

UNICEF Youth Advice St. Maarten

#MYNEWWORLD



UNICEF thanks the young people who participated in the focus group discussions on St. Maarten: Prerna (16), Breanna (16), Breyenne (17), Kadar (17), Jaidev (17), Jay(17), Shari (18) and Jamie (16).



This group of young people are students who attend the St. Dominic High School, Learning Unlimited Preparatory School, St. Maarten Academy, and the Methodist Agogic Center Comprehensive Secondary Education.

Special thanks also to advisors Melissa Gumbs and Kamilah Gumbs and to Connie Francis Gumbs of the St. Maarten Youth Council Association for coordinating all #MyNewWorld activities on St. Maarten. And another special thank you to Stichting WeConnect for the organizational support of #MyNewWorld in the Dutch Caribbean.

The My New World project on St. Maarten is funded by UNICEF the Netherlands. With this project, 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.”

Breanna Silvers (16) participant #MyNewWorld in St. Maarten



Breanna Silvers 16 years old
#MyNewWorld, St. Maarten

“I am thankful for this opportunity for us as the future leaders of St. Maarten to express our concerns and possible solutions. To issues in our country. I chose to get involved to speak to the different issues in my country and to see how I can make a change. It has truly been a great experience, and I believe that as young leaders we can make a difference.”



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About the UNICEF Youth Advice #MyNewWorld, St. Maarten

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

On St. Maarten 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 our government.

Our advice has been compiled in this report. We are sharing our advice with the Parliament of St. Maarten and we will also discuss our advice with several members. We hope that we can convince them to adopt some of our ideas.



Participants #MyNewWorld, St. Maarten

PRIORITY SUBJECTS

Education

REGULATE ONLINE LEARNING BY STANDARDIZING PLATFORMS ACROSS THE SYSTEM

Online learning is currently neither regulated nor standardized. Even within the same school, teachers use different platforms to teach and administer graded work. This is a problem, as it not only confuses students and parents, but is also cumbersome for students using smartphones or a low-end tablet, as multiple apps utilize valuable storage space. Regulation and standardization should include: a single meeting platform for lectures – e.g., Zoom, MS Teams or Google Meet/Google Classroom; a standard platform for turning in assignments or doing tests – e.g., Google Classroom, SeeSaw; and digital platforms for textbooks and study resources. We believe that in moving forward, digital or virtual learning will become a standard part of our education system. Therefore, it is important that standards are set that will meet the educational needs of all students.

Sports

PRIORITIZE AND PROMOTE SPORTS AND SPORTING ACTIVITIES

Sports and sporting activities are insufficiently prioritized and promoted. Consequently, local sports are not taken seriously by a large segment of the population, including youth. This is problematic, as sports can open up career opportunities for gifted athletes, as well as create another layer to our tourism-based economy. Prioritization and promotion should include better coordination and consistent promotion of interscholastic sports and annual Interscholastic sport days. This will increase interest and participation of youth in organized sports. In addition, care and maintenance of both public and school-based sporting facilities is essential in improving the promotion of sports.

Culture, Economy and Environment

REVITALIZE PHILIPSBURG AS A THRIVING ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CENTER

Philipsburg, the capital of Sint Maarten is fast becoming a ghost town. By 5.00 pm the stores are already closed and shuttered. Many restaurants are also closed in the evenings and there are very few family-friendly attractions. In the absence of a fully functional library and museum, Sint Maarten is lacking a vital link to the preservation of its history and knowledge center. This is an issue because a dying capital can be seen as a sign of a failing economy. In addition, when young people do not have positive, affordable outlets for entertainment, they are prone to get into legal trouble. A vibrant, revitalized Philipsburg will also create more options for our tourism-based economy. We strongly believe that our capital Philipsburg can be revitalized by prioritizing the reconstruction of the Philipsburg Jubilee Library, with museum and archaeological center and incorporating more family-oriented activities, green spaces and a better balance between high-end and economical options for dining and going out.

OTHER ADVICE PER THEME

Education

- Regulate the amount of work given during online classes to ensure that students are not overloaded.
- Provide universal access to digital textbooks and resource materials, step by step online tutorials, and recorded lectures for future reference.
- Improve internet connectivity so that virtual learning can be effective and to avoid students missing classes and being unable to complete assignments.
- The curriculum needs to be revised to include local history and culture.

Sports

- Enhance maintenance of sporting facilities with improved sanitizing stations throughout the facilities.

Culture, Economy and Environment

- Develop a cultural calendar to revitalize the local traditions and diversify the economy through Culture Tourism.
- Develop and promote Art & Culture attractions outside of the main tourist areas, e.g., museums.
- Implement city planning, better street lighting and signage, improved road maintenance, and environmental protection to enhance the living environment for both residents and visitors.



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