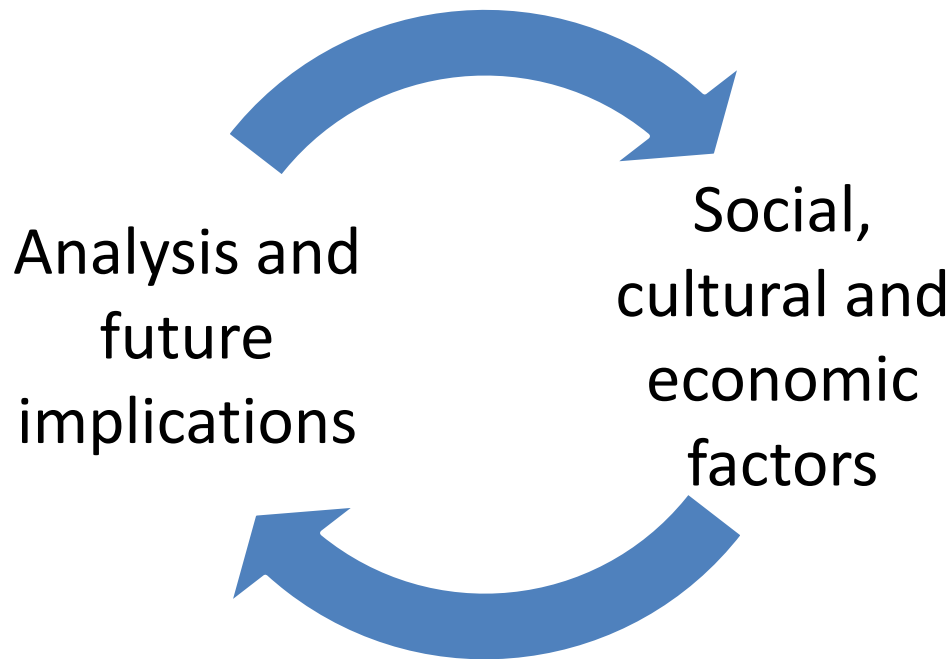


Protecting our future generation on Bonaire.

About Child Maltreatment in Bonaire



Introduction and personal link

- Drs. Elly Rojer
- Child psychologist
- Behavioral scientist at Stichting Project and BWB from Zorg en Jeugd Caribisch Nederland (ZJCN)



Definition child maltreatment

Any form of harm, abuse, or neglect that a child (under 18 years old) experiences from a parent, caregiver, or another person responsible for their welfare.

Forms;

- **Physical abuse or neglect**
- **Emotional (psychological) abuse or neglect**
- **Sexual abuse**

Long lasting individual, social, and economic consequences

Research

- 2019 UNICEF situational analysis
- CBS – Caribbean Netherlands Student Survey (2024/2025)
- UNICEF / University Leiden / University Curaçao (2024)
- Research of the mental health of the youth (2025)
- Reports Nationale ombudsman and Kinder ombudsman

Bonaire Context

27,000 inhabitants

17% under 14 years old

Island context

Multicultural society:

36% Bonairians

20% (mostly Curaçao)

15 % European Netherlands

Latin Americans

Other cultures



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Findings of the consulted data about Bonaire

- Child maltreatment happens regularly on Bonaire
- Mostly verbal violence and physical punishment
- There is a cultural acceptance of physical punishment
- Culture, poverty and stress are important factors
- Girls are more vulnerable than boys

Risk factors on Bonaire being;

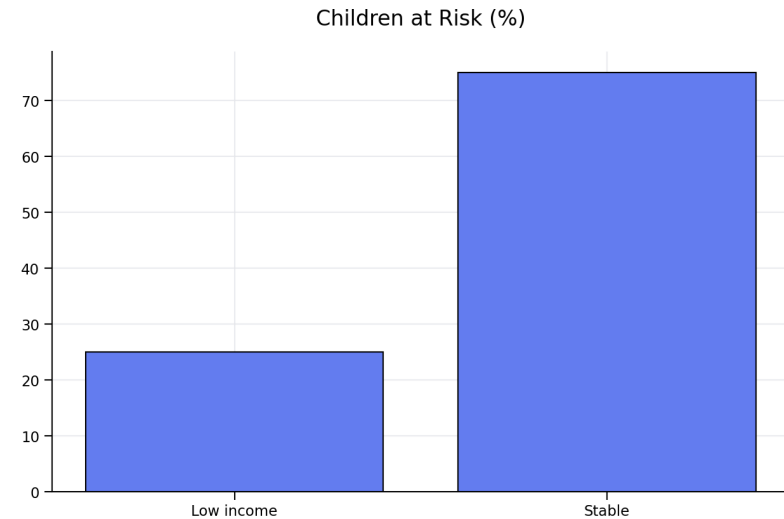
- * Poverty and financial stress
- * Relationship problems
- * Traditional parenting standard
- * Limited access to help

Protecting factors:

- Strong family ties
- Sense of community
- Growing awareness about non violence parenting

Poverty & Inequality

- * 1 in 4 children lives in poverty risk
- * Income inequality is high (Gini ~ 0.40)
- * Top 20% earn up to 9 $\times$ more than bottom 20%
- * Average income is 30–40% lower than in Europe
- * Cost of living + housing shortages worsen poverty



Education

33% low education

- Large and growing Youth population (25 % (0-25 years)
- 33% of youth (15-24 Y) is working instead of school.
- 11 % is not working and not at school
- Limited opportunities for higher education

Culture & Society

Strong family ties and intergenerational households
Culture parenting values. Strong sense of community

Migration/multicultural population.
Changing family structures

Economic instability

These factors:
Can increase stress in households
Affect child well-being



Support Services

1. The central hub: **Sentro Aksesio Bonaire**
includes Guiami (Reporting point)
2. Government system: **Zorg en Jeugd Caribisch Nederland (ZJCN)**
3. Mental Health Caribbean
4. Guardianship Council

Challenges to combat maltreatment

Underreporting

Stigma

Capacity

Resource constraints

Social problems

Coördination challenges

Required data

- * Prevalence, especially of different forms of neglect and sexual abuse
- * Risk factors
- * Use of services
- * Effectiveness of policies and the support system
- * Focus on protective factors, looking at our history of resilience
For example: storytelling, music, dance, religion
- * Research initiated from the situation and perspective of Bonaire
- * Research questions should be asked from daily practice

Final Message

Better data →
better support

Invest in children

Poem from a child on Bonaire

Live life without harming yourself
To live a long life
To live a good life
To enjoy your childhood
To enjoy a beautiful life
You haven't seen it all yet
There is a lot to learn in life
You only have one life
Live your life with God in your heart
And stay with Him forever

