

UNICEF Youth Advice

Saba, Caribbean Netherlands

#MYNEWWORLD





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UNICEF thanks the young people who participated in the focus group discussions on Saba: Billie Jean (17), Bernardo (15), Vernisha (16), Lyiesha (16), Tyler (16), Clarine (18), Micaiah (18) and Savannah (16).

UNICEF also thanks the 60 young people who participated in the survey on Saba. Special thanks also to the Saba Comprehensive School and Lysanne Charles for their contribution to and coordination of all #MyNewWorld activities on Saba. And another special thank you to Stichting WeConnect for the organizational support of #MyNewWorld in the Caribbean Netherlands.

The #MyNewWorld campaign in the Caribbean Netherlands is part of the UNICEF Caribbean Netherlands Children's Rights Program, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations. With this campaign, UNICEF emphasizes the importance of enabling young people to exercise their right participate.

The views of the young people participating in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of UNICEF.

Preface

Suzanne Laszlo, director UNICEF Netherlands

“The year 2020 has turned the world upside down. In the global Corona crisis, UNICEF is working extra hard, for every child. The Corona crisis presents the necessary challenges, but also offers opportunities to improve the world. The voice of young people is essential in this. The choices that politicians make today influence their lives now and in the future. That is why we asked young people between the ages of 13 and 18 in the European and Caribbean Netherlands to share their ideas for the new world they would like to see. The right to participate is one of the most important principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

UNICEF Netherlands is pleased to see that at this time, politicians are increasingly emphasizing the importance of listening to children and young people. We therefore hope that you will read this Youth Advice with interest and take the convictions of the young people to heart.”

Vernisha (16) participant #MyNewWorld in Saba

“I found this experience great, I was able to voice my opinion and I feel heard.”



Participants #MyNewWorld, Saba

About the UNICEF Youth Advice #MyNewWorld, Caribbean Netherlands

The Corona crisis has disrupted the world and this raises many questions, also for youth in the Caribbean Netherlands. That is why UNICEF asked us how the ideal world should look. Through the youth participation campaign #MyNewWorld, UNICEF is supporting adolescents in the Netherlands and Caribbean Netherlands with making our opinions loud and clear.

On Saba we started with focus group discussions where we first discussed all kinds of topics and then chose the most important themes for which we formulated advice for the government on Saba and in the Netherlands. The advice from our focus groups were presented in the form of a survey to 60 students within our school so that they could indicate what they agreed or disagreed with and whether they had any additional ideas. This means that in total 68 students out of 100, 66% of the student body, participated at some level in this assessment of advice to the government.

Our advice has been compiled in this report. We are sharing our advice with Commissioner Bruce Zagers and Island Secretary Tim Muller on Saba, State Secretary Raymond Knops (Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations), and Member of Parliament Stieneke van der Graaf and will also discuss our advice with them. We hope that we can convince them to adopt some of our ideas.



Participants #MyNewWorld, Saba

PRIORITY SUBJECTS

Education: online vs. face-to-face

ALLOW STUDENTS TO CHOOSE BETWEEN ONLINE AND REGULAR EDUCATION

During the lockdown, we received lessons virtually because our school facility was closed. The start of the online classes was pushed back from 7.30am to 9am, which many students preferred. For many students, studying from home went very well and some of us even learned better online. For other students studying online did not go as well; for some this was due to the lack of social interaction and for others it was due to the lack of structure. After the lockdown ended, there were still concerns about safety so students who were doing well online could continue virtual learning. For students who were not doing well online, a return to the physical school space was obligatory. This made it clear to us that it is possible to provide both options to students at the same time. However, at the start of the new school year, we all had to return to the regular school space again with classes starting at 7.30. We miss having options that better suit our individual learning styles.

Professionalization of sports for youth

FUND AND PROFESSIONALIZE YOUTH SPORTS STARTING WITH FULLY PAID AND DEDICATED PROFESSIONAL COACHES

On Saba we struggle with access to structural sporting clubs. Still many of us participate in whatever sports are available. One of our biggest challenges is the lack of professional, dedicated and committed coaches. This makes it impossible for us to play at our highest potential or develop our talents to collegiate or professional levels later on. During the Corona crisis this lack was amplified, because we had no coaches to encourage us to continue our workouts or healthy nutrition. We also realized that we not only use sports for physical activity, but also as an emotional outlet and way to combat mental fatigue. Sports should be seen as critical to our mental, physical and emotional development and wellbeing.

Hygiene and public health

ENSURE THAT PROPER HYGIENE AND PUBLIC HEALTH REMAIN TOP PRIORITIES

Before the Corona crisis proper hygiene and the risk of a pandemic did not have our attention. However, as the world, and our island, became more aware of the rapid spread of the Corona virus our school became more vigilant, ensuring that we keep social distance and also had hand sanitizers readily available throughout the campus. After the lockdown and with the beginning of the new school year the hand sanitizers are still available, though in less abundance and social distancing measures have been eased. We are concerned that the island is becoming too relaxed and that we will eventually return to the old situation. The government needs to be more careful, taking into account what is happening in the surrounding islands, and reopen slowly. Effective and sustainable protocols must be put in place to sustainably protect the community. This should include the use of temperature guns, mandatory hand sanitizers at all public buildings and spaces, compulsory use of masks and testing for persons regardless of symptoms at a reasonable price.

OTHER SUBJECTS

Finance

- Make financial support for vulnerable families and people more accessible (easier online forms) or employ staff who can reach out to persons, because they may be too proud to seek help.
- Improve assistance to small businesses, especially regarding taxes during this period and moving forward.
- Create more incentives for local, young entrepreneurs who may want to open businesses not related to tourism.
- Provide more relief in terms of discounts on electricity and water.
- Provide vulnerable families with basic necessities like the internet.

Education

- Find teachers who are qualified and care. Teachers who know the CXC curriculum and want to teach and provide genuine care to their students.
- Provide basic school equipment such as internet, laptop, and tablets for students in need.
- Ensure that there are similar systems throughout the entire education process from kindergarten to 6th form.
- Introduce more influence from the United States in our education system because many students go to the United States due to the language and culture.
- Make Visa acquisition easier.

Youth Representation

- Establish a structured youth group to provide advice to government on an annual or biannual basis.
- Make the youth body sustainable through a set committee or a funded NGO.
- Allow the youth group to advise and aid (through volunteer work) government freely on issues including disability, culture, education, tourism, agriculture.
- Take the advice seriously even though it would not be binding.

Agriculture

- Encourage and favor local produce and producers on the island.
- Incentivize local producers to grow more.
- Encourage businesses to store food in case of future crises, in particular foods like flour, milk, water, etc.

‘My colleagues in the cabinet and I find it important that young people provide ideas and input for this new world, because this is about your future. Your ideas and your creativity are essential. That is why I want to challenge you: share your ideas.’

Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Netherlands - May 19th, 2020

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