NEWS FLASH TASKFORCE 2023

Interlandelijke Taskforce Kinderrechten

INTRODUCTION

The first news flash of the Kingdom Taskforce on Children's Rights for 2023 shares vital information on after-school activities, parenting support, youth participation and much more. We have seen meaningful developments on all islands regarding compliance to child rights laws. The islands work separately but also together. A great example of inter-island collaboration is the introduction of the Guana Chat children's phone. Want to know more? Read on!

ARUBA

In Aruba, significant work has been done in several key areas in the past year. These include the 'Positive Parenting' program, which was started by the Youth and Family Center in 2016 and encompasses approximately 20 organizations that meet on a quarterly basis. The program recently established a committee that will work on creating a Parenting Vision. [A Parenting Vision expresses what children need in their upbringing to grow up safely and healthily and to develop into adult citizens who fully participate in society.]

The Center conducts workshops and lectures for parents, and in conjunction with Children's Phone, has started a project to give additional support to fathers to help them become more involved in their families. As part of these efforts, it is also working with hotels to ensure that employees are given time off to attend the skill building activities. Later this year, the range of activities offered by the Youth and Family Center will be listed in a catalog intended for schools and the Ministry of Education.

Graduation of the project "From Teenage Parents to Life Coaches"

Work has also been done to establish programs about Healthy and Safe Parenting, Signs of Safety and to implement the Protection Code in Aruba. The government has implemented a pilot project for safety nets in after-school care programs and at a foundation and intends on extending this initiative in the coming months.

Additionally, the Parenting Vision committee is working closely with various civil society organizations in schools. In 2022, this work included the creation of a 4-year strategic plan for parenting support and other areas of importance to families. The Turning Empathy: Strategic Plan to Improve Emotionally Healthy Parenting through an Outreach Approach 2022-2026, has been finalized and its implementation commenced in early 2023.

Aruba is also in talks with UNICEF to access further support for its positive parenting and youth participation programs. As Arubans celebrate the first five years of Parenting Week, they are focused on empowering local organizations as they plan and organize for a better future.

Parenting Week

BONAIRE

With funds from the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK), the number of after-school activities on Bonaire has increased and several new projects have been initiated, including the construction of a hybrid classroom, which will also be used as a kitchen.

A webpage for young people is being developed and will provide up-to-date information on what is going on in Bonaire. The webpage will be added to the official government website and will also be a link to the so-called child pass.

This child pass, formally known as the “Diamond Pass”, gives access to sporting, cultural, and educational activities. It can also function as a library and discount card. The pilot group that tested the pass gave positive reviews. After an awareness campaign, children will be able to order these online later this year, with parental consent. A recently hired coordinator will organize some of these activities for young people aged 13 and older.

An old community center is being converted into a Family Justice Center to centralize youth care activities. Victims of child abuse and domestic violence will go there for all the necessary help (police, doctors, etc.). The 'Akseso' foundation will provide social support at the Center as well as the neighborhood development project. Akseso is a 1-stop counter, where people can go with all kinds of questions about youth care. The Integral Youth Policy will be refined into an action plan which will provide more clarity on these developments.

Last year, an awareness campaign for child safety in traffic was held and was so well received by the population that the campaign will be repeated this year.

Bonaire is also placing major emphasis on youth participation. The Public Entity Bonaire and UNICEF have written an overview of the various organizations that are supporting youth on behalf of the government. UNICEF is also providing technical assistance and the Youth Council is being revived to better attune the activities of the chain partners to the needs of youth.

CURAÇAO

A youth platform has been set up to connect young people from different sociocultural backgrounds. The youth platform currently has 5 members, and wants to expand to a maximum of 15 young people, so that more activities can be organized. This year's theme for the activities is 'inclusion'.
In collaboration with youth organizations from Romania and Albania, local organization Pro Bista has agreed to a project with Erasmus+ that offers blind and visually impaired youth a platform to promote inclusiveness. In October this year, young people from Romania and Albania will travel to Curaçao to learn about Curaçaoan youth and culture.

With support from UNICEF, the team in Curaçao is working hard to complete the Protection Code, which is being spearheaded by a national coordinator. The project was launched on the 25th of November 2022 and the Code's roadmap for Aruba will also be implemented in Curaçao. The Code's project leaders will make an inventory of all NGOs and GOs in their area, which will also be featured on the social map.

Information Session Protection Code

The chain partners are currently reviewing the Code and each chain partner will be assessed to ascertain whether a child safety protocol already exists within their organization. At the same time, it will also be determined who at the chain partners qualifies to participate in the 'train the trainers' training.

A proposal for youth legislation has been presented to the Minister of SOAW. The SOAW, together with the University of Curaçao, and Child Protection, is also working on the development of a toolkit for professionals, which will be online soon.

Information Session Protection Code

The University of Curaçao is conducting various studies about the state of vulnerable children on the island. Curaçao is also working with UNICEF to achieve a baseline measurement of domestic violence and child abuse. New research on the rights of the child has now been completed and presented to the minister. Systems will also be set up this year to monitor developments and to support decision-making based on this data.

Curaçao has submitted a project via Erasmus+ to better study the problems of undocumented children and youths' lack of access to medical assistance because they do not have residence permits. This is a serious issue that will be studied and mapped out with a local partner this year.

Implementing the parenting vision is scheduled for 2023. An awareness campaign about parenting will start this year. The aim of this is to make 'parenting' an important topic of conversation among the population so that children can be guided more consciously.

SABA

Child Focus organizes various after-school activities for children between 4 and 12 years old. All children on the island in that age range, including children who are not registered at Child Focus, can participate in these activities.

The high school organizes several after-school activities such as clubs and societies for young people aged 12-18. These clubs expose students to diverse disciplines and are supervised by adult coaches.

There are two 'healthy lifestyle' programs for children of varying ages. In these programs, children and parents attend workshops via which they receive insights on the risks of being overweight and advice on how to live healthily.

The Youth Council, which was quite active and worked independently, is now going through a transitional phase because of the absence of former members who migrated for their studies. The remaining members are being guided by two government employees as the Council works to recruit new members.

The Youth 13+ project was set up as part of the Positive Parenting program. This project aims to focus the joint efforts of the Caribbean Netherlands to support the development of youth into adulthood. Young people must be given the opportunity to make full use of their talents so that they can participate fully in society.

The themes of this project are:
- Housing
- Leisure and development activities
- Poverty reduction
- Youth participation
- Domestic violence and child abuse
- Education and labor

The government and civil society organizations are working to combat domestic violence and child abuse with guidance from the Administrative Agreement (Bestuursakkoord) and various actions plans. The working groups comprise members of the Safety Network whose programs protect children and youth.

Guana Chat

Furthermore, work is currently being done on a crisis shelter (a flexible shelter) so that victims of domestic violence and child abuse will not have to leave Saba to access care.

Families and children can now access professional help and support after consulting with experts. All cases are discussed and can be tackled directly from a solid step-by-step plan which is implemented gradually based on the client's progress and needs.

ST. EUSTATIUS

Some of the guidance provided to parents on St. Eustatius is done through the Triple P method which focuses on Positive Parenting. St. Eustatius wishes to expand this work by collaborating with St. Maarten and the University of the West Indies on positive parenting strategies.

Ongoing cooperation with the BES and Children's Telephone Foundation of Aruba has proved successful. Guana Chat, St. Eustatius' children's telephone, went live in March 2022. Many children have already called and a campaign within schools is currently being considered to provide children and youth with more information about the topics they can call about, how to share their concerns, and to assure them that their privacy will be respected. These are issues they have many questions about.

End of School Year Gala/Talent Show. The students that are leaving the island to study abroad.