have nothing to do. My brother is in prison because he committed a lot of burglaries. He started doing things like that because he didn’t have anything to do.’ (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

520. I think there should be more things for young people to do. I think it would be good if there was a cinema and a Gameland. There used to be, but eventually they closed down. I also think it would be good if there was a playground in every neighborhood. There are lots of young kids who roam the streets because they have nothing to do. They could play in the playground and stay out of mischief (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

521. There should be more things so that children and young people have something to do and don’t always have to entertain themselves, which often leads them the wrong way. (expert)

522. The island is nice for children until they are ten or twelve years old. Then I think it quickly becomes too small and boring. (expert)

523. Now they’re bored and looking for trouble. They want excitement. (expert)

524. If young people are hanging out under a tree and being annoying, you should be able to send them somewhere. At the moment that’s impossible and shifting them is a problem. (expert)

525. I went to Aruba once and there was plenty to do. The streets are busy. Not like here. A couple of cars on the streets. On Sunday there’s nothing to do. It is very quiet and calm, but there’s nothing to go and do. There are a few things though. But I’ve already seen it all. Windsurfing, drive around the island. I’m tired of driving around. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

526. There’s no investment in youth. There should be things to do, lots of them. There’s nothing for us to do. Lots of young people want to study abroad and never come back because Bonaire is boring. (Girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

527. On the BES islands there are few opportunities for children in terms of relaxation. There are a lot of volunteer organizations though. (expert)

528. The need is great but the supply is limited. The community centers, especially in the neighborhoods, are not attractive enough for the kids. (expert)
529. I think Young Bonaire offers good quality care to that target group. I think they have very inspirational programs for young people and that they have really continued to develop them in recent years. But there is obviously not enough capacity. (expert)

530. There’s almost nothing for the kids on this island. That’s another reason for the levels of crime. They behave annoyingly and get involved in nasty stuff. (expert)

531. There’s nothing on the island for young people. I started in the Centro di Bario eight years ago, and there was nothing there either. There is no money. They have been focusing on an Extended School in North Salina but it would be much better to invest in the neighborhoods. (expert)

532. There is a playground, but it’s in the center. Moms with small children don’t all go there because transportation is always a problem. (expert)

533. There’s no disco, no cinema, no skate park, nothing. (expert)

534. Young people can go to Young Bonaire, lots of students do. There’s a bus from Rincon which costs ninety dollars per year. (expert)

535. Neighborhood Centers close at five o’clock, and then there is nothing for young people to do. Only the Centro di Bario in Rincon remains open where you can play soccer and stuff. (expert)

536. These days lots of children now go to a Centro di Bario or homework supervision after school. (expert)

537. Young Bonaire is wonderful initiative for children over twelve years. Children in Bonaire don’t easily do things that they think they aren’t capable of. Young Bonaire encourages them to do so by taking them diving etc. (expert)

538. There is hardly any entertainment for teenagers on Bonaire. There is no movie theater, bowling alley or nightclub. There is a lot for small children to do. That is why we are so pleased with Young Bonaire. It is the only youth organization on the island which organizes activities for young people. (child, Bonaire)

539. I play soccer for the Uruguay team. It’s going well. This Friday we have to play again. I love soccer. They say that if you go to the Netherlands, you’ll become a professional. I’d love to be a professional. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

540. Every afternoon after I’ve eaten, I play softball, soccer or go fishing with my friends from the neighborhood. Usually we play softball because we all really like it. Sometimes I even play softball with the older men, and then I thrash them! (boy, aged 12, Bonaire)

541. Sometimes I go fishing with a friend of my mom at the weekends. That’s always fun! I think cycling is also great, I’d love to have a bicycle. I don’t care that it’s actually too hot for cycling! (boy, aged 12, Bonaire)

542. My hobbies are dancing, swimming, singing, hanging out with my friends and kickboxing. I go to kickbox training every week. And my idol is Nicky Minaj. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

543. We are going to begin after school sports and games. It will be organized by a sports teacher. (expert)

544. There are sports clubs where they can play soccer and softball. But there are also children who might not want that and would rather do other things. (expert)

545. Late last year that there was a fight between two villages outside the school. It always happens at the weekend and is usually about soccer. That has to be fought out. (expert)

546. You can do all kinds of activities here; sailing, tennis, swimming, soccer, baseball, ballet, music, you name it. But it all costs money. And you need transportation because it’s spread over the island. One child can do that, the other can’t. That doesn’t help create a balanced society. (expert)

547. I have one friend who lives with me in the same neighborhood. Sometimes I go over to her house and then we talk about all sorts of things. My friend’s mom won’t let me go anywhere with them
because she's afraid I'll cause problems, and that my friend will also get into trouble. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

548. I usually sit somewhere and talk with friends in my free time, or I go home and clean. (Girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

549. Otherwise I often chat with my friends or I watch television. Once I went to a chat site for teens and I made two friends there. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

550. After school me and my friends wait together under the tree for the bus. Apart from that, I don’t play with my friends. (girl, 8 years old, Bonaire)

551. I don’t go out with friends yet. We’re going to try it out soon. It depends on how I behave. It has to be one step at a time. If it’s arranged in advance, a friend is allowed to visit me in Kas di Karko. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

552. In my free time I usually ride my bike with friends or play soccer. If I’m free in the afternoon, I sometimes go on my bike to visit my father who lives in another neighborhood. My mom never goes with me because she doesn’t like it. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

553. In my free time I usually chat, watch TV or talk with friends outside. On Friday and Saturday I visit my brother in the jail. We can see him for forty five minutes. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

554. Sometimes I go out at the weekend. Usually I go to town. I don’t go out that often as I only go to town if I really feel like it. In the city there’s nothing to do either. Sometimes there are parties, but five parties are planned on the same night and then there is nothing for months. That’s a shame, because the young people just get bored again. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

555. We do have sports activities, but young people also have a habit of sitting around. Under the tree. (expert)

556. We tried it out during the time we worked at the Bonaire School Community. We allowed young people to set up their own place where male and female friends could meet each other and make music. They didn’t need to go to the disco or the town. Yet it turned out that they would rather wander around the town here than go there. So it is difficult to find out what they really want. (expert)

557. The only time a child goes to a disco is when we hold one here at school. (expert)

558. Recreation is not a priority for politicians. (expert)

559. I think it’s the government’s duty to ensure that children have something to do. That there are soccer pitches and places to hang out. It is important that they have their own place to go to. (expert)

560. As far as cultural policy for children goes, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science says they can’t do anything because it is a municipal responsibility. However, every municipality has a need for national support. The BES islands are in danger of falling through the cracks. (expert)

561. Because cultural policy is being subject to so many funding cuts across the Netherlands, everybody’s queuing up at the national funds and national state funds. You’ve got more chances if you can show your face, but that is of course impossible for organizations on Bonaire. Fundraising from the islands is often very difficult. (expert)

562. I’d like to be able to go to a water park at the weekend. Or events such as bike races, car races, paintball or soccer competitions. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

563. Sometimes I go out at the weekends, but even in the evening there’s rarely anything to do. It would be great if there were more things to do for people of my age. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

564. I think that there is little to do for children and youth on Bonaire. There should be more things to do so that young people don’t hang around on the street and make trouble. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

565. It would be nice if there was a zoo and a traffic garden on Bonaire. Curacao has got both, and I like going there. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)
I think there should be more things for young people to do. I think it would be good if there was a cinema and a Gameland. There used to be, but eventually they closed down. I also think it would be good if there was a playground in every neighborhood. There are lots of young kids who roam the streets because they have nothing to do. They could play in the playground and stay out of mischief. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

Bonaire doesn’t have a park. I know that Bonaire is small, but that doesn’t mean that they can’t build a park. There should also be more places to play sports. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

In my opinion, there should be more activities for young people on the island. Not only outside school, but via school. (expert)

There is a lack of after-school activities for children. (expert)

There is no park where you can meet up. (expert)

For young people, it would be great if you could play billiards, ping pong and that sort of thing in the evening. If you had a good supervisor in every community center, it could have a preventive effect. (expert)

If every Centro di Bario was equipped with a table tennis table and a playground, it would be a major step forward. (expert)

There are too few recreational facilities for young people. There is a park near here and another in Rincón, and that’s it. More infrastructure is needed. A place to play football, basketball and other activities. (expert)

Participation

The people involved in politics don’t ask anything. They just have to make Bonaire better. And implement all the activities for the kids that we have been talking about. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

At home, my mom doesn’t ask anything. Although I can decide which clothes I want to wear. She washes my clothes and folds them up. I am a bit lazy, that’s why. Sometimes I wash them myself and hang them up too. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

I think that besides these organizations, there are no opportunities for a child to make a contribution. Even if you have problems, there is no organization where you can go for help. This is something that needs to be changed. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

Bonaire Youth Outreach is very positive. It spends time raising awareness of young people about risks through films such as 'Nayza', which raises awareness of young people about AIDS. And they are working on a play about ‘ghetto life’ and how not to be part of it. A lot of people are members. The Bonaire Youth Outreach Foundation has a page on Facebook where you can see how many of us there are. We do everything ourselves. We, all young people, write the script, do the filming and editing and even have roles in the movie. This is different to other organizations where they take ideas from young people to make a film themselves, and then say it was made by young people when in fact the young people weren’t allowed to do anything. With us, we do it all ourselves. We can also give our own opinion. There are regular club meetings where we can give our opinion and input. We want to take the film abroad to Aruba, Curacao etc. But the film is in Papiamento, so it can’t really be promoted internationally. So we’ll keep if for ourselves, for the Antilleans. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

We sometimes discuss political issues within the club. For example, when some Dutch MPs were recently on Bonaire, we first held a club meeting where we all put ideas and questions forward that we could then present to them. One of our club members, Moniek, then represented the club. (girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

Emotions are not discussed on the islands. Children are not asked about what is actually going on. (expert)

Children cannot participate. They are not self-reliant or independent. (expert)

Because many children themselves are underdeveloped, they will never dare to participate. Girls are more concerned with superficial things, and so in fact are boys. At home, they are expected to have
582. Young people are not encouraged socially, and at home they have to take on a supporting role instead of being stimulated to develop their personalities. (expert)

583. Participation at home is particularly difficult because it requires parents to be motivated first. People are more concerned with the development of the island in comparison to the Netherlands than with listening to children’s opinions. (expert)

584. We are also working on setting up a student council. It will give the students a voice in the school. I think that it is essential that they can participate in decisions about their own school. (expert)

585. Children are very eager to learn. They want to know about things. However, until recently they were always kept a little ignorant, with people saying things like, “Well, they can’t do that anyway”. Now the tide is beginning to turn. (expert)

586. We would like to form a proper youth advisory board with the Antillean Youth Care Federation (FAJ). However, permanent and good governance is needed first. There is a group leader now. It’s not yet clear how the youth advisory board will function. The Antillean Youth Care Federation hasn’t acted for years. What is clear is that an advisory board is needed, with the idea of giving young people a voice. At the moment they’re not involved in anything. Eventually, they’re going to have to sit down with the governor. Young people’s opinions are also not taken into account in schools at the moment. (expert)

587. There is a Children’s Rights Day, when a march is held with lanterns, but they really don’t know anything about children’s rights. It would be a good idea if schools gave lessons in children’s rights. (expert)

588. The youth is not encouraged enough to be involved in anything here. Talk to them, find out what they want! (expert)

589. Children would like to be more involved in government policy. With debates, for example, so we can give our opinions on various topics. Because our opinions are usually considered irrelevant. (child, Bonaire)

590. Youth organizations must make much more effort to involve young people. (child, Bonaire)

591. We really want to be involved in solving the problems on the island. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

592. We could, for example, start a petition or protest at violations of children’s rights. In other words, organize a protest march. (child, Bonaire)

593. I think that youth organizations should demand more attention and should pay more attention. Because we know what is going on with young people, and if you cooperate and consult with young people, you can make real progress. (child, Bonaire)

594. There are few organizations that I know of that deal with the problems of children and youth. There are teachers at school, however, who you can go to if you have problems. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

595. The only way to change the education system is to begin protest actions. Or go to the director. But if you do that, he’ll send you to the coordinator. But the coordinator does nothing, and you end up back at the director. (child, Bonaire)

596. It is important that a student council is set up in every school, but I don’t know if this is realistic. Our opinion doesn’t matter. Even when we are asked for our opinions, the teachers always win. Their opinions carry more weight than ours. (child, Bonaire)

Housing conditions

597. I live with my mom and her partner in quite a big house. I’ve got my own bedroom. I’ve had my own bedroom since I was little. (boy, aged 12, Bonaire)

598. Our house has two bedrooms. My mom and stepfather sleep in one room, and I sleep in the other with my grandma, grandpa and three brothers. I sleep with my youngest brother on one bed, and I sleep really well, for sure. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)
599. I think that my house is too small. I wish it was a bit bigger, with a larger living room and four bedrooms. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

600. I lived in Rincón for a about a year with a lady I have long known for a long time. She was really happy that I was there, and I really liked living with her, but a few months before I left her granddaughter from the Netherlands came to live with her. From then on things went downhill fast. I thought that the granddaughter treated her grandmother very badly and I spoke about it with her. She got very angry, and we had an argument that got really out of hand. We fought with each other. I felt really sorry for the lady because she had been so kind in offering me a home, and then suddenly everything went wrong. After the argument I apologized to the lady and then decided that I would leave to avoid aggravating the situation. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

601. I went to the Guardianship Council and told them about everything that had happened, and that I needed somewhere to live because I had no place to go. The Guardianship Council then found me a place in Kas di Karko. Because the Guardianship Council didn’t remove me from my home, the rules that apply to me are completely different to the rules for children that are there because they have been taken away from home. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

602. Soon I’ll be eighteen and I won’t be able to stay there anymore, so the idea is that I’m going to look for work so that I can rent a little apartment. My mom lives in Curacao, so I can’t really go and stay there. My father lives here, but we don’t get on well enough to live together. (girl, 17 years, Bonaire)

603. I sleep in quite a big room with my two sisters. We all have our own bed and our own wardrobe. My mom and her partner sleep in the other bedroom. Sometimes when I have to do homework it’s annoying that I have to share a room with my two younger sisters because they just want to play and I can’t concentrate properly. Usually they do stay quiet when I ask them to be, and then I can finish my homework. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

604. I live in the Kas di Karko guesthouse at the moment. My brothers, my mom and my father live at home. I’m the only one in the family who lives in Kas di Karko. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

605. They suddenly told me that I was going to Kas di Karko. My reaction was, “Why are they sending me there?” I started crying because I didn’t want to go there. It was a step into the unknown for me. They did explain to me why they thought I should go there. Now I understand it, and it’s better than being at home. But I’d still like to return home. They took me away from home because of my behavior. I didn’t get on with my father. We always had problems with each other. Well, he had problems with me because I behaved so badly, which made him very strict and aggressive and then he would hit me. Now I think that it’s good for me to be here. Except for the rules, I think they’re too strict. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

606. Where I used to live, I didn’t get much attention or love. I do in the Kas di Karko shelter, though. And where I used to live there wasn’t enough food for everyone. There is at Kas di Karko. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

607. In my room there is a computer table, a chair, a bed and a wardrobe. I miss my laptop. At home I have one, but they don’t want me to take it away. In Kas di Karko there is a computer that everyone can use. Everyone gets just one hour, which I don’t like. For example, when I’m on MSN chatting to someone, I want to carry on chatting, but I can’t because it’s someone else’s turn. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

608. I live in a three bedroom house in a nice neighborhood. I live with my mom, my younger brother and two younger sisters. My mom has a separate bedroom. I sleep with my brother in one room and my two sisters sleep in the other. My dad doesn’t live with us, but I get on well with him. He lives in Hato and I see him regularly. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

609. Even though I have to share a room with my brother, I’ve got plenty of space and quiet to do my homework after school because he goes to Young Bonaire after school activities. My sisters go to Skol di Bario after school and my mom picks them up on her way home from work. That means I’m often alone at home in the afternoon. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

610. Poverty. Awful slums. No sanitation. The conditions in some neighborhoods in Bonaire are really bad. (expert)
611. Poverty and housing are major problems. The girl that I just mentioned lives in a house with her two children, her mom and three or four sisters. It is a small place with two bedrooms. (expert)

612. There really should be affordable housing for people in need. I am dealing with a family with six children, and it’s really distressing to see how those people live. (expert)

613. We have been very active with the housing association in fighting for affordable housing. We have helped to create a position on housing. We are fighting for a minimum income level. (expert)

614. Living in a small home doesn’t necessarily mean that a child can’t develop properly. It’s the mentality of poverty that keeps things as they are. Children have to help so that bills can be paid. They have to look after their little brothers and sisters and keep the household going. That’s the priority, not school. The majority of the inhabitants of the island are not affected in this way, but it’s a persistent problem. (expert)

615. Too many people in small spaces results in incest and drug abuse, and basically they live here as if it was the 1950s. (expert)

616. Only eight percent of the houses are owned by the housing corporation. 92% of the houses here are in private hands: investors, people that have a house here but live and work in the Netherlands. Rental prices are therefore too high, and much higher than they actually should be. (expert)

617. Starter homes are needed for young people. Homes that are affordable, also for teenagers who unexpectedly become pregnant and their partners. (expert)

618. The rental prices are very high. Fortunately, 60% of the population own a home, but the others do not. The latter have to pay high rents. And when parents are stressed, so are their children. (expert)

619. There is a long waiting list for social housing. And the housing association is nearly bankrupt, so it must also now raise rents if it is to continue. There is no housing benefit. There is a scheme for housing benefit, but the island is supposed to make a contribution. However, the island doesn’t have enough money for housing benefit. This leaves the housing association with a problem. (expert)

620. I can see this affecting our teenage moms. There isn’t any low-cost housing. So they have to stay at home in a family with a mom and father. Then you’re in a very vulnerable position as a teenage mother. Sometimes there are other people living in the same home, and they all have an opinion about your child. They all have an opinion about you. Maybe you want to educate or treat your child differently. (expert)

621. It’s often impossible to do homework. (expert)

Financial situation
622. We’ve got enough money at home. I get almost everything I want from my mom, and there is food on the table every day. If I don’t feel like eating my mom’s food, I ask her for money so I can get something from the Chinese. The Chinese is nearby, so I often go there to get a takeaway. (boy, aged 12, Bonaire)

623. Clothes are cheap on Curacao. Shoes, bags and school supplies are also much cheaper than on Bonaire. Here you can pay 20 dollars for a bag, and after a week it’s broken. There aren’t many clothes for sale here anyway, so anything you buy is already being worn by everybody else. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

624. Another expensive thing on Bonaire is food. I don’t think food should be expensive, bread especially. Bread should be made free and available to everybody. There are people who have nothing, they should be given free bread. I don’t think that there are people on Bonaire without any food at all. (girl, 13 years, Bonaire)

625. Both my mom and her partner work, so we have enough money to buy food. My mom usually cooks lunch for us, if she doesn’t she makes sure that she gets food for us. In the morning and evening we eat bread. Sometimes my mom’s partner cooks for us in the evening. That is always really tasty because he comes from Santo Domingo so he cooks very differently to my mom. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)
626. My mom can buy us everything we need. But sometimes when I ask her if I can have some new clothes she says I can’t because I already have enough things. And sometimes when I ask her if she wants to buy a book for me, she says she’d rather spend the money on food. If my mom can’t buy something for me, then I always call my father and he pays for it. My mom isn’t always happy about it because she says that I can’t have something and then my dad buys it for me. (girl, 15 years, Bonaire)

627. I help with sweeping up at my mom’s restaurant, and I get paid ten dollars. I put the money I earn into my piggy bank. (girl, 8 years old, Bonaire)

628. We don’t get any pocket money at Kas di Karko. But I work myself. I clean the RCN offices once a week. I work from Monday to Friday, two hours per night. I get paid once a fortnight. I hand over the money I earn to the group leaders and they look after it for me. When I need money for something, I can ask them for it. But sometimes they say that it’s not possible because I have to save and can’t spend it all at once. Sometimes they give me a hard time before I get the money because they don’t agree with what I want to spend it on. My mom doesn’t give me money regularly, but when I really need it I can ask her. To buy clothes, for instance. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

629. Actually I don’t save any money. The group leaders keep my money so that I don’t just spend it all in one go. I spend it on others or buy a cool piece of clothing if I come across something I like. I also use the money to buy my own toiletry. In the house there are already lots of things such as deodorant, shower gel and toothpaste. School supplies are also provided. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

630. My mom works very hard to give all of her children food to eat and to give us everything we need. If I need something, my mom is able to buy it for me. (boy, 15 years, Bonaire)

631. My mom works three half days. There is food at home every day. My mom cooks at lunchtime and in the evening we eat bread. If I need anything I always get it. My father spoils me because I’m the only girl in the family, I actually get everything I want from him. When I ask my mom for something, and she says that I can’t have it, I ask my dad and I always get it. I am very aware of what I get out of my mom and what I can get out of my father. That is useful, because I can always get what I want. (girl, 16 years, Bonaire)

632. Money has become tight for most people because of the use of dollars. It doesn’t affect me because I don’t have any money. If you convert the prices into guilders, you think, well, that is expensive now! That’s when my mom says ‘VIKTORIA’. I notice that my mom can’t buy as many luxury things. We have to pay our monthly expenses, so we can’t go shopping all the time. My mom says we should establish priorities in life. (Girl, 14 years, Bonaire)

633. There is no child benefit in the Antilles. This leads to inequality relative to the Netherlands. (expert)

634. There is a foundation called FESBO, which is trying to organize various things. For example, parents with low wages could get school supplies and uniforms. But this year they had no money. (expert)

635. Sometimes it’s very difficult to help people when they don’t even have the most basic things. If you’re hungry, you’re not going to be interested in sitting down and listening to people chatting. If you can sort the hunger out, things are much easier. (expert)

636. We had to rely on funding for years. Take the Antillean Co-financing Foundation (AMFO) for example. You got money from them if you did something related to poverty reduction. Our foundation took the educational and professional market under its wings. We set up a student circle. We realize you have to start at the roots. You have to start here straight away if you want the students to come back. The first step in that circle is the academic and professional market. We received funding on four occasions from the Antillean Co-financing Foundation, but the Antillean Co-financing Foundation has since stopped because the BES islands are now part of the Netherlands. So we must now operate with the regular budget. We made a request in good time, and then we were told, “Go to the school because they get a lump sum and also offer career advice.” That is what we did. Fortunately, they agreed to our request to outsource. This means we can continue in our work with the educational and professional markets. I mean that structural solutions are necessary. Before solutions come, progress must be made until a certain level is reached, in all areas. (expert)

637. Bonaire has been neglected for years and they know it. You need to draw up a program that includes the fight against poverty. Nobody claims that it’s going to be sorted out in a few months, but you have to set up a program to give children what they deserve in terms of living standards. One part of this is child benefit. They say that having children allows tax deductions to be made, but
the people that need it most don’t benefit from this because they are under the tax threshold. (expert)

638. What also really bothers me is that the real situation here hasn’t been used as a basis for determining benefits, the minimum wage or disability insurance. In the Netherlands, the minimum income level has been established. Other provisions are determined on the basis of this minimum income level: old-age pension, minimum wage and benefits. Benefits are then calculated as a percentage of the minimum wage, and there is something to work with. This has not happened here. Here they increased the amount that existed by a certain percentage. People cannot survive on the money. In addition, it doesn’t take into account the shift from direct to indirect taxation. This means that purchasing power is declining. What’s the point in first giving an increase and then taking it back again? It’s not fair. Bonaire doesn’t get a fair chance, and neither do Saba or St. Eustatius. (expert)

639. The main problems are poverty and discrimination. A child doesn’t ask to be born. When a child is born, it already suffers from inequality. The child of a rich father has more opportunities than the child of a poor father. That difference must be eliminated. I have been arguing for years that almory, and child benefits, should not be dependent on personal circumstances. At the moment, the mom has to ask for almory. I want to reverse this, I want it to be set up so that the father is automatically forced to pay. Your child was born, and you have to look after it. If the father, for instance, says I can only pay one hundred dollars, then he should have to go to the tax office with his documents to explain why. That is why a minimum income level is important. What he cannot pay, should be made up by the government. You can do this in the form of child benefit. You get child benefit if you need it. I can’t see why that is so difficult to set up. It is true that fathers often threaten or appease moms, along the lines of, “If you’re not going to the Guardianship Council then I’ll take care of this and that”. Then nothing is registered, and you have no legal rights. Something must be done about this, to increase the responsibility of parents. (expert)

640. There was never any money. If you wanted to do anything you had to go to a fund. I used to be in a group that drew up funding projects. Well, it was a disaster. You should have seen how often it got sent back. You were often too late when drawing up a project, the horse was already half way out of the stable and then they kept you hanging on. There was also no guarantee that anything would be approved.

641. Many parents don’t have enough money. With the adoption of the dollar, things have worsened. (expert)

642. Shortage of money is a constant problem. Much child care is not subsidized. Parents pay $ 112 per month for a half day including food, or $ 202 for a whole day. (expert)

643. Children of parents who can’t afford it stay at home with their grandfathers or grandmothers, but I always make exceptions and let some attend without paying anything. (expert)

644. Poverty, there is terrible poverty. They hide it, they are all so ashamed. (expert)

645. Everything depends on income. The least that they have to pay is $ 10 every six months and the maximum is $ 85 per six months, if you earn more than $ 3,000 per month. I think that is pretty reasonable. (expert)

646. Secondly, water here is incredibly expensive. You need to think about every little bit that you use. It runs into hundreds of dollars. Electricity is fairly easy to economize, I don’t think that’s the case with water. (expert)

647. The only thing you see is that everybody has got a BlackBerry. Appearance is everything here. (expert)

648. Inflation and adoption of the dollar have definitely made things worse. (expert)

649. A lot of Bonaireans didn’t pay any tax for four or five years. In March, the authorities took action and police controls were put in place. If you had two fines, your car was impounded. They’re not used to that here. Because they recognize the Netherlands in it. Pay taxes, to be sure, but don’t expect anything back, that is how it’s seen here. (expert)

650. It’s all very minimal though, including the benefits that people have to live off. Sometimes, when people come in, you can smell that they haven’t eaten anything in a long time. Especially at the end of the month. Then I ask, “How are you, have you had anything to eat today, when was the last time
651. The women who come here all work as prostitutes in the evening. Or have sex in exchange for things, going from man to man, simply to have something to eat. I don’t think that is living, it is merely surviving. I think that they aren’t conscious of this in the Netherlands simply because it isn’t expressed in numbers. Everything must be investigated and quantified. It is very difficult to shine daylight on what is going on here. I know what is happening because I see them on the streets at night, but nobody talks about it. (expert)

652. People on minimum benefits can only survive if they can earn some money or if their families help them. People on benefits can earn up to the minimum wage. (expert)

653. There are some groups who are unable to earn any money and who receive no support from their families, including many single moms. Sometimes the father doesn’t pay any alimony, either. (expert)

654. People on minimum benefits often go and stay with family, which results in lots of people living in a confined space. (expert)

655. There are relatively few people on benefits on the islands. People prefer not to ask for benefits and survive through earning money, or depend on help from family and friends. In that respect, there is a positive attitude. (expert)

656. The core of the problem is actually the low minimum wage. Many people in work struggle to make ends meet. They often have multiple jobs. (expert)

657. No poverty line has been established for the Caribbean Netherlands. In the European Netherlands, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) has defined a low income threshold. (expert)

658. There is no housing benefit system on the islands. Although there is social housing, there is a shortage of low-rent housing. On Bonaire and St. Eustatius, social housing tenants pay up to a third of their income on rent. (expert)

659. Participation in sports and recreational activities is often free, and doesn’t really constitute a problem for people with low incomes. (expert)

660. Public bodies are responsible for combating poverty, but so far they have done little. The social services and public bodies should coordinate better with each other. (expert)

661. There is a new subsidy system for public bodies for integrating policies. (expert)

662. People don’t talk about financial problems out of pride and shame. As a result, poverty remains almost invisible. (expert)

663. The State Representative, Wilbert Stolte, recently sounded the alarm. He estimated that half of the population has financial problems. (expert)

664. A group leader earns $1100 a month here. The rent is $500. She has a loan of $180. She has a baby, so they have to buy diapers and milk. They are left with about $200 to live on. That’s peanuts, because everything is really expensive. That is pure poverty. (expert)

665. Parents and children often have bad spending patterns, and allow themselves to buy stuff like soda and snacks. Many people get their wages in an envelope at the end of the month. They don’t deposit it in the bank, but go straight to the snack-bar to eat something and then run out of cash before the end of the month. (expert)

666. I do understand that people can do the strangest things to get money. (expert)

667. It is ridiculous that the inhabitants of the BES islands don’t get child benefit. I think that it’s really unfair. (expert)

668. The biggest mistake that the Netherlands makes, and everyone makes, is that they look at how things operate in the Netherlands, and then transfer it to the islands without taking into account the culture of these islands. They have been repeating this mistake since 10-10-2010, over and over again. (young person)
Appendix 2 – Consulted experts

The experts listed below were consulted in the period from early 2010 to early 2013. Lengthy conversations were held with many of these experts, while others were consulted intensively via email, and yet others offered their contributions at an expert meeting, or read and commented on texts. With a few individuals the written or oral contact was brief.

The experts are listed here in alphabetical order without (academic) title, indicating the position they held at the time of the consultation.

Despite making every effort to compile a full and complete list, we cannot rule out any accidental omissions. We offer our sincere apologies to anyone omitted.

Marnix Arendshorst – acting director, Stichting Overlegorgaan Caribische Nederlanders (OCaN).
Marom Ayoubi – director, Stichting Overlegorgaan Caribische Nederlanders (OCaN).
Inge Berben – director, Fundashon FORMA - Bonaire.
Jamila Berkel – teacher supervisor, Sacred Heart School - Saba.
Camelia Berkel-Dembrook – director, Expertisecentrum Onderwijs Zorg (EOZ) - St. Eustatius.
Justine Beumer-Gonggrijp – public prosecution officer - Bonaire.
Joka Blaauw – director, Saba Health Care Foundation - Saba.
Michiel Boekent – director, Saba Comprehensive School - Saba.
Wilma Böhm – director, Basissschool De Pelikaan - Bonaire.
Huub Bouwen – head of unit SZW BES-islands.
Maryse Broek – education expert, Sardes.
Irene Broekhuijze – chairperson, Jongeren van het Koninkrijk.
Jos de Bruin – co-worker, National ombudsman.
Ilona Burgers – manager, Stichting Jeugdwerk Jong Bonaire - Bonaire.
Carl Burncamper – health expert - Saba.
Elka Charles-Simmons – elementary school teacher, Sacred Heart School - Saba.
Pieter de Coninck – project secretary, Caribbean Netherlands directorate International Affairs, Ministry of VWS.
Denise Crexstian-Coffie – manager, Woondiensten Fundashon Cas Boneriano (FCB).
Nienke Deelstra – school coach PO-council - St. Eustatius.
Angela Dekker – managing adviser USONA - St. Maarten.
Hans Derks – project leader, supporting Publich healthcare /GHOR Caribbean Netherlands.
Melissa Diaz – consultant MUNDIAZ Health Support and GGD Den Haag.
Liënnie Domacassé – co-worker, Stichting Project - Bonaire.
Marga Drewes – quartermaster Youth Care, Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland - Bonaire.
Chelendra Elizabeth – family counsellor, Stichting Project - Bonaire.
Celia Fernandez Pedra – chairperson, Ban Boneiru Bèk - Bonaire.
Alida Francis – communication adviser and acting head of Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland - Saba.
Yazir Francistela – board member MAAPP, movement to promote Antillean and Aruban participation.
Chris Frais – vice-chairperson and secretary, OCaN.
Curvin George – researcher, Voogdijraad BES - Bonaire.
Suzy Guido – assistant project leader Child Focus Foundation - Saba.
Stan van Haaren – senior advisor, Nederlands Jeugdinstuut (NJII).
Mystica Hassell – social worker, EduPartners - St. Eustatius.
Jet van Heijnsbergen – director, Expertisecentrum Onderwijs Zorg (EOZ) - Saba.
Gene Herbert – social worker, EduPartners - St. Eustatius.
Rosa Hoes – director, Samenleving en Zorg Openbaar Lichaam Bonaire (OLB) - Bonaire.
John van 't Hoff – director, Scholen Gemeenschap Bonaire (SGB) - Bonaire.
Dion Humphreys – founder, MegaD Youth Foundation - St. Eustatius.
Carol Jack-Roosberg – head of public health service (GGD) - St. Eustatius.
Leen de Jong – director, Gwendolyne van Puttenschool - St. Eustatius.
Judith Keller – consultant, CoMensha.
Helga Kessels – deputy director, Woningstichting Aert Swaens.
Marielle Knol – director, Mobiliteit in Muziek.
Lidy Kooij – school coach secondary education - Bonaire.
Gijs Koot – head of Public Health, A.M. Edwards Medical Center - Saba.
Sabine Kroon – policy officer, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.
Raymond Labad - chairperson MAAPP, movement to promote Antillean and Aruban participation.
Jiehua He Labad – youth member MAAPP, movement to promote Antillean and Aruban participation.
Fleur Lagcher - OCW/RCN, Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland.
Vivian de Lanoy – researcher, youth healthcare on BES islands.
Sophie Leenders – co-worker Ministry of Security and Justice.
Ton Liefaard – professor of children’s rights, faculty of law, Leiden University (UNICEF endowed chair).
Dwayne Lindo – brigadier, St. Eustatius police force - St. Eustatius.
Martijn Linnartz – member of the legal committee Stichting Overlegorgaan Caribische Nederlanders (OCaN).
Freek Mekking – project advisor Oranjefonds.
Shanna Mercera-Gibbs – nurse, aids-coordinator Public Health Department - St. Eustatius.
Myra ter Meulen – advisor youth policy.
Ambrosio Molina – project leader Improvement program PO OCW/RCN, Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland.
Ron Oei – founder tenants’ association St. Eustatius Housing Fund (SHF) - St. Eustatius.
Rogier Oet – co-worker, Children’s Ombudsman.
Cynthia Ortega-Martijn – member of House of Representatives, Christen Unie party.
Martha Padmos – co-worker, Ministry of Security and Justice.
Esmeralda Pietersz – head of Fundashon Jiwiri, learning and play school - Bonaire.
Geert van der Plas – education expert - Bonaire.
Brenda van Putten – teacher and education expert, Governor de Graafspoon - St. Eustatius.
Solange Quandus – policy officer, Stichting Overlegorgaan Caribische Nederlanders (OCaN).
René Reehuis – head of education, EduPartners - St. Eustatius.
Kim te Riele – physiotherapist and secretary Saba United Sports Federation - Saba.
José Rosales – acting head of Bonaire police force - Bonaire.
Chaya Sampatsing - coordinator BES-affairs for public health, Ministry of VWS.
Mick Schmit – director, chairperson Stichting Project and FORSA; FAJ-circle Bonaire - Bonaire.
Herman Schnitzler - orthopedagogist - Bonaire.
Wim Schutten – project leader Child Focus Foundation - Saba.
Riet Seally-Clappers – director, Center for Youth and Family - Bonaire.
Brenda Simmons – coordinator, family guardianship Bonaire - Bonaire.
Anastacia Simmons – researcher, Guardianship Council Saba - Saba.
Tessa Smets – co-worker, Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland.
Glennville Smith - commissioner Statia – Portfolio Youth Government - St. Eustatius.
Aaron Soares - assistant project leader, Child Focus Foundation - Saba.
Derek Spence – physical education teacher, Saba Comprehensive School - Saba.
Iris Sporken – teacher, homework supervisor, Governor de Graaf School; Mega D Foundation - St. Eustatius.
Izalina Tavares – policy officer children’s rights, Ministry of VWS.
Bas Tierolf - senior researcher, Verwey-Jonker Instituut.
Leo Tigges - liaison for Caribbean Netherlands, Ministry of Security and Justice.
Mariette van der Tol – student, Utrecht University.
Michelle Verplanke – acting unit manager, Immigration and Naturalisation Service, Caribbean Netherlands.
Justine Verschoor – director, youth care and family guardianship, Caribbean Netherlands - Bonaire.
Elton Villarreal – board member MAAPP, movement to promote Antillean and Aruban participation.
Thijs Voncken – team leader real estate, Woonlinie.
Sandra Voorneman – coordinator, youth care and family guardianship, Centre for Youth and Family (CJG) - St. Eustatius.
Atie Vrij – policy advisor, youth justic policy department, Ministry of Security and Justice.
Gilbert Wawoe – chairperson, Begeleidingscommissie Onderwijs en Jongeren Samenwerkingsprogramma.
Henk Weekers – coordinator, Center for Youth and Family (CJG) - Saba.
Diana Wilson – director, Sacred Heart School - Saba.
Floyd Woodley – director, Governor de Graafschool - St. Eustatius.
Hemmie van Xanten – head of education department - Saba.
Child on Bonaire
Appendix 3 – Consulted literature

The consulted literature is listed below. After each title, the letter ‘B’, ‘E’, and/or ‘S’ indicates to which island the title applies. After the letter, an asterisk * indicates whether a summary of that title is available.

The literature summaries are only available as a PDF file on the website of UNICEF Netherlands, www.unicef.nl/koninkrijkskinderen.

1. Belastingdienst Caribisch Nederland. Inkomstenbelasting. Informatiefolder. BES
2. Belastingdienst Caribisch Nederland. Wijzigingen in de Belastingwetgeving BES, een toelichting. Wijzigingen voor particulieren. BES
13. Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (2012). The Dutch Caribbean in figures. BES
17. Comité voor de uitbanning van discriminatie van vrouwen (CEDAW) (2010). Slotcommentaar Nederland. BES *
23. Committee on the rights of the Child (2009). General Comment no. 12, The right of the child to be heard. CRC/C/GC/12. BES
24. Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011). General Comment no. 13, The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence. CRC/C/GC/13. BES
25. Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013). General Comment 15. The right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (Article. 24). BES
27. Curconsult (2011). Samen verder bouwen. Belevingsonderzoek Caribisch Nederland. Onderzoek naar de beleving van de veranderingen door de burgers van Caribisch Nederland als gevolg van de gewijzigde staatkundige structuur binnen het Koninkrijk. BES *
30. Curconsult (2012). Tracking onderzoek onder professionele onderwijsdoelgroepen in Caribisch Nederland, de eenmeting. BES *
34. Drewes, Marga (2010). Gezond en veilig opgroeien in Caribisch Nederland (Bonaire, St. Eustatius en Saba). Een schets van de stand van zaken op het gebied van de jeugd: opgroeien en opvoeden in Caribisch Nederland. BES
37. Dutch NGOs (2012). Shadow report on the response of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the request of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its Concluding Observations (CEDAW/C/NLD/CO/5, para 52) to provide, within two years, information on the steps undertaken to implement the recommendations in paragraphs 27 and 29. BES *
40. European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, CPT (June 2007). Report to the authorities of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on the visits carried out to the Kingdom in Europe, Aruba, and the Netherlands Antilles. BES *
41. European Committee of Social Rights (2011). Conclusions. BES *
47. Government of the Netherlands Antilles (2011). 10th National Report on the implementation of the European Social Charter. BES *
49. Hesselink, A. (2009). The approach with regard to the penitentiary system at the BES-islands. Enschede: Universiteit Twente. BES *
51. Human Rights Committee (2009). International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Concluding observations. BES *
52. IdeeVersa (2012). Referentiekader Caribisch Nederland. Bijlage 3: beleidsvelden. BES *
53. Informatiekrant Bonaire, St. Eustatius en Saba. Editie 13, juni 2012. BES
64. Kinderrechtafdeling (2008). NGO rapport IVRK, Nederlandse Antillen. BES *
66. Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (2012). Antwoord van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden op het verzoek van het Comité voor de uitbanning van discriminatie van vrouwen in zijn slotcommentaar (CEDAW/C/NLD/CO/5, paragraaf 52) om binnen twee jaar informatie te verstrekken over de stappen die genomen zijn om de in de paragrafen 27 en 29 vervatte aanbevelingen te implementeren. BES *
69. Liever les in gebruik van de pil. Trouw, 2 mei 2012. B
72. Nederlandse Antillen (2007). Regeringsrapportage. BES *
73. Nederlandse Antillen (2009). Rapportage aan het Comité voor de uitbanning van discriminatie van vrouwen (CEDAW). E *
74. Nederlandse overheid (2012). Vierde rapportage Nederland aan het Comité voor de Rechten van het Kind. BES *
79. Plan Veiligheid Bonaire, Naar een veilige leefomgeving voor de burgers van Bonaire (2006). B *
80. Plan Veiligheid St. Eustatius, Naar een veilige leefomgeving voor de burgers van Statia (2006). E *
81. Raad voor de Rechtshandhaving (2012). *Het aangifteproces op Bonaire, St. Eustatius en Saba. Inspectieonderzoek van de Raad voor de Rechtshandhaving naar het bestaan, de opzet en de werking van het aangifteproces op Bonaire, St. Eustatius en Saba.* BES *


83. Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland *Informatiekrant Bonaire, St. Eustatius en Saba.* Nr 10, sept/okt. 2011. BES

84. Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland, Zorgverzekeringskantoor. *Informatieburechore zorgverzekering voor verzekeraand van de Zorgverzekering Bonaire, Saba en St. Eustatius. Per 1 januari 2011.* BES

85. Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *0.2 Leerplichtwet BES.* Folder. BES

86. Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *0.3 Wet primair onderwijs BES.* Folder. BES

87. Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *0.3.1 Wet primair onderwijs BES.* Folder. BES

88. Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *0.4.0 Wet voortgezet onderwijs BES.* Folder. BES

89. Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *0.4.2 Wet voortgezet onderwijs BES.* Folder. BES

90. Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *0.5.1 Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs BES.* Folder. BES

91. Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *0.6.0 Sociale Konstragieken Jongeren (SKJ) Caribisch Nederland.* Folder. BES

92. Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *Informatiekrant Bonaire, St. Eustatius en Saba.* Editie 13, juni 2012. BES


94. Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *Informatiekrant Bonaire, St. Eustatius, Saba.* Oktober 2010, nr 8. BES


99. SIFMA (2008). *Netherlands Antilles NGO Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.* BES *

100. SIFMA (2008). *NGO-rapportage Nederlandse Antillen.* BES *


111. *Woonvisie Bonaire CN 2011-2015.* B *


113. *Youth Policy Plan Saba (2006).* S *

1 Introduction

In 2013, the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights published its advice, *Gelijke behandeling bij de toepassing van het Kinderrechtenverdrag in Caribisch Nederland* (Equal treatment in applying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Caribbean Netherlands). The summary included in the publication is reproduced below. The full advice is available on the institute’s website.

2 Summary

In this advice, the Institute for Human Rights addresses the question whether, regarding the application of the rights stipulated in the United Nations children’s rights convention, is it permissible to make any form of distinction between the Caribbean Netherlands (Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba) and the European part of the Netherlands; and if so, under what conditions. To this end, the Institute examines the legal framework and the meaning of both the equivalence principle and the UNCRC. We specifically address two rights: the right to protection against child abuse and the right to education.

This advice was drawn up at the request of UNICEF Netherlands. UNICEF has extensively studied the situation of children on the six Caribbean islands of the Kingdom, publishing its final report in May 2013. There is, more generally, some ignorance and a lack of understanding regarding the equivalence principle. The Institute for Human Rights is pleased to contribute to a clarification of these issues. That is why it has chosen to publicly offer its advice with regard to the questions raised by UNICEF.

It is important that the essential minimum level of the rights stipulated in the UN children’s rights convention is assured in both the Caribbean and European Netherlands. It is not permissible to make any kind of distinction regarding the level of realization of certain children’s rights between the Caribbean Netherlands and the European Netherlands. Such a distinction may only be made if it does not pertain to equivalent cases, or if an objective justification can be given for the distinction. In this advice, the institute explains the assessment framework that must be used in such a case. If the rules deviate in the two kingdom parts, then the Dutch government must justify this difference with reference to the assessment framework. In doing so and if called for, it is important that the Dutch government examines the effects on inhabitants by means of an impact assessment.

The assessment framework must take into account the nature of the UNCRC obligation concerned. The obligation sometimes compels an immediate and direct compliance with the children’s right concerned, while other rights leave more scope for a gradual realization. The essential minimum level of the children’s right must however be assured as quickly as possible. The UNCRC furthermore emphasizes the urgency of creating specific regulations and policy for certain citizen groups, in order to overcome their arrears in the realization of children’s rights.

The assessment framework to determine whether it is permissible or not to apply a distinction in the realization of children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands and the European Netherlands consists of two steps.

First, there is the comparability test. This pertains to comparability in terms of relevant main issues in the light of the goal that the measure concerned aims to accomplish. Comparability thus does not require that the situations in the two kingdom parts are fully comparable in all respects. The Institute feels that it is not appropriate to hastily conclude that the situation in the Caribbean Netherlands is not comparable to that in the European part of the kingdom.

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Second, making a distinction in the realization of children’s rights between the two kingdom parts is only permitted if this distinction is objective and justifiable on reasonable grounds:

1. the distinction must serve a legitimate purpose, in the sense of a non-discriminating goal, that satisfies a significant interest and/or a real need;
2. the measure must be adequate to achieve the intended goal (sufficiently precise and fitting);
3. the demand must be met that there is no alternative, less divergent measure to achieve the intended goal, and
4. the goal of the measure must be proportionate to the affected interests.

When assessing the adequacy of the measure to achieve the intended goal, the practical effects of the measure on individual citizens must also be taken into account, for instance by means of an impact assessment. The above indicates that a divergent approach to realizing children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands, compared to the European part of the kingdom, can be objective and reasonably justifiable. Significantly distinctive factors can play a role here. Nevertheless, both kingdom parts must work towards an equivalent level of protection of children’s rights.

If there are any divergent rules or regulations between the two kingdom parts, then the Dutch government must motivate these differences with reference to the assessment framework. This reinforces the legal concept and the acceptance thereof. It is important to embed this consideration in a publicly accessible, specifically designated location in the legislative documents.
Appendix 5 – The Convention on the Right of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child is also referred to by its acronym, UNCRC. An abbreviated form of the convention is given below.

Article 1 – Definition of the child
The Convention defines a ‘child’ as a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger.

Article 2 – Non-discrimination
The Convention applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities; whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

Article 3 – Best interests of the child
The best interests of children must be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them. All adults should do what is best for children. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. This particularly applies to budget, policy and lawmakers.

Article 4 – Protection of rights
Governments have a responsibility to take all available measures to make sure children’s rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. When countries ratify the Convention, they agree to review their laws relating to children. This involves assessing their social services, legal, health and educational systems, as well as levels of funding for these services. Governments are then obliged to take all necessary steps to ensure that the minimum standards set by the Convention in these areas are being met. They must help families protect children’s rights and create an environment where they can grow and reach their potential.

Article 5 – Parental guidance
Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to direct and guide their children so that, as they grow, they learn to use their rights properly. Helping children to understand their rights does not mean pushing them to make choices with consequences that they are too young to handle. Article 5 encourages parents to deal with rights issues ‘in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child’.

Article 6 – Survival and development
Children have the right to live. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.

Article 7 – Registration, name, nationality, care
All children have the right to a legally registered name, officially recognised by the government. Children have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country). Children also have the right to know and, as far as possible, to be cared for by their parents.

Article 8 – Preservation of identity
Children have the right to an identity – an official record of who they are. Governments should respect children’s right to a name, a nationality and family ties.

Article 9 – Separation from parents
Children have the right to live with their parent(s), unless it is bad for them. Children whose parents do not live together have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might hurt the child.
Article 10 – Family reunification
Families whose members live in different countries should be allowed to move between those countries so that parents and children can stay in contact, or get back together as a family.

Article 11 – Kidnapping
Governments should take steps to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally. This article is particularly concerned with parental abductions.

Article 12 – Respect for the views of the child
When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account. The Convention encourages adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision-making – not give children authority over adults.

Article 13 – Freedom of expression
Children have the right to get and share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or others. In exercising the right to freedom of expression, children have the responsibility to also respect the rights, freedoms and reputations of others. The freedom of expression includes the right to share information in any way they choose, including by talking, drawing or writing.

Article 14 – Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
Children have the right to think and believe what they want and to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Parents should help guide their children in these matters.

Article 15 – Freedom of association
Children have the right to meet together and to join groups and organisations, as long as it does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

Article 16 – Right to privacy
Children have a right to privacy. The law should protect them from attacks against their way of life, their good name, their families and their homes.

Article 17 – Access to information
Children have the right to get information that is important to their health and well-being. Governments should encourage mass media – radio, television, newspapers and Internet content sources – to provide information that children can understand and to not promote materials that could harm children.

Article 18 – Parental responsibilities
Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their children, and should always consider what is best for each child. Governments must respect the responsibility of parents for providing appropriate guidance to their children. The Convention places a responsibility on governments to provide support services to parents, especially if both parents work outside the home.

Article 19 – Protection from all forms of violence
Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally. Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.

Article 20 – Children deprived of family environment
Children who cannot be looked after by their own family have a right to special care and must be looked after properly, by people who respect their ethnic group, religion, culture and language.

Article 21 – Adoption
Children have the right to care and protection if they are adopted or in foster care. The first concern must be what is best for them. The same rules should apply whether they are adopted in the country where they were born, or if they are taken to live in another country.

Article 22 – Refugee children
Children have the right to special protection and help if they are refugees (if they have been forced to leave their home and live in another country), as well as all the rights in this Convention.
Article 23 – Children with disabilities
Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support, as well as all the rights in the Convention, so that they can live full and independent lives.

Article 24 – Health and health services
Children have the right to good quality health care – the best health care possible – to safe drinking water, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help them stay healthy. Rich countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

Article 25 – Treatment in care
Children who are looked after by their local authorities, rather than their parents, have the right to have these living arrangements looked at regularly to see if they are the most appropriate. Their care and treatment should always be based on ‘the best interests of the child’.

Article 26 – Social security
Children – either through their guardians or directly – have the right to help from the government if they are poor or in need. The Dutch government made a reservation on this article: children have no independent right to social security, but only through their parents.

Article 27 – Adequate standard of living
Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. Governments should help families and guardians who cannot afford to provide this, particularly with regard to food, clothing and housing.

Article 28 – Right to education
All children have the right to a primary education, which should be free. Wealthy countries should help poorer countries achieve this right. Discipline in schools should respect children’s dignity. For children to benefit from education, schools must be run in an orderly way – without the use of violence. Any form of school discipline should take into account the child’s human dignity. Therefore, governments must ensure that school administrators review their discipline policies and eliminate any discipline practices involving physical or mental violence, abuse or neglect.

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

Article 30 – Children of minorities
Minority or indigenous children have the right to learn about and practice their own culture, language and religion. The right to practice one’s own culture, language and religion applies to everyone; the Convention here highlights this right in instances where the practices are not shared by the majority of people in the country.

Article 31 – Leisure, play and culture
Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.

Article 32 – Child labour
The government should protect children from work that is dangerous or might harm their health or their education. Children’s work should not jeopardize any of their other rights, including the right to education, or the right to relaxation and play.

Article 33 – Drug abuse
Governments should use all means possible to protect children from the use of harmful drugs and from being used in the drug trade.

Article 34 – Sexual exploitation
Governments should protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. This provision in the Convention is augmented by the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.
Article 35 – Abduction, sale and trafficking
The government should take all measures possible to make sure that children are not abducted, sold or trafficked. This provision in the Convention is augmented by the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Article 36 – Other forms of exploitation
Children should be protected from any activity that takes advantage of them or could harm their welfare and development.

Article 37 – Detention and punishment
No one is allowed to punish children in a cruel or harmful way. Children who break the law should not be treated cruelly. They should not be put in prison with adults, should be able to keep in contact with their families, and should not be sentenced to death or life imprisonment without possibility of release.

Article 38 – War and armed conflicts
Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war. Children under 15 should not be forced or recruited to take part in a war or join the armed forces. The Convention’s Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict further develops this right, raising the age for direct participation in armed conflict to 18 and establishing a ban on compulsory recruitment for children under 18.

Article 39 – Rehabilitation of child victims
Children who have been neglected, abused or exploited should receive special help to physically and psychologically recover and reintegrate into society. Particular attention should be paid to restoring the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

Article 40 – Juvenile justice
Children who are accused of breaking the law have the right to legal help and fair treatment in a justice system that respects their rights. Governments are required to set a minimum age below which children cannot be held criminally responsible and to provide minimum guarantees for the fairness and quick resolution of judicial or alternative proceedings.
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This report is part of the following series:

- Child on Bonaire. Children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands
- Child on St. Eustatius. Children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands
- Child on Saba. Children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands
- Child on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba. Children’s rights in the Caribbean Netherlands. Summary

The reports, appendices and summary are available on:
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The Kingdom of the Netherlands comprises four countries: the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten. Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, Saba have a separate status within the Netherlands. They are called Caribbean Netherlands. Together with the countries of Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten they form the Caribbean part of the Kingdom.

- Autonomous countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. These countries have their own governments. (1, 2 en 4).
- Since 2010 these islands are special municipalities of the Netherlands (3, 5 and 6).
More than 5000 children grow up on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba. These islands became part of the Netherlands in 2010. Together they form what is now called Caribbean Netherlands.

What is it like for children to grow up in Caribbean Netherlands?

How does this situation relate to the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?

*Child on Bonaire* answers these questions. It describes the results of a study into the situation of children on the island.

UNICEF did this survey to get a complete picture of the situation of the children. The survey was conducted between early 2010 and the beginning of 2013. It maps all the aspects of children’s life on Bonaire. To this effect children and young people themselves were interviewed, experts were consulted and literature was reviewed. The situation of children is checked against the standards of the UN Child Rights Convention. The minimum requirements of this convention apply to all children in the Netherlands, including the children in Caribbean Netherlands.

There are separate reports on Saba and St. Eustatius and a summary of the three reports.