



Child on Saba

Children's rights in the Caribbean Netherlands
Karin Kloosterboer

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May 2013

Foreword

You have before you *Child on Saba. Children's rights in the Caribbean Netherlands*: a UNICEF study into the situation of children growing up on the tropical island of Saba, 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 Saba* 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 Bonaire.

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 Saba.

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 Saba. 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 Saba 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 Uzoie 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 Saba, interviews with children were set up through the Child Focus Foundation. Suzy Guido and Aaron Soares spoke with some of the children from the island, although they found it difficult at times.

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 Papiamentu-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 Saba grow up.

Karin Kloosterboer

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Introduction

Child on Saba 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 Bonaire*.

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 Saba 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 Saba. 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 Saba, 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 Saba** section presents the study results for Saba 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 Saba is one of three reports on the situation of children's rights in the Caribbean Netherlands. *Child on St. Eustatius* and *Child on Bonaire* 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

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 Saba. Children's Rights in the Caribbean Netherlands presents the results of the study performed on the island of Saba. Similar reports have been published for St. Eustatius and Bonaire. 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 Saba 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 Saba – 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, Curaçao, 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 Curaçao*, *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, Curaçao, 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 Saba*, 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 Bonaire*. 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 over opgroeien op Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, 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 Saba, 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.

¹ The reports are available on www.unicef.nl/koninkrijkskinderen, under the respective island.

² www.unicef.nl/koninkrijkskinderen.

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 Saba* 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 Saba:

- 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).

¹ An earlier study compared the children's rights situation in asylum centers to the applicable demands of the convention. See: Kloosterboer, K. (2009). *Kind in het centrum. Kinderrechten in asielzoekerscentra*. Voorburg: UNICEF Nederland, Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland, Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers.

7.2 Children

‘Every child has the right to be involved in what happens. It is their future.’ (girl, 14 years, Saba)

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.

Children

This report refers to all zero-to-eighteen-year-olds as ‘children,’ following terminology used in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In some cases, however, it is important to be more precise. In such cases the term ‘young people’ may be used to refer to the age bracket of twelve to eighteen (and older).

Interviews

UNICEF wanted to hear from children themselves how they feel about their life. What’s going well, what isn’t going so well, and how could things be improved? In short, we wanted to hear what *they* think. Children are often very capable of clearly explaining what they find important. And sometimes they come up with solutions that never even occurred to grown-ups.

On each of the islands, interviewers spoke to children aged between eight and eighteen. The interviewers were first trained by the UNICEF study coordinator to give them the required knowledge on children’s rights and to teach them specific skills for interviewing children. Each of these interviewers had previous experience of working with children. To make sure children would be able express themselves freely, the study used interviewers who speak the language of the children of the island and are familiar with the culture. Interviews were held in Papiamentu, English, Dutch – and even in Spanish on one occasion.

The interview method and technique was adapted as well as possible to children’s age, level of development, and their life world. Some of the children liked the fact that they could draw as they shared their experiences, others preferred to role-play what they would change if they ruled the island, while others were perfectly able to express their views on certain matters in a ‘regular conversation.’ The interviewers had lists of questions and subjects at hand, for whenever they felt the need to further structure the conversation. The interviews were semi-structured.

The interviews with the children do not comprise scientific or representative research, but are intended as an (initial) illustration of and to provide information about an as yet unknown perspective on the children’s rights situation on the island: How do children themselves feel about growing up on one of the islands?

Most children were very excited to be allowed to take part in the study. Many of them were not used to expressing their views. Adults usually don’t ask them for their opinions. Some were even genuinely surprised that we really wanted to know what they think about different kinds of things. In some cases, children were reluctant because they were afraid their words would come out in the island’s small community. Many children gave

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 Saba

On Saba, we spoke to a total of 22 children in 16 individual interviews and chat sessions with six children. The individual interviews were held in April 2012. They were prepared and conducted in collaboration with the Child Focus Foundation, an organization for after-school care. 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.

Suzy Guido and Aaron Soares, both assistant project leaders from the Child Focus Foundation, worked as interviewers in the project. They conducted the interviews 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 Saba 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.

Another factor on Saba was caused by the reserve that the local interviewers had themselves. They found it difficult to ask the children questions about their personal business and problems. In a small and closed community like Saba, it was not ideal to work with interviewers from the island itself. This led to the fact that the children gave more socially desirable answers and that the interviewers did not go into enough depth with their questions. The difference between the interviews carried out by the UNICEF interviewer and the interviewers from the Child Focus Foundation also show the difference in depth. However, even the less extensive interviews with the children gave a picture of their views.

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 of 2011, chat sessions were held involving eight children aged between thirteen and sixteen on Saba. UNICEF commissioned the Verwey-Jonker institute to organize and conduct these online sessions with focus groups (and different sessions). On the island, the United Sports Federation and the Child Focus Foundation 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 2011.¹

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**

'You do have opportunities when you grow up on the islands, but you need to be prepared to fight for what you want.' (young person from Saba)

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

¹ See also www.verwey-jonker.nl.

entitled *Jongeren in Nederland over de kinderrechtsituatie op Bonaire, Sint Eustatius en Saba* (Young people in the Netherlands on the children's rights situation on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba), you will find records of these panel sessions.¹ The outcome of these sessions were used in this report.

7.4 Experts

'The most important thing is that children have a good life at home. That they get breakfast. That things are discussed with them. That they have a good relationship with their parents.' (expert)

'Since many children have difficult circumstances at home - lots of parents are always working and there is nobody to look after the children - it is important that children feel safe at school, at after-school care, at sports associations, in playgrounds, and so on. Creating safe places requires extra attention.' (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 website, you will find, under the island of Saba, 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.

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 under the respective island. They are also available on the Stichting Alexander website: www.st-alexander.nl.

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.

	Bonaire	St. Eustatius	Saba	Total
Interviews with children	11	17	16	44
Children in chat sessions	8	4	6	18
Total children	19	21	22	62
Young people (18+)				10
Experts				107
Literature				114
Total no. of sources:				293
Total no. of statements:				2,331

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).¹ 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 Saba 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 Saba.

¹ For a more extensive overview see: www.unicef.nl/nieuws/agenda/spraakmakende-zaken-afl-4/.

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 Saba, were presented 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 Saba

Saba is an island in the North Caribbean area, about 160 kilometers east of Puerto Rico. To the west of the island is the Atlantic Ocean and to the right of the island, the Caribbean Sea.

Saba, together with St. Eustatius and St. Maarten, is part of the Windward Islands and together they are also called the SSS islands.

Saba lies more than 800 kilometers to the north of Bonaire and is more than 30 kilometers away from St. Eustatius. Between Saba and the European Netherlands is a distance of around 7,000 kilometers.

Saba is the smallest inhabited island in The Netherlands. It is about four and a half kilometers across and has a surface area of fourteen square kilometers. The capital of Saba is The Bottom.

Saba consists of a sleeping volcano: Mount Scenery. The slopes run steeply to the sea and the coast is rocky. Mount Scenery is 877 meters high and is therefore the highest point in The Netherlands and also in the whole Kingdom of The Netherlands.

Saba has a humid tropical climate. The island is covered with rain forest. More than 700 different sorts of plant grow on Saba and there are more than 1,000 different species. Saba lies in an area that is susceptible to hurricanes. The hurricane season runs from July to November.

Nearly 2,000 people live on Saba. On 1st January 2012 there were 1,971 inhabitants according to the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). Half of the indigenous is white and the other half is black. In addition there are about 200, mostly American, students who study at the Saba University School of Medicine and another 200 personnel from the medical facility. In addition many of the inhabitants come from other islands or countries in the region. A quarter of the inhabitants are called Johnson or Hassel.

Saba lives from tourism and since 1988 from the income from the medical facility, the Saba University School of Medicine, generated by the arrival of many students from the United States.

Saba rose out of the ocean millions of years ago. The island has been inhabited for thousands of years.

There are different theories about the origin of the name 'Saba'. Christopher Columbus discovered Saba and named it 'San Cristóbal'. It could be that this name was later bastardized to Saba. Another theory is that the Indian word for rocks, 'Siba', is the origin of the name, Saba. There are also people who refer to the Greek word 'Sheba' (morning). Through the years Saba has had many nicknames such as: 'Elfin Forest', 'King Kong Island', 'Island of Lace', 'Island of Shoes', and 'Island of Women'. The current nickname is 'The Unspoiled Queen'.

The Mount Scenery volcano on Saba was last active about five thousand years ago.

Saba	
Nickname	The Unspoiled Queen
Capital	The Bottom
Surface area	14 km ²
Official language	Dutch and English
Most widely spoken language	English
Religion	Roman-Catholic: 58% Anglican: 14% Other: 22% None: 5%
Population	1,971
Children (0-20 years)	341 (17.3%)
Source of income	Tourism
Currency	American Dollar (USD)
Government	Part of the Netherlands as a 'public body' since 2010
No. of elementary schools	1
No. of public high schools	1
University	Saba University School of Medicine
Hospitals	Saba Health Care Foundation (A.M. Edwards Medical Centre)
Holiday	First Friday in December, Saba Day

Table 2: Saba details¹

Saba 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 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.

¹ Sources: statline.cbs.nl; beautiful-bonaire.nl; dutchcaribbeanlegalportal.com

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.

	Bonaire	St. Eustatius	Saba	Caribbean Netherlands
Children 0 - 5 years	992	199	79	1,270
Children 5 - 10 years	1,011	238	99	1,348
Children 10 - 15 years	1,059	248	84	1,391
Children 15 - 20 years	998	209	79	1,286
Total no. of children	4,060	894	341	5,295
Total population	16,541	3,791 ¹	1,971	21,585

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 authorities³ and the special position of these public authorities was laid down in the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands⁴ (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.'

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

¹ Statia welcomed its 4000th inhabitant on 8 March 2013.

² Source: CBS (2012). *Statline, Bevolking Caribisch Nederland*.

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.

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

¹ United Nations Resolutions 1514 and 2625.

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 regulations¹. They claim that Bonairians, Statians, and Sabans should be consulted again, after having been provided with extensive information.²

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 Bijleveld³.

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.⁴ 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.⁵

2.8 **Island government and organization**

The Saba Public Body is organized as follows. Day-to-day administration is handled by the *governing council*. This council is made up of the *lieutenant governor* (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.

At the start of 2013, Saba's lieutenant governor was Mr. Jonathan Johnson.

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. Saba's island council has five members. The members appoint the deputies, who together with the lieutenant governor make up the governing council. In early 2013, the island council consisted for four seats for the Windward Islands People's Movement/WIPM and one seat for the Saba Labor Party/SLP.⁶

¹ Vgl. Duijf, Charlotte M.A.M., and Alfred H.A. Soons (2011). *The right to self-determination and the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles*. Wolf Legal Publishers.

² Duijf, Charlotte, and Fred Soons. *Zelfbeschikkingsrecht Bonairianen, Statianen en Sabanen*. in: *Openbaar Bestuur*. October 2011.

³ Handelingen (Proceedings) 2009/10, nr. 28, p. 1171.

⁴ Kamerstukken II (Parliamentary papers) 2011-2012, nr. 33 131, 2 *Constitutionele basis openbare lichamen BES (Grondwetswijziging)*.

⁵ Kamerstukken I (Parliamentary papers) 2012-2013, nr 33131, C.

⁶ Also see the website of the Saba public body: www.sabagov.nl and www.beautiful-saba.nl

Caribbean Netherlands	Municipality
Island council (councilors)	Municipal council (councilors)
Governing council	Municipal Executive
Lieutenant Governor	Mayor
Deputy	Alderman

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 2010.¹ 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.²

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.³ 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.⁴

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

¹ 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.

² Idem.

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2008), Decision list BES administrative consultation, 31 January 2008.

⁴ Algemene Rekenkamer, Rijksoverheid en Caribisch Nederland: *naleving van afspraken*, House of Representatives, session year 2012-2013, 33471, nr. 2.

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 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.'⁴ 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.⁵

¹ TK 2013, Letter to the House of Representatives of 30 January 2013 about the minister's trip of 19-27 January 2013.

² The legal basis is the Act on the Public Bodies of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba (WoIBES).

³ Kingdom Representative for the Public Bodies of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, *Voortgangsrapportage 2011*, February 2012.

⁴ Children's Ombudsman (2011). *Wij laten van je horen; Jaarverslag 2011*. Den Haag.

⁵ Information received in an email from Rogier Oet, Children's Ombudsman staff member, 25 April 2013.

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.¹

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.²

¹ Children's Ombudsman (2012). *Kinderrechtenmonitor 2012*. The Hague.

² 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

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

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a relatively young convention. The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the convention on November 20th 1989. Thirty years earlier, on November 20th 1959, the United Nations adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. While this declaration was not legally binding, the convention is, imposing 'hard' obligations on member states. The Netherlands has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: it came into force on March 8th 1995.

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 en 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.

¹ Blaak, Mirjam, et al. (2012). *Handboek Internationaal Jeugdrecht*. Leiden: Defence for Children.

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 April 2002, the Dutch government submitted its second report to the committee. Aruba submitted its first report in that same month, and the Children's Rights Collective submitted another report of its own. The committee debated the government report in January 2004, and formulated 57 recommendations.

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.

¹ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2003). *General Comment no. 5, General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. CRC/GC/2003/5.

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,

¹ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2003). *General Comment no. 5, General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. CRC/GC/2003/5.

Kalverboer and Zijlstra translated these factors into fourteen conditions for development that are linked to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹ 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.

¹ Kalverboer, M.E. & A.E. Zijlstra (2006). *Het belang van het kind in het Nederlandse recht: Voorwaarden voor ontwikkeling vanuit een pedagogisch perspectief*. Amsterdam: SWP.

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

¹ Kloosterboer, Karin (2009). *Kind in het Centrum, Kinderrechten in Asielzoekerscentra*. Den Haag: UNICEF Nederland, Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland, Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers.

² UNICEF Netherlands, letter of 13 December 2012.

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 SABA

Introduction

This part of the report contains the results of the study conducted on the island of St. Saba,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 St. Eustatius.

¹ In the same period UNICEF studied the children's rights situation on both the two other islands making up the Caribbean Netherlands (Bonaire 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 Saba. Developments up to early 2013, as well as the current situation, will be outlined in the following.

1.2 Youth and Family Centers

In May 2011, a Youth and Family Center (*Centrum voor Jeugd en Gezin*, CJG) was opened on Saba in April 2011.¹ The CJG on Saba comes under the responsibility of the Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. Due to the small scale, the center is also responsible for youth work, foster care, community (ambulant) youth care and family supervision with employees able to carry out several functions at the same time.² Saba has two community care workers and a youth leader.³

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 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).

³ *Vierde rapportage Nederland aan het Comité voor de Rechten van het Kind* (2012).

1.3 Parenting support

On Saba, 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 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.

The CJG on Saba has a *Temateka* (toy library) that lends out various board games.¹

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 instill a positive parenting attitude, and can be used both for parenting support and for counseling 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.²

At the start of 2013, a positive parenting campaign was launched on Saba, with a view to raising awareness of the normality of having questions about parenting, showing people where they can turn to with those questions, and teaching parents the basic principles of positive parenting.³ This campaign draws on the Triple P positive parenting methodology.⁴

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 training 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 Saba, cases of problem children and adolescents are handled by a case group. Cases are mainly submitted by 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

¹ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/nieuws/6/centrum-voor-jeugd-en-gezin-sint-eustatius-introduceert-temateka.html> and information received from Justine Verschoor, Youth Care and Family Guardianship Caribbean Netherlands in July 2012.

² *Vierde rapportage Nederland aan het Comité voor de Rechten van het Kind* (2012).

³ Information received by email from Stan van Haaren, 20 December 2012.

⁴ *Vierde rapportage Nederland aan het Comité voor de Rechten van het Kind* (2012). Also see www.positiefopvoeden.nl.

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 plan.' 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.

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.¹

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 increasing 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.²

On Saba, eight children receive some form of community care. The average length of the assistance is three months. Between January and March 2012, twelve new requests for support were received. In two cases it concerned children taking part in ART training, where they would participate in activities organized by the youth leader or were instructed individually. In four cases it concerned community care and upbringing support. In the other six cases, short-term single visit help or advice was provided or the request was made by mistake.

In addition, about twenty children and teenagers take part, individually, in activities organized by the youth leader. There is a sort of youth club that organizes film and informational activities, sport and games and debates on specific subjects. At the request of the school, ART training is given to children and teenagers from the secondary school.³

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 July 2012, one child on Saba was placed under supervision.⁵

¹ Letter of the Minister of Security and Justice dated 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80.

² Youth care and Family Guardianship Caribbean Netherlands (2012). *Wat doet de Jeugdzorg en Gezinsvoogdij Caribisch Nederland*. Information leaflet for professionals.

³ Information received in an email from Justine Verschoor, Youth care and Family Supervision the Caribbean Netherlands in June and July 2012.

⁴ Youth care and Family Guardianship Caribbean Netherlands (2012). *Wat doet de Jeugdzorg en Gezinsvoogdij Caribisch Nederland*. Information leaflet for professionals.

⁵ Information received in an email from Justine Verschoor, Youth Care and Family Guardianship Caribbean Netherlands in June and July 2012.

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 an ambulant care worker.

Saba has no residential facilities. Children have to go to Bonaire or Curaçao or (if specific specialist treatment is necessary) in the Netherlands. This is considered very restrictive on Saba as *one family, one plan* becomes difficult to achieve. Outsourcing the daily educational responsibility to a facility on another island and supporting the parents at the same time in their parental responsibility is virtually impossible.

1.8 Teenage mothers

In comparison to the Netherlands, Saba has a relatively large number of teenage mothers. Recent figures are lacking, however. This generally concerns girls who have neither a job nor qualifications, partly due to the fact that they became mothers at a very young age. 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.

There are no specific facilities on Saba for pregnant girls or very young mothers. The children of these teenage mothers are often (also) educated by the grandparents.

1.9 Child abuse and domestic violence

On Saba, child abuse is reported either to the Guardianship Council, the CJG, the youth care agency, or the police.¹ There is a discussion going on between the Guardianship Council (which is in favor) and the CJG (which is not in favor as yet) about the implementation of an Advice and Reporting Center for Child Abuse and Neglect (abbreviation in Dutch AMK). The discussion was prompted by considerations of benefit as well as necessity, also given the small scale of the island. Another option is that the involved parties collaborate in a more efficient way.² On Saba this is not the case at the moment. There again, size plays a role. At this moment, most reports are received by the Guardianship Council. A protocol needs to be developed.³

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.⁴

In June 2012, several conferences focusing on child abuse were held on the BES islands 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, as 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.⁵

¹ Information received from Justine Verschoor, Youth care and Family Guardianship Caribbean Netherlands in July 2012.

² Information received in an email from Stan van Haaren, Netherlands Youth Institute, 21 December 2012.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Letter of the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations concerning the visit of the Queen and memorandum by Ortega-Martijn. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 3300IV No. 37. Appendix 1: Reaction per policy domain.

⁵ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/nieuws/245/sint-eustatius-is-gastheer-van-de-eerste-conferentie-over-kindermishandeling.html> and <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/nieuws/249/kindermishandeling--niets-doen-is-geen-optie.html>. Consulted on 2 November 2012.

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 society on Saba.¹

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.

An infrastructure is currently being constructed by means of knowledge transfer and by setting up (collaboration) structures. In 2012 a child safety workgroup to handle the approach to child abuse will be set up.²

Fighting domestic violence comes under the responsibility of the island authority (see 1.7, Custodial placement). There are no women's shelters for (adult) victims of domestic violence.³ It is unclear whether facilities on Curacao are open to the people of Saba.

The 2006 *Communities that Care* survey held among pupils showed that 5% of the participating adolescents on Saba had been subjected to sexual abuse.⁴

St. Eustatius has a Women's Desk. This organization comes under the Department of Social Affairs and functions more as an ombudsman.⁵ Many women who seek help—mostly young mothers—have problems related to upbringing and health.

1.10 **Child care**

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

An overview is offered below of current child care facilities, including after-school programs, for children aged between zero and twelve. For after-school activities, refer to the chapter 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 due 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 having a positive impact, it was being implemented inadequately.⁶

¹ Information received by email from Stan van Haaren, Nederlands Jeugdinstituut, 21 December 2012.

² Ibid.

³ IdeeVersa (2012). *Reference framework the Caribbean Netherlands*. Annex 3: competences. Page 177.

⁴ De Boer, S., Roorda, W., Jonkman, H., Van Aalst, M. (2006). *Scholierenonderzoek Communities that Care*. Nederlandse Antillen: DSP-Groep.

⁵ P. 42. On St. Maarten, the Women's Desk is a central place for the government, NGOs and women, that develops guidelines for women and gender policies. There is substantive attention for the themes of abuse, HIV and AIDS and the desk has developed a program, together with the Preventive Health Department, on awareness of young teenage mothers.

⁶ Meerdink, M.A., Schonenburg, L. (2010). *Pedagogical quality of daycare centers on the Netherlands Antilles. Current quality and comparison with quality measures of 2007*. Utrecht: Utrecht University.

There is one children's care organization on Saba, the Laura Linzey Day Care Center. This center is part of the public body at this time as the foundation had problems in the past. A real attempt is being made to allow it to operate independently. The foundation has room for about fifty children and has another twenty or so on the waiting list. Parents pay between \$ 75 and \$ 150 per month depending on the number of hours. For the children on the waiting list there is temporary private care. This center also offers the VVE program High/Scope.

1.11 **Legislation**

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

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 (abbreviation in Dutch: AMVB). The developed youth policy approach will then be embedded in law through an AMVB, simultaneously with adjustments to regulations for youth protection. 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.¹

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 adolescent 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.²

Saba has a child care ordinance governing only the island. This ordinance stipulates that the island's administration will set quality requirements for child care. Saba'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-country 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 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 Saba.³

¹ 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).

² Response of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the request by the Committee to end 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.

³ *Vierde rapportage Nederland aan het Comité voor de Rechten van het Kind* (2012).

1.12 Policy and activities

The Youth and Family coordinator, professionals, and services on the island and youth care professionals from Dutch youth care 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 supervision services and the guardianship council. The basic methodology selected for all youth workers is that of Triple P.¹

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.²

Activities

- A Youth and Family Center was opened in 2010.
- Youth workers and behavioral scientists were appointed.
- 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 start of 2012.
- The *JeugdLinQ* IT system was implemented at the CJG and youth care, family supervision, and youth health care facilities.
- A conference about the response to child abuse was held in June 2012.

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 the small scale of the island, implementation of family guardianship measures has been assigned to the Caribbean Netherlands Youth Care and Family Guardianship /Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport.³

Caribbean Netherlands Youth Care and Family Guardianship

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.⁴

¹ 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* dated 1 January 2011.

² IdeeVersa (2012). *Referentiekader Caribisch Nederland*. Annex 3: policy domains. Page 175.

³ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/234/jeugdbeleid+in+caribisch+nederland.html>. Consulted on 26 June 2012.

⁴ Youth care and Family Guardianship Caribbean Netherlands (2012). *Wat doet de Jeugdzorg en Gezinsvoogdij Caribisch Nederland*. Information leaflet for professionals.

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.¹

Youth and Family Center (CJG)

The CJG offers information, counseling, and parenting support for parents and professionals. The CJG on Saba falls under the responsibility of the Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. Due to the small scale, the center is also responsible for youth work, foster care, ambulant youth care and family supervision with employees able to carry out several functions at the same time.²

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 with filing child support petitions with the court, and mediate, seize property, or execute court-ordered compulsory measures to ensure child maintenance is paid.³

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.

2 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.⁴

'I have enough privacy at home.' (boy, 14 years, Saba)

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.⁵

'Sometimes parents hit their kids. I used to get hit at home sometimes when I was younger, but not anymore.' (boy, 14 years old, Saba)

¹ IdeeVersa (2012). *Referentiekader Caribisch Nederland*. Annex 3: policy domains.

² *Fourth report Netherlands to the Committee on the Rights of the Child* (2012) and the Ministry of Home Affairs and Kingdom relations. Answer to questions from the House of Representatives in relation to the letter about the visit to, amongst others, the Caribbean Netherlands September 2011.

³ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/188/voogdijraad.html>. Consulted on 6 November 2012.

⁴ See quotes 1, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25.

⁵ See quotes 159, 169, 170, 171, 172, 174, 175, 176, 178, 179, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187.

'In the beginning, I didn't have a very good relationship with my stepfather. I didn't want him to take the place of my father. Nowadays we get on well.' (boy, 16 years old, Saba)

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.¹

Some of the children could not live with their mother (during the first years of their lives), as she was still a teenager when they were born and was 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. Occasionally, a child has little to no contact with her mother. The mother lives elsewhere or is unable to take care of her child.

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).² And there are 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.

Violence in the family situation is mentioned by various children, and then 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

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

Nearly all of the children surveyed have to do household chores, such as sweeping the floor, clearing up, washing the dishes, and cooking.⁵

'I like cooking. At the moment I'm doing a lot of baking. I make banana bread, carrot cake and other things.' (girl, 11 years old, Saba)

Most children speak different languages and sometimes they speak a different language at home than in school or with friends. They speak Dutch, Papiamentu, English, Spanish.⁶

'I speak Spanish with my mother, but English with my sisters and my stepfather.' (boy, 16 years old, Saba)

3 Young people on family and parenting

The young people surveyed indicate that many children 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.

¹ See quotes 158, 159, 160, 180.

² See quote 60.

³ See quotes 219, 221, 222.

⁴ See quotes 2, 3, 6, 13, 15, 17, 19, 22.

⁵ See quote 6.

⁶ See quote 7.

Many children are hardly stimulated at home. Help with school work is lacking and there is no one to help them think about their future.¹

Adolescents 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. How parents see the world does not connect well with how their children see the world.²

'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 occur regularly. The adolescents surveyed attribute this 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.

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.³

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

Young people note 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 young people think that 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.⁴

The adolescents 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.⁵

'On all islands there is little openness when it comes to abuse or maltreatment.' (adolescent)

'I don't know where victims of physical or sexual abuse could go to for help on Saba. There is nobody you can trust.' (adolescent)

4 Experts on family and parenting

According to the experts that were consulted, the upbringing of many children on Saba is under severe strain. Experts have major concerns about the child-rearing environment of

¹ See quotes 53, 54, 75.

² See quotes 11, 12.

³ See quotes 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199.

⁴ See quotes 113, 114, 115, 116.

⁵ See quotes 118, 242.

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 Saba. It is, for example, unknown how many children are currently raised by one or both of their parents¹, 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 a number of children on Saba frequently grow up in a violent environment that is plagued by an authoritarian parenting style. Many children on the island are doing fine, but others are occasionally beaten at home, are humiliated, and some were sexually abused. 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 neglect or child abuse².

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, and so on.

The parenting style in many families is harsh (see also 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 below). At school, too, children are confronted with violence (see the chapter on Education).

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.³

'There is a different culture here where corporal punishment is still considered normal, as it was in the Netherlands in the 1950s.' (expert)

'Parenting on this island is a tricky subject. Disciplining children here is seen as hitting and using aggression. This promotes aggressiveness in children, both physical and verbal.' (expert)

'Using violence to bring children up has been going on for so many generations that it is considered normal.' (expert)

¹ In the interest of readability, the text always refers to parents, but this also includes single parents or other child rearers.

² Child abuse: every form of physical, mental or sexual interaction that is threatening or violent for a minor and is actively or passively imposed on the minor by parents or other persons with who the minor has a forced relationship or whom the minor depends on, threatening to seriously damage or seriously damaging the minor physically or mentally.

³ See quotes 120, 121, 122, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157.

'Although everybody knows it happens, child abuse and maltreatment are taboo here.'
(expert)

4.2 **Lack of attention and neglect**

'We notice a trend of neglect on the island', says one expert. Other experts consider it a major problem that children on Saba receive too little attention. Children are often left to fend for themselves. They have to amuse themselves, and 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 above).

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 for other reasons. The situation of some children is so harrowing that they would be placed in care, if that were possible.¹

'Some children are sent to school dirty.' (expert)

'Children are very often alone. They watch TV and think they can do anything they see on TV.' (expert)

'During the day the refrigerator is locked while mom is at work. Mom gets home late.'
(expert)

'If you get home after working sixteen hours, you can't educate your kids properly.'
(expert)

4.3 **Lack of parental control and social safety net**

The experts flag up that any kind of social structure is lacking on Saba. 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.

¹ See quotes 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 72, 73, 74.

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.

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.¹

'The situation at home for children in Saba is often problematic. There are many children whose parents are always working and have no one to look after them. It is then especially important that children feel safe at school, at after-school care, at sports clubs and in playgrounds.' (expert)

4.4 **Parenting style**

As described above, the type of parenting that many children on Saba 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 is generally authoritarian and 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.

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 below). 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.

¹ See quotes 92, 93, 95, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101.

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. An attempt is underway to teach parents positive parenting (Triple P: Positive Parenting Program) through parenting support. This will, however, take considerable time.¹

'One parent said to me recently: "You have to talk so much!" And that sums things up perfectly, because these days they have to talk to their children. They used just to do what they wanted. I tell them that they have to have a bit of time out first, and then talk calmly.' (expert)

'Some parents don't set any limits for their kids and let them do anything they want. Partly because they don't know what to do if they aren't allowed to hit them. These kids are never corrected and learn no boundaries. That's not good for a child.' (expert)

'Many parents have no idea how to raise a child. A mother of a 3-month-old baby telling it, "Behave!"' (expert)

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

In a number of families on Saba, fathers are conspicuous by their absence. The reasons for that vary widely (see also below). 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 (primary) 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

'Some parents are very young people with children, sometimes too many children. Mothers have to do everything while fathers hang out on the street. They are usually not role models. Only a few fathers are good examples.'(expert)

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.

¹ See quotes 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 292.

² See quotes 161, 162, 163.

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.¹

'The home situation is bad for many children. Children come to school without having eaten breakfast. Those that need it are given a sandwich and a mug of chocolate milk.' (expert)

'There is always something to eat at Child Focus and at school because lots of children are hungry.' (expert)

4.7 **Family composition**

The experts who were interviewed about Saba did not name the composition of the family as a specific topic in relation to Saba, as opposed to the islands Bonaire and St. Eustatius.

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.²

'A few children are cared for by their grandparents on the island because their parents had problems with alcohol or drugs and couldn't accept their responsibilities.' (expert)

'There is a big difference between the people of Saba and Statia (St. Eustatius). The indigenous population of Saba is half white and half black. The white half has traditionally had a higher level of education and development which increases the average level on the island. On Statia, almost the entire population has a low level of education and development.' (expert)

4.9 **Teenage pregnancies**

Teenage pregnancy is a regular occurrence on Saba. However, there are no exact figures of the number of teen pregnancies because these are not registered accurately. Experts say that every year there are one or two teenage pregnancies on Saba from a total of twenty pregnant mothers. Everyone of course knows the girls that get pregnant. In the beginning, the girls were no longer allowed to go to school because of the fear that it would prove to be contagious. Action was taken against this and it was pointed out that education was compulsory. Girls that get pregnant can now go to school in a normal manner.

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. Many teenage parents also had teenage parents.

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.

¹ See quotes 131, 132, 133.

² See quotes 154, 155, 156, 157, 158.

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. Adolescents will moreover not go to a pharmacy or family doctor to get contraceptives, because then the whole island would know about it.

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 often have to work as well nowadays to get by. Nevertheless, it is often the grandparents that take over on Saba. Experts are concerned that this situation may not be healthy for the children.

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

'Every year, one or two of the 20 females who get pregnant on Saba are teenage girls. Obviously everyone knows the girls who get pregnant. They used to be expelled from school, but there were protests against this policy. These days girls must attend school, so they carry on with their lessons if they become pregnant.' (expert)

'EOZ has a pregnancy education project. It seemed to be something a lot of girls wanted for a time. Now they are given lessons with lifelike dolls that they have to care for to show that it isn't all just cute and cuddly.' (expert)

4.10 **The community**

Saba is a very small society of about 1800 people, of which 200 are medical students. This means that everyone knows everyone. 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, however, no one is inclined to (personally) 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.²

Experts list various aspects that affect child-rearing and which they relate to 'the culture.' The inhabitants of Saba are very independent and do not like others - from off the island - interfering in their affairs. This attitude makes it very difficult to handle problems such as child abuse

¹ See quotes 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217.

² See quotes 155, 225, 228, 229, 231, 232, 233, 234, 239, 240.

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.¹

'The situation regarding children's rights is generally worse on Statia than on Saba. On Saba everything is more organized, more under control and neater. That includes parenting.' (expert)

4.11 **Parenting support and help with problems**

It is normal for parents on Saba to ask 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.

Several initiatives have been taken on Saba 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.

The experts stress the importance of performing an accurate needs assessment for the island and not simply copying systems that are used in the European Netherlands. No short-term campaigns, but sustainable solutions, along with a preventive approach.

There are very few places on the island where children who look for help, albeit anonymously, can go. There was a sort of children's telephone run via the medical university on Saba but the experts do not know what happened to it.

Experts state that it is often very difficult to get parents to change their parenting style, especially if children have serious difficulties. In such a situation an attempt is made to pressure the parents into working with them. If that is successful, then the child can remain at home. If not, then the child must be transferred to another island as placing a child with foster parents on Saba is virtually impossible. People are reluctant to offer themselves as foster families, because they are afraid of repercussions from the parents. There is no other care available on the island.

¹ See quotes 226, 235, 236.

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, and so on. A baseline measurement is needed for all these aspects.¹

'The court comes to Saba once a month and meets with the Guardianship Board. Then all the cases, from name changes and new laws through to alimony, are treated in one stroke.' (expert)

'The Youth and Family Center has different tasks in different places. On Saba, it carries out lots of different tasks because it's such a small island, but it's always difficult to decide what we should and shouldn't do.' (expert)

'The Dutch don't realize that there is a totally different mindset here and that the Youth and Family Center has to adapt to it. The Dutch are used to other cultures adapting to them. But people here on the island are used to doing things their own way. For example, there was never any structural assistance, it was something that didn't exist. They used to solve problems as well as they could by themselves. Now things are expected of them that they aren't prepared for.' (experts)

'We are still looking for two or three foster homes on Saba for voluntary placement. There is certainly a debate about whether this will work. As long as it is voluntary, it probably will, but if placement is compulsory the parents might appear angrily on the doorstep of the foster home. It is a small island after all.' (experts)

5 Literature on family and parenting

There have been several studies that have yielded information about family and parenting on Saba. 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 3.

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 briefly summarize findings on family and parenting from various studies and other literature.

5.1 Family composition

Literature on family and parenting shows that a little over half of children on Saba grow up in a two-parent family and that in addition there are a relatively great number of single-

¹ See quotes 244, 246, 247, 248, 250, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291.

² See literature 16.

³ See literature 74.

parent families. 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 Very few highly educated parents live on Saba (21%).²

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.³

Human rights committees have expressed concern about the difficult situation of single-parent families, as well as about the lack of financial support.⁴

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.⁵

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.⁶

Other human rights organizations have also called for action against domestic violence.⁷

In the Youth Policy Plan Saba from 2006, signals were given that children did not have a good relationship with their parents on the whole. There was no control or rules at home and children were very often severely punished. Verbal and physical violence was used.⁸

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.⁹

A 2006 survey among high school pupils showed that 5% of pupils on Saba had once suffered sexual abuse, while 20% had been harassed.¹⁰

Domestic violence records of the police and public prosecutor's office (2012) show that there is no proper overview of domestic violence incidents on Saba. The police and public prosecutor suspect the incidents are recorded in other crime categories than domestic violence.¹¹

¹ See literature 106.

² See literature 106.

³ See literature 105.

⁴ See literature 18.

⁵ See literature 33, 110.

⁶ See literature 16, 64.

⁷ See literature 41, 18, 17, 37.

⁸ See documentation 113.

⁹ See literature 8, 60.

¹⁰ See literature 8.

¹¹ See literature 32.

A different study confirmed that violence is still widely used as a parenting tool. There are no laws prohibiting that. The Antillean Civil Code governs the island and does not explicitly prohibit physical punishment at school, at home, and at juvenile institutions.¹

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 observes that there is poverty on the island.²

5.3 **Social safety net**

The literature makes reference to the absence of a social safety net on Saba. 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.³

5.4 **Parenting style**

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, relational problems, addiction, absence of a social network, poor housing (in a bad neighborhood).⁴

Proper support for parents and children is indispensable and should be set up.⁵

Research done in 2006 showed that families with a history of problems were more prevalent on Saba than on other islands. Moreover it was caused by alcohol or drug addiction and criminal behavior.⁶

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.⁷

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 on Saba. Human rights committees have pressed for improvements in this area.⁸

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 varies strongly on Saba. Poverty, insufficient education, and dropping out of school are identified as key causes of teenage pregnancies.⁹

¹ See literature 46.

² See literature 74.

³ See literature 70, 110, 64, 41, 18.

⁴ See literature 64.

⁵ See documentation 16, 41.

⁶ See documentation 8.

⁷ See literature 43.

⁸ See literature 108, 100, 16, 18.

⁹ See literature 106.

The literature also points out that (teenage) fathers are insufficiently involved in teen pregnancies and ensuing parenthood.¹

The Dutch government recognizes the sexual behavior between teenagers (and teenagers and adults) as undesirable and problematic.²

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.

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 Saba, 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.

¹ See literature 64.

² See literature 74.

- 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 Saba 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 off, 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).

Education

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

The Caribbean Netherlands Education Acts has been in effect on Saba since 1 August 2011.

1.1 Preschool education

Responsibility for child care lies with the island authority. The Laura Linzey Day Care Centre on Saba works met the early childhood education program Kaleidoscope. This 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 more information about child care on the island, see 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.

¹ <http://www.nji.nl/smartsite.dws?id=110145>. Consulted on 4 November 2012.

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:

- Papiamentu (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. For Saba they are Dutch and English.²

There is one primary school on Saba, the Sacred Heart school. In October 2011 this school had in total 148 students, spread over 9 classes.³

1.3 **Secondary education**

In contrast to Bonaire and St. Eustatius, Saba does not use the Netherlands examination system. Saba uses the Caribbean CXC examination system instead of the HAVO (higher general secondary education) and the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) instead of the VMBO (Lower Vocational Education). The CXC system fits in well with the American and Caribbean university system, but in the Netherlands it only gives entry to the MBO (Intermediate Vocational Education) and HBO (universities of applied sciences).

On Saba, the language used for instruction in secondary education is English. Dutch is taught as a foreign language and the students take the IGCSE examination for this subject. In addition, beginning in 2012, the CCSLC (Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence) is taken. This is used to establish the further study of the student; academic or vocational.⁴

On Saba, the Saba Comprehensive School offers TVET and regular secondary education to about one hundred students. There are TVET courses in carpentry, woodwork, electrical engineering and technical drawing. Other courses are being developed.⁵

¹ Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *03.0 Wet primair onderwijs BES*. Folder.

² Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *03.1 Wet primair onderwijs BES*. Folder.

³ Letter from the minister for Education, Culture and Science to the House of Representatives about the evaluation of the Education agenda for Caribbean Netherlands dated 16 May 2012. House of Representatives of Parliament. Session year 2011-2012, 31 568, no. 103. Addendum: Report about absenteeism public body Saba.

⁴ Inspectorate of Education (2008). *Education on Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba*. Utrecht: Inspectorate of Education.

⁵ http://www.sabacomprehensiveschool.com/index.php?topic=technical_vocational. Accessed on 21 February 2013.

1.4 Secondary vocational and higher education

In 2011, 391 students from the Caribbean Netherlands received student aid to support them in their further education. Of these students, 87 studied 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.¹

The private Saba University of Medicine is based on Saba. Other than this there are no further facilities for secondary or higher education on Saba.

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 an educational institution, do not have paid employment, and have not minimally attained a qualification at level 1 of intermediate secondary vocational education (MBO), 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.² On Saba, 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.

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.

Saba 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.³

There are little or no special education possibilities on Saba for children with behavioral problems, children who leave school early and children with a handicap.

¹ Overview of WSF-BES 2011 grants to pupils leaving the islands for further studies abroad.

² Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *06.0 Sociale Kanstrajecten Jongeren (SKJ) Caribisch Nederland*. Brochure.

³ Determination of the Budget Statement of Kingdom Relations (IV) for the year 2011. List of questions and answers. Established on 2 September 2011. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 32 500 IV no. 49.

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, then 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.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 61% on Saba.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. For the period September 2011 to March 2012, an absence percentage of 4.2% was quoted for the Saba Comprehensive School. It is not clear what this figure means precisely, but it is assumed to refer to the percentage of pupils that was absent without reason once or more often.

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.

¹Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *02.0 Leerplichtwet BES*. Brochure.

²De Boer, S., Roorda, W., Jonkman, H., Van Aalst, M. (2006). *Scholierenonderzoek Communities that Care. Nederlandse Antillen*. DSP-Groep.

³Letter by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science to the House of Representatives on the evaluation of the education agenda for the Caribbean Netherlands, dated 16 May 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011–2012, 31 568, no. 103. Annex 2.

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.¹

1.10 Homework assistance

The Child Focus Foundation organizes different sorts of after-school activities for children from four to eighteen which includes homework support.

1.11 Commuting to and from school

For public transport, see the chapter on Recreation, Play, and Leisure Time.

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

Youngsters from Saba who go to school in the Netherlands can, alongside the regular student aid, apply for a once-only start-up allowance. On certain conditions they can also apply for student aid to cover a college education in the U.S. or elsewhere in the Caribbean. For more information, see the chapter on Finance.

1.13 Legislation

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

On 1 August 2011, the Compulsory Education Act for the BES islands, the Elementary Education Act for the BES islands, the Act on the expertise centers, 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.

1.14 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

¹ <http://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/onderwijs/Caribisch+Nederland/Toezicht+Caribisch+Nederland>. Consulted on 17 March 2013.

² Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *Informatiekrant Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, Saba*. October 2010, number 8.

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 and Caribbean standards. 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 on Saba.
- 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.

1.15 **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 education.

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.

¹ Determination of the Budget Statement of Kingdom Relations (IV) for the year 2011. List of questions and answers. Established on 2 September 2011. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 32 500 IV no. 49.

² Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba. *Voorjaarsrapportage 2011*.

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. Currently, St. Eustatius has 33 firms that are recognized by the ROA as apprenticeship-companies. 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.¹

2 Children on education

The children surveyed highlight a wide range of matters concerning education on Saba. For example, they refer to the transport to and from school and how small the island is. They also say that the school and the classes are very small: a lot of children sit in a class with nine pupils and the class with eighteen pupils is the biggest in the school.

'What I like about our school is that it is so small. Our small classes are small. There are sixteen of us in my class.' (girl, 14 years old, Saba)

Different children say that there are too few books at school for each child to have one. There is also sometimes a shortage of other school gear. One of the children complained about the food at the school. They found it expensive and not very appetizing. 'Lasagna at nine in the morning, that's not good'.²

Other comments by children concern the following subjects.

2.1 Quality

The children's opinion on the quality of education on Saba runs from positive to negative. The secondary students in particular have ideas about this. A number find the school and the quality of education is fine, although it could always be better. Some find it to be limited and others find that it is at too low a level and are concerned about their future.³

'The education system on Saba isn't as good as in other places. That means that it will be more difficult for me when I go abroad. I'll probably have to repeat a few school years.' (girl, 14 years old, Saba)

2.2 Educational offering

Not all children find what is offered acceptable. They realize though that on a small island it can't be any different. They accept as a fact that there can only be one primary school and one secondary school on Saba. But they would like it if there was more for children to do at school and that the choices were more varied so that they could develop in the direction of their choice. They think that the number of subjects at school has been reduced 'since the Netherlands interfered'.

¹ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/nieuws/roa-kantoor-caribisch-nederland-officieel-geopend>. Consulted on 22 February 2013.

² See quotes 211, 212, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226.

³ See quotes 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 237, 239, 240.

'We should have more subject and curriculum options at school.' (girl, 17 years old, Saba)

One of the children named children's rights as a subject, either in the last class at primary school or the first class at secondary school.¹

2.3 Language

The children say that , on Saba, all lessons are given in English. The Dutch language is a separate subject. The children say that English was spoken mostly in this lesson, for a logical reason: 'the teacher wants us to understand what is written and what is said'. Outside the lessons the children speak English and not Dutch. They are totally unconcerned about speaking in Dutch. If they come to the Netherlands then they will learn it.²

'At school, everything is in English. We do have two languages at school, but everything is translated from these two languages into English.' (girl, 14 years old, Saba)

2.4 School environment

Most children are positive about the school environment. 'Everybody knows everybody else and there are no big problems', said a boy of fourteen. Most children consider that there is very little harassment at school, but teasing does occur and occasionally there are small fights which are quickly sorted out by an adult. Children say that they mostly feel safe at school. The only thing that virtually nobody is happy with is the school uniform. First it was just a normal polo shirt, but now it is a whole uniform. Some children hate the fact that they must wear it.³

'School is great.' (boy, 14 years old, Saba)

'At school it's very safe, because there are lots of people you can ask for help.' (girl, 12 years old, Saba)

2.5 School attendance and dropout rate

Some The children are unanimous when asked if they attend all lessons: nobody skips classes.⁴

'I don't skip school, I really want to finish my course, something I've never managed to do. Classmates of mine have skipped school, but when things started getting difficult they stopped. Now they are doing better at school. They should actually be in my class, but they had to repeat the school year.' (boy, 16 years, Saba)

2.6 Homework

Most children find that the amount of homework they receive is reasonable. If they need help with the homework they can ask a friend, parents, sister or brother or the school. A single child found that the support from the school should be more intensive.⁵

¹ See quotes 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 327, 329, 330, 629252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 282, 346.

² See quotes 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288.

³ See quotes 291, 292, 293, 295, 296, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 322, 324.

⁴ See quotes 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338.

⁵ See quotes 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 366, 367.

'Every child would prefer it if homework was never given, but we don't get given that much. I think that's fair because we already work hard at school.' (girl, 11 years old, Saba)

2.7 Teachers

The children have different opinions on their teachers. Most children find the teachers 'good' and 'pleasant'. They can also go to the teachers for help. Other children are more critical and find that the teachers do not explain the content clearly. They point out that on a small island you don't have any choice. 'If you can't get on with a teacher, there is nowhere else to go. Then you just have a problem', said a girl of fourteen. Others find it a shame that their teachers, especially the favorites, leave the school.¹

'The teachers are nice. They help you if you have a problem. You can also ask them for help if you have a problem with your parents.' (girl, 15 years old, Saba)

2.8 Future

What the future holds for the children who grow up on Saba remains to be seen. Some of them want to go to the Netherlands and others to the United States, Canada, Barbados, Bonaire or St. Maarten. Whatever happens, they must leave the island if they want further education. The professions or areas that the children aiming for are varied: cook, business woman, teacher for children with learning problems, teacher, children's doctor, doctor, lawyer, accountant, pilot. Or law, computer technology, electro technology, tourism, English, biology, psychiatry. One of the children said that there were sometimes problems with the connections between secondary school and university. There could be waiting lists and some of the children would be forced to wait on Saba.

Some of the children said that after their study period they would like to return to Saba. There are also some children who have no idea what they want to do and would very much like the possibility of obtaining information about the various directions in which they could go and what is available.²

'I'd like to be a chef or a businesswoman. I like to do paperwork. Maybe I'd like to go to the Netherlands to study, but I don't really want to learn Dutch. To be honest, I don't know why I want to go to the Netherlands. But I can get a student loan if I go to the Netherlands, and I'll be able to see snow.' (girl, 11 years old, Saba)

'I want to train to be an accountant when I'm older, but I'm not so good at math.' (girl, 14 years old, Saba)

3 Young people on education

The adolescents surveyed spoke only briefly about education. They mentioned the problem of having to deal with the different languages. The second issue concerns the lack of sex education at elementary school, while children are already sexually active at that age. This is covered in greater detail in the Family and Parenting section.³

The children also said that you do have chances if you grow up on Saba but you must be prepared to fight for them.⁴

¹ See quotes 368, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382.

² See quotes 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 460.

³ See quotes 317, 317, 318, 319, 319.

⁴ See quotes 265, 265, 266, 267, 267, 289, 445.

'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 report that politics, religion and education are strongly bound together. The school board has a lot of influence .

They also say that the size of the classes vary, but that all classes are small. An infant's class with 28 children is seen as 'too full'.

It was suggested that people on Saba took a firm stance during the political changes in 2010. Therefore they have not switched to the Dutch language for secondary education. The changes that are now necessary, due to the political changes, are therefore not so large as on the other islands.¹

4.1 Quality

Experts are not happy with the quality of education on Saba and especially secondary education. An educational expert said: 'I would not send my child here for secondary education'. The children in the primary school also fall behind. They do have a hope that improvements will come and say that the school is working hard to achieve this.

Some of the experts express surprise that the level is so low since the classes are so small. That should mean the children could be instructed individually. According to the experts, the unsatisfactory quality of the education means that the children's opportunities for development are smaller.²

'Children have the right to a good education. I think we could do more.' (expert)

4.2 Educational offering

The education offered on Saba is limited, which is not surprising on such a small island. The experts name the pros and cons of growing up on a small island. It feels safe but there are no real challenges. That applies to the education as well. There is one primary school and one secondary school. All levels sit in one class with each other. Amongst them are children with learning difficulties and development problems. This demands a lot of the teachers.

Recently there has been a possibility to receive vocational and practical education. One expert feels that people should think through the offer much more carefully. It should fit in with a vision of what sort of inhabitants you want on the island and the skills and behavior that this implies.

The support provided by the Expertise Center is also mentioned. The experts furthermore state that sex education is a central goal in education but that the Ministry is delaying its implementation as the schools have so much to do already. It is left up to the schools to determine whether or not they will or can provide it.³

'There are no special schools here. All the pupils are in one class, including those lagging behind. Teachers have to be able to do everything.' (expert)

¹ See quotes 227, 228, 229, 230, 232.

² See quotes 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 280.

³ See quotes 268, 270, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281.

4.3 School environment

The experts don't say much about the school environment on Saba. They note that the education system is based on the creation of compliant citizens. Some find that the school environment is not good.¹

4.4 Pupils

Experts make a variety of points about pupils on Saba. They see the learning problems as a result of inbreeding on the island. They have established that there are education shortfalls (see also quality) and that there are many 'problem students'. The Expertise Center and the Center for Youth and family organize information afternoons about the increasing aggression in primary education.

The experts are positive about the involvement of parents with their children. 'Parents are more involved with the school than a few years ago', said an expert.

On the subject of Family and upbringing, experts say that there is a tangible link between the family situation and the behavior of children at school.²

'If you're older than 12 you have to leave here.' (expert)

4.5 School attendance and dropout rate

Experts do not name absence and dropping out as problems on Saba. It is not known precisely how often pupils are absent or drop out.

For a number of years the Compulsory Education Act has been in force, giving the school attendance officer the authority to impose a fine for truancy. According to the experts, the part-time attendance official is not active.

4.6 Teachers

All experts agree that good teachers are essential for good education. 'As a teacher you must get the best out of a child', they say. But sometimes that is where the problem lies. This can have different reasons. There are still some teachers that have a very authoritative style when giving lessons, including shaking the pupils, hitting them or threatening them with the cane or by shouting 'be quiet and sit still'.

Saba uses an English language system. Teachers come from all over the world with their own views on giving lessons and their own teaching methods. Some of them are not used to teaching children to be independent and critically thinking people.

Another problem signaled by the experts is the very constant change of teachers. Most of the teachers come for a short period, in some cases only for a year. That means that the students must continually get used to new teachers, a new approach and other methods. That means that no team can be built, and for the teachers who do stay it means having to work very hard to catch up and deal with the changes.

Nevertheless, the experts see hopeful developments in this area. For example, the application of the Triple P method which helps the teacher to learn another style of teaching, and also headmasters who will not tolerate their teachers using force. The teachers also see the difference when they win the trust of the children: children start developing quickly and properly.³

¹ See quotes 248, 323.

² See quotes 231, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330.

³ See quotes 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422.

'The teachers come from all over the place. We have teachers from Canada, USA, Suriname, Trinidad, Statia, Aruba and the Netherlands here. They all have their own ideas, backgrounds and educational vision.' (expert)

'The teachers in Saba all have their own pedagogic vision. I'd like to see active teachers, but they are directive. They tell the children what they need to know, and the children have to reproduce what they're told. They're not taught to think for themselves.' (expert)

4.7 Future

The experts have determined that suitable further education is not possible on an island of this size. There are few possibilities after secondary school. Recently a facility has been set up for practical training. The experts also say that children can obtain a scholarship to follow further education off the island but many of them do not know that. Girls usually leave the island earlier than boys to study elsewhere. There are a number of 16 and 17-year-olds who are already working or who stay at home because there is no suitable education available for them. They do jobs on ships or with a telephone company but receive no training.

Because the education system on Saba is given in English, students are less likely to go to the Netherlands. Instead, they travel to places such as Trinidad, Puerto Rico or the United States.

Some would like education in the form of lower vocational training where children alternate between Saba and St. Eustatius, making it less boring for them.

Some of the experts are concerned about the future of the children. They find the children to be too relaxed and unmotivated and that they don't feel responsible for their future. One expert advised every child on Saba to: 'Leave the island and continue your studies elsewhere. Increase your chances, there is more than just Saba'.¹

'Tailored education? No chance of that on such a small island.' (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 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 now have less influence on education. 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 Saba.

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 Saba. The government's report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2012) shows 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

¹ See quotes 269, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 456, 457, 459.

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 further below). Up to 2015, the government and various public entities will also be pouring considerable investment into school buildings. On Saba, that is being used for the conversion of the former leather factory to a location for vocational education from the Saba Comprehensive School and the preparation of the Brede School in The Bottom.

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 Saba 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 and after-school programs.¹

5.2 Quality

In 2006, the Dutch Inspectorate of Education qualified the quality of education on Saba as good. The school for secondary education was characterized as a weak school, but was found to be less weak than the secondary education on Bonaire and St. Eustatius. The educational achievements on Saba continued to fall behind and on other points the quality fell short of normal. Additionally, the inspectorate identified 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 Saba were subjected to such inspections.²

Of the citizens of Saba who took part in the 2011 perception survey, 45% feels education has improved since 2010, although a majority (75%) thinks it has yet to get better. One year further, and 55% says that education has improved, while 70% thinks it will get even better. Free books, better premises, higher quality of teaching, and more options to attend (upper) secondary education 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.³

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#03>

³ See literature 106, 27, 29, 28, 30, 54, 74.

5.3 **Offering**

Children's rights are not a fixture in the curriculum of schools on Saba.

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.

5.4 **Language**

A 2011 study shows that parents on Saba are concerned about the knowledge of the Dutch language and the choice of CXC education.¹

5.5 **School environment**

The youth policy plan for Saba (2006) showed that the majority of the children felt safe at school (62%). It also showed that 11% of the children were victims of violence with a weapon at school. Nearly the half were having or had had quarrels with their fellow students and a quarter with the school personnel. Half of the pupils said that there was no one to go to at school with their problems.

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.

A 2011 study shows that parents, too, feel insufficiently heard at and informed by the school. What also shows up is that the parents on Saba are satisfied with the school and the teachers. Their involvement with the school is also greater than on the other islands.

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 and also specifically mentioned Saba. It recommends including 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.²

5.6 **Pupils**

Research shows that some children on St. Eustatius are exposed to risk factors at school (such as falling behind in their learning, lack of a bond with the school). School achievements were weak, several children remained in the same class for a second year (43%), and sexually risky behavior, cutting classes, violence and alcohol and drug usage were quoted as problem behavior.

A third of the children said that their parents never asked about the school, according to the youth policy plan for Saba (2006).

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. The 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.

¹ See literature 26, 6.

² See literature 26, 46, 64, 16.

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 there. Internal counselors and care coordinators have been trained to take stock of the extent of the need for this kind of care.¹

5.7 **School attendance and dropout rate**

The 2006 Saba youth policy plan indicated that a majority of the pupils (60%) did not feel at home at school or found that the school did not have enough regard for students with problems (60%). In other areas, such as safety and teaching material, most of the children had no problems.

Another 2006 study shows that truancy occurs widely. Pupils primarily put that down to the fact that they do not feel a bond with the school. They are not motivated to go to school or to do homework. Even so the report shows that the children on Saba are lagging behind less, educationally, than their peers on the Leeward Islands. 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.

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.

5.8 **Homework**

The youth policy plan for Saba (2006) established that most of the children (66%) had no problems with concentration when doing homework.

5.9 **Teachers**

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.

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

¹ See literature 106, 26, 71, 33, 64, 74.

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.

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.¹

5.10 **Future**

The 2006 youth policy plan for Saba showed that nearly two thirds of the secondary school students wished to do further study. Also, 35% said that they hated studying.

A 2009 study shows that there is still a lot of ground to make up when it comes to aligning education with Saba's job market. Employers attach little value to diplomas and often 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 Saba after they have finished school and higher education: suitable work and salary.²

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 Saba, 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).

¹ See literature 26, 28, 30, 64, 74.

² See literature 26, 10, 113.

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 Saba 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 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.

Health

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.'¹

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 and health care on Saba, 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 Saba, comparable to that produced by the foresight study on health care (*Volksgesondheid Toekomst Verkenning*, VTV) that is published for the European Netherlands by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (*Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid 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 also initiated studies as part of infectious disease control. Nevertheless, adequate and recent data in many health-related areas is currently lacking.² It is expected that the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), following on from St. Eustatius, will carry out a Youth Health Survey. This concerns a study of the health situation of children on a number of islands in the Caribbean area. The results of such a study can be used to establish an effective policy in the area of health.

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

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 Saba.

Islanders have access to health insurance.

¹ World Health Organization (WHO) (1978). *Declaration of Alma-Ata, International Conference on Primary Health Care. Alma-Ata, USSR*. 6-12 September 1978.

² E-mail from Pieter de Coninck, project secretary Caribbean Netherlands, International Affairs Directorate, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, on 5 February 2013.

Besides the 'usual' health risks, children on Saba 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.

1.2 **Curative health care**

The Saba Health Care Foundation was set up on 1st January 2011 and the former A.M. Edwards Medical Center has been absorbed by the Foundation. Two full-time doctors work in the center and outpatient care, emergency help and hospital treatment are offered. In addition, a number of specialists visit the island. A dermatologist, a gynecologist, an orthopedist and a psychiatrist come once a month. A company doctor and a neurologist come to Saba every six weeks, a cardiologist once in two months and a revalidation doctor every three months.¹

In the first instance, patients go to St. Maarten for other specialist help, and secondly they can be referred to Guadeloupe and Colombia. Since 2011, a helicopter stands by at the airport of St. Maarten to enable urgent evacuation to St. Maarten both day and night.²

Two or three family doctors work on Saba. One of them is responsible for the Area Health Authority (AHA) tasks. There is no separate AHA service on the island. There are several dentists on the island.

1.3 **Youth health care and maternity care**

Saba's maternity center has been combined with the Youth and Family Center (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. Youngsters 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 tend 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).³

Maternity care is available on Saba.⁴

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 – Dutch acronym GHOR) to the desired level. The National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) is also closely involved in these efforts.⁵

¹ E-mail from Pieter de Coninck, project secretary Caribbean Netherlands, directors International Affairs, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, on 5 February 2013.

² Letter from the minister for Health, Welfare and Sport to the House of Representatives about health care in the BES islands dated 19-1-2012.

³ E-mail from Melissa Diaz, GGD Den Haag, 27 March 2013.

⁴ E-mail from Pieter de Coninck, project secretary Caribbean Netherlands, Department for International Affairs, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 5 February 2013.

⁵ Letter from the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport to the House of Representatives about healthcare on the BES islands, dated 19-1-2012.

1.5 Care for the disabled

Saba has no (special) facilities for mentally handicapped children. There are also no (special) facilities available for children with a physical handicap.¹

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.²

On Saba, there is no specific help for drug addiction or psychiatric problems. The Mental Health Foundation (MHF) has plans to set up small scale help.

On Saba there are currently no facilities for mental healthcare. In some cases, psychiatric care is provided through regular care channels (primary care physician) or referred for admission in the Netherlands. Moreover, Saba is served by visiting psychologists and a part-time psychiatrist.³

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, 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.⁴ 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.⁵

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 Saba 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 of The Hague will be launching various activities between 2012 and 2013 to raise awareness of sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases.

¹ E-mail from Pieter de Coninck, project secretary Caribbean Netherlands, Department for International Affairs, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 5 February 2013.

² Letter from the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport to the House of Representatives about healthcare on the BES islands, dated 19-1-2012.

³ E-mail from Pieter de Coninck, project secretary Caribbean Netherlands, International Affairs directorate, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, dated 5 February 2013.

⁴ [http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/120/de+zorgverzekering+\(algemeen\).html](http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/120/de+zorgverzekering+(algemeen).html)

⁵ Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. Health insurance office. *Informatiebrochure zorgverzekering voor verzekerden van de Zorgverzekering Bonaire, Saba en Sint Eustatius*. As from 1 January 2011.

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

- The AIDS Support Group Saba (ASGS) is active in the area of prevention aimed at adolescents. They provide information in the form of folders, campaigns and activities. They target secondary school pupils in particular.
- The ASGS will also provide information for the primary school. The Center for Youth and Family has taken the initiative here.
- Students from the medical facility provide information to the pupils of the secondary school with such programs as 'Girl Power', 'Real men' and 'R.E.S.P.E.C.T'. The information provided is very dependent on the student that provides it.
- Sex education is not yet a permanent fixture of the regular school curriculum. Stakeholders – including the two heads of school – emphasize the importance of sex education at school. Professionals say sex education is also required because some young people have a distorted idea of sex.¹
- The reach of the existing prevention activities seems large. Little is known about the impact: no detailed studies have been carried out about the sexual behavior and risks of adolescents and their attitude toward safe sex.
- There is no proper system in place to monitor sexually transmitted diseases. A proper system is actively being developed for the monitoring of HIV.
- There is an AIDS helpline with a number on St. Maarten which young people can call anonymously.
- The number of teenage pregnancies on Saba is high (in 2007 11% of the births were from a teenage pregnancy: 5% of all teenagers between fifteen and nineteen were delivered of a child). More information on this subject is offered under the theme of Family and Parenting.
- The number of provoked abortions seems high, but it is difficult to form a good picture of the situation. There are no exact figures. 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 on Bonaire has been authorized to perform abortions. Patients from Saba can also come here for an abortion.
- 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. The ASGS has placed four condom machines in public entertainment areas on Saba and, on average, 50 condoms are taken per month).
- According to stakeholders, sexual abuse occurs regularly. However, the exact scope of this problem is unknown. It is suspected that people are reluctant to intervene in cases of sexual abuse. This would be due to the smallness of the island and the fear for mistakes, reputation damage and repercussions.
- Intolerance and discrimination in relation to sexual orientation do not occur on Saba. The island is seen as being accepting of people with different sexual identities.²

1.9 **Obesity and diabetes**

There seem to be many cases of obesity and diabetes on the island. There turns out to be a need for greater awareness and insight in the area of a healthy lifestyle.³ Beginning 2013, a health show was organized on Saba by and in collaboration with the chain partners in the health care field. The inhabitants of the islands were able to obtain

¹ See Trouw newspaper, 2 May 2012, *Liever les in gebruik van de pil*.

² GGD Den Haag (2011), Offerte GGD Den Haag 31 March 2011, *Ondersteuning Bestuurscolleges Caribisch Nederland bij uitvoering GHOR en Publieke Gezondheid. Report Field trip Sexual Health & Hygiene from 15 September to 7 October 2012*.

³ GGD Den Haag (2011), Offerte GGD Den Haag 31 March 2011, *Ondersteuning Bestuurscolleges Caribisch Nederland bij uitvoering Publieke Gezondheid*.

information about the health care on their island and were made aware of the importance of this care.

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.¹

1.11 **Other health risks**

In other areas, too, children on Saba 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.

1.12 **Legislation**

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

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.

The Medical Treatment Contracts Act (WGBO) is regulated through the Civil Code for the BES islands.²

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).³

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. The hospital on Saba that was run by the government was therefore privatized on 1st January 2001 when the Saba Health Care Foundation (SHCF) was set up.⁴

¹ E-mail from Pieter de Coninck, project secretary Caribbean Netherlands, Department for International Affairs, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 5 February 2013.

² Agreement regarding medical treatment: Art. 446-468 Burgerlijk Wetboek, boek 7, afdeling 5.

³ Decision list BES administrative meeting 20 November 2008 in The Hague.

⁴ Letter from the minister for Education, Culture and Science to the House of Representatives about the evaluation of the Education agenda for Caribbean Netherlands dated 8 October 2010. House of Representatives. Session year 2010-2011, 31568, no. 81.

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.
- The hospitals on St. Eustatius and Saba were privatized as per 1 January 2011 with the establishment of the *St. Eustatius Health Care Foundation* (SEHCF) and the *Saba Health Care Foundation* (SHCF).
- Subsidies from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport were invested in medical infrastructure (buildings, equipment, and ambulances) and in staff training.¹
- 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.²
- 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).³
- A central control room has been set up for the three islands on Bonaire to direct the emergency services of the police, fire department, 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.

Local health insurance authority (ZVK)

The ZVK is part of the Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland 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. But also the support for insured parties when medical care is provided outside the Caribbean Netherlands.⁴

Saba Health Care Foundation (SEHCF)

The Saba Health Care Foundation, established on 1 January 2011, provides health care on Saba. The A.M. Edwards Medical Center has been absorbed by the foundation.

Youth and Family Center (CJG)

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

¹ Kingdom representative for the public bodies of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba, *Voorjaarsrapportage 2011*.

² Letter by the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport to the House of Representatives about healthcare on the BES islands, dated 19-1-2012.

³ Letter by the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport to the House of Representatives about healthcare on the BES islands, dated 19-1-2012.

⁴ Kingdom representative for the public bodies of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius en Saba, *Voorjaarsrapportage 2011*.

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.¹

'I reckon we're all healthy. When we get sick, it's usually only the flu.' (boy, 16 years old, Saba)

Children have different views about the health care on Saba. A fourteen year old boy combined the different meanings nicely by saying 'As long as there is nothing seriously wrong with you, the care is good.' There is, indeed, a hospital on the island, but for specialized care or operations you must leave the island. Then the inhabitants of Saba can travel to St. Maarten, Puerto Rico or Colombia. That gives the children the idea that the technology and care on the island should be improved. Then patients could stay on Saba if there was something the matter with them instead of having to make a whole journey. Most children are satisfied with the doctors on Saba, but a number of children are critical. They feel that the doctor doesn't always diagnose the problems properly and is too quick to prescribe medicine.²

'There's a hospital on the island, but it's not very good. I think that there are three doctors and a number of nurses. Health care is reasonable but not brilliant. There's room for improvement and something should be done about it.' (girl, 14 years old, Saba)

'The hospital on Saba is good.' (boy, 14 years old, Saba)

The children who were interviewed on Saba did not say much about their eating habits. One girl said that she found the food at school too fatty and she didn't like it.

According to the children, they have absolutely nothing to do with alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. They do know others that use them. The children who do not drink and smoke and are against the use of drugs motivate their actions with various arguments: unhealthy, unsportsmanlike, unattractive, stupid. The children get instruction and information about the use of drugs. One fourteen year old said that he would not talk about drinking after he had said that he didn't use drugs and didn't smoke.³

We have a cafeteria at school, but I don't like the food. Croquettes, French fries, fried chicken, hamburgers, it's all too much fat.' (girl, 16 years old, Saba)

3 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 Saba. Their comments cover several sub-areas.

3.1 Sickness

Experts consider obesity on Saba to be a serious problem. Research has shown that more than half of the children on Saba (55%) are overweight. To have a nice plump child is seen as a sign of prosperity and experts describe this as culturally determined. Attention is now paid to this in baby clinics to prevent babies being overfed .

¹ See quote 462.

² See quotes 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483.

³ See quotes 497, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 511.

In addition to unhealthy and one-sided eating, obesity is also caused by a lack of exercise. One expert said that the connection between exercise and health is not known on the island.

In addition to obesity, there is also malnutrition. This occurs in 11% of the children on Saba.

One expert reported that attention is paid to pregnancy, respect for yourself and HIV and AIDS once per month on the radio.¹

'The idea that exercise is healthy hasn't sunk in here.' (expert)

3.2 **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.

Experts say that there is a consultation bureau, with a doctor in the Center for Youth and Family. The consultation bureau is free and children receive their immunization injections there. As a result, there is a good picture of children up to fifteen months. From fifteen months until they become infants many children continue to visit the consultation bureau doctor. According to the experts this means that there is a reasonable picture of the children of this age.

Saba has two family doctors who perform other tasks as well as their normal duties. They can make echoes and x-ray photographs and plaster casts if needed. The health care experts said that the doctors are child friendly, unlike the small hospital on Saba. According to them the hospital is not suitable for children, apart from the fact that it has limited functionality, care and specialization .

Specialists come to the island once per month but do not include a pediatrician. There is no pediatrician working on Saba. For specialized help children have to go to the hospital on St. Maarten. One of the experts described the hospital on St. Maarten as a regional hospital with limitations. The hospital is not equipped to handle the care for children. In any case, children with more serious problems must travel to Guadeloupe, Colombia or the Netherlands. In Guadeloupe, the European norms apply and French is spoken which can cause communication problems if urgent help is needed. In Colombia the American standards apply.

A team of specialists, including a psychologist and a child and youth psychiatrist, can provide monthly advice for children with psychiatric or other health problems.

Experts state that the possibilities for children with a handicap are severely limited on Saba. The conclusion is that they cannot receive suitable treatment on the island and they must find it elsewhere.

The experts say that girls on Saba do not go to a family doctor easily. Also not when they have something 'unclear' such as a sexually transmitted disease or a pregnancy. To have an abortion girls had to travel to St. Maarten but since the abortion law has come into force they must travel further to Bonaire.²

'There are two family physicians on Saba who carry out plaster casting, ultrasounds and X-rays in addition to their general duties. There are also specialists who visit the island once a month. There is no pediatrician.' (expert)

¹ See quotes 461, 461, 463, 464, 465.

² See quotes 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 496.

3.3 **Food**

Experts are concerned about what children eat on Saba. Bad food, junk food, unhealthy and one-sided eating habits with few vegetables and fruit, but lots of sweets and soft drinks.

The experts see various reasons for this eating pattern. Healthy eating is not an issue, and costs moreover play a very important part. Everything that is healthy is expensive on Saba. Also, at school, unhealthy food is sold and it would require a drastic change in the culture to switch to healthy eating, experts say. There is now collaboration with the ASA in The Hague to help persuade the inhabitants to live and eat in a healthier manner and to alternate their 'rice, beans and peas' with other foodstuffs.¹

'The menu here often consists of rice, beans and peas. Healthy eating is going to require a cultural shift. ' (expert).

4 **Literature on health**

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

4.1 **Sickness**

A previous study of youths on Saba shows that many children are exposed to risk factors (also see below). It concerns, amongst others, depression, worrying about the future, sexual abuse and violence.

In their report concerning the Children's Rights Convention of 2008, the NGOs said that handicapped children on Saba were kept out of sight. At the time of the report there were four handicapped children on the island that were looked after at home. There are no professionals available on the island. Public life is fairly inaccessible for these children.

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 there are no children with HIV or AIDS on Saba.

A quick scan from 2009 gives advice on how to promote sports and exercise Saba.²

4.2 **Health care**

A 2011 perception survey shows that the population of Saba 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

¹ See quotes 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 512, 513.

² See literature 106, 67, 78, 77, 100, 16.

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 the health care for undocumented children is 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.¹

4.3 **Food**

Whether mothers on Saba are sufficiently aware of the importance of breast feeding for their children is not clear. Reports by NGOs on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2008) say that some public education efforts have been made, but without any follow-up for mothers and professionals.

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.²

4.4 **Alcohol and drugs**

A 2003 survey of youths shows that relatively many children on Saba use marihuana (8%). Children also drink alcohol. Saba does make some efforts towards drugs prevention through projects in school.

The report by NGOs on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2008) states that there is little to no data available on the use of drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes and the effect of awareness campaigns. There are awareness projects in school.

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.³

5 **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 Saba. The following is key in this context:

¹ See literature 27, 29, 100, 16.

² See literature 100, 16.

³ See literature 106, 8, 100, 16.

- 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 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

6 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 and 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. Hopefully this will change in the near future with the publication of the PAHO Youth Health Survey.

¹ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2003). *General Comment no. 4, Adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, CRC/GC/2003/4.

² Committee on the Rights of the Child (2005). *General Comment no. 7, Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood*, CRC/C/GC/7.

³ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006). *General Comment no. 9, The rights of children with disabilities*, CRC/C/GC/9.

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)*.

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 great 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 such a small island. In those cases, other possibilities will need to be sought to guarantee children on Saba can exercise their 'right to enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment and rehabilitation of health.'

Safety

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 Saba.

In the area of safety, there is widespread collaboration with the other two islands of the Caribbean Netherlands. Therefore the choice has been made to mention the relevant information in relation to Bonaire and St. Eustatius as well.

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 further information about 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 Saba is concerned, this only captures crime registered by the KPCN (police force) and the OM (public prosecution service) in the year 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.¹

Refer to the Family and Parenting chapter for information about domestic violence and child abuse.

The statistics from the Caribbean Netherlands Police Corps show the same pattern as that on Bonaire and St. Eustatius: thefts form the greatest number of crimes followed by violence, and both the police and the Public Prosecutor prioritize the solving of violent crimes (see Table 5). There were 178 incidents registered in Actpol and, of those, about a quarter involved theft and about 20% were violent crimes. Conspicuous on Saba is the large number of incidents involving destruction of property (23). From the 178 cases, 55 were recorded by the Public Prosecutor and, of these, more than half were cases of violence.²

Fact	Number	Solved
Property	23	13%
Violent crimes	30	83%
Burglary	23	52%
Other theft	21	29%
Possession/use of firearms	7	86%
Vice crimes	0	-
Threat	9	100%
Opium law	3	100%
Resistance/obstruction	4	125%
Collisions	39	87%
Traffic offenses	33	85%
Total	192	68%

Table 5: Crime figures registered by KPCN Saba.³

The 2012 perception study for the Caribbean Netherlands⁴ showed that 39% of Saba residents feel that safety has decreased since the transition while 13% has the impression that safety has improved. But at least 69% were not satisfied with the performance of the police force.

1.3 Juvenile crime situation

In 2011 there was one underage suspect registered with the public prosecution on account of a violent incident.⁵

¹ IPOL Service, National Police Agency (2012). *Registered criminality on Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius 2008-2011*.

² IPOL Service, National Police Agency (2012). *Registered criminality on Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius 2008-2011*.

³ IPOL Service National Police Agency (2012). *Registered criminality on Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius 2008-2011 St. Eustatius*.

⁴ 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*.

⁵ IPOL Service National Police Agency (2012). *Registered criminality on Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius 2008-2011*.

The 2006 study among pupils, *Communities that Care*, indicated that violence and juvenile delinquency on the five islands of the former Netherlands Antilles occurs most frequently on Saba.

On Saba, 45% of the youths admitted to having participated in a fight and 53% declared to have beaten someone up. The percentage of youths that reported to carry a weapon sometimes to regularly was 33% on Saba, while 19% said they had threatened someone for money. Further, 44% of youths on St. Eustatius admitted to shoplifting. The percentage of youths that revealed that they had once been apprehended by the police was 10% on Saba.¹

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 chapter on Recreation, Play, and Leisure Time.

In 2010, a Center for Youth and Family (CJG) was opened on Saba. 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.²

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. For more information about upbringing support, community care and family guardianship, see the chapter 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 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 chapter.

1.5 **Combating crime**

The Caribbean Netherlands Police Force has offices on the three islands. In tackling frequent crimes and misdemeanors, 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.

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.

¹ Boer, S. de, Roorda, W., Jonkman, H., Van Aalst, M. (2006). *Study amongst pupils, Communities that Care*. Netherlands Antilles. DSP-Group.

² Letter from the Minister of Security and Justice dated 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80

³ Dienst IPOL, Korps Landelijke Politiediensten (2012). *Geregistreerde criminaliteit op Bonaire, Saba en Sint Eustatius 2008-2011*.

⁴ Letter from the Minister of Security and Justice dated 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80.

The understaffing at KPCN is particularly pressing at a number of operating service such as Investigation, Basic Community Policy (Dutch acronym: BPZ) and Intake, Information and Operational Support, where there are forty vacancies across the three islands.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 community support 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 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 in 2011: from 14% in 2009 to 8% in 2011. On the other hand, the number of minors involved in incidents has shown a significant increase compared to 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. Finally, the approach is also 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 care 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 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 for which criminal offences someone will be tried.⁵

¹ Dienst IPOL, Korps Landelijke Politiediensten (2012). *Geregistreerde criminaliteit op Bonaire, Saba en Sint Eustatius 2008-2011*.

² <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/30/veiligheid+en+justitie.html>. Consulted on 28 October 2012.

³ Dienst IPOL, Korps Landelijke Politiediensten (2012). *Geregistreerde criminaliteit op Bonaire, Saba en Sint Eustatius 2008-2011*.

⁴ Letter from the Minister of Security and Justice dated 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80

⁵ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/30/veiligheid+en+justitie.html>. Consulted on 25 October 2012/

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.¹

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.

The Common Court handles appeal cases tried and sentenced at first-instance courts. Appeal cases are handled by multiple – three – judges.² 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.³

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 Court 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.⁴

1.8 **Legal aid**

Anyone whose annual earnings stay below \$12,570 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 compulsory.⁵

1.9 **Juvenile sanctions**

Both in the Caribbean Netherlands and the European Netherlands, the age of criminal responsibility is twelve.⁶

The following sanctions are available for adolescents aged between twelve and sixteen:

- HALT settlement
- Reprimand
- Financial penalty
- Supervision order under criminal law
- 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)

¹ <http://www.gemhofvanjustitie.org/>, and: <http://www.gemhofvanjustitie.org/vestigingen/statia>. Consulted on 24 October 2012.

² <http://www.gemhofvanjustitie.org/>. Consulted on 24 October 2012. And information received by e-mail from Justine Beumer-Gonggrijp, public prosecutor, public prosecution office Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, 2 April 2013.

³ <http://www.gemhofvanjustitie.org/vestigingen>. Consulted on 24 October 2012.

⁴ <http://www.gemhofvanjustitie.org/index.php?eid=442>. Consulted on 24 October 2012.

⁵ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/192/recht+op+kosteloze+rechtsbijstand.html>

⁶ *Wetboek van Strafvordering BES* Article 477

- 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 Saba, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment has financed the employment of a supervisor by the Saba Conservation Foundation who supervises community service sentences.³

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.⁴ 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.⁵

1.11 Juvenile detention

Young criminals from Saba are held in the correctional institution on Bonaire if detention is unavoidable⁴. The intention is that they will serve their sentences in the detention facility on St. Eustatius which is being built at the moment.

The police cells on Saba were declared unfit for use, which meant that suspects could only spend one night there. After that the suspects had to be taken to St. Eustatius or Bonaire. After the rebuilding in 2012, the police cells on Saba are again being used.⁶

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

¹ *Wetboek van Strafrecht BES*, Article 41.

² <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/nieuws/181/reclasseringstoezicht-ook-met-gps-enkelband-mogelijk.html>

³ Information received in an email from Leo Tigges, liaison for Caribbean Netherlands from the Ministry of Security and Justice, 6th August 2012.

⁴ 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 Information received in an email from Leo Tigges, liaison for Caribbean Netherlands from the Ministry of Security and Justice, 6th August 2012.

⁶ IPOL Service National Police Agency (2012). *Registered criminality on Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius 2008-2011St. Eustatius*.

barely any possibilities for after care on a voluntary basis. A ‘sheltered housing’ facility is lacking.¹

1.13 **Victim support**

On the three islands, 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.²

1.14 **Immigration**

The Netherlands’ Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND) has an office on each of the islands to receive residence permit or naturalization applications.

In 2011, 5,553 applications for a residence permit were submitted to the IND on the three islands (refer to Table 6). Another 51 naturalization applications were submitted, of which forty were granted.³ The IND on the BES islands did not receive any applications for asylum.⁴

Type of application	Number submitted	Number granted
Provisional residence permit application	488	453
Fixed-term residence permit	1,522	1,487
Fixed-term residence permit extension	1,775	1,745
Permanent residence permit	322	297
Admission by law	1,087	1,075
Extension of admission by law	41	40
Statement of non-application	92	88
Visa return	226	226
Total	5,553	5,411

Table 6: Production 2011 IND Caribbean Netherlands.⁵

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.⁶ On 31 December 2010, Saba had 1824 inhabitants. Of this population, 50% was born in the former Netherlands Antilles, 16% in Central or South America, 3% in the Netherlands, 16% in the U.S. or Canada, and 16% in other countries.⁷

¹ Information received in an email from Leo Tigges, liaison for Caribbean Netherlands from the Ministry of Security and Justice, 6th August 2012.

² *Informatiekrant Bonaire, Sint Eustatius en Saba*. Editie 13, June 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 Information received by e-mail from Michelle Verplancke, Senior/Deputy unit manager Immigration and Naturalisation Service Caribbean Netherlands, 3 December 2012.

⁵ Appendix to letter from the Minister for Immigration, Integration and Asylum, dated 10 February 2012. House of Representatives, Session year 2011-2012 nr. 31 568 nr. 97.

⁶ Letter from the Minister for Immigration, Integration and Asylum, dated 1 February 2012. House of Representatives, Session year 2011-2012 no. 31 568 no. 95.

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 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 on Bonaire. 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 on the islands.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.

CoMensha reports that figures on human trafficking on the islands are not available.^{5 6}

1.16 Legislation

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to children on Saba.

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

¹ Letter of the Minister of Security and Justice dated 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 91.

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, Sint Eustatius and Saba, *Voorjaarsrapportage 2011*.

⁴ http://www.mensenhandel.nl/cms/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=8&Itemid=12 Consulted on 27 October 2012.

⁵ Information received in an email from Judith Keller, CoMensha, 18 March 2013.

⁶ information received in an email from Justine Beumer-Gonggrijp, public prosecutor, public prosecution office Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, 2 April 2013.

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. 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
- 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.⁷
- 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.⁸

¹ http://www.eerstekamer.nl/wetsvoorstel/32017_rijkswet_gemeenschappelijk

² http://www.eerstekamer.nl/wetsvoorstel/32018_rijkswet_openbare

³ http://www.eerstekamer.nl/wetsvoorstel/32207_veiligheidswet_bes

⁴ Information received by e-mail 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.

⁶ Department of IPOL, Korps Landelijke Politiediensten (2012). *Geregistreerde criminaliteit op Bonaire, Saba en Sint Eustatius 2008-2011*.

⁷ Letter of the Minister of Security and Justice dated 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80.

⁸ Letter of the Minister of Security and Justice dated 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80.

- Since June 2010, the Guardianship Council has been handling youth probation tasks on all three islands of the Caribbean Netherlands.¹
- Bonaire's custodial center was done up and extended in 2008 and 2010.² A daytime program was designed for the center, which has also started offering educational services to inmates.³
- New multifunctional custodial institutions are currently being built on Bonaire and St. Eustatius. These are expected to open in 2015.⁴
- The capacity of the current custodial institution has been expanded using container cells pending the construction of new buildings.⁵
- 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.⁶

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.⁷

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.⁸ 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

¹ Letter of the Minister of Security and Justice dated 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80.

² Letter of the Minister of Security and Justice dated 18 January 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 31 568 no. 91.

³ Letter of the Minister of Security and Justice dated 12 September 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 80.

⁴ Letter of the Minister of Security and Justice dated 18 January 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 31 568 no. 91. Information newsletter Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba. Edition 13, June 2012.

⁵ Report General Consultation on 6 February 2012 with Minister Opstelten of Security and Justice and State Secretary Teeven of Security and Justice. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33 000 IV no. 63.

⁶ Kingdom Representative for the public bodies of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, *Voorjaarsrapportage 2011*.

⁷ Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland, *Informatiekrant Bonaire, Sint Eustatius en Saba*. No. 10, Sept/Oct. 2011.

⁸ Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland, *Informatiekrant Bonaire, Sint Eustatius en Saba*. No. 6. September 2010.

organizational sense, the police force is part of the Directorate-General for Police of the Ministry of Security and Justice.¹

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.²

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.³

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.⁴ 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).⁵

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.⁶

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.⁷

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.⁸

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.

¹ http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korps_Politie_Caribisch_Nederland. Consulted on 28 October 2012.

² <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/177/brandweer.html>. Consulted on 28 October 2012.

³ Ministry of Justice, Letter to the House of Representatives on the status of judicial facilities on the BES islands as per 10 October 2010, dated 4 October 2010.

⁴ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/30/veiligheid+en+justitie.html>. Consulted on 25 October 2012/

⁵ Ministry of Justice, Letter to the House of Representatives on the status of judicial facilities on the BES islands as per 10 October 2010, dated 4 October 2010.

⁶ <http://www.gemhofvanjustitie.org/index.php?eid=442>. Consulted on 24 October 2012.

⁷ <http://www.gemhofvanjustitie.org/>. Consulted on 25 October 2012.

⁸ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/178/justitie%E3%ABLe+inrichting+caribisch+nederland%2C+locatie+bonaire.+%28%E2%80%9898jicn%E2%80%99+%29.html>. Consulted on 25 October 2012.

The Guardianship Council works closely together with other entities such as youth care and family supervision, 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.¹

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.² The Bonaire office has expressed a willingness to also serve as a reporting center for victims of human trafficking.³

Law Enforcement Council

The Law Enforcement Council is an intra-national 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.⁴

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

Nearly all the children interviewed have a positive feeling about security on the island: they feel safe wherever they go. There is virtually no street violence apart from a single fight between men who are drunk. Many children attribute the feeling of safety to the small population, everyone knows everyone, after all. If anything occurs, they go home. And anyway there are 'police everywhere on the island'. There is no other entity to turn to in case they feel threatened according to the children.

Some children feel less secure in a few places or in specific situations. The children also say that things are occasionally stolen but that there is little or no criminality on the island. 'There are no murders', and children find that 'quite safe, certainly in comparison with the other islands'.

There are also no gangs or youth gangs.⁵

'Because Saba is so small, it's safe. Everyone knows each other.' (girl 14 years old, Saba)

'The best thing here is that everyone knows each other. Fighting is very rare, and there's virtually no crime. Saba is the safest place to be.' (girl, 12 years old, Saba)

¹ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/188/voogdijraad.html>. Consulted on 27 October 2012. And information received by email from Atie de Vrij, policy adviser, Judicial Youth Policy directorate, Ministry of Security and Justice, 4 April 2013.

² *Informatiekrant Bonaire, Sint Eustatius en Saba*. Editie 13, June 2012.

³ Kingdom Representative for the public bodies of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, *Voorjaarsrapportage 2011*.

⁴ <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/persberichten/2011/04/01/benoeming-leden-raad-voor-de-rechtshandhaving-en-beheerraad.html>. Consulted on 25 October 2012.

⁵ See quotes 514, 515, 516, 518, 519, 520, 522, 523, 524, 525, 527, 528, 529, 531, 532, 534, 535, 536, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 550, 551, 552.

'There's hardly any violence and no gangs.' (boy, sixteen years old, Saba)

3 Young people on safety

The adolescents 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

The experts also says that it is safe on Saba. As a result, children can move freely across the island.

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.

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

¹ See literature 81, 100.

The 2012 Poverty Exploration shows that large groups of people having to live together due to poverty also comes with safety risks.¹

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).²

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.

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.

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.³

5.3 **Youths**

The literature about juvenile involvement in crime paints the following picture.

¹ See literature 33, 111.

² See literature 16.

³ See literature 102, 56, 57.

A youth survey from 2003 and 2007 shows that a large section of children on Saba 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 (14%) and say they carry a weapon when they go out (15%). The highest scores for problem behavior on Saba are for sexually risky behavior, depression and truancy, followed by violence and alcohol and drug use. The risk factors on Saba lead to high scores for the different sorts of problem behavior. The protective factors do not provide enough protection against them.¹

The now older youth plan for Saba (2006) was based on even older research about children and young people between 12 and 24:²

- A third of the young people admitted having unsuitable friends and acquaintances.
- A fifth of the young people felt unsafe out in the nightlife.
- 62% of the pupils felt safe at school.
- 11% of the young people was a victim of violence with a weapon at school.
- A quarter of the young men consider it normal to go to a prostitute.
- One in eight of the young people find it normal to accept money or gifts in exchange for sexual acts.
- Nearly half of the young people say they know someone who was a victim of sexual abuse.
- 15% of the young people said that they had sex without actually agreeing to it.
- 3% of the young people said that they had been subjected to corporal punishment.
- 37% of the young people said that they had suffered from verbal abuse.
- 33% of the young people said that they had been in contact with the police.
- 21% of the young people said that they had deliberately destroyed public property.
- 11% of the young people said that they were members of a street gang.
- A third of the young people said that they would like to be a member of a street gang.

A large survey among pupils aged between thirteen and eighteen in 2006 showed that violence and youth delinquency in this age group was most prevalent on Saba and St. Eustatius, followed by Bonaire. On Saba 45% of the young people admitted that they had taken part in a fight and 53% admitted to having beaten up someone. Around 33% of the children sometimes or regularly carried a weapon.³

On Saba, 19% said that they had threatened someone for money. In addition, 44% of the children said that they had shoplifted, and 10% admitted to having been apprehended by the police. Of the children and young people on the island, 5% said that they had been sexually abused. The percentage of young people that said they had been threatened was 20%.

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.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

¹ See literature 106.

² See literature 113.

³ An article based on this 2010 research cites other figures on the carrying of weapons. See literature 60.

⁴ See literature 8, 60.

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.¹

Police records for 2008 to 2011 (2012) show crime registered by the public prosecution service and the Caribbean Netherlands Police Force. For an extensive summary on this, see under Current Situation ('General crime picture' and 1.3 'Juvenile crime situation').²

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 adequately 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.³

5.4 **Approach and sanction**

The following literature in particular provides information about the approach to tackling crime on Saba.

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 Saba, a majority of inhabitants expressed dissatisfaction with how the police force functions (69%). This is tied to a reduced sense of safety on the island.

A subsequent survey in 2012 shows that people are now 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 (43% feel safety on the island has improved since 10/10/10, while 20% feel that the island become less safe). People are generally positive about the fire service, which also improved in comparison to 2011.⁴

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 offence. The committee on the elimination of discrimination against women expressed the same concern in its final remarks in 2010.

¹ See literature 100.

² See literature 32.

³ See literature 74.

⁴ See literature 27, 28.

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.¹

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 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.²

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 committee 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.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.

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

¹ See literature 51, 73, 17, 66, 37.

² See literature 16, 74.

³ See literature 40.

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 that can be applied on Saba as from 2011: 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 10 October 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 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.⁶

¹ See literature 100.

² See literature 49.

³ See literature 51.

⁴ See literature 16.

⁵ See literature 74.

⁶ See literature 81.

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 Saba.

- 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 Saba 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).

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. Trying sixteen-and-seventeen-year-olds under adult criminal law and the possibilities of life imprisonment for young people in that age bracket is also not consistent with the minimum requirements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The new approach on Saba 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 Saba

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)

Elka Charles, teacher of the primary school started providing after-school care for children between four and twelve years in 2011. About twenty children attend. The parents pay \$85 per month. The supervision of the group is paid for from these contributions. The after-school care does not receive a subsidy. Against this relatively low range of after-school care there is a greater range of after-school activities offered by the Child Focus Foundation (see 1.5, other activities for children).¹

1.3 Sports

The available facilities on Saba consist of a multi-functional Cruyff soccer field, a sports hall in the secondary school and two basketball fields. The inhabitants of the island do not have access to a swimming pool.

Children receive 2 hours of gym lessons per week at school. Occasional sports activities take place in the weekend and in the afternoon during the week.

In 2009, and with subsidy of Health, Welfare and Sport, the Netherlands Institute for Sport and Exercise (*Nederlands Instituut voor Sport en Bewegen*, NISB) commissioned the DSP-group to perform a quick scan regarding the situation of sports and exercise on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba. According to the report, very little is organized on Saba and private initiative is limited. The Child Focus Foundation organizes sports activities. In addition

there are small groups active in a number of sport disciplines. The Saba Triathlon is held once a year and a great number of the inhabitants turn out.¹

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.²

The following will describe the cultural options children on Saba. This is not an exhaustive list, but it does give a basic picture of the island's cultural offering for children.

On Saba, the Child Focus Foundation organizes cultural activities for children from four to eighteen years old. In addition, there is a dance school on Saba and also the dance group Saba Danza.³

The Kids Life Imagery Foundation provides photography lessons for children jointly with the Child Focus Foundation.⁴

The Saba Cultural Foundation organizes a number of events on Saba, including the yearly carnival.

The Harry L. Johnson Museum is based on Saba.⁵

1.5 Other activities for children

The Child Focus Foundation organizes several types of after-school activities for children from four to eighteen years old, such as sports, culture, cooking lessons, sewing lessons and music. The activities take place at different locations on the island and the children are brought there by bus. No meals are provided but children can have sandwiches if they are hungry.

Child Focus reaches around 85% of the youth mostly up to 12 years old (on the basis of occasional participation). Child Focus will develop more activities in the future, especially for teenagers.

The Public Body provides the building and the electricity. The activities and leadership are financed by funds and subsidies, to which the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport provides \$ 375,000 (for 2012 and 2013).⁶

A youth leader works in the Center for Youth and Family. About twenty children and teenagers take part individually in the activities organized by the youth leader. There is a sort of youth club that provides film and informational activities, sport and games and

¹ Lagendijk, E. (2009). *Sport and exercise on the BES islands. Quick scan and advice about policy, infrastructure and organization of sport and exercise on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba around 2009*. Amsterdam: DSP-group.

² <http://regelingkultura.wordpress.com>

³ <http://regelingkultura.wordpress.com/2012/07/31/maandag-30-juli-2012-aruba-en-saba/>
<http://www.sabanews.nl/6%20News/0%20Saba%20WWW/wordpress/?p=8171>.

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/kidslifeimagery>.

⁵ <http://www.sabatourism.com/museums.html>.

⁶ Letter from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment dated 22 June 2012 to the House of Representatives concerning promises made during general discussions Caribbean Netherlands 30 January 2012. House of Representatives, session year 2011-2012 33000 IV no. 76.

discussion of specific subjects. The Center for Youth and Family has a toy library like those on Bonaire and St. Eustatius.

1.6 **Playgrounds**

The Harry L. Johnson Museum has a playground for children .

1.7 **Library**

There is a library on Saba.

1.8 **Religion**

The majority of the inhabitants of Saba (58%) are Roman Catholic. In addition, 14% belong to the Anglican Church and 22% have another faith.¹

There are five churches in the four villages on Saba: three Roman Catholic and two Anglican.

1.9 **Public transport**

There is no public transport on the island except for pupil transportation. There is a ferry service between Saba and St. Maarten, run by two by two private companies.²

1.10 **Legislation**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to children on Saba.

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 Child Focus Foundation on Saba receives subsidy for this purpose from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

Responsibility for the policy in the areas of youth work and afterschool care lies with the island authorities. They provide subsidies to certain organizations, such as the Child Focus Foundation.

Unlike their counterparts in the European Netherlands, parents on Saba 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 assumed responsibility for the overdue maintenance of child care premises.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. The study showed that none of the three islands had a sports policy plan.⁵

¹ <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saba>

² IdeeVersa (2012). *Reference framework Caribbean Netherlands*. Page 96.

³ IdeeVersa (2012). *Referentiekader Caribisch Nederland*. Page 210.

⁴ IdeeVersa (2012). *Referentiekader Caribisch Nederland*. Bijlage 3: beleidsvelden. Page 175.

⁵ Zuidgeest, M.H.P. en Maarseveen, M.F.A.M. van (2011) *Bonaire gezond en duurzaam: naar een fietsplan voor Bonaire*. Stichting ABC Advisory Report no. 154, Bonaire and Enschede.

In 2011, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science made a once-only 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.¹

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 has been accommodated at the CJG.

Child Focus Foundation

The Child Focus Foundation organizes several after-school activities for children and adolescents from four to eighteen years old on Saba.

(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

The children interviewed on Saba describe extensively what they do when they are not in school and have free time. Of course they have to do homework. Besides that, the children spend their time playing, watching television, reading, making music, drawing and painting, gaming or using the computer.

There are also children who are members of an archeological or chess club, others cycle, play sports or meet their friends (see later). Some have household duties such as vacuuming, washing up or doing the laundry (see also Family and Parenting).

Some children find that there are not many children of their own age to do things with because Saba is so small. In addition many of the inhabitants are relatives. Some children find that fine, others find it limiting. They also have a lot of free time.²

'Saba is small. Not many people live here so there aren't many people you can go and see.'
(boy, 14 years old, Saba)

'Boring' and 'dull' are the key terms that most of the older children use to describe the situation on Saba regarding free time. They have the feeling that not much gets organized and that the island is also too small for that. That leaves it up to them to think up things and then to organize them. Some children are successful. They have turned things around and decided that they need to entertain themselves. 'You must have your own hobbies' said a sixteen year old girl who draws and paints. 'You just have to look for something to do', added a boy of the same age.

¹ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/nieuws/97/mogelijkheid-voor-extra-geld-bibliotheken-saba,-sint-eustatius-en-bonaire.html>.

² See quotes 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 645.

Not all children can get rid of the feelings of boredom and undertake an activity. The children notice that many of their peers just hang around. A number of children choose to sleep when they feel bored.¹

'I try to sleep when I get bored, which is often.' (girl, 16 years old, Saba)

'There isn't really enough to do on the island for teenagers.' (girl, 14 years old, Saba)

Some children find that there are advantages to the fact that what is offered for teenagers is somewhat limited and that the island is not very lively. 'If there is a party, everyone comes', observed a youth of sixteen. Moreover, trips to another island, such as St. Maarten, are all the more exciting. Some children do not miss the entertainment on other islands with cinemas and shopping malls. They find it nice and peaceful on Saba.²

Most children take part in sport and some are fanatical. Basketball, softball and soccer are popular. It also gives children the chance to occasionally visit other islands to play matches. In addition there are children who swim, skate, run, do fitness exercises, walk, dance and play tennis.

Children also say that the Child Focus Foundation organizes activities, such as the Sea Scouts and photography lessons, in which they take part.

The Center for Youth and Family also organizes get-togethers for young children and for young people.

Children would like to see more sports facilities and material on the island, such as basketballs, soccer balls and team clothing.³

'I usually spend my time studying or playing sports. In any case, I'm hardly ever home.' (youth, 16 years old, Saba)

Usually local teams play against each other. Occasionally a soccer team from another island comes here to play a game.' (girl, 14 years old, Saba)

Just as in other places, most of the children interviewed on Saba enjoy 'chilling out' with other children of their own age. Hanging out together, doing fun things, laughing, sleeping over, listening to music, (online) gossiping, watching a sporting event or a film together.⁴

'On Friday evening there is a place that shows movies. We occasionally go out to dinner or go to a basketball game.' (girl, 14 years old, Saba)

'There aren't many places to go out. There is a place where you can go just to chill with your friends.' (boy, 14 years old, Saba)

'A lot of kids live on the street, which in fact starts right from nursery school.' (girl, 16 years old, Saba)

The children would like it if there was more to do after school on Saba. More clubs, activities, workshops. That would also help children to understand better 'that they must do something with their lives otherwise it will never be better', according to a girl of sixteen.

¹ See quotes 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 590, 591, 592, 593, 640.

² See quotes 596, 597, 598.

³ See quotes 569, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 646.

⁴ See quotes 625, 626, 627, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643.

The wish lists of some children include a cinema and an amusement park, but the children are realists and think that they will not be built because Saba is too small and there is no money for them.¹

'A movie theater would be great, but it will probably never happen. Saba is too small.' (girl, 14 years old, Saba)

3 Experts on recreation, play, and leisure time

The experts who were consulted find that the offering for the children of Saba who are twelve years old or more is very limited. From that age onwards children will take part in more exciting and challenging things and have more entertainment, but there are few possibilities for this on the island.

The experts find that there are few play opportunities for young children and insufficient sport and play opportunities for older children.

What is available is sometimes difficult to reach for children. The Child Focus Foundation does organize the logistics of the after-school activities. Even so, the experts recommend a better bus service as parents do not feel responsible or are not in a position to bring their children to after-school activities and to collect them afterwards. The school bus, the busses of the Child Focus Foundation and the drum band are not sufficient.

In addition, the experts say, there is a need for 'strong group leaders for after-school activities' because 'otherwise the children cannot be held in check'. They also find that children should be stimulated to take part in activities. 'That is better than only watching TV or gaming'.²

If you are twelve years old or older, you want to do exciting things, which we don't have here. That makes it very boring for children.' (expert)

The smallness of the island makes it difficult to do more with sports activities. There is a Johan Cruyff soccer field and a sports hall and there are frequent efforts to organize sports activities. In reality, the number of children in each age group is so small that you cannot make a selection based on sex or age. Everyone plays in the team. This means that children cannot develop.

The limited number of children means that it is not financially possible to establish a new sport. In addition it is physically impossible to allow for all sports on Saba: there is too little room and the room that there is, is not level.³

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

¹ See quotes 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653.

² See quotes 566, 594, 595, 599, 600, 601, 602, 644.

³ See quotes 622, 623, 624.

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. Subsidies have been allocated to existing foundations for leisure activities, such as Child Focus on Saba. 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**

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, in the committee's opinion these are insufficiently structured and balanced. There are insufficient resources. For disabled children, access to activities and facilities is a bottleneck.

The 2006 Saba youth policy plan revealed that children felt that there were sufficient recreational opportunities for young people, but that some activities were not structurally offered. In addition they found that the available recreational facilities must be improved and that there was a need for a swimming pool.

In the 2011 *Woonvisie*, the residential environment is described as not always clean and safe, with playgrounds/fields lacking in some areas.

The Poverty Exploration of 2012 shows that activities for adolescents, such as sports, singing, and dance, are generally free on Saba. 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**

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.

What emerges in the youth policy plan for Saba (2006) is that a third of the children feel that they have unsuitable friends and acquaintances and one fifth feel unsafe in the nightlife. More than one in ten children said that they had no nice and good friends.³

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. And seeing as they cannot afford to put

¹ See literature 74.

² See literature 33, 76.

³ See literature 113, 60.

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.¹

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 Saba:

- 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.

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.

¹ See literature 33.

Needless to say, the right to recreation, play, and leisure time is also closely related to other rights and subjects from the convention.¹ 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 Saba 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 such 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.

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

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 Saba; 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 Saba 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 (*Wet medezeggenschap op scholen*, WMS) 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

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

² De Participatieladder van Hart: Hart, R. A. (1992), *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*. Innocenti Essays, UNICEF, Florence, Italy

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.

appointed from and by staff and members appointed from and by parents. In secondary education, the participation council must also have members appointed from and by pupils.¹

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.² Pupils and their parents do, however, want to participate in decision-making in education.³

The Saba Comprehensive School website reports that a students' council exists.⁴

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.⁵

On Saba the Child Focus Foundation organizes activities for and with children. For information see the chapter on Recreation, play and leisure time.

1.4 **Access to information**

Each of the three islands has one or multiple branches of a library. 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 Saba also have access to TV and radio.

1.5 **Legislation**

Needless to say, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to children growing up on Saba.

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.⁶ Other than that, the Children's Ombudsman also receives complaints and alerts from adults and children. For

¹ *Wet Voortgezet Onderwijs BES*, Articles 57 and 58.

² Research voor Beleid (2012). *Evaluatie wet Medezeggenschap op Scholen. Eindrapport*. Een onderzoek in opdracht van het Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap.

³ Information received in an email from Chris Frans, vice-chairman and secretary OCaN, 23 April 2013.

⁴ http://www.sabacomprehensiveschool.com/index.php?topic=student_council. Consulted on 14 January 2013.

⁵ www.jongerenvanhetkoninkrijk.org. Consulted on 12 January 2013.

⁶ <http://www.kinderombudsman.nl/92/veelgestelde-vragen/ombudsman.nl/92/veelgestelde-vragen/>. Consulted on 12 January 2013.

the Caribbean Netherlands, the Children's Ombudsman will be working closely together with the National Ombudsman.¹

2 Children on participation

The children who were interviewed say that they are sometimes asked for their opinion, both at home and at school or other places.

Some children find that their family and friends are interested in what they think about things. Other children say that they make decisions together about dress, bed times and those sort of things. Some parents let their children decide what they wear, who they have contact with, other parents ask the child for their ideas but finally make the decision themselves.²

'She is the mom, so I leave the decision-making to her. I normally choose not to complain.' (boy, sixteen years old, Saba)

'My parents respect my opinion, but what I say isn't always taken into account. They're older, so they decide.' (girl, 11 years old, Saba)

'My parents encourage me to do things and not to spend all my time on the sofa, but it's always up to me.' (girl, 12 years old, Saba)

'At home we decide things together.' (girl, 14 years old, Saba)

Some children find that they are taken seriously at school. They are asked for their opinions on such things as art. And there are occasional discussions and sometimes a survey is conducted by other organizations. Occasionally they are asked what they think of their lessons. They were also asked what they thought about the new school uniform. Many children found the previous uniform better, but unfortunately they were not asked at the time.

There are also children that have never found that their opinion was considered at school. They are never asked, according to the children. The differences are notable considering that there is only one secondary school on Saba.

If and if so, what was done with their opinions, is unclear to most of the pupils.³

'At school they never really ask for our opinions.' (boy, 14 years old, Saba)

Friends also sometimes ask for each other's opinion or help. Children like that. They do not like it when they are involved in something and then are told how everything must be done.

Most children are happy if their opinion is considered. A fourteen year old girl expressed this very succinctly: 'It feels good when they want to know how I think about something'. And a sixteen year old girl said: 'They ask for my opinion both at home and at school. That means that they want to know how I think about things. That gives me the feeling that I'm a part of it.'

The children say that there are no organizations on Saba that are interested in their opinion. They also find it difficult to change things. They don't know who they should go to then. Nor are there any discussion or debating clubs, outside school, for children who find that appealing.⁴

'As far as I can see, there aren't any organizations on Saba that are particularly interested in the views of young people.' (girl, 17 years old, Saba)

¹ Dutch government (2012). *Vierde rapportage Nederland aan het Comité voor de Rechten van het Kind*.

² See quotes 654, 660, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691.

³ See quotes 662, 663, 664, 692, 693, 694, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704.

⁴ See quotes 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 661, 695, 701.

'It's hard when you want to change anything here. There isn't really anybody you can talk to, certainly not at school in any case.' (boy, 14 years old, Saba)

'On Saba, the opinion of everyone, including children, is taken seriously. Everyone's opinion is listened to.' (girl, 12 years old, Saba)

3 Experts on participation

The experts that were surveyed for this study say that children on Saba cannot participate, as they are not self-sufficient and independent. In addition no one ever talks about emotions and children are not really talked to. Children are kept 'small'. They must keep their mouths shut, ask no questions and mustn't interfere. Participation doesn't come into it.

Some experts note that children do not say much about what happens at home. A 'stay silent' culture is dominant. At the same time nothing can be kept secret on the island and there is a gossip culture.

Some adults on the island are afraid that children will come into conflict with their parents if you take them seriously and tell them of their rights. An expert drew a parallel with the situation in European Netherlands in the 1970s regarding the Youth Advice Center (*Jeudgadviescentrum*, JAC). There is a feeling that children will then start to resist their parents.

The after-school organization Child Focus is now trying to get children more interested in their activities by asking them what they would like to do.¹

'Knowing the mentality of young people, they are not likely to openly discuss any problems they have at home. At the same time, there are no secrets on Saba. People use Facebook a lot here, and it works like a tabloid newspaper. Maybe Facebook should be used to inform young people about their rights.' (expert)

'There is a culture of silence. Children should keep quiet and not ask anything. It's none of your business, as a child.' (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.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

¹ See quotes 665, 665, 665, 666, 666, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670.

² See literature 27, 28.

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 now outdated 2006 youth policy plan for Saba showed that the possibilities for children to be heard and taken seriously, both at home and at school, were severely limited.

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.¹

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 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.²

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).

¹ See literature 72, 100.

² See literature 16, 74.

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 12.¹ In this comment, the committee stresses, among other things, that participation is an ongoing 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 Saba. 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.

¹ Committee on the rights of the child (2009). *General Comment no. 12, The right of the child to be heard*. CRC/C/GC/12.

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 Saba

The following will describe housing conditions on Saba. 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, Saba's population was 1,971, of which 342 were under twenty years old.¹

Aside from these population figures for Saba (and their age and sex), there is no recent statistical data about islanders' housing situation. There are only estimates and figures from *Woonvisie Saba* (Housing Vision Saba) documents and studies.

According to information contained in the Woonvisie 2012-2015 for Saba (hereafter called the *Woonvisie*) there are 1,080 homes on the island for the nearly 2,000 inhabitants. Virtually all homes are privately owned.

According to the Woonvisie, affordable accommodation on Saba is under great pressure. As a result, a house often accommodates far more people than it was originally built and planned for. On Saba it was considered normal to build your house before getting married. From 1994 to 1998 the housing corporation on Saba, the Own Your Own Home Foundation (OYOHF), subsidized by the Netherlands government, gave out low interest loans for the building of houses. Eighty-five households made use of this. At the moment, loans for the building or purchase of a property are difficult to obtain and have a high

¹ CBS (2012). *The Dutch Caribbean in figures* en CBS (2012), Statline, Bevolking Caribisch Nederland.

interest rate. Building costs are high on Saba due to local circumstances (mountainous, limited ground availability) and, since the transition, they have risen further.

The OYOHF owns 26 social properties. Most of these houses have two or three bedrooms and they often have a separate apartment on the ground floor with one bedroom. From 2012, six social properties are being built in the Range district. Another 20 social properties will be built in the Under the Hill district, in cooperation with the Netherlands housing association Woonvisie.

There were 50 registered house seekers, twice as many as the number of available properties.¹ To be considered for a social property, the income must lie between a minimum and maximum amount.² Whenever a social property becomes available, a social worker assesses the social and living conditions of the first applicant on the waiting list. The property is offered according to the urgency. The Woonvisie indicated that the inhabitants of Saba want a clarification of the criteria for registration, allocation and the waiting list.

On Saba and the other two islands making up Caribbean Netherlands, the inhabitants receive no rent subsidies, unlike in the European Netherlands. However, the rent for a social property may only be a maximum of one third of the income of the tenant (\$ 168 to \$ 310).³

In May 2012, the OYOHF sent a letter to the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations asking for its financial situation to be considered. The organization wrote that due to a structural shortage of funds, no adequate maintenance could be carried out on the properties. In the letter, the minister was asked to allow the OYOHF to charge cost covering rents and to solve any resulting financial problems by providing rent subsidies, similar to the system in the European Netherlands. The minister did not share the opinion of the OYOHF that the current regulations, based on the Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment Act for the BES islands, have led to this impossible situation where housing associations cannot charge rents that cover their costs. The Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment act for the BES islands contains articles about building and an accommodation regulation but no articles about rent policy or rent subsidies.⁴

In the private sector tenants pay between \$ 600 and \$ 800 for an apartment and between \$ 800 and \$ 900 for a house with two bedrooms. Many of these properties are hired by personnel and the hundreds of students from the Saba University School of Medicine.⁵

The Woonvisie concluded that the housing areas are not safe and clean everywhere and some have no facilities for sports and games.⁶ According to Woonvisie there are initiatives underway to improve the quality of life. The Wilhelmina park has been spruced up and there are plans for the building of a young people's area and a number of play areas.⁷

1.3 **Legislation**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child also applies to children on Saba.

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

¹ Woonlinie (2011). *Saba Housing Vision 2012-2015. Housing and livability on 'The Unspoiled Queen'*.

² Information received by e-mail from Woonlinie, October 2012.

³ Woonlinie (2011). *Saba Housing Vision 2012-2015. Housing and livebility on 'The Unspoiled Queen'*.

⁴ Answers to questions from Ortega-Martin about the letter from the Own Your Own Home Foundation by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Second House of Parliament. Meeting year 2011-2012 no. 3000.

⁵ Woonlinie (2011). *Saba Housing Vision 2012-2015. Housing and livability on 'The Unspoiled Queen'*.

⁶ Woonlinie (2011). *Saba Housing Vision 2012-2015. Housing and livability on 'The Unspoiled Queen'*.

⁷ Information received per e-mail from Woonlinie, October 2012.

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. Saba does not yet have a housing regulation (or one that regulates the for housing allocation).¹

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.

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.²

Saba does not yet have a development plan. In 2011, the Netherlands housing association Woonlinie produced a 'Woonvisie 2012-2015' (Housing Vision) for Saba. In the Woonvisie, goals in the area of accommodation are described and also how these goals could be reached. The goals are to have a housing stock that meets the requirements of the inhabitants, a livable future oriented housing area and an adequate support organization.

Six new social rental properties are currently under construction on Saba. In addition, 20 extra social rental properties will be built in cooperation with Woonlinie.

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.

Own Your Own Home Foundation (OYOHF)

This foundation is responsible for social housing on Saba.

¹ IdeeVersa (2012). *Referentiekader Caribisch Nederland*. Bijlage 3: beleidsvelden. Page 128 and 130.

² 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.

Woonlinie

This is the Dutch housing association that supports Saba's OYOHF.

2 Children on housing conditions

The views of the children who were interviewed on Saba about the location and the house where they live are divided and give a balanced picture.

Some say that they have no privacy at home, others find that they have sufficient peace and room to be alone if they choose. There are children with their own bedroom and children who share a bedroom but don't find it a problem.¹

'At home I haven't really got enough privacy. The whole family is coming and going the whole time. I'm not complaining, I'm used to it.' (boy, 16 years old, Saba)

'I live in a fairly large house. It's a decent size.' (girl, 14 years old, Saba)

'I think I have enough privacy. If I get into an argument, I usually go to bed or go over to friends' (boy, 14 years old, Saba)

'We live in a small hut. It's not great, but I've got my own bedroom.' (boy, 14 years old, Saba)

3 Experts on housing conditions

The experts who were consulted spoke in general terms about housing and the living environment on Saba. They often see a connection between the financial situation that families are in and the difficulty they have in finding proper housing. They furthermore confirm the picture presented by the Woonvisie and the Poverty Survey (see below).

4 Literature on housing conditions

The problem of overcrowding is noted in the Woonvisie for Saba 2012-2015. It is not unusual for ten or twelve people to live in a house with three bedrooms. This leads to a disagreeable situation for the occupants. It makes it difficult for children to do their homework and to go to bed on time and teenage mothers often live in their parents' house. Addicted children that live at home can cause extra problems and tension. After discussions with stakeholders, it became clear that social workers need to supervise tenants and make them aware that they should not neglect the house and the surroundings. In addition, it was concluded that the housing areas are not always safe and clean and that some have no facilities for sport and games.

The Poverty Survey 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, including sex and drugs.

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. For instance, there should be better control over the hire of private sector apartments on Saba.

¹ See quotes 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711.

The housing shortage is also highlighted by a study (2010) into the situation of teenage mothers. The majority of teenage mothers on Saba (65.5%) live with their parent(s). One of the reasons for that is that there is no suitable housing available for them.

The 2008 NGO report showed that various families on Saba – and single-parent families in particular - lived in homes that are too small for them. The report refers to ‘bad housing’ as one of the reasons 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.¹

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 Saba, 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 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

¹ See literature 111, 44, 33, 11, 43, 105, 100, 41.

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 achieving the convention's housing rights on Saba. 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 Saba families' financial situation: inflation and the cost of living, 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 and the cost of living

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.¹ In 2011 the average inflation on Saba was 6.4%. Above all, the price of transport and the prices in the catering segment rose in 2011.² In the second quarter of 2012, inflation on Saba was 3.9%. In the quarter before that it was 5.6%. The most important reason for the lower inflation in the second quarter was the reduction in electricity prices. The modest increase in food prices also pushed the inflation rate down.³ In comparison: inflation in the European Netherlands was 2.3% in 2011.⁴ In the first eight months of 2012, the European Netherlands' monthly inflation figures stayed between 2.1% and 2.5%.⁵

¹ *Donner erkent fouten Antillen*. In: newspaper *Trouw* 27 October 2001.

² CBS, Statline, Caribisch Nederland. <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/prijzen/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2012/2012-3560-wm.htm?RefererType=RSSItem>.

³ <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/prijzen/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2012/2012-infkatie-cn-2012-2.htm>

⁴ <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/prijzen/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2012/2012-3560-wm.htm>

⁵ CBS press release of 6 September 2012. *Inflatie ongewijzigd op 2,3%*. <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/prijzen/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2012/2012-051-pb.htm>.

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

There are no reliable figures about the numbers out of work on Saba, according to a representative for the Social Affairs and Employment unit on the BES islands.² In 2005, Ecorys estimated the number at work on Saba at 736 people, which was about 73% of the total population between 15 and 65. Before 2009 the working population on Saba was estimated to be around 800. In 2005, the government was by far the largest employer (30%), rising to 50% if health care and education were included. The catering industry accounted for around 15% of the total number of employees.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

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.⁸

According to Ecorys and Curconsult, there are no recent figures available about the distribution of income on Saba. The government is the largest employer on the island. The average gross monthly salary paid by the government is around \$ 1,855. On the basis of discussions conducted on Saba, a purchasing power survey revealed that, excluding the

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*.

² *CBS start met budgetonderzoek BES-eilanden*. In: *Antilliaans Dagblad*. 2 March 2013.

³ CBS, Statline. <http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=80479NED&D1=13&D2=a&D3=0&D4=103,116&VW=T>.

⁴ CBS, Statline. <http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=71958NED&D1=0,5-6,10&D2=a&D3=0,23-24&D4=0,41,46,51,56&HDR=T&STB=G1,G2,G3&VW=T>.

⁵ Ecorys (2009). *Connection between Education and Labor Market BES-eslands, research commissioned by the Ministry for Education, Culture and Science*.

⁶ <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/minimumloon/vraag-en-antwoord/hoe-hoog-is-het-minimumloon-per-uur.html>. Consulted on 18 June 2012.

⁷ CBS, Statline. <http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=70957ned&D1=a&D2=0-1,I&D3=0&D4=a&D5=0&D6=a&HD=080523-1743&HDR=G2,G4,T,G5&STB=G1,G3>.

⁸ Drewes, M. (2012). *Armoede in Caribisch Nederland, een verkenning*.

government, many employees earned just above the minimum wage.¹ In 2012, the minimum wage for an employee on Saba older than 21 was \$ 4.48 per hour.²

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.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵

The registration and counselling of the unemployed on Saba has not yet been organized, according to a representative for the Social Affairs and Employment unit on the BES islands.⁶ This is also stated in the *Referentiekader Caribisch Nederland* by IdeeVersa. In addition to the social opportunity programs for young people (*Sociale Kanstrajecten Jongeren*, SKJ), there are also social work place programs on Saba. These are programs aimed at reintegration into the labor market or the offer of a job. There is also adult education on Saba that can help low skilled people to find work or to improve their prospects.⁷

1.6 **Income tax**

Up to 2010, there was a so-called bracket rate for income tax in the Caribbean Netherlands. As of 1 January 2011, most people pay tax at a rate of 30.4%. This rate 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%.

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 \$5,000.⁸

¹ Ecorys en Curconsult (2012). *Purchasing power research Caribbean Netherlands. Investigation into purchasing power effects and social economic conditions in Caribbean Netherlands.*

² [http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/nieuws/171/indexering-2012-financi%C3%ABle-regelingen-van-het-ministerie-van-sociale-zaken-en-werkgelegenheid-\(szw\).html](http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/nieuws/171/indexering-2012-financi%C3%ABle-regelingen-van-het-ministerie-van-sociale-zaken-en-werkgelegenheid-(szw).html). Geraadpleegd op 14th May 2012.

³ Drewes, M. (2012). *Armoede in Caribisch Nederland, een verkenning*. IdeeVersa (2012). *Referentiekader Caribisch Nederland. Bijlage 3: beleidsvelden*.

⁴ Information supplied by email by Huub Bouwen, unit head SZW BES-islands, October 2012.

⁵ <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/nieuws/2012/10/11/sociaaleconomische-impuls-eilanden-caribisch-nederland.html>. Consulted on 15 October 2012.

⁶ Information supplied by e-mail by Huub Bouwen, Head of unit Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment BES-islands, October 2012.

⁷ IdeeVersa (2012). *Reference framework Caribbean Netherlands*. Attachement 3: policy areas. Page 158.

⁸ Belastingdienst Caribisch Nederland. *Inkomstenbelasting*. Informatiefolder.

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 \$2,772.¹ 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.² 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.³

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 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.⁴

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.⁵

¹ Belastingdienst Caribisch Nederland. *Wijzigingen in de Belastingwetgeving BES, een toelichting*. Wijzigingen voor particulieren.

² <http://www.belastingdienst-cn.nl/bcn/nl/prive/vanaf-belastingjaar-2011/inkomstenbelasting/tarieven-en-belastingvrije-bedragen>. Consulted on 14 May 2012.

³ <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/kinderbijslag/voorwaarden-en-hoogte-kinderbijslag>. Consulted on 18 June 2012.

⁴ <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/kindegebonden-budget/vraag-en-antwoord/hoe-hoog-is-het-kindegebonden-budget.html>. Consulted on 18 June 2012.

⁵ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/154/algemene+weduwten-en-wezenwet+%28aww%29.html>. Consulted on 14 May 2012.

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 Saba.¹

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 Saba was \$86 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 Saba, the child allowance for the first child amounts to \$25. For the second and third child, the child allowance is \$13.² 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.³ The occupational disability allowance amounts to \$101 on Saba.⁴ In the fall of 2012, the Dutch government decided to increase the occupational disability allowance by 50%.⁵

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 22 live on Saba.⁶

The poverty survey in the Caribbean Netherlands lists the following figures regarding the number of people receiving this financial assistance: on Sab, 13 people receive financial assistance, of which 8 receive an occupational disability allowance, and 1 person receives a child allowance.⁷ 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 2012.⁸

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

¹ http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/index.php?view=pagina&id=154&set_language=NL. Consulted on 14 May 2012.

² <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/152/onderstand+wet+bes.html>. Consulted on 14 May 2012.

³ Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. Informatiekrant Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, Saba. October 2010, number 8.

⁴ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/152/onderstand+wet+bes.html>. Consulted on 14 May 2012.

⁵ <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/nieuws/2012/10/11/socialeconomische-impuls-eilanden-caribisch-nederland.html>. Consulted on 15 October 2012.

⁶ Information provided by email by Huub Bouwens, unit head SZW on the BES islands, October 2012.

⁷ Drewes, M. (2012). *Armoede in Caribisch Nederland, een verkenning*.

⁸ <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/arbeid-sociale-zekerheid/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2012/2012-055-pb.htm>. Consulted on 1 October 2012.

one.¹ 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.² 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.³

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.⁴

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.⁵

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.⁶

¹ Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. *Informatiekrant Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, Saba*. October 2010, number 8.

² Information provided by email by Huub Bouwens, unit head SZW on the BES islands, October 2012.

³ <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/nieuws/2012/10/11/socialeconomische-impuls-eilanden-caribisch-nederland.html>. Consulted on 15 October 2012.

⁴ http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/bijstand/algemene-bijstand?ns_campaign=Thema-subsidies_uitkeringen_en_toeslagen&ro_adgrp=Bijstand-Algemene_bijstand&ns_mchannel=sea&ns_source=google&ns_linkname=%2Bbijstandsuitkering&ns_fee=0.00&clid=CI7Q2ICu2rACFY5pfAodECGczg. Consulted on 18 June 2012.

⁵ <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/bijstand/bijzondere-bijstand>. Consulted on 19 June 2012.

⁶ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/157/cessantiawet+bes.html>. Consulted on 14 May 2012.

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).¹

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.²

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.³

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 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.⁴

Child care allowance

Unlike their counterparts in the European Netherlands, parents on Saba 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.

¹ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/156/wet+ziekteverzekering+%28incl.+loonderving%29.html>. Consulted on 14 May 2012.

² *Wet ongevallenverzekering BES*.

³ Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. Zorgverzekeringskantoor. *Informatiebrochure zorgverzekering voor verzekerden van de Zorgverzekering Bonaire, Saba en Sint Eustatius*. Per 1 January 2011.

⁴ Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland, Zorgverzekeringskantoor. *Informatiebrochure zorgverzekering voor verzekerden van de Zorgverzekering Bonaire, Saba en Sint Eustatius*. Per 1 January 2011.

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. 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.¹

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.²

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.³

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

¹ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/148/studiefinanciering.html>. Consulted on 14 May 2012.

² <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/pagina/192/recht+op+kosteloze+rechtsbijstand.html>

³ Drewes, M. (2012). *Armoede in Caribisch Nederland, een verkenning*.

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.¹

1.9 **Assistance in kind**

Churches on Saba occasionally help families.

1.10 **Legislation**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to children on Saba.

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 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.²

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.³

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 2012.⁴ Price

¹ <http://www.nibud.nl/nibud-extra/uit-elkaar-geld-goed-geregeld/alimentatie-regelen/kinderalimentatie.html>. Consulted on 1 October 2012.

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.

³ 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.

⁴ Regulation of 21 November 2011, Staatscourant 2011, 21373.

trends were calculated for each island separately, and the welfare amounts were raised by the resulting percentage.¹

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.²

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.³

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.⁴

In the spring of 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.

¹ 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.

² 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.

³ <http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/nieuws/244/verhoging-vrije-uitkering-eilanden-caribisch-nederland.html>

⁴ 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.

- 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.¹

Activities

- 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.
- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment commissioned a 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.²
- 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 down heavily on purchasing power. Agreements have meanwhile been made about that with Curaçao.³

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.

¹ <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/nieuws/2012/10/11/sociaaleconomische-impuls-eilanden-caribisch-nederland.html>. Consulted on 15 October 2012.

² Kingdom Representative for the public bodies of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba (2011). *Voorjaarsrapportage 2011*.

³ Kingdom Representative for the public bodies of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba (2012). *Voorjaarsrapportage februari 2012*.

Public Authority

The island authority is responsible for combating poverty in the broadest sense, alongside employment finding and labor force participation.¹ 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.²

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 say various things about their or their parents' financial situation. For instance, they say food – and then especially health food – is expensive on the island, as are electricity and water. 'Life on Saba is expensive', as one sixteen-year-old boy sums up. The children attribute this to the taxes and transportation costs attached to everything that is sold on the island.

Nearly all of the children say that money is not a problem at home. There is enough money for food and to buy clothes. Some children said they knew of some families that struggle to make ends meet.

There are some children who have a job and earn money that way. Some children get pocket money and others do not.³

'I get paid for babysitting.' (girl, 11 years old, Saba)

'We regularly go on holiday, although we haven't been recently because we're saving up for my studies.' (girl, 17 years old, Saba)

'Some people don't have the things they need. Some kids can't grow up like the other kids as a result. They don't have all the things that we have.' (boy, 14 years old, Saba)

3 Experts on financial situation

The experts who were consulted said that there were many parents with money problems on Saba. There were various reasons for this. In the first place the high costs in combination with the low salaries cause problems. The prices on the island have risen in the last few years and 'living on Saba is the most expensive' of the three BES islands.

Experts also spoke about the 'blingbling culture' of some residents, which meant that they had to have a large car.

Some people have three jobs, said one of the experts. Experts furthermore see difficulties for single mothers who have to pay the costs of their children alone. That is even more difficult if they have a low-paid job.

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 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.

³ See quotes 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750.

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.'

The experts call for structural solutions and a major catch-up effort to get all areas to the required (minimum) level. Some say the islands have 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. Saba is not given a fair chance,' according to one expert.¹

'Many single mothers are honestly trying to pay for the education of their children.'
(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.

The 2012-2015 *Woonvisie* for Saba reports that about half of the people on Saba live from a minimum income. About ten percent of the households are entitled to an income supplement. The income supplements and salaries are lower than in European Netherlands, while the cost of living is higher than in European Netherlands. The costs of many products and services have risen since the transition.

Recent research into the purchasing power in Caribbean Netherlands shows that the increase in fuel costs (extra transport costs) and the increase in other global prices for food and raw materials are mainly responsible for the price increases on the island in the last few years. In addition, the double indirect taxation – due to the combination of the new fiscal policy for Caribbean Netherlands with that of St. Maarten and Curaçao – makes daily life more expensive. A majority of the population has seen its purchasing power decline since 10-10-10.

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 poverty survey 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.

¹ See quotes 751, 752, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769.

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 short, and that while child maintenance is often never paid.

The 2012 poverty survey 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.¹

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.²

6 Conclusion

On Saba, 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.

¹ See literature 106, 33, 39, 27, 29, 11, 109, 105, 32, 100, 16, 74, 19, 47, 41.

² Committee on the Rights of the Child (2005). *General Comment no. 7, Implementing child rights in early childhood*. CRC/C/GC/7.

Conclusion

The study into the children's rights situation on Saba 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 Saba

From the descriptions per theme, it emerges that the situation on Saba does not (yet) meet the applicable demands as formulated by the UNCRC.

Family and parenting

In some families on Saba, children 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. 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.

There are many mothers who 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 is generally supportive of individual residents. There is another side to this, however. 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. Organizations, such as the Youth and Family Centers, are working hard to improve the situation, but this 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. Saba has just one elementary school and one secondary school. There are no special education facilities. For all continued education, the children need to leave the islands.

The quality of education appears to be improving significantly, thanks in part to the arrival of education expertise centers and inspectorates. On Saba children are taught in English. Some children have language problems which create a lag in educational levels.

Some 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 some of 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. Some children on Saba 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.

There does not appear to be much crime in the small community of Saba. To the extent that juveniles are involved in criminal activities such as burglary, drugs trade, armed robberies and violence, the group appears to be small.

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 other two islands have also improved, now operating more on the principle that youth criminal law should be of a pedagogical nature.

Children 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, St. Eustatius and Saba 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 Saba 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 and who take enough time to play with them, to climb Mount Scenery 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 interact 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, sports 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 Saba, 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 Saba. 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, and the terrain is too steep to permit bicycling. 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.

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 Saba.

To bring the children's rights situation on the islands into line with the Convention, these domains will need to be 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 Saba.

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 Saba where it concerns the remedying of any *lag in education or development*.

As said, the current situation on Saba 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 independent relations and obligations between the children, parents and organizations on Saba 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.

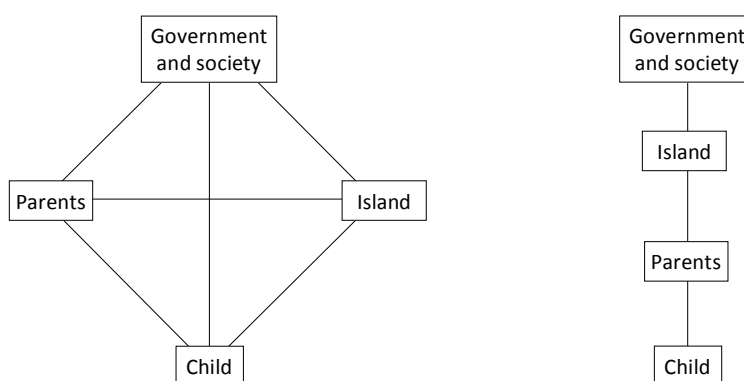


Diagram 1: Mutual relations in terms of responsibility

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 Saba) 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 UNCRC applies to each child (non-discrimination). That means that the government and all organizations involved with children on Saba 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.¹

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 Saba 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 Saba. 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.

¹ See also the recommendation by the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, which is discussed in the chapter on the UNCRC and which is summarized in Annex 4.

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 Saba 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 Saba

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Family and parenting

1. We usually eat lunch together at home. Sometimes my father isn't there because he's gone fishing. My mom cooks for us. In the evening we have another hot meal that my mom also cooks. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
2. I cook quite often, but my dad usually cooks. My mom can cook better. She makes food with more flavor. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
3. I used to be the noisy problem kid but I've calmed down now. I've simply grown up. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
4. Everyone's at home when I get back at lunchtime, but I just eat alone. When it comes to food, I'd rather not be with the family. I just like to be by myself sometimes. My mother makes breakfast, lunch and dinner for us. I do sometimes have dinner at the table with the rest of the family. My sister also eats alone in her room. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
5. I speak Spanish with my mother, but English with my sisters and my stepfather. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
6. My parents are a bit strict. I'm not allowed to go anywhere I want, such as certain places when bands are playing. They always want someone to keep an eye on me. They think that kids should be given time to grow up and shouldn't be out on the streets until late. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
7. My parents want me to go to bed early because I have to get up at half past in the morning. I usually go to bed between eight and nine. My parents usually tell me that it's time for bed, but if I'm really tired or have a headache, I go to bed myself. I get up in the morning, have a shower, put on my uniform, eat breakfast and then comb my hair. Everything takes a long time. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
8. I like cooking. At the moment I'm doing a lot of baking. I make banana bread, carrot cake and other things. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
9. I speak a bit of Dutch. My parents speak it, and sometimes speak to me in it. If they don't want my sister to understand them, they speak Dutch. But my sister is also beginning to understand Dutch, so they're going to talk more Papiamentu. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
10. At home we have to help every week with cleaning. Sweeping, putting clothes into the washing machine and taking them out of the dryer, dusting and mopping. (girl, 11 years, Saba)

11. If I do something bad, I get punished, but I don't get hit. I have to stay in my room for a while and think about what I've done, or I'm grounded. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
12. There are no problems at home. I just argue with my sister. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
13. My parents aren't very strict. There are rules, but they aren't very rigorous. There are certain things that I'm allowed to do and other things that I'm not allowed to do. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
14. I'm not allowed to go to sleepovers or anything like that. Actually, I'm not allowed to do normal things. If I want to go somewhere I have to ask permission first. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
15. At home we speak English, but when my grandparents come we speak German. I can understand it and speak it. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
16. I decide when to go to bed. Sometimes my parents tell me to go to bed when it's really late, but usually they don't need to. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
17. I usually eat alone. My mom is home, but she usually helps my brother with his homework. I don't mind eating alone. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
18. My parents can be strict if they think that there is something that I absolutely have to do. They want me to help with home with cleaning and other chores. That's not easy, because I don't feel like it. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
19. Usually my sister helps my mother with cleaning and I help my father with odd jobs. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
20. I can't do anything I want at home, but I can do most things. If I do something wrong, then they talk to me and ask why I did it. As punishment, they ban me from the computer for a while. They never hit me. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
21. In fact, there are never any problems at home. If I'm not allowed to do something I want to, I ask why. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
22. Usually I go to bed without having to be told, but sometimes my parents tell me to go to bed. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
23. I can decide where I want to go, but my parents have to approve. I do usually respect my parents. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
24. I live with my parents. We get along well. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
25. I've got my friends, but sometimes my parents interfere about the people I hang out with. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
26. At home I help with the laundry, the washing up and I keep my own room tidy. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
27. My father isn't too strict. I can choose the friends who I want to hang out with. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
28. My parents aren't really that strict. Friends can come home with me. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
29. I usually eat with my parents. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
30. My parents aren't strict. They set limits, but I don't mind. I get along well with them. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
31. My friends come over to my house. I go over to their houses too, but not as often. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
32. I've got plenty of privacy at home. If I want to be alone, I can. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
33. My mom is stricter than my father, but I have the freedom to do what I want. She trusts me. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
34. I've got plenty of privacy at home. (boy, 14 years, Saba)

35. I've got my own room at home where I can keep my things and do my homework in peace. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
36. I help with the housework. Tidying up the living room, mopping, sweeping, taking out the trash. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
37. I get along well with my parents. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
38. My parents aren't strict at all. My mom lets me go anywhere without making a fuss, although my father usually has to think a bit longer about it. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
39. There aren't really any problems at home. Sometimes, but not often. I always do my best to behave well. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
40. I always eat alone, even though my parents are around. We haven't got a proper dining table at home. I usually eat at the computer or in front of the TV. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
41. I don't have to help out with the cleaning at home. I like doing the ironing and cooking, so that's what I do. I've been washing my own clothes since I was 12. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
42. 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)
43. Parents don't know how to talk about sexuality. (boy)
44. Mothers don't understand where their kids are talking about. Kids get information that has originated and developed in a very different context. Because of this, the experience of the kids often has no connection to the world and beliefs of their parents. (adolescent)
45. Children, especially boys, are spoilt. (expert)
46. It is important to teach parents about what is punishment and what is not. They need to learn that they have to be consistent. It is not good enough to ground your child after school and ban sports or music activities, and then be inconsistent in the weekend because you want to go a party and it's a nuisance if your kid is grounded. (expert)
47. This sort of thing must be gradually changed through offering parenting support. Teach people how to bring up children. (expert)
48. One parent said to me recently: "You have to talk so much!" And that sums things up perfectly, because these days they have to talk to their children. They used just to do what they wanted. I tell them that they have to have a bit of time out first, and then talk calmly. (expert)
49. Some parents don't set any limits for their kids and let them do anything they want. Partly because they don't know what to do if they aren't allowed to hit them. These kids are never corrected and learn no boundaries. That's not good for a child. (expert)
50. The most important thing is that children have a good life at home. That they get breakfast. That things are discussed with them. That they have a good relationship with their parents. (expert)
51. Education has to start at home. And it must start at home with parents and their children learning to mutually respect each other. (expert)
52. Parents should teach children responsibility and set limits. At the moment they don't spend any time on this. (expert)
53. Of course the situation at home is the most difficult thing to change. It is uncontrollable, and the same thing has been going on for years. A lot of investment is needed to show that things can be done differently. We are now using the Triple P method on the islands. In itself, the idea is good, but it doesn't work in practice. Positive parenting has to be learnt in four meetings. It assumes basic knowledge that should be present, but isn't. Besides, it's a straitjacket. You have to implement it strictly according to a certain pattern, when in my opinion what people need should be approached on an individual basis. (expert)

54. If children have a problem here they cannot contact an AMK (advice and child abuse hotline) or a children's helpline. But it is doubtful whether they would do if it was available anyway, because they are taught to be passive; "Do this, do that." In practice, neighbors who think a child is being abused call the school, the CJG (Youth and Family Center) or the Guardianship Council. (expert)
55. Alternatives to parenting that do not involve violence should be promoted. Publicly, such as on local TV. We now have two projects which promote information from the EOZ (Expertise Center Education Care Foundation), as well as newspapers. (expert)
56. Parents have to be approached and addressed about their interaction with children. (expert)
57. Many parents have no idea how to raise a child. A mother of a 3-month-old baby telling it, "Behave!" (expert)
58. Parenting here is strict. (expert)
59. There are a lot of problematic parenting issues here. (expert)
60. Bringing up children is not only a weak point, it is a vicious cycle that has been going on for generations. (expert)
61. The parenting method on Saba is harsh. A corrective slap is generally considered normal and correct. Education is based on authoritative communication: do this, don't do that. It is based on a strong hierarchical relationship between parent and child: I'm the parent, I decide. Parents are afraid of losing their authority and are not accustomed to talking with children or negotiating with them. It is becoming increasingly difficult with external influences such as TV and the internet. Showing affection and parental love is unusual on Saba. Many parents don't know any better. They were brought up themselves in an authoritative, negative way, and that's the way they treat their children. They've never had a good example to follow when it comes to positive parenting. (expert)
62. A survey by a professor from Trinidad showed that most children on Saba consider their home a safe environment. (expert)
63. You see a lot of neglect on Saba. (expert)
64. The situation at home is often bad. Addicted mom, no close family ties, moms with two jobs. Nobody looks after the kids after school. Kids roam the streets until someone comes home. (Expert)
65. Some children are sent to school dirty. (expert)
66. Lots of moms have two jobs. (expert)
67. Parents should pay more attention to education and teaching. Children no longer know how to behave. They don't learn to listen. (expert)
68. Children are very often alone. They watch TV and think they can do anything they see on TV. (expert)
69. Some parents leave their children alone at home for long periods. These children become rough and rude. (expert)
70. During the day the refrigerator is locked while mom is at work. Mom gets home late. (expert)
71. Neglect. The time and attention given to children is minimal! (expert)
72. If you get home after working sixteen hours, you can't educate your kids properly. (expert)
73. There are many single-parent families and children with behavioral problems. In addition to the effects of neglect, there are children with ADHD or other problems. (expert)
74. Some of the parents on Saba have little regard for their children. (expert)
75. Lots of kids grow up in an environment with little stimulation and few prospects. (boy)
76. Often there is no father in the home, and the mom is obviously working all day. When she gets home, she's tired. (boy)

77. The islands need a social structure, something they don't have at the moment. (expert)
78. Since many children have difficult circumstances at home - lots of parents are always working and there is nobody to look after the children - it is important that children feel safe at school, at after-school care, at sports associations, in playgrounds, and so on. Creating safe places requires extra attention. (expert)
79. Grandparents used to take care of the children. These days they can't do that anymore, they have to work to pay the bills. (expert)
80. You have to imagine a triangle with the child in the middle. The school is in one corner, the home in another and organizations etc. in the third corner. The school is weak. Home is weak, because parenting skills are inadequate. People do things year in year out in a certain way. (expert)
81. The situation at home for children in Saba is often problematic. There are many children whose parents are always working and have no one to look after them. It is then especially important that children feel safe at school, at after-school care, at sports clubs and in playgrounds. (expert)
82. The general view on the islands is that control at home often fails and that there are little or no after-school activities for children and young people. (expert)
83. My friends are sometimes hit when they are at home. It's not severe, but they do tell me about it. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
84. I used to get hit but not anymore. It was always just a tap on my hand. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
85. Perhaps parents do hit their kids. I think if a kid does something wrong, the parents might hit them. That's definitely possible. I don't really know anything about it. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
86. My parents sometimes hit me if I do something really bad. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
87. Sometimes parents hit their kids. I used to get hit at home sometimes when I was younger, but not anymore. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
88. It is not always abuse or maltreatment if parents hit their kids. I've often experienced it myself and see it more as innocent corrective action. (adolescent)
89. Correcting kids through corporal punishment is part of the culture, unless it takes extreme forms and the kid has clearly visible injuries to the face or elsewhere. (adolescent)
90. Kids don't get much attention from parents. They see their father hitting their mother and copy the same behavior. (adolescent)
91. The father beats the mother. If you see that when you are young, you think it is the right thing to do because it's what your father does. (adolescent)
92. There isn't a helpline for reporting abuse like there is in the Netherlands. (adolescent)
93. I don't know where victims of physical or sexual abuse could go to for help on Saba. There is nobody you can trust. (adolescent)
94. 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 about it immediately. Everyone knows that abuse is taking place, but nobody does anything about it. (expert)
95. Child abuse is now being reported, which is a step in the right direction. (expert)
96. There is a lot of inbreeding on Saba. (expert)
97. It is difficult to raise awareness of child abuse. Parents become angry. It is taboo. (expert)
98. Child abuse, both verbal and physical, is a major problem. You are going to open a can of worms! (expert)

99. 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 protection. (expert)
100. As mentioned in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is important that child abuse is defined and that everyone is made aware of it. Public awareness about parenting without violence and what is meant by child abuse is crucially important. The fact that parents are models is therefore a central issue. It focuses on the importance of making people sensitive to personal values, which is applicable to both parents and children. An essential part of this is that children possess social skills and learn to set their own limits, especially in situations outside of their comfort zone. In a wider perspective this involves identity, development, integrity and values. It requires a paradigm shift, with the focus not on failure but on strengths. (expert)
101. In order to properly respond to the issues surrounding the tackling of child abuse, 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 the right things are being done. (expert)
102. Two issues 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 learn to deal with their children in a different way. (expert)
103. The national government and the island government should formulate core objectives in the context of addressing child abuse. These could then serve as frameworks for addressing child abuse and would also reflect the social and guiding responsibility of the government. (expert)
104. 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)
105. 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)
106. 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 Papiamentu) 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)
107. Since the advent of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), I get the general feeling that although children are not hit as much with belts and pieces of wood and the like, they do still get the occasional slap. (expert)
108. The occasional parent still forgets that they may not abuse their child. It involves one or two cases on the island. This is severe abuse. Parents must be taught other punishment techniques. (expert)
109. A child who is beaten at home often exhibits behavioral problems at school. (expert)
110. Incest and child abuse is a major problem here. There is a safe house in St. Maarten for women and children, but there is no institution that can receive calls from a helpline. It is still the custom on the island that the father is the first person to have sex with his daughter. This still happens on Saba.

- There are also sexual relationships between siblings. ‘Things don’t happen behind closed doors’, so these examples are imitated by children, brothers, etc. (expert)
111. There is always something flying around at home if a child misbehaves. (expert)
 112. If the school calls to say that the child has misbehaved, the child gets hit at home. (expert)
 113. It is well known that corporal punishment takes place here. And that it doesn’t help. (expert)
 114. EOZ and the Center for Youth and Families use the same approach on Saba. For example, we are using the Triple P method in an event we are organizing about increased aggression in elementary education. (expert)
 115. Child abuse is taboo on Saba. Some years ago, children completed questionnaires about violence, addiction, abuse, etc. which was presented responsibly, but it remains taboo. (expert)
 116. Although everybody knows it happens, child abuse and maltreatment are taboo here. (expert)
 117. There is a different culture here where corporal punishment is still considered normal, as it was in the Netherlands in the 1950s. (expert)
 118. Many parents assume that if your child misbehaves, you hit them with a buckle and strap. (expert)
 119. It is very difficult to tackle child abuse and maltreatment on the island. The people in Youth Care and the Guardianship Council are all from the island. A quarter of the population of the island is related. (expert)
 120. Changing violent parenting methods takes time. Good examples are needed and alternatives to violence must be consistently demonstrated. (expert)
 121. Parenting on this island is a tricky subject. Disciplining children here is seen as hitting and using aggression. This promotes aggressiveness in children, both physical and verbal. (expert)
 122. How children grow up at home can be a great cause for concern. There is a lot of physical violence in the home. (expert)
 123. Using violence to bring children up has been going on for so many generations that it is considered normal. The situation with teen pregnancies is the same. (expert)
 124. There are many circumstances on the islands that increase the risk of child maltreatment, such as poverty, multiple jobs, strict parenting habits, model behavior of parents and young parents. These circumstances do not legitimize child abuse, but do make it clear that the risk of child abuse is higher. (expert)
 125. My father lives on St. Eustatius. I really have no idea why. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
 126. Sometimes I visit my father, but not that much. I visit him at Easter every year. This is the first year that I haven’t been. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
 127. My father often used to come to Saba to work, but not anymore. He is now employed by the cable company on St. Eustatius, so he doesn’t need to come here. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
 128. Some parents are very young people with children, sometimes too many children. Mothers have to do everything while fathers hang out on the street. They are usually not role models. Only a few fathers are good examples. (expert)
 129. On Monday morning there is a meeting at the school. A few fathers might turn up, but it is generally only mothers. (expert)
 130. The macho culture is very noticeable. Mothers have to care for the family as well as earn money. Take the example of a mother of 34 with a 20-year-old daughter and two other younger children. She has to earn a living waitressing. (expert)
 131. 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 through. (expert)

132. The home situation is bad for many children. Children come to school without having eaten breakfast. Those that need it are given a sandwich and a mug of chocolate milk. (expert)
133. There is always something to eat at Child Focus and at school because lots of children are hungry. (expert)
134. I live with my mom, my brother, my two sisters and my stepfather. My little brother is one, one of my sisters is twelve and the other is five. (boy, 16 years , Saba)
135. When we left the Dominican Republic, we went to St Eustatius. After my parents divorced, we moved to Saba with my mom. That was her decision. She didn't want us to be too far from our father and she thought it would be a good place to live. We can get a decent education here. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
136. My mom is not strict. She sometimes tries to be but she is really just a joyful, happy, kind mother. That's why I am, too. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
137. In the beginning, I didn't have a very good relationship with my stepfather. I didn't want him to take the place of my father. Nowadays we get on well. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
138. I live with my mom, my father, my sister and my stepsister. She's not actually my stepsister, we have the same father. She often visits us but doesn't actually live here. My stepsister is 14 and my sister is 6. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
139. My mother is American. She was born on Saint Croix, but she's spent most of her life in America. Her grandmother always lived on Saba and her mother came here because her grandmother died. I think when my mom was here she decided to stay. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
140. I live with my parents. I've got a younger brother who is nine. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
141. My father is from here and my mother is from Germany. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
142. My father's family lives here, but nobody from my mother's family lives here. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
143. I live with my mother, my father and my sister. She is nine. I also have an older brother and an older sister. My father had already been married before he married my mother. I think that my sister is 25 and my brother is 30. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
144. I live with my parents and my younger brother. (girl, 15 years)
145. I live with my father. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
146. I live with both my parents. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
147. I live with both my parents and my brother. I get on well with my parents and love the place where I live. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
148. I live with both my parents and my older brother. (girl, 16 years , Saba)
149. My aunt and my grandparents on my father's side live down the street. (girl, 16 years , Saba)
150. I live with my mother. (boy , 14 years , Saba)
151. I live with both my parents and my sister. (girl, 15 years , Saba)
152. I live with both my parents. (boy , 14 years , Saba)
153. I used to live with my sister, who is 23. She moved to St. Maarten, because she had to go to college there. She's training to be a nurse. (boy, 14 years, Saba)

154. A few children are cared for by their grandparents on the island because their parents had problems with alcohol or drugs and couldn't accept their responsibilities. (expert)
155. Child support concerns fathers who have to pay alimony via the Guardianship Council because direct contact with the mother is impossible. About 12 cases on Saba have done this voluntarily, thereby avoiding the courts. Another 26 cases involve 'court requested' child support. Then fathers are obliged to pay alimony for their child. (expert)
156. Currently there are four or five children for whom a state pension is paid in connection with the death of a parent. That is a sort of widows and orphan pension, and it is also paid via the Guardianship Council. If one parent dies, the child is placed with the other parent, or with family if this is not possible. (expert)
157. There is a big difference between the people of Saba and Statia (St. Eustatius). The indigenous population of Saba is half white and half black. The white half has traditionally had a higher level of education and development which increases the average level on the island. On Statia, almost the entire population has a low level of education and development. (expert)
158. 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 negatively 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)
159. Teenage pregnancies are common on all the islands. (adolescent)
160. Girls are tempted to sleep with boys that offer them beautiful things and promises of a rosy future. When the girl gets pregnant as a result, it is usually her mom who cares for the baby. (adolescent)
161. 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)
162. Girls copy each other's behavior. They see lots of other pregnant girls at school and the 'cute' babies. (adolescent)
163. I happen to know of a case in Statia of a schoolboy who has fathered children with five different girls. He's very popular, which shows that the girls really want to have babies. (expert)
164. 'Girl Power' is a group of teenagers who give sexual education to younger teenagers. That takes place at the high school. There is also a similar group of boys, they are called the Big Boys or something similar. (expert)
165. We have a group for young mothers. Eight mothers registered initially. Five turned up for the first meeting and they were very enthusiastic. By the third meeting there were only two left. If you ring them up and ask why they couldn't come, they say that they couldn't make it or something else turned up, but they will come next time because they really enjoyed it. (expert)
166. Children don't like to visit the family physician. That includes appointments to arrange contraception. It's something that isn't done, because everybody would hear about it immediately. It's very rare for children to go alone. (expert)
167. Every year, one or two of the 20 females who get pregnant on Saba are teenage girls. Obviously everyone knows the girls who get pregnant. They used to be expelled from school, but there were protests against this policy. These days girls must attend school, so they carry on with their lessons if they become pregnant. (expert)
168. EOZ has a pregnancy education project. It seemed to be something a lot of girls wanted for a time. Now they are given lessons with lifelike dolls that they have to care for to show that it isn't all just cute and cuddly. (expert)
169. Contraception is far from self-evident here. (expert)

170. The grandparents are often the ones who look after the baby of a teenage mother. The mother has to go to school to learn or has to work. It's not a good educational situation when a baby has to grow up with older people with old-fashioned ideas on parenting. (expert)
171. When I'm sad I ask my parents for help. That doesn't happen often. Everything is going well. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
172. If I was sad, I'd ask my mother for help. That doesn't happen often because I'm a happy person. I could also ask my oldest sister. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
173. If I have any problems, I would sooner ask my parents for help than my friends. (girl, 15 years)
174. I think there is a big gap between those who have made it and stay away from this place, and the kids who stay behind. (boy)
175. People have a huge inferiority complex compared to white people. This manifests itself in various ways, such as submissiveness or arrogance. (expert)
176. There is a collective sense of inferiority, which begins with education and school. Low self-esteem is passed on. (expert)
177. 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)
178. Setting limits is a real problem here, and both parents and children find it very difficult to respect rules. This is in part a result of habits on the island. If you agree to be home at six o'clock and then meet somebody you know on the way who suggests doing something, then you do it. Because another thing is that everybody is very willing to please others. Everybody is family. (expert)
179. For kids up to twelve years old, life on the island is great. Development for older kids is very difficult. (expert)
180. People don't dare to address each other about each other's behavior. That is something that has to be done by outsiders. (expert)
181. The culture of shame is very strong. Everything is swept under the carpet. (expert)
182. Everything is hidden under a layer of politeness. (expert)
183. The situation regarding children's rights is generally worse on Statia than on Saba. On Saba everything is more organized, more under control and neater. That includes parenting. (expert)
184. Saba is a very small community with about 1,500 residents. That means that everyone knows each other. People watch out for each other and gossip about each other. Family ties are very strong. As a result, people are not willing to talk to each other about awkward subjects. They prefer to avoid difficult conversations because they always have negative consequences, such as everyone interfering, family fights or people ignoring each other. In such situations, economic ties, such as those between partners, former partners or between mothers and new partners, may play a role. On important subjects, a culture of silence reigns. There is also a culture of shame, and taboo subjects are not mentioned. Child abuse is an example of a subject that is not spoken about. People seem to prefer to stick their heads in the sand: we'd rather not know it's there, we don't want to know and we don't want to bring the good name of families into disrepute. Sabans are also very independent and do not appreciate interference from outsiders. This makes it very difficult to tackle a problem like child abuse. Aid workers must first win trust, which is very difficult because of the general cynicism towards them. (expert)
185. More attention should be given to parents for carrying out certain things. (adolescent)
186. There are Youth and Family Centers (CJG) on the islands of St. Eustatius, Saba and Bonaire. These places are not accessible. They are not adapted to the local culture and situation. (adolescent)

187. 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)
188. 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)
189. 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)
190. 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)
191. 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)
192. 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)
193. 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)
194. 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)
195. 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 the Triple P method. That is what the three islands wanted, and they had already heard about it. (expert)
196. The Guardianship Council has various functions such as child support, guardianship, children overseas in homes and children in foster care on the other islands. (expert)
197. At the moment there are two girls housed in St. Maarten and Curaçao. (expert)
198. There is currently one OTS (supervision order) on Saba. We work together with the Youth and Family Center. The child is still with its parents and we are increasing pressure to ensure that the parents cooperate. If that works, then the child can continue to live at home. If not, the child will have to be transferred to another island. A foster home is not an option in this case because the island is too small. It often happens that parents interfere with foster parents. They can't accept that somebody else is bringing up their child. (expert)

199. The Guardianship Council is a last resort. We first try to cooperate with the Youth and Family Center and make it clear that things are serious while keeping the Guardianship Council in reserve as a 'big stick'. (expert)
200. The court comes to Saba once a month and meets with the Guardianship Council. Then all the cases, from name changes and new laws through to alimony, are treated in one stroke. (expert)
201. There was a sort of children's helpline on Saba via the University School of Medicine which children could call if they had questions or needed information. I don't know if it still exists. (expert)
202. The Youth and Family Center has only been at full strength since January 2012:
 - * A full-time field worker.
 - * A youth worker.
 - * A teaching assistant / parenting support assistant.
 - * A 50% - 50 % coordinator / field worker. (expert)
203. The Youth and Family Center has different tasks in different places. On Saba, it carries out lots of different tasks because it's such a small island, but it's always difficult to decide what we should and shouldn't do. (expert)
204. The Dutch don't realize that there is a totally different mindset here and that the Youth and Family Center has to adapt to it. The Dutch are used to other cultures adapting to them. But people here on the island are used to doing things their own way. For example, there was never any structural assistance, it was something that didn't exist. They used to solve problems as well as they could by themselves. Now things are expected of them that they aren't prepared for. (expert)
205. In the past, people were flown in. The style of work was 'fly in, hear the problems, devise rapid solutions, impose a directive and clear off'. Chop chop chop. People here said they would do it as requested and then they went back to their daily routines. (expert)
206. Now the Youth and Family Center wants to be sustainable and make long-term agreements with parents. No short-term policies or quick fixes. However, this often causes problems because it's not what people are used to. We try to make it clear that although the Youth and Family Center is voluntary, it is not without obligation. (expert)
207. The Youth and Family Center wants to focus on prevention. As long as possible and as intensively as possible. The Guardianship Council is used as a last resort. (expert)
208. We are still looking for two or three foster homes on Saba for voluntary placement. There is certainly a debate about whether this will work. As long as it is voluntary, it probably will, but if placement is compulsory the parents might appear angrily on the doorstep of the foster home. It is a small island after all. (expert)
209. There are a lot of children with behavioral problems. (expert)
210. There is no advice and child abuse hotline or children's helpline structure that children can call 24/7. (expert)

Education

211. I take the bus to school. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
212. It takes me five to ten minutes to get to school, no time at all. The island is small, so everything is nearby. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
213. We get textbooks from the school. However, there are never enough books, so that causes problems. My class is the largest class. They are 18 of us, and usually there aren't enough books for everyone. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
214. There are 8 students in my class. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
215. There are 9 students in my class. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
216. There are 18 students in my class. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
217. There are 18 students in my class. It is the biggest class in the school. (boy, 14 years, Saba)

218. There are at least fourteen students in my class. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
219. There are 13 students in my class. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
220. Sometimes there aren't enough textbooks at school for everyone. And we are also short of other stuff. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
221. There are 9 students in my class. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
222. Sometimes there aren't enough textbooks at school for everyone. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
223. The school is good. It's an unusual building, although the roof leaks when it rains. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
224. What I like about our school is that it is so small. Our small classes are small. There are sixteen of us in my class. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
225. I don't like the food at school and it's expensive. Lasagna at nine o'clock is not right. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
226. There are 9 students in my class (girl, 15 years, Saba)
227. The school board had a lot of influence. The school board on Saba was not compassionate. As on St. Eustatius, there was a lot of resistance from the school board that was affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventists. (expert)
228. 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)
229. Classes vary in size. There are some classes with only 11 pupils and others with 28 (nursery school). We think that that is too many for one class. (expert)
230. I teach second grade and there are 14 pupils in the class. (expert)
231. EOZ and the Center for Youth and Families use the same approach on Saba. For example, we are using the Triple P method in an event we are organizing about increased aggression in elementary education. (expert)
232. On Saba the people are more powerful than on Statia, and that is why they have indicated that they don't want to adopt the entire Dutch system. There is less need for change now. (expert)
233. I think the education system here is good. The level suits us well and we learn a lot. I like it. All my current teachers are really nice. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
234. The school is good. Although some things have improved in the school, there is still room for additional improvement. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
235. The level of education here is too low. There aren't enough textbooks and other things, and lots of stuff is outdated. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
236. De school is OK and it's improving all the time. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
237. The school lessons could be better. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
238. The education system here is a bit limited. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
239. The school is OK. It could be better, but that's always the case. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
240. The education system on Saba isn't as good as in other places. That means that it will be more difficult for me when I go abroad. I'll probably have to repeat a few school years. (girl, 14 years, Saba)

241. It is positive that schools have started to take a different approach. The will to provide good education certainly exists, but a lot of the lessons are centered on teachers' own values and norms. Making the leap to development-oriented education was too great. (expert)
242. Children have the right to a good education. I think we could do more. (expert)
243. The quality of education is not yet at the level where it should be. (expert)
244. The school has indicated that it wants to improve. (expert)
245. Education has been lagging behind for years. First everything came from Curaçao and then it stopped. Education keeps taking knocks here. (expert)
246. If children don't get a proper level of education, it may mean that they get fewer opportunities for self-development. Every child has the right to as much development as possible. (expert)
247. I wouldn't send my child to secondary school here. (expert)
248. Secondary education here is poor. There is a bad atmosphere and children don't like school. That has to change. (expert)
249. Children on Saba are 12 to 18 months behind in math and language when they leave primary school. (expert)
250. The level of education is not brilliant. There's a big difference in level between classes. Sometimes there are only fourteen children in the class and you would think that every child would receive individual attention, but that's not the case. (expert)
251. The quality of education here is lousy. (expert)
252. I go to Saba Comprehensive School which is the only secondary school on the island. There is a primary school too, the Sacred Heart School on the site below us. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
253. There is no HAVO (senior general secondary education), VWO (pre-university education) or MAVO (lower general secondary education) here. The system is different. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
254. It would be good if there was more space at school and more things to do. You can play table soccer at school, but I wish that there were other things to do. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
255. There is only one school, the Saba Comprehensive School. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
256. At Cove Bay they built a new school for the technology students. They also built a kitchen and a bathroom for the 'hospitality' students. However, it would be nice if they could also do something for my course. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
257. I go to Saba Comprehensive School. That's the only secondary school on the island. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
258. All my friends go to the same school. Everyone knows everyone. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
259. I attend the High School at the moment. There are lots of different optional courses to prepare us to study abroad. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
260. We should have more subject and curriculum options at school. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
261. Since the Netherlands started interfering, we have had less choice in subjects at school. That is annoying. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
262. At school, we can choose for ourselves which sports we do. In my class, we always choose new types of sport, which we learn a lot from. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
263. There's a gym at school and new sports all the time. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
264. We get lessons at school about drugs and self-confidence and so on. But I don't think many people take any notice. (boy, 14 years, Saba)

265. There should be more sex education, even at primary school. It is now a major problem in primary schools. (adolescent)
266. I think that a specialist should teach kids about their bodies. Not just about sex, but also about HIV, AIDS and other STDs. (adolescent)
267. Information is provided, but only in high school, even though kids are already sexually active at a young age. (adolescent)
268. 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)
269. They should really create a lower professional education course in which students spend one year on one island and one year on another. Then students wouldn't become bored. (expert)
270. Some parents don't think through what they are doing to their children. Families move here from Santa Domingo and Colombia with young adolescent children who only speak Spanish and English and are lagging being educationally. Of course these children have a right to education, but how are we supposed to organize it here on Saba? They are put into a class with other children who also need attention. (expert)
271. We organize after-school care with two paid staff. My eighty-year-old mother and I work as volunteers. Parents pay \$ 85 per month, unless they cannot afford it, in which case Youth and Family pays. (expert)
272. We currently offer after-school care for 36 children, from Monday thru Friday, from half past twelve to six for children aged between four and ten years. Older children don't want after-school care and some go to Child Focus. (expert)
273. There are no special schools here. All the pupils are in one class, including those lagging behind. Teachers have to be able to do everything. (expert)
274. The primary school is the only school, and it is attended by every child, including those that are lagging behind in terms of education or development. (expert)
275. It is currently possible to attend practical and professional courses. (expert)
276. The local authority has additional funding for housing and education for children who want to study outside Saba. (expert)
277. We have to ask ourselves about what sort of citizens we want on the island and what kind of skills and kind of behavior we expect from them. (expert)
278. There is just one school for primary education and one for secondary education. This means that children of different abilities are all grouped together in one class. (expert)
279. Each school has a coordinator and there are remedial teachers in the group. EOZ provides special support. (expert)
280. On Statia the Expertise Center had to start from a lower baseline 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)
281. Sex education is certainly a key objective in education, but the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science Education has decided to wait before the implementation because of the workload in the schools. Schools are permitted to use their own initiative and provide information to children, which is sometimes what happens. (expert)
282. The Rights of the Child is a subject we study at school at the end of primary school or in the first year of secondary school. (child, Saba)
283. All classes at school are in English. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
284. We study Dutch as a separate subject, but we usually speak English during the lessons. The teacher wants us to understand what is written and what is said. (boy, 16 years, Saba)

285. I'm not particularly worried. I think that I'll be able to learn Dutch when I'm in the Netherlands. I had to learn English the same way when I moved to Saba. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
286. I speak a little Spanish, Dutch, English and Papiamentu and about four words of French. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
287. At school, everything is in English. We do have two languages at school, but everything is translated from these two languages into English. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
288. During the Dutch lessons I do speak Dutch, but I never speak it outside the lessons. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
289. The language struggle is another one of the issues in the education system. (adolescent)
290. On Statia they made a big mistake by not choosing to give lessons in English. They have stuck to Dutch, and the island government has done likewise. But those kids have never spoken a word of Dutch. Dutch isn't spoken anywhere on the island. There aren't even many Dutch people there, unlike here on Saba. So when they go to the Netherlands, they don't understand a thing. (expert)
291. I am in grade 4 at Saba Comprehensive School. There are five altogether, so I've got one more to go. We used to have a different uniform, but when we got a new director he decided that we needed a new uniform. He thought that the old uniform didn't really look like a uniform. It was a polo shirt, just a normal shirt really with the logo of the school. I liked the old uniform better because we could wear jeans. Now we have to wear a certain type of pants. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
292. There isn't any bullying at school. Anything that does go on is just people joking around with each other, they never really mean it. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
293. In the breaks I play soccer and eat my lunch. Actually it's not lunch because the break is at half past nine, so it's more like breakfast. There is a canteen where you can sit. You can also just sit back, relax and talk to people. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
294. Everyone knows everyone at school. There is a total of about 100 kids in the school. It's not really a big deal, we see each other every day. So if there's a fight, people make up afterwards. The next day you see each other again. If there's a fight with a lot of violence, it is usually cleared up after two or three days. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
295. There is bullying and teasing at school. More teasing than bullying, but there are a number of kids that are bullied. Nothing is done about it. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
296. There is a counselor, but I don't feel comfortable around her. I just don't like being around her. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
297. Actually there isn't really any bullying at school, just a bit of teasing. They don't say anything bad, they just joke with each other. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
298. Nobody is ever bullied. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
299. Kids aren't bullied here. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
300. Very occasionally, there is a fight at school. I know of one student that was suspended. (girl, 15 years)
301. I've never seen anybody being bullied. (girl, 15 years)
302. If there is a problem, I can always talk to my class teacher. (girl, 15 years)
303. The nice thing about school is that everyone knows each other and there are no major problems. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
304. There are lots of things in school that are broken. It takes a long time to repair them. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
305. We wear a uniform at school, except on Christmas Eve. Then we can wear whatever we like. (girl, 14 years, Saba)

306. In fact, there isn't any bullying here. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
307. At school it's very safe, because there are lots of people you can ask for help. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
308. I've seen students fighting but it wasn't scary. The teachers sorted it out immediately. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
309. Nobody is bullied here. Everyone is friendly with each other, even if they aren't friends. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
310. I feel safe everywhere. There is a fight at school from time to time, but it's very rare. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
311. There is some teasing and bullying, like there is everywhere. I've even experienced it myself sometimes. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
312. When kids get hurt, they sometimes go to their parents, but they usually go to their friends for help. I always try to help as much as possible. Kids should be able to talk to their teachers if they feel threatened. Their teachers should then talk with them. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
313. I've been bullied. I don't worry too much about it because it's not worth it. I also know that other kids are bullied sometimes. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
314. If they are bullied they usually go to their friends for help, or occasionally the teacher. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
315. At school you often see fights. Nothing really violent, just little fights and stuff. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
316. If there is a fight at school, someone from authority always appears. Then they get punished by being suspended or stuff. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
317. I feel safe at school. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
318. There isn't actually any bullying. It happened to just one time. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
319. There isn't actually any bullying. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
320. We tease each other a lot but we don't mean anything by it. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
321. School is great. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
322. School is generally going well. I work hard on the subjects where I have problems. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
323. On Saba you can see that parents and school create docile citizens. That dates from the time of slavery and colonialism, when it was useful to have docile people. The system is still the same. (expert)
324. I hate the school uniform that I have to wear. (child, Saba)
325. Because of inbreeding, there is a relatively high number of learning problems on the islands. (expert)
326. On Saba there was a higher number of pupils with behavioral and educational problems. (expert)
327. Parents are more involved with the school now than they were a few years ago. (expert)
328. There are 60 to 65 kids with serious problems that are known to the EOZ. (expert)
329. We now have a list of 78 children who have been at EOZ for various different reasons. It might concern career advice, but it usually concerns problems. Then psychological tests are carried out and a child and adolescent psychiatrist is involved. (expert)
330. If you're older than 12 you have to leave here. (expert)
331. I don't skip school, I really want to finish my course, something I've never managed to do. Classmates of mine have skipped school, but when things started getting difficult they stopped. Now

- they are doing better at school. They should actually be in my class, but they had to repeat the school year. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
332. I never skip school. I always go to lessons. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
333. I hardly ever skip school. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
334. I never skip school. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
335. We never skip school. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
336. I never skip school. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
337. I never skip school. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
338. I never skip school. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
339. There are a lot of premature school leavers, with the result that children have no basic qualifications and their chances are small. (expert)
340. Failure is silent. The school generally makes no mention of truancy, because they are paid per student. (expert)
341. In 2008 the Compulsory Education Act came into force. The school attendance officer can now levy fines for truancy. (expert)
342. Since a short time ago there have been attendance officers, one on each island. Unlike the one on Statia, the one on Saba is inactive. (expert)
343. Every child would prefer it if homework was never given, but we don't get given that much. I think that's fair because we already work hard at school. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
344. If there is something at school that I don't understand, I wait until my mom or my father comes home to help me. If my sister is around, I can ask her to help me. Otherwise, I go online to see if I can find anything or call a friend. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
345. We have a computer at home and I share a laptop with my father. Actually, there are two computers and a laptop because I've got a computer in my room. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
346. There should be more projects to help kids with their homework. After school some teachers offer additional classes for children who need help in certain areas, but I think there should be more teachers doing this. At the moment these extra lessons are given once or twice a week, but it should be more often. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
347. Although I get given homework every day, it's never that much. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
348. I do my homework at home. If I need help my mom can help me. There is always the internet if you don't understand something. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
349. We don't really get a lot of homework. Sometimes we get homework for certain subjects, but it's never much. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
350. I usually do my homework at home, but sometimes I do it at school. My sister and my brother often help me with it. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
351. I do about three hours of homework per day, which I do in my room. If I want, I can ask the teacher at school for help. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
352. I do my homework when I have free time at school and then finish it at home. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
353. I don't get given a lot of homework. I always do it on my own, in my room. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
354. I have homework to do every day, but it's not much. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
355. Sometimes my parents help me with my homework, and other times a teacher at school helps me. (girl, 14 years, Saba)

356. We get a lot of homework, some weeks more than others. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
357. Sometimes I do my homework alone. We often meet up for group projects and then we help each other. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
358. They can help you with homework at school. You can go there if you want, it's not compulsory. Ms. Tracy has an extra homework class, and I think that there are other homework classes. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
359. I don't do a lot of homework. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
360. Sometimes we get a lot of homework, it depends. It's not a problem. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
361. I do my homework alone. They can help you at school if you want. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
362. We don't get much homework, but we do have a lot of projects to do. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
363. My father helps me do my homework at home. At school, they can also help you. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
364. I do my homework at school and at home. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
365. I don't have any problems with homework. It never takes more than an hour. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
366. I do my homework at home. Sometimes I ask a friend to help. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
367. We used to get homework, but since I've been in grade two it's stopped. We have to do a lot of projects though. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
368. I don't really like the teachers at school. They don't explain things properly. They usually say that we should look at the examples in the book, but we don't really understand things just by looking at examples. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
369. The lessons are fun, but I don't like it when teachers leave. My favorite teacher is also leaving. He says he doesn't want to teach anymore. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
370. Most teachers are good. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
371. If you don't get on with a teacher, there's nothing you can do about it. It's just bad luck. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
372. The school is good. Most teachers give good lessons. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
373. The teachers are definitely good and help you to learn. They're not particularly strict, unless you're careless. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
374. Not all the teachers are good. They should be selected more carefully. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
375. The teachers are nice. They help you if you have a problem. You can also ask them for help if you have a problem with your parents. (girl, 15 years)
376. Most teachers are nice. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
377. I like going to school and get on well with the teachers. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
378. The teachers are good and they are kind. Sometimes they are strict, but that's something all teachers have to be. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
379. I get along well with the teachers. You can build a personal relationship with them. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
380. I get along well with the teachers. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
381. The teachers are good, except for one. (girl, 14 years, Saba)

382. The teachers are nice. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
383. 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)
384. There were headmasters on Saba and St. Eustatius who were successful in ending corporal punishment. (expert)
385. I teach at both schools, and after school I organize activities for young people, basketball in particular. (expert)
386. When I came here, kids were lagging behind in physical development. (expert)
387. You first notice little changes in the children when you address them. Things speed up as they come to trust you. (expert)
388. Teachers have to be a team. And they need to stay here for more than a year, otherwise everything that has been built up gets destroyed. (expert)
389. Some teachers don't encourage pupils to work things out for themselves. That's not good. Children are responsible for their own development and have to learn to think for themselves and be responsible. (expert)
390. Both teachers and parents must make every effort to get the best out of children. (expert)
391. We need to differentiate more within lessons. Education should focus on the level of the individual child. Some teachers can do that easily, but tend to fall back into their old habits. Teachers keep forgetting that there are IB students in the class these days. (expert)
392. Teachers keep changing and that's a problem. (expert)
393. There are a lot of teachers who speak too loudly. (expert)
394. Teachers don't hit the children at this school, although they do give them a hard shake from time to time. (expert)
395. All teachers are trained in the Triple P method of positive parenting. (expert)
396. The teachers come from all over the place. We have teachers from Canada, USA, Suriname, Trinidad, Statia, Aruba and the Netherlands here. They all have their own ideas, backgrounds and educational vision. (expert)
397. We need good teachers for teenagers. (expert)
398. Every year there are new teachers at the school. They all have their own methods that the kids have to get used to over and over again. (expert)
399. The teachers are highly motivated. (expert)
400. Students must learn to be assertive and to participate in both society and the education system. You have to teach children to think more critically. That also helps with the learning process. (expert)
401. I am really worried about the quality of education on Saba. There are many issues related to classroom management by teachers. The teaching staff is very multicultural. They come from all corners of the world and they all have very different views on education. (expert)
402. Many teachers come here for a short period, usually one year. It is not appealing to stay here any longer. (expert)
403. There are very few Saban teachers. The teachers come from Trinidad, Guyana, Canada, USA and the Netherlands. (expert)
404. The disadvantages are also closely related to the fact that the teachers come from all corners of the world. (expert)

405. Teachers have to be approached and addressed about their interaction with children. (expert)
406. Teachers here have very different backgrounds and ideas. Some would still like to stand in the classroom with a cane. (expert)
407. In grade three, students are still beaten by the teacher who comes from Trinidad and has been trained to hit. The children who are beaten at school are often the ones who are also get beaten at home. (expert)
408. The primary teachers are not properly trained. (expert)
409. There is a high turnover of teachers. (expert)
410. There are problems with remedial teachers. They sometimes have the habit of saying, "shut up and sit still." This is especially difficult for some children. A child with ADHD is better off letting off steam outside. (expert)
411. Bringing different cultures together is very difficult. It can be seen in the teachers. Everybody's position on the role of the home and the school is different. Often it's not even clear what that position is. (expert)
412. A lot of teachers don't have confidence in their role in the education of children. Many teachers suffer from low self-confidence. (expert)
413. On the islands, it is not customary to address people about their methods. People find it very difficult when someone tells them that they could tackle something in a better way. Teachers are no exception. (expert)
414. There's no sense of community among teachers in the schools. There's no sense of 'Let's do it as a team.' (expert)
415. I haven't seen any physical violence in schools yet, but I have certainly seen a lot of verbal aggression. (expert)
416. Teachers' communication methods assume that all children are troublemakers. There is no respect for pupils. (expert)
417. Teachers often yell. They justify this by saying that children would otherwise misbehave because they are used to being yelled at in their homes. (expert)
418. To stop physical and verbal aggression, you have to work together in different areas. The Youth and Family Center, police and schools all have to pull together. (expert)
419. What is very positive here is the will to make the best of things. Most people, including teachers, are very motivated to improve the situation for children. (expert)
420. On Saba, we use an English-language system. It is very directive and authoritative. (expert)
421. On Saba lessons are given in English. The teachers come from all over the world. Jamaica teachers are often seen as good teachers, but by Dutch standards they are not. (expert)
422. The teachers in Saba all have their own pedagogic vision. I'd like to see active teachers, but they are directive. They tell the children what they need to know, and the children have to reproduce what they're told. They're not taught to think for themselves. (expert)
423. I don't really know what I want to study when I finish school. I used to want to be an electrician in the Netherlands. But I'm not sure anymore. I still want to go to the Netherlands, mainly because my cousins live there. They've told me about life there and they can help me if go there. I've never been to the Netherlands. We were going to go there a long time ago on a school trip but it was canceled. I'd like to go there on vacation first, but I think that that's impossible because it's too expensive. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
424. As far as school is concerned we can go to America or to the Netherlands. I don't actually know if there are enough options for kids. (girl, 11 years, Saba)

425. I'd like to be a chef or a businesswoman. I like to do paperwork. Maybe I'd like to go to the Netherlands to study, but I don't really want to learn Dutch. To be honest, I don't know why I want to go to the Netherlands. But I can get a student loan if I go to the Netherlands, and I'll be able to see snow. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
426. Education should be different. There are now specializations that you have to choose after the second grade, a course for kids who want to do carpentry, courses for kids that are slow learners and 'Academic'. For the latter, you can specialize in science or economics. It's a new system and my class is the first that has to choose. We don't think it's a good system because we would rather mix subjects from different specializations. Lots of us don't even know what we want to do, so we would prefer a mix. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
427. Most people who are successful at school go to America or the Netherlands. It depends a bit on what they want to study. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
428. I'll probably go to the Netherlands, but if that fails I'll go to America. I'd rather go to the Netherlands because Saba is now part of the Netherlands. I reckon it's easier to go to the Netherlands. Law, IT or teaching children with learning difficulties such as children with autism and dyslexia. Whether I want to stay on Saba depends on how Saba develops. Things will certainly change. It also depends on whether I can find work somewhere else. So it depends on quite a few things, but there's a chance I'll come back. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
429. I'm still thinking about what I want to do after school. Electrical engineering seems interesting. I think you can study it on a number of the islands. I have heard that you can study it on Barbados and someone else told me that you can study it on Bonaire, too. Then I could stay on the islands. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
430. I want to go to the Netherlands or to America. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
431. I want to go to college when I'm older. Something to do with tourism, but I'll have to move away. You can't study it here. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
432. I'd like to be a director in the tourism industry. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
433. I want to study in the US, become a teacher and then come back here. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
434. I want to go to the US or Canada when I'm older. I want to become a pediatrician and they have good courses there. (girl, 15 years)
435. When I finish school, I'm going to go somewhere else to study. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
436. I'm not sure what I want to study. Maybe English, biology or psychiatry. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
437. When I finish school, I want to go to the Netherlands to study. I'm not sure what I want to do; medicine, law, or cookery. I like all those things. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
438. When I finish school I want out of here, but I don't know where I'll go. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
439. When I finish school I'm going to go to the U.S. or to the Netherlands. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
440. When I'm older I want to study in the U.S. and become an accountant. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
441. I want to train to be an accountant when I'm older, but I'm not so good at math. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
442. When I finish school I want to leave Saba, but I don't know yet what I want to be when I'm older. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
443. I've got three years to go and then I'll be off to the Netherlands or St. Maarten. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
444. I want to go to the Netherlands. I want to be a pilot. I'm thinking about training to be a pilot on St. Maarten. There is a course there for those that want to be Winair pilots. Eventually I want to be a KLM pilot. KLM is my favorite company. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
445. You do have opportunities when you grow up on the islands, but you must be willing to fight for what you want. (adolescent)

446. 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 young people. 20% come back, 80% of which are girls. (expert)
447. There aren't many Saban students in the Netherlands. Because the whole system is in English on Saba, they usually go to Puerto Rico, Trinidad or the US. (expert)
448. There is no social training, and young people who are practically oriented are particularly let down on Saba. As a result, many 16 or 17-year-old young people are forced to work without having first learned about the associated responsibilities. They don't know how to behave at work, how to deal with money, etc. They're not prepared. And some young people stay at home because there's no training for them. (expert)
449. Girls generally leave the island earlier in order to go to college. (expert)
450. There are currently about six 17 or 18-year-old guys on Saba who have completed their lower secondary education, but are unable to continue their studies. They have jobs unloading ships and with the phone company, but they don't get any training or education. (expert)
451. Due to this situation, some come into contact with the legal system. They are bored and haven't learned to channel their anger. Generally, issues are resolved as much as possible outside the legal system. That's the advantage of a small island, but sometimes things are too serious. In extreme cases, adolescents end up in the jail on Bonaire. For less serious cases, community service on Saba is another option. (expert)
452. Young people are not motivated. They don't know what the options are and don't feel responsible for their own futures. (expert)
453. All young people are eligible for a scholarship to continue learning outside the island. Many are unaware of this. (expert)
454. I encourage every child to get off the island and continue studies elsewhere. Broaden their horizons. There is life beyond Saba. (expert)
455. Many young people are too relaxed about their futures. (expert)
456. For young people there used to be very few options. All the practical subjects were killed off. This year extra investment has returned. A building has been opened next to the airport for practical training. (expert)
457. Tailored education? No chance of that on such a small island. (expert)
458. From high school onwards all the opportunities for young people are actually too limited. (expert)
459. There are few opportunities for 16 or 17-year-old boys. (expert)
460. After we've finished high school, we'll have to wait until we can go to college because there's a waiting list. There's nothing to do while we're waiting. It's a time when lots of kids start drinking and develop problems with drugs and alcohol. (child, Saba)

Health

461. Once a month there is a broadcast on the radio from the local station in Statia and Saba in which topics such as pregnancy, respect yourself, HIV and AIDS are discussed. (expert)
462. I reckon we're all healthy. When we get sick, it's usually only the flu. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
463. An investigation showed that 55 % of children are overweight and 11 % are malnourished. (expert)
464. Obesity is a serious problem. Obesity is an issue in the baby clinic these days. It's customary to want a nice fat baby because it indicates prosperity. (expert)
465. The idea that exercise is healthy hasn't sunk in here. (expert)
466. If you're very sick, you have to go to St. Maarten. (girl, 11 years, Saba)

467. If you are sick you go to the doctors at the hospital. I don't have any family physician. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
468. There's a hospital on the island, but it's not very good. I think that there are three doctors and a number of nurses. Health care is reasonable but not brilliant. There's room for improvement and something should be done about it. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
469. They should improve their facilities so that patients aren't immediately sent elsewhere as soon as there's a problem. The doctors at the hospital are fine, but more specialists are needed. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
470. They usually send you to St. Maarten. You could also end up in Puerto Rico or Colombia. I don't understand why patients are sent to Colombia instead of to the Netherlands. My grandfather was sent to Colombia and I think they should have sent him to the Netherlands. We are part of the Netherlands, after all. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
471. You always have to go to the hospital. Doctors don't visit people at home. There are nurses who visit people in their homes, but no doctors. If it's very serious, they might send an ambulance, but that would be unusual. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
472. As long as there is nothing seriously wrong with you, healthcare is OK. There's usually a doctor available at the hospital. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
473. The doctor is within walking distance from my house. In fact, everything is within walking distance on Saba. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
474. I was operated on once, and it went well. (girl, 15 years)
475. Often someone comes from the medical center to the school. They do checkups or give information about AIDS. I learn a lot from it. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
476. Healthcare is good. Almost everyone is insured. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
477. Healthcare here is good but a bit bureaucratic. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
478. The doctors here are fine. I've never been admitted to the hospital. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
479. I've had problems with my health, and I haven't always been treated well. There should be more facilities on Saba. Sometimes it takes too long to transfer you to somewhere else. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
480. I have been admitted to the hospital. Not on Saba but on St. Maarten. I had surgery on my adenoids. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
481. The hospital on Saba is good. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
482. The doctors who are there now aren't as good. The doctor who used to be there was good. I think he's related to me. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
483. Some doctors just give you a drug without diagnosing you properly. Others are less lazy. Some really diagnose you thoroughly to find out what the problem is. That's what the doctor who used to be there always did. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
484. On the BES islands, certain medications are no longer reimbursed since the system changed. Poor parents can't afford it anymore. (expert)
485. We have a team of specialists: EOZ, psychologist, child and adolescent psychiatrist, speech therapist and physiotherapist. There are monthly healthcare, counseling and referral team meetings with the class care coordinator. Then cases are discussed and the situation in the class examined. On this basis of all this, an action plan is drawn up. (expert)
486. For disabled children, the opportunity on Saba are very limited. It's very difficult because they feel rejected if you tell them that appropriate care must be found elsewhere. (expert)

487. There are two family physicians on Saba who carry out plaster casting, ultrasounds and X-rays in addition to their general duties. There are also specialists who visit the island once a month. There is no pediatrician. (expert)
488. There is a medical center on St. Maarten with just one pediatrician. (expert)
489. As a family physician, I sometimes refer children to the pediatrician, which means they have to go to St. Maarten. (expert)
490. The hospital on St. Martin is similar to a local hospital with all its limitations. So if there is a serious problem, children have to be sent to Guadeloupe. They speak French there and European standards apply. Otherwise they have to go to Colombia, where stringent American accreditation is applicable, or the Netherlands. (expert)
491. Communication is very difficult. In severe cases and emergencies this can become a serious issue. (expert)
492. The family physician here is child-friendly. The hospital on Saba is not suitable for children, and neither is the hospital on St. Maarten. There's no room for parents to stay overnight with their child, although visiting hours are flexible. (expert)
493. Girls don't go to the family physician if they have something unknown wrong with them. (expert)
494. The clinic is free and carries out vaccinations. This helps babies up to 15 months old to be kept under close observation. (expert)
495. When babies are more than 15 months old, they go to the Youth and Family Center. There is a clinic doctor but no pediatrician. It allows the children to be observed reasonably through to the end of the toddler stage. (expert)
496. Girls have to go to St. Maarten for an abortion. If the abortion law is adopted, girls will then have to go to Bonaire. (expert)
497. We have a cafeteria at school, but I don't like the food. Croquettes, French fries, fried chicken, hamburgers, it's all too much fat. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
498. On many islands, the kids get poor-quality nutrition. There's a lot of junk food. (expert)
499. Unhealthy food is sold in schools. (expert)
500. The eating habits here are often unhealthy. Lots of candy and soda. Healthy food is really not an option here because of the economics. Everything that is healthy is expensive. (expert)
501. The menu here often consists of rice, beans and peas. Healthy eating is going to require a cultural shift. (expert)
502. A partnership with the Public Health Service in The Hague has been set up to see how people can live and eat more healthily. (expert)
503. I rarely drink alcohol, only on special occasions and at parties. I don't smoke and I never will. I can honestly say that that is something I'll never do. I love sports, so I want to stay healthy. I will never ruin my lungs by smoking. I don't take drugs either. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
504. I think most sorts of alcohol are disgusting. I hate beer. I don't really drink at all. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
505. I don't drink alcohol and I don't use drugs. (girl, 15 years)
506. In my age group no one smokes or takes drugs. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
507. I've never seen anyone at school with alcohol or drugs. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
508. Personally I don't drink or take drugs, but I know people who do. It's unhealthy. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
509. There is definitely enough information about drugs, but I think they do it because they think it will make them more popular. (boy, 14 years, Saba)

510. If they would listen to me, I would tell the government that they should help young people more to keep them away from alcohol and drugs. And that they should focus more. And that they should help kids who are having problems at home. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
511. I don't smoke and I don't take drugs. I don't want to talk about alcohol. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
512. Chronic drug users must be given specific support, which falls outside the scope of the social training project. They end up in youth shelters, juvenile detention or drugs rehabilitation. (expert)
513. I didn't hear about kids using alcohol or drugs at the primary school. (expert)

Safety

514. Actually, there's never any violence. Things only sometimes get out of hand when people are drunk. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
515. I feel safe on the island. Not everywhere. In fact I mean yes, everywhere. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
516. Stuff gets stolen sometimes, but there isn't any fighting. I think that there's only been one big fight up to now. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
517. Saba is one big family. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
518. There is little violence on the island. I think that's because everyone knows each other. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
519. Because Saba is so small, it's safe. Everyone knows each other. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
520. Every now and then there is a fight at school, but it doesn't happen often. On the street, violence is virtually non-existent. Sometimes there are fights, but not every day. It's pretty rare. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
521. I feel safe anywhere on the island. It's so small here. Sometimes there are thefts, but it's a rare event. It doesn't happen often. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
522. There's no fighting at school, only sometimes on the street. The island is very small, so news travels fast. Usually, when there is a fight in a bar, it means that people are drunk. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
523. I actually feel safe everywhere. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
524. I feel safe everywhere. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
525. I've never experienced anything bad here. (girl, 15 years)
526. Life is pretty easy here. You don't have to worry about anything. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
527. I actually feel that I'm safe everywhere. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
528. I never feel really threatened. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
529. I feel safe anywhere. Everyone knows each other. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
530. I've never experienced something scary. But sometimes I hear stories from my friends about the island and people who die and stuff. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
531. In general, I definitely feel safe. Except for a few places where there's a lot of violence. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
532. On the street it depends. Sometimes there are groups of boys hanging around who say nasty things. That's happened to me before. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
533. I definitely feel safe at home and at school, but on the street I sometimes very unsafe. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
534. Something scary happened once but luckily my father was around at the time. (girl, 14 years, Saba)

535. I feel completely safe everywhere. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
536. I've never encountered violence anywhere. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
537. As a child, you're very pretty free here. It's safe. (expert)
538. I feel safe on the island, there's no crime here. There's a bit of theft, but it's very rare. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
539. They don't steal from the locals, but from the people in the hotels. I think that happened once. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
540. I know everybody and I've got a couple of very good friends who live within walking distance. It's quiet and there is hardly any crime. Sometimes things happen, but nothing important. There aren't any murders here. It's pretty safe compared to the other islands. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
541. I actually feel safe everywhere is. There isn't any crime. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
542. It's safe on the streets. There isn't any crime. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
543. The best thing here is that everyone knows each other. Fighting is very rare, and there's virtually no crime. Saba is the safest place to be. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
544. Saba is quiet and safe. There aren't any criminals with guns and stuff. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
545. There's little crime here. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
546. I feel safe here on the island. There isn't any crime or violence. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
547. There's hardly any violence and no gangs. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
548. If I feel threatened, I go home. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
549. Not much prior consideration is given to what would really connect to local habits on the islands, what people really need when it comes to assistance, guidance and services. (adolescent)
550. Saba is safe. There are always police present over the whole island. (child, Saba)
551. I think that if you feel threatened, you can simply go to the police. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
552. If kids feel threatened, they can discuss it at home or with a teacher. But there isn't an institution that can help them. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
553. If kids fight at school, some are suspended while others are given after-school detention. Others are given 'in school suspension'. This means that they are suspended, but have to attend school. They have to stay with a teacher or the principal all day. They do try to do something to stop the fighting and solve the problem, it usually works out. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
554. If I felt threatened, I don't really know where I'd go. (boy, 14 years, Saba)

Recreation, play and leisure time

555. In my free time I play computer games or games on the PlayStation. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
556. I usually spend my time at home playing with my family, doing exercises, watching TV or sitting behind the computer. I take part in activities if there are any. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
557. After school I usually just stay at home. Sometimes my cousins come over, or I play on the computer. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
558. Saba is small. Not many people live here so there aren't many people you can go and see. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
559. We have a lot of free time. I'm in an archeology club and a chess club. (boy, 14 years, Saba)

560. I don't do any sports in my spare time. I read a lot. I spend most of my money on books. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
561. A lot of my friends are members of my family. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
562. In my spare time I do homework and I've got a basketball hoop outside as well as a drum line. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
563. In my free time I go cycling, play basketball and talk to my friends. I'm in a basketball team. I play games on the PlayStation. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
564. For young people aged twelve to eighteen there are things to do, but for older teenagers aged sixteen or seventeen there is little to do when it comes to their development. (expert)
565. There are two new sports facilities: the Cruyff soccer pitch and a gymnasium in St. Johns. There is also a place to play basketball. Those are the only level areas. In terms of play areas, there isn't much, just a small playground in The Bottom which is very popular. A pool has been made for children in Cove Bay. (expert)
566. Child Focus carries out the logistics of after-school activities. They transport the kids everywhere. (expert)
567. If the after-school care isn't well organized, it causes trouble in the village and at school. (expert)
568. The isolation of Saba is a big problem. Young people have no privacy at all, especially teenagers. They can't leave the island except by plane, which is expensive. (expert)
569. The Youth and Family Center focuses on parents with young children, but it also organizes all kinds of activities for young people. We often go there. (child, Saba)
570. I no longer get bored. I just go and find something to do. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
571. It's boring for teenagers on the island. There isn't much to do and there are hardly any places you can go. (Boy, 16 years, Saba)
572. I don't always get bored, but sometimes it's just dull. Watch TV or play games on the computer. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
573. There isn't really much to do on the island, but we always find something. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
574. When I get bored, I go on the computer, or I go and find some friends so that we can hang out. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
575. There's not always enough for us to do here. You have to entertain yourself. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
576. I try to sleep when I get bored, which is often. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
577. There isn't much to do. That sucks, especially on Friday night if you want to go out. (girl, 15 years)
578. There is probably enough to do but it's always the same. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
579. There's not much to do here for kids. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
580. Sometimes I get bored. Then I go on the computer or watch TV. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
581. There isn't really enough to do on the island for teenagers. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
582. I get bored quickly. That's why I keep myself busy. I like to draw, listen to music and go on the computer. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
583. I usually go to bed at nine o'clock because there isn't much to do here. And sleep is good for you. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
584. There's not much to do here in the evening. (girl, 12 years, Saba)

585. During vacations we usually stay on Saba. We have more than enough vacation. I get bored if I don't go to school for a long time. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
586. There isn't much to do here. A lot of people just hang around. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
587. Outside school, there's not much to do. You really need to have your own hobbies. I draw and paint. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
588. When I get bored, I play video games or watch TV. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
589. Lots of kids just hang around on the street, simply because they've got nothing to do. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
590. There's not much to do here. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
591. There's not really enough for us to do on Saba. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
592. When I get bored, I go and play with my sister or something. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
593. I'm often bored. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
594. If you are twelve years old or older, you want to do exciting things, which we don't have here. That makes it very boring for children. (expert)
595. For young children this island is great, but teenagers don't find it either challenging or fun. (expert)
596. Saba is not very lively, so if there's a party, everyone goes. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
597. On the other hand, it doesn't really matter that there's not much to do here because you can always go to St. Maarten and that's exciting. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
598. If we are on vacation there are cinemas and shopping malls, but I never miss when we get back. I think it's nice and quiet here. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
599. There should be a better bus service. Parents don't feel responsible, and therefore children are limited in where they can go. There is a school bus, a Child Focus bus and a bus for the drum band, but that is still not enough. (expert)
600. It's difficult to organize after-school activities for young people. Strong group leaders are needed because otherwise it's difficult to keep the youths under control. (expert)
601. There are no real playgrounds for children with trampolines or the like. (expert)
602. There are very few sports and games facilities for older children. (expert)
603. I'm in a basketball team. We've already been to St. Maarten twice. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
604. We used to have training every Tuesday and Saturday. Now everyone has lots of school work, so we only go to the basketball court when we have time. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
605. After school I usually go home. Otherwise, I go to basketball training. We sometimes have basketball training right after school. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
606. I usually train alone. If I train with friends, we usually play short games against each other. Sometimes we also train during the week. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
607. I usually spend my time studying or playing sports. In any case, I'm hardly ever home. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
608. There is soccer and basketball, in fact a lot of things that have something to do with sports. There is also a sea-scouts group organized by Child Focus. There are a few things to do, but they are often boring. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
609. I play basketball and soccer. I also like fitness, weight lifting and hiking. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
610. I do it at home. We have a kind of home gym. (girl, 11 years, Saba)

611. I play basketball. Actually I don't really have any hobbies. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
612. I love soccer, softball and volleyball. You can't really play volleyball anywhere on the island. I think you can train in the evenings somewhere, but I'm not sure. We used to have a net but we lost it. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
613. Usually local teams play against each other. Occasionally a soccer team from another island comes here to play a game. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
614. I've got loads of friends. We usually go skating or rollerblading. There isn't a skate park on the island, so we just skate on the road. I would love it if there was a skate park. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
615. My hobbies are photography, dancing and playing basketball, or sometimes tennis. (girl, 15 years)
616. I used to go to boxing but now I go to skating practice. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
617. It's not so bad. There are after-school activities. I play basketball, soccer and softball, and I'm in a basketball team. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
618. You can do several things here after school. I often go swimming. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
619. I play basketball and soccer with friends or with my brother. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
620. I love sports. I play basketball, as well as other sports. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
621. You can do anything here. Sports, running, hiking and swimming. Swimming is the most fun! Ride bikes, play with your friends, talk to your friends, play games. Do you know the shop Game Flight? There isn't one on Saba, but we've got other games. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
622. Sports activities are popular. We try to arrange one activity each evening with its own theme. (expert)
623. The opportunities for children to play sports and games are very limited. There is the Johan Cruyff pitch and a sports hall. The population is small so it's not possible to separate people into different genders and age groups. There is just the one team. That means that people can't develop their talents. (expert)
624. Lots of sports are impossible on Saba. Not because of physical limitations, but because there are too few children to make such sports viable. (expert)
625. I only go out when people ask me along. They do ask me, but then I say I'm not going. I'd rather just chill with my friends. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
626. Play sports with my friends, do fun things, have a laugh and then have sleepovers. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
627. My friends have all been to my home, and I've also been to their homes. Most live nearby, but otherwise it's just a short drive. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
628. My hobbies are reading, listening to music and chilling with friends. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
629. On Friday evening there is a place that shows movies. We occasionally go out to dinner or go to a basketball game. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
630. Sometimes I do get bored. Then I go over to a friend's house, listen to music or chat online with my friends. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
631. There aren't many places to go out. There is a place where you can go just to chill with your friends. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
632. I go to my friends' homes or they come to mine. We rent movies or make smoothies. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
633. I hang out with my friends and I watch movies. (girl, 16 years, Saba)

634. A lot of kids live on the street, which in fact starts right from nursery school. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
635. When I'm with friends we hang out, go shopping, eat out or watch movies. (girl, 15 years)
636. Actually I never play outside. I do hang out with my friends though, and we go swimming or get something to eat. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
637. I usually hang out with other girls. People think it's weird if you hang around a lot with boys. But with girls there's often a lot of drama, believe me. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
638. When I'm with friends we go out to eat or hold a party. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
639. When I'm with friends, we usually watch a movie. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
640. Lots of kids hang out on the street, simply because they've got nothing to do. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
641. In my free time I watch TV at home or I go over to a friend's house. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
642. I've got lots of friends. We play sports or games, or go for a bike ride with those that have bikes. Most do have a bike, and the others have either a skateboard or roller skates. We do then all go together, but they go on their skateboards or roller blades and the rest of us go on our bikes. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
643. I sometimes go out in the evening, but only if someone invites me to a party. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
644. Kids must be encouraged to participate in activities. It's better than just sitting in front of the TV or gaming. (expert)
645. In my free time I draw or I read. Sometimes I help clean the house by vacuuming and washing the dishes. I also wash my own clothes and those of my sister. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
646. There should be more opportunities to play sports. They should build a sports center and have more equipment available to help us. More basketballs, more footballs and uniforms for the teams. A circus would be fun. That reminds me, there isn't a circus around here anywhere. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
647. 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)
648. I think there should be more after-school activities for kids. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
649. There isn't much to do. There should be more activities. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
650. I'd like to do something with archeology or a skate club. There should be lots more after-school clubs. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
651. I think that workshops or something similar should be organized for the kids. And that adults that they trust should tell them that if they don't try and make something of their lives, things aren't going to get any better in the future. They need to understand that. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
652. A movie theater would be great, but it will probably never happen. Saba is too small. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
653. There should be more amusement parks here like in the US. But really big things will never come here because there isn't enough money for them. (boy, 14 years, Saba)

Participation

654. My mom sometimes asks me what I think about school. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
655. As far as I can see, there aren't any organizations on Saba that are particularly interested in the views of young people. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
656. They do ask me about my opinion, both at home and at school. They want to know how I feel about something, which gives me the feeling that I'm part of things. (girl, 16 years, Saba)

657. It's hard when you want to change anything here. There isn't really anybody you can talk to, certainly not at school in any case. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
658. On Saba, the opinion of everyone, including children, is taken seriously. Everyone's opinion is listened to. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
659. There is no opportunity anywhere here to participate in a club, workshop or discussion. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
660. I usually make my own decisions. Sometimes my parents disagree, sometimes we make a joint decision. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
661. Friends sometimes ask me for my opinion. For example, if they have a problem and don't know what to do. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
662. I can voice my opinions at home and at school without problems. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
663. If I want to change something at home, I can talk about it. They take my opinion into consideration, and at school it's the same. Not here in the neighborhood though. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
664. I can give my opinion at school. They do ask me what I think about things, but I'm not sure if they actually do anything about it. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
665. Emotions are not discussed on the islands. Young people are not asked about things that actually trouble them. (expert)
666. Children cannot participate. They are not self-reliant or independent. (expert)
667. If you are going to educate young people about their rights then it is inevitable that they at some point they are going to clash with their parents. That is what happened previously at the JAC (Youth Advice Center) in the Netherlands. (expert)
668. Knowing the mentality of young people, they are not likely to openly discuss any problems they have at home. At the same time, there are no secrets on Saba. People use Facebook a lot here, and it works like a tabloid newspaper. Maybe Facebook should be used to inform young people about their rights. (expert)
669. Child Focus is now interviewing children and young people about activities they would like to do after school. Popular answers are musicals, swimming and cooking. (expert)
670. There is a culture of silence. Children should keep quiet and not ask anything. It's none of your business, as a child. (expert)
671. My mom sometimes asks me for my opinion when it comes to clothes or technology. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
672. She is the mom, so I leave the decision-making to her. I normally choose not to complain. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
673. When we have a discussion at home, we all have our own opinions. Then your opinion really gets heard. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
674. I can decide for myself what I want to be when I'm older, where I want to study and who my friends are. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
675. My parents respect my opinion, but what I say isn't always taken into account. They're older, so they decide. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
676. My parents sometimes ask me for my opinion. And if they decided to do something that I didn't agree with, I would probably be able to say so, but that's never happened. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
677. My parents and I discuss everything together and then we make decisions together. (girl, 14 years, Saba)

678. At home we decide things together. I can buy the clothes I want and choose my own friends. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
679. At home we make joint decisions about how things should be. My parents aren't really that bothered. They do warn me sometimes though. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
680. My parents let me make my own decisions. They do give advice and make sure that I do the right things, but they always ultimately leave it up to me. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
681. My parents encourage me to do things and not to spend all my time on the sofa, but it's always up to me. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
682. My parents certainly take me seriously when I have an opinion on something. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
683. Sometimes they listen to what I have to say, sometimes they don't. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
684. Usually it's up to me, but sometimes my mom tells me what to do. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
685. At home we decide things together. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
686. I can decide for myself what clothes I wear and what I spend my money on. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
687. Sometimes my mom forbids me to hang out with someone who's got a bad reputation. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
688. We make joint decisions at home about clothes and bedtimes and stuff. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
689. My friends and my family are interested in hearing my opinions. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
690. At home they often ask me what I think about things. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
691. It's up to me what I wear and what I do. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
692. At school they sometimes ask us our opinions about the lessons. They want to know what we think about them, for example if they are interesting or boring. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
693. When the uniform was changed, nobody asked us what we thought. But recently they did ask for our opinions on the new uniform. Lots of people thought the old uniform was better. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
694. At school, they sometimes ask us for our opinions. In English lessons that is often the case, as it is in Dutch lessons. The teacher tells us what she thinks, and we tell her what we think. In Spanish, Computer Sciences and Engineering they also sometimes ask us for our opinions. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
695. We've been making things for the musical. The teacher decided what we had to make. The people involved in the musical told us what we had to make and which colors we had to use, although we could say what we thought about it. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
696. I asked if it was possible to take courses from different specializations, but I haven't been given an answer yet. I also asked if I could study the other subjects in my own time if it wasn't possible. Because I still haven't had my questions answered, I'm in the dark, and I really think the system should be changed. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
697. At school they don't really ask us we think about things. Maybe once or twice. I don't think it would make much difference anyway. I think everyone has their own opinion, and it's difficult to satisfy everyone. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
698. Sometimes we have to fill out a questionnaire. I don't think that they come from the school but from other organizations. Mostly they just contain standard questions about you and the school. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
699. At school we have discussions where they ask as for our opinions, which is great. (girl, 17 years, Saba)

700. Sometimes I'm asked to give my opinion, and at school I can also say what I think. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
701. Sometimes people do ask me for my opinion. At school, for example, when we are talking about art, or somebody might want to know what I think about their hair. It feels good when somebody is interested in my opinion. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
702. I can voice my opinion on things at school. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
703. At school they never ask you about how you think things should be done. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
704. At school they never really ask for our opinions. (boy, 14 years, Saba)

Housing conditions

705. At home I haven't really got enough privacy. The whole family is coming and going the whole time. I'm not complaining, I'm used to it. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
706. We live in a big house by Saban standards. You probably went past it when you traveled from the airport. There is a house on the road to the airport with a pitched roof, and that's my home. It has got four bedrooms. Everyone has got their own bedroom and there is a guest room. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
707. I live in a fairly large house. It's a decent size. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
708. I live in a medium-size house. It's neither too big not too small. I share a bedroom with my sister. I don't mind, we normally get on well with each other. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
709. I think I have enough privacy. If I get into an argument, I usually go to bed or go over to friends. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
710. Our house has two bedrooms , two bathrooms, a living room and a kitchen. I've got my own bedroom. (girl, 17 year , Saba)
711. We live in a small hut. It's not great, but I've got my own bedroom. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
712. The local authority has an additional fund for housing and education for young people who want to study outside Saba. (expert)

Financial situation

713. I don't get any pocket money. If I want money, I have to work for it. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
714. Life on Saba is quite expensive. Not just electricity and water, but food too. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
715. We've never been in a situation at home where there wasn't enough money. (boy, 16 years, Saba)
716. There's always enough money at home to buy food. There's always food on the table three times a day, and there are always snacks. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
717. I get paid for babysitting. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
718. I put it in my piggy bank. In December, we're going to Orlando, so I'll have a look then to see how much money I've got. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
719. I get money from my parents if I want to buy something, if I want to buy things at school or if I want to order something online. If the things are too expensive, I don't get them. In fact, I only get the things I need. (girl, 11 years, Saba)
720. If I need money, I just ask my parents for it. I've also got some savings, but money isn't a problem at home. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
721. During the holidays, I have a job. (girl, 14 years, Saba)

722. Shopping on the island is expensive because of all the duties that have to be paid. All these taxes and transport costs make it expensive. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
723. Everything is reasonably affordable, but taxes do make things more expensive for most people. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
724. There's always enough money at home to buy food. I don't get any pocket money, but I get paid for helping with the chores at home. My parents usually pay when I need something. I don't get everything I want, but I always get clothes. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
725. Every now and then we take a vacation, although we do have to save up for it. We've just got back from the Dominican Republic. I've been to St. Maarten and St. Thomas. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
726. We've got enough money at home for food and clothes. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
727. We regularly go on holiday, although we haven't been recently because we're saving up for my studies. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
728. I get pocket money and this summer I'm going to find a job. (girl, 17 years, Saba)
729. We've got enough money at home for food and clothes. We never have any financial problems. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
730. We've got enough money at home for food and clothes. In fact, everybody has. (girl, 15 years)
731. We've got enough money at home for food and clothes. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
732. I don't get any pocket money, but I do get paid for gardening work. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
733. We don't have any financial problems at home. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
734. I get pocket money and it's up to me what I spend it on. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
735. We've got enough money at home for food and clothes. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
736. We don't have any financial problems at home. Both my parents are independent. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
737. We've got enough money at home for food and clothes. (girl, 12 years, Saba)
738. We've got enough money at home for the usual stuff. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
739. I've got a job and it's up to me what I spend it on. (girl, 16 years, Saba)
740. I don't know if there are any people who are actually homeless, but a lot of people don't have much and can't do a lot for their kids. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
741. Some people don't have the things they need. Some kids can't grow up like the other kids as a result. They don't have all the things that we have. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
742. I haven't got a job. Usually I help my family, and sometimes I get paid. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
743. We've got enough money at home for food and clothes. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
744. I've got a job and I get pocket money. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
745. We never have any financial problems at home. (girl, 14 years, Saba)
746. It's up to me what I spend my money on. Clothes and stuff. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
747. We never have any financial problems at home. (girl, 15 years, Saba)
748. We've got enough money at home for food and clothes. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
749. I don't get any pocket money. (boy, 14 years, Saba)

750. In the summer I have a job. I use the money to buy clothes. (boy, 14 years, Saba)
751. There is no child benefit In the Antilles. This leads to inequality relative to the Netherlands. (expert)
752. 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)
753. 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)
754. 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)
755. People on minimum benefits often go and stay with family, which results in lots of people living in a confined space. (expert)
756. 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)
757. 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)
758. No poverty line has been established for the Caribbean Netherlands. In the European Netherlands, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) has defined a low income threshold. (expert)
759. Participation in sports and recreational activities is often free, and doesn't really constitute a problem for people with low incomes. (expert)
760. Public bodies are responsible for combating poverty, but so far they have done little. The social services and public bodies should improve mutual coordination. (expert)
761. There is a new subsidy system for public bodies for integrating policies. (expert)
762. People do not talk about financial problems, out of pride and shame. As a result, poverty remains almost invisible. (expert)
763. The State Representative, Wilbert Stolte, recently sounded the alarm. He estimated that half of the population has financial problems. (expert)
764. For some children whose parents have little money, there are few financial options to study outside Saba. (expert)
765. Prices on the BES islands have soared. A study last year showed that the cost of living on Saba is the highest among the BES islands. (expert)
766. It is ridiculous that the inhabitants of the BES islands don't get child benefit. I think that it's really unfair. (expert)
767. Mothers often have low-paid jobs. (expert)
768. Many parents face serious financial and economic problems. Prices are high while wages remain low. There is a bling-bling culture which includes having a flashy car. Some people have three jobs. (expert)
769. Many single mothers are honestly trying to pay for the education of their children. (expert)

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.
Jarmila **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 **Blaauboer** – director, Saba Health Care Foundation - Saba.
Michiel **Boeken** – director, Saba Comprehensive School - Saba.
Wilma **Böhm** – director, Basisschool De Pelikaan - Bonaire.
Juliëtte **Bonneur** – legal policy adviser, Netherlands Institute for Human Rights.
Huub **Bouwen** – head of unit SZW BES-islands.
Maryse **Broek** – education expert, Sardes.
Irene **Broekhuijse** – chairperson, Jongeren van het Koninkrijk.
Jos de **Bruijn** – 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 **Crestian-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 Public healthcare /GHOR Caribbean Netherlands.
Melissa **Diaz** – consultant MUNDIAZ Health Support and GGD Den Haag.
Liënné **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 **Francisca** – board member MAAPP, movement to promote Antillean and Aruban participation.
Chris **Frans** – vice-chairperson and secretary, OCaN.
Jovani **Franscado** – co-worker Bonaire police force - Bonaire.
Tanja **Gellweiler-Woeltjes** – co-worker Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.
Curvin **George** – researcher, Voogdijraad BES - Bonaire.
Suzy **Guido** – assistant project leader Child Focus Foundation - Saba.
Stan van **Haaren** – senior advisor, Nederlands Jeugdinstituut (NJI).
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.
Marieke **Knol** – director, Mobiliteit in Muziek.
Suzanne **Koelega** – journalist, The Daily Herald.
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.
Kees-Jan de **Kruijf** – coordinator, Werkervaring & Resocialisatie Stichting Krusada - Bonaire.
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 **Liefardt** – 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).
Jodi **Mak** – co-worker Verwey-Jonker Institute.
Freek **Mekking** – project advisor Oranjefonds.
Shanna **Mercera-Gibbs** – nurse, aids-coordinator Public Health Department - St. Eustatius.
Myra ter **Meulen** – advisor youth policy.
Quintin van **Mildert** – co-worker, Ministry of OC&W, International Affairs.
Ambrosio **Molina** – project leader Improvement program PO OCW/RCN, Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland.
Jonneke **Naber** – policy advisor Netherlands Institute for Human Rights.
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 Jiwi, learning and play school - Bonaire.
Geert van der **Plas** – education expert - Bonaire.
Esther **Pourier-Thodé** – director, Guardianship Council BES - Bonaire.
Brenda van **Putten** – teacher and education expert, Governor de Graafschool - 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** – orthopedagogue - 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.
Glenville **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.
Anneke van **Toll** – lawyer, legal office Van Toll N.V. - Bonaire.

Françoise **Vermunt** – policy advisor, Directorate of Relations Management, Development and Implementation Management, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

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 justice 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.

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.

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Appendix 4 – Advice of the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights

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.¹

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.

¹ <http://www.mensenrechten.nl/publicaties/detail/18047>.

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 law makers.

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.

Colophon

Child on Saba. Children's rights in the Caribbean Netherlands is a publication of UNICEF Netherlands.

© May 2013

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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*

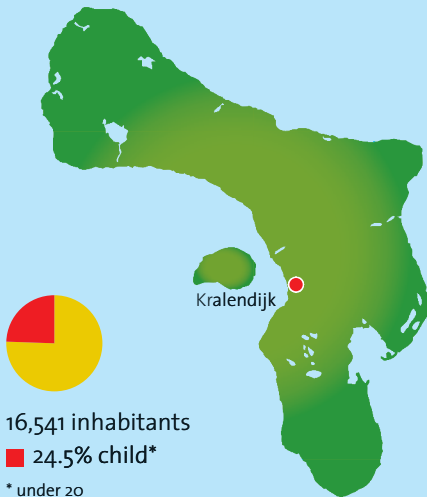
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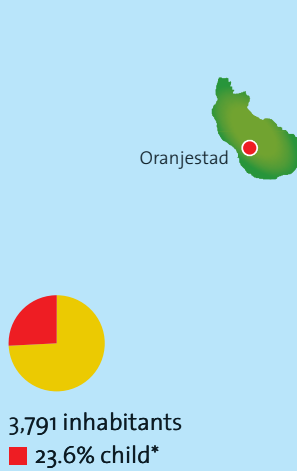
ISBN 978-90-73841-18-5



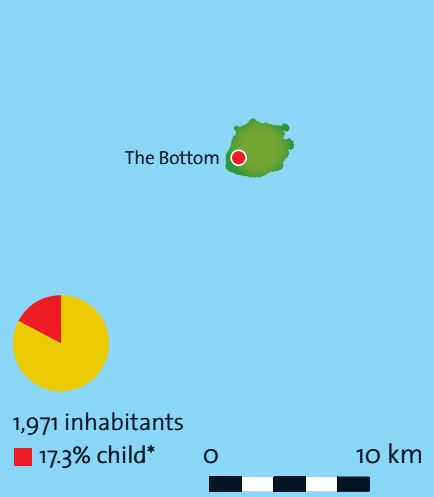
Bonaire



Sint Eustatius

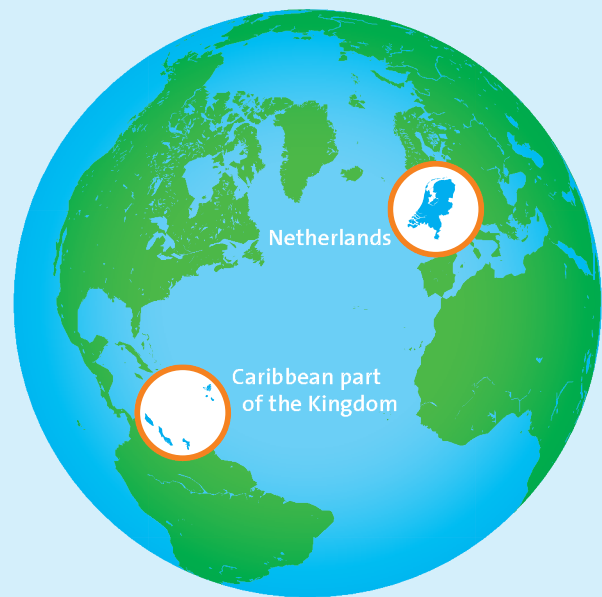


Saba



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).



Caribbean part of the Kingdom

- | | |
|-----------|------------------|
| ① Aruba | ④ Sint Maarten |
| ② Curaçao | ⑤ Saba |
| ③ Bonaire | ⑥ Sint Eustatius |

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 Saba 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 Saba. 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 Bonaire and St. Eustatius and a summary of the three reports.