

FINAL REPORT

National Vision on
Parenting Support
Aruba

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This vision document was written by Elly Hellings (consultant at IndigoBlue Consult) with the support of Daniel Corsen, Deva-Dee Siliee (facilitators of interactive sessions at Reshapers) and Helen Guda (independent expert on parenting and parenting support). Coordination with the local government was achieved through regular consultations with Sacha Geerman, Yvonne Bermudes-Geerman (Social Affairs Directorate/Centro pa Hoben y Famia), and the members of the Parenting Committee. On behalf of the client, UNICEF Netherlands, Anna Kroon and Ytske van Winden provided critical thinking and feedback.

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Aruba, June 2024



VISION ON PARENTING



In Aruba, parents ensure that their children grow up in an optimal learning environment, within a warm and safe family situation, in a child-friendly neighborhood.

VISION ON PARENTING SUPPORT



Aruba strives for a future where every parent benefits from a holistic, inclusive, accessible, and data-driven system of parenting support, which focuses on empowering parents so that they feel confident, supported, and connected to foster a warm, safe, and stimulating environment for children, with the aim of ensuring their optimal well-being and development.

This reading guide is intended to effectively navigate readers through this document about parenting and parenting support in Aruba. This vision document consists of several interconnected parts that delve into the background of the vision and explain how the vision is constructed and how to arrive at an appropriate and effective approach to turn the vision into reality.

Focus on parenting and parenting support and the six building blocks of the parenting vision

In 2020, the Aruban government established the Centro pa Hoben y Famia (CHF) on a project basis as part of the Social Crisis Plan, to strengthen the protection of children against violence and abuse. This was done through a cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approach and by implementing systematically integrated and coordinated strategies and interventions aimed at family and parenting support. The direction and approach of the CHF are detailed in the document 'Turning to Empathy: a strategic plan to improve emotionally healthy upbringing through an outreach approach.' Furthermore, in 2018, Aruba established a vision on parenting, which consists of six building blocks that also form the foundation for the Theory of Change for parenting support.

The basic principles of parenting support

2

This section explains several key basic principles that are guiding due to their relevance to the development of children in different life stages, the needs associated with these stages for parents, and potential challenges that may arise. It presents some definitions and explains the different forms of parenting support that are possible.

The Theory of Change

This is a visual representation of the change trajectory to clarify how an integrated and strategic approach can lead to the desired results and intended impact. By detailing the three focus areas (demand side, supply side, and support side), it becomes clear that it is necessary to adopt an approach that gives integral attention to these three areas. It also schematically shows the specific results aimed for and establishes a connection between the different levels: output, outcome, and impact.

Current offer of parenting support

This section presents the current offering of parenting support. By linking the vision to the current offering, it is possible to determine where adjustments, extra attention, or strengthening are needed.

From vision to reality: the explanation

The story behind the vision supports the vision in words, explaining the thought process and the journey towards the intended change. By providing more depth and background, the Theory of Change is made more recognizable and understandable.

Demographic information

An overview of key demographic data supports the choices made in the report and clarifies the evidence-based approach.

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'TURNING TO EMPATHY'

Seven points of interest for emotionally healthy families and parenting



THE SIX BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE VISION ON PARENTING

VISION ON PARENTING



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Positive support

Through compliments and loving encouragement, parents stimulate the child's self-reliance, motivate them to learn new things, provide support in overcoming difficulties and invest 'quality time' in the child.

A safe physical and stimulating environment

A safe physical environment allows a child to explore undisturbed and parents have to prohibit less. In a stimulating environment with fascinating activities, a child is less likely to be bored and there is less chance of negative attention seeking and annoying behavior.

PARENTING

Realistic expectations

Parents should have realistic expectations of the child in all areas of development.

Advice, support and tailor-made assistance

Parenting is a challenge in which the parents' own strengths form the starting point for all the advice, support and help they can call on, such as neighbors, relatives, work environment, church community, childcare and other professionals.

Effective discipline

A child develops best in a predictable environment, where parents consciously set clear rules, give clear instructions, and respond appropriately and pedagogically responsible when the child exhibits undesirable behavior.

Taking good care of yourself as a parent

The physical, mental and social well-being of parents has a major influence on the way they interact with their child; every child is unique and develops at its own pace. Parents should have realistic expectations of themselves and the co-parent, which includes a balance between work and family and a positive mutual relationship.

Source: *Opvoeden op Aruba 2018-2020*, Departement Sociale Zaken Aruba

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PARENTING SUPPORT

VISION ON PARENTING SUPPORT



Aruba strives for a future where every parent benefits from a holistic, inclusive, accessible, and data-driven system of parenting support, which focuses on empowering parents so that they feel confident, supported, and connected to foster a warm, safe, and stimulating environment for children, with the aim of ensuring their optimal well-being and development.

Definitions

Parents/caregivers

Parents refer to all parents, guardians or caregivers who provide structural care to a child, not limited to biological parents.³

Family support

A collection of activities and interventions aimed at strengthening the functioning of families and embedding parenting and other family-related activities in a system of supportive relationships and resources.

Parenting support

Activities or services aimed at strengthening the way in which parents approach and fulfill their role as parents, especially aimed at knowledge, attitude, skills, behavior and practice in relation to parenting.^{4,5}

Basic principles of parenting support

- Child at the centre
- Accessibility
- Ongoing support
- Evidence-based approach
- Own strength
- Equality
- Gender equality
- Inclusivity
- Culturally sensitive
- Collaborative

Approach to parenting support

- Individual approach
- Group-oriented approach
- Mixed approach

Family support

Parenting support



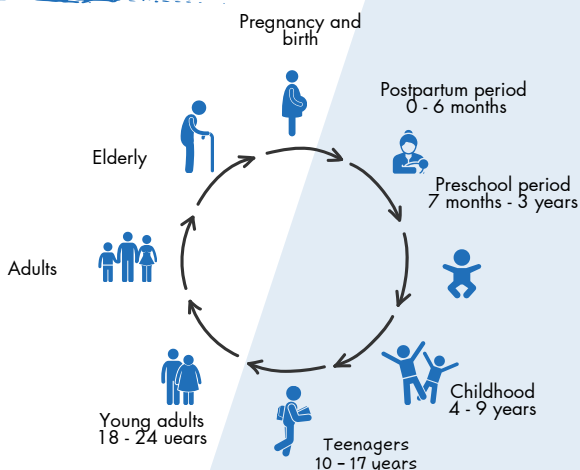
Indicated parenting support

Selective parenting support

Universal parenting support

Types of parenting support

Life course and transitional periods^{7,8}



Parenting challenges can vary depending on individual circumstances, cultural context and social factors. Common challenges relate to:

- Work-family balance
- Financial stress
- Parents' personal problems
- Relationship problems between parents / other family members / absent parents
- The growth and development of the child / child-related factors
- Single parenthood and teenage parenthood
- Raising a child with 'special needs'
- Cultural, social and gender-related influencing factors
- Availability and accessibility of support (including 'special needs')

Parenting challenges

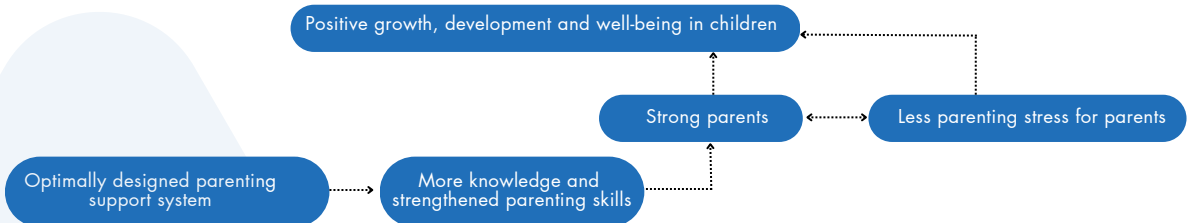
THE THEORY OF CHANGE

VISION ON PARENTING SUPPORT



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Impact



Results

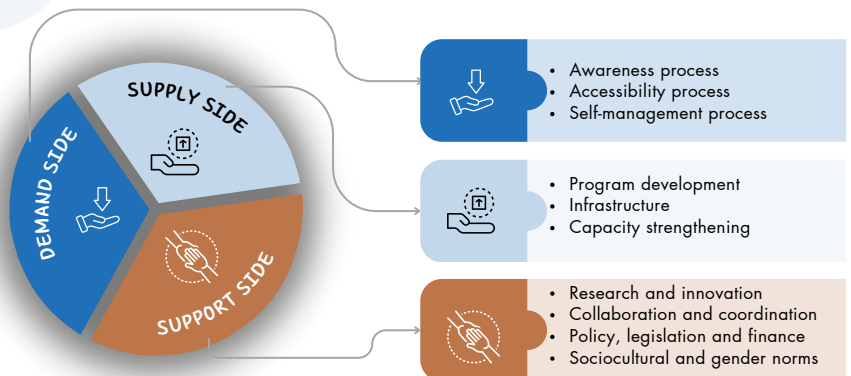


Parents actively participate in parenting interventions	The effectiveness of parenting interventions has increased	There is a collective sense of responsibility and a stimulating environment for parenting
Parents are able to actively find appropriate parenting interventions	The quality of the parenting interventions is high	Substantive policy frameworks, supporting legislation and financial resources are available
Parents are aware of the existence and possibilities of parenting interventions	The knowledge and skills of staff within parenting interventions have improved	Parenting interventions are organized and offered based on a collective and coordinated approach
Parents are aware of the importance of positive parenting	There is a diverse range of coordinated parenting interventions	There is a monitoring and evaluation system that provides useful information and data
Parenting interventions are easily accessible and available to parents	Parenting interventions are based on knowledge and data	
Parenting interventions meet the needs of parents		

Strategy



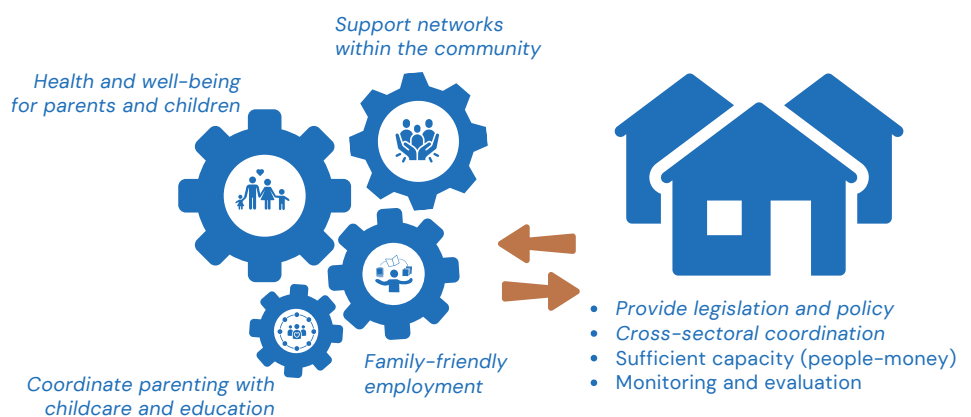
An effective, sustainable and widely applicable system of parenting support is possible when there is a good interplay between the needs of the parents (demand side), the available resources and services (supply side), and the fulfillment of important preconditions (support side)



Integrated approach



The focus is on four substantive domains, combined with the fulfillment of important preconditions



Starting point

There is a need to establish a holistic and inclusive system of parenting support to promote positive parenting

Positive parenting

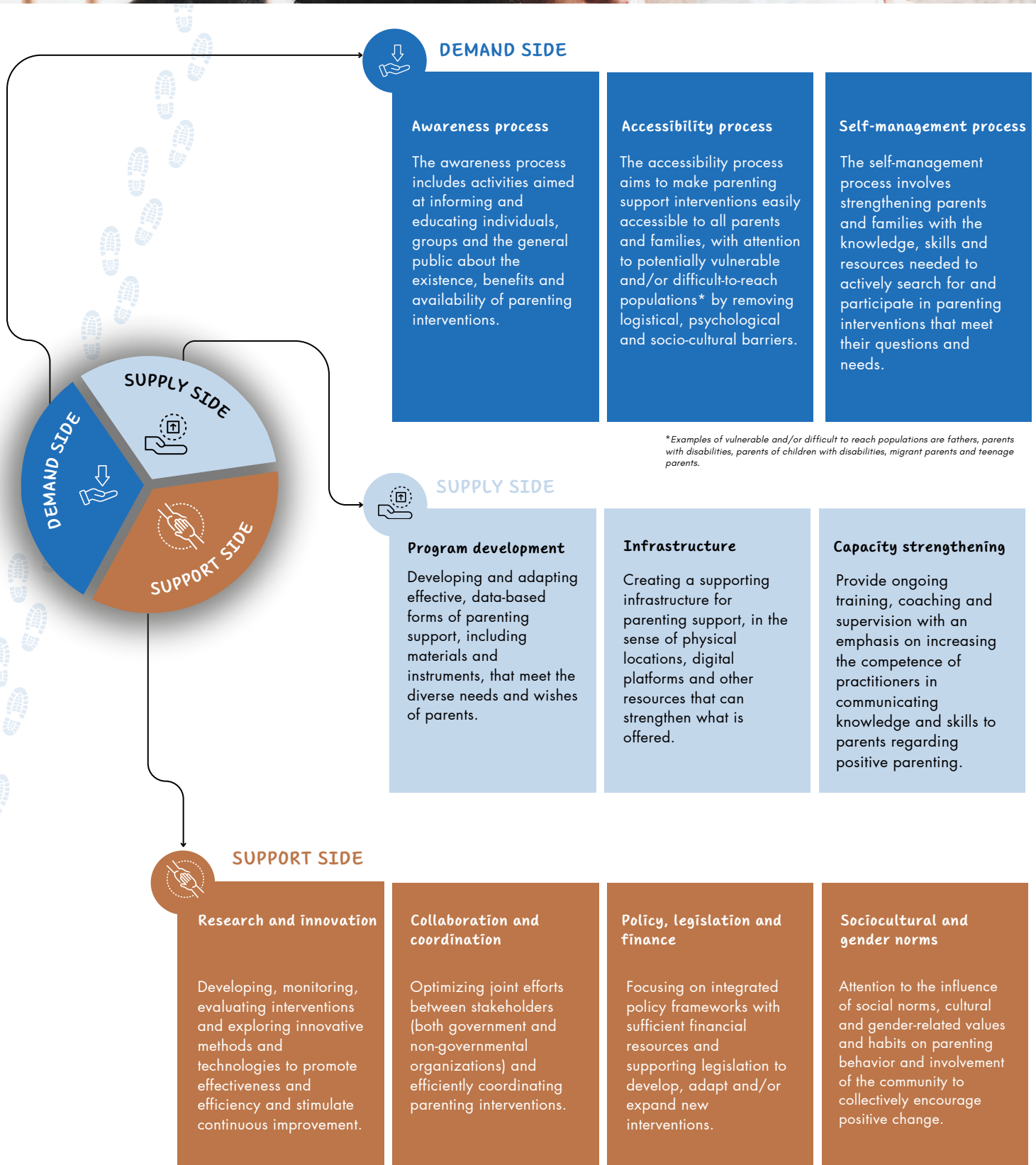
Parental behavior that is focused on the best interests of the child, is nurturing, stimulating and non-violent, provides recognition and guidance, and sets boundaries to promote the full development of children^{10, 11}

ELABORATION OF CHANGE STRATEGY

VISION ON PARENTING SUPPORT



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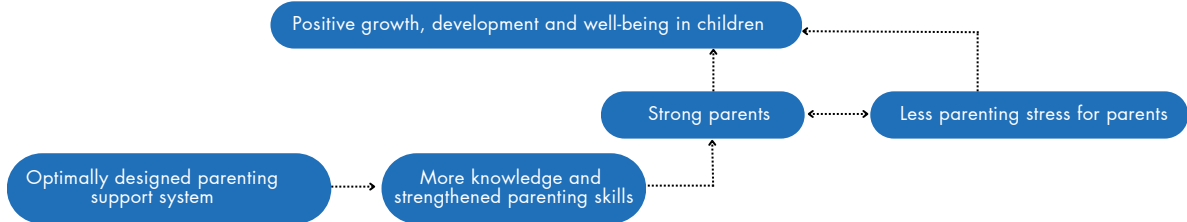
ELABORATION OF LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

VISION ON PARENTING SUPPORT

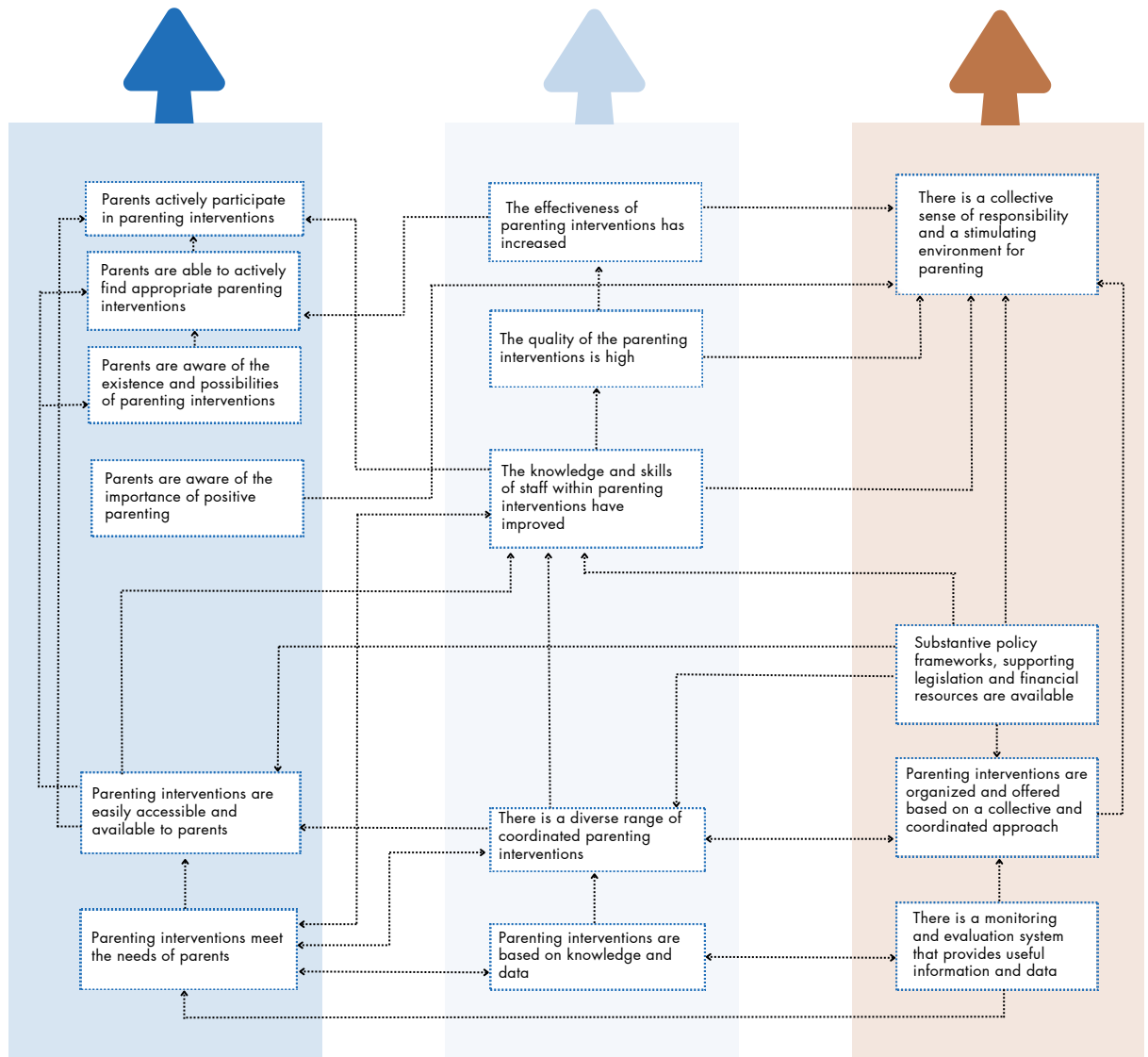


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Impact



Outcome



Input



Demand side



- Awareness process
- Accessibility process
- Self-management process

Supply side



- Program development
- Infrastructure
- Capacity strengthening

Support side



- Research and innovation
- Collaboration and coordination
- Policy, legislation and finance
- Sociocultural and gender norms

CURRENT OFFER OF PARENTING SUPPORT

VISION ON PARENTING SUPPORT



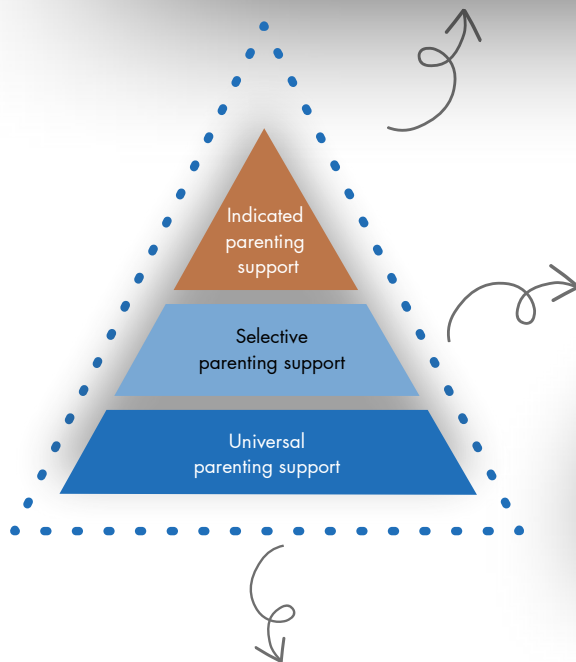
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Individual approach

- Orthopedagogical support for parents with children with an increased risk of developmental problems (Wit Gele Kruis)
- Mental health intervention (Stichting Hunto)
- Firm parenting (Wit Gele Kruis)
- Psychological guidance and psycho-education (Centro di Desaroyo Humano)
- Provide guidance to parents who are victims of a traumatic event (Slachtofferhulp)
- Guidance for parents with children with addiction problems (Fundacion Anti Droga Aruba)

Mixed approach

- Jump 18 - Aruba youth obesity prevention program (Jump 18)
- Coaching and guidance (Departamento di Asunto Social)



Individual approach

- Family counseling (Stichting voor verstandelijk gehandicapten Aruba)
- Family mediation (Plan di Mayor Aruba)
- Parenthood remains (Plan di Mayor Aruba)
- Parallel Solo Parenting (Plan di Mayor Aruba)

Group-oriented approach

- Parenting support (Fundacion pa nos muchanan)
- From teenage mothers to life coaches (Fundacion Adra)

Mixed approach

- Support for parents of children with autism (Fundacion Autismo Aruba)
- Parent-child care (Wit Gele Kruis)
- Support for foster families (Centro Famia di Criansa Aruba)

Individual approach

- Tienda di Educacion
- Consultation by phone (Fundacion Pa Nos Muchanan)

Mixed approach

- Office for parenting questions (Wit Gele Kruis)
- Parenting support (Tienda di Educacion)
- Educational campaign (Centro pa Hoben y Famia)
- Conscious Discipline (Fundacion Educador Consciente Aruba)

Group-oriented approach

- Siimami Guiami (Fundacion Pa Nos Muchanan)
- Curso Futuro Mayor (Wit Gele Kruis)
- Best Dad Ever (Telefon pa Hubentud)
- Workshops with various themes (Centro pa Hoben y Famia)

Target audiences

- Prenatal period
- Postpartum period
- 7 months - 3 years
- 4 - 9 years
- 10 - 17 years
- 18 - 24 years

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Introduction

In accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),¹² Aruba puts people first in its policy intentions. The development and well-being of every member of society should be maximized, with special attention to vulnerable groups and high priority given to the development and safety of all children and young people. From this background, Aruba has set out various lines, including developing a vision on parenting and parenting support. While the parenting vision sets the overarching tone and importance of positive parenting within society, the parenting support vision is necessary to provide the strategic framework to make both visions a reality.

Steps already taken

In April 2016, a multidisciplinary Parenting Committee was established, consisting of representatives from both government and non-governmental organizations, which developed a vision on parenting in consultation with professionals from the field and parents. An important step was also taken in the field of cooperation and coordination in 2020 with the establishment of the Centro Hoben y Famia. The focus is currently on providing outreaching support and guidance to parents, families, professionals and young people themselves. The report 'Turning to Empathy' elaborates a strategic approach on how Centro Hoben y Famia can contribute to realizing the vision on education.

The next step: a vision for parenting support

The next steps have been determined by the Directorate of Social Affairs, in close collaboration with the Parenting Committee and UNICEF Netherlands. These include developing a vision on parenting support and creating an overview of the current range of parenting support in Aruba. Stakeholders and parents were involved in both parts. The interactive consultation sessions and inventory questionnaire have provided valuable input. Together with the information collected from desk research and an analysis of the current situation and context in Aruba, these results were used to develop a Theory of Change.

The basic principles for parenting support in Aruba

This part explains the basic principles that apply to the Aruban approach to parenting support. Central to the vision is that all parents, regardless of their background, should be equipped with appropriate knowledge and skills to stimulate the positive development of children. Parenting support should be available and easily accessible and should take into account the changing needs of parents within various socio-economic groups, with specific attention to vulnerable and/or potentially difficult to reach groups

such as fathers, parents with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, migrant parents and teenage parents. The approach is scientifically substantiated and strengthens the capacities of families, promotes (gender) equality, is inclusive, culturally sensitive and aimed at cooperation between all parties involved. Attention is paid to positive gender socialization, the process by which individuals are encouraged from an early age to adopt positive and healthy beliefs, attitudes and behaviors related to gender in order to contribute to promoting an environment of respect, equality and inclusivity. In addition, attention is focused on promoting balanced relationships between parents, and (ex-) partners share responsibility for raising children. Explicit attention is also paid to adolescence, a crucial period in which gender attitudes and behaviors deepen and new gender roles emerge. It is also a time when the negative consequences of some gender norms begin to appear.

Definitions

To create clarity, several key concepts such as 'parents' and 'family support' are defined and it is explained why it is important to choose a life course approach that recognizes the different life stages and transition periods. Parents carry child experiences with them, which shape and influence their parenting role towards children. The life course approach emphasizes the importance of targeted support during crucial transitions, promotes development and helps to preventively recognize and tackle problems in growing up and parenting. Additionally, the visual representation emphasizes that there are different types of parenting support and approaches, and it highlights specific challenges that influence the parenting process. This clear explanation enables policy makers, care providers and educators to speak a common language and promotes a coherent and inclusive approach to parenting support in Aruba, while considering the diverse needs and backgrounds of families and individuals.

Theory of Change

The Theory of Change starts from the need to set up a holistic and inclusive system of parenting support to stimulate positive parenting. Stakeholders and parents in Aruba agree that parental support should be child-centered and is most successful with an integrated and holistic approach. This approach looks at what is needed from several areas and how these different perspectives can be connected and strengthen each other. An integrated approach to parenting support refers to the need for integration at two levels: attention to four substantive areas and the fulfillment of necessary organizational conditions. The four substantive domains are not separate from each other, they influence each other and can set each other in motion, just like gears do.

Four domains

In consultation sessions with stakeholders and the target group of parents, it became clear that Aruba needs an approach that connects the following four substantive domains: health and well-being of parents and children, a community-oriented system preferably at neighborhood level, attention to the interconnected educational role of parents and formal educators (childcare/school) and creating more family-friendly employment opportunities to achieve a better work-life balance. An integrated approach to parental support is vital as it recognizes that parenting is influenced by multiple interrelated factors and areas.

1. Health and well-being: The (mental) health and well-being of parents are essential for effective parenting. When parents are mentally and emotionally healthy, they can provide a caring, stable, and safe environment for their children. Mental health issues can impact a parent's ability to be involved in their child's education, connect with support networks within the community, and maintain a healthy work-life balance. A holistic approach ensures that parental wellbeing is addressed to positively influence other

aspects of parenting. Stress management is a crucial part of maintaining optimal mental and emotional health.

2. Community support networks: A strong network provides parents with resources, guidance and a sense of belonging. It provides opportunities for parents to connect with others experiencing similar challenges and access local services and support. Support networks can connect parents to mental health resources, educational support and employment opportunities that promote work-life balance. They can help parents find solutions to various challenges, creating a more supportive and interconnected ecosystem for families. Family members, neighbors and others can play an important role in a child's upbringing.

3. Coordinating parenting with childcare and education: Children spend a lot of time in childcare situations and at school, which means that, in addition to parents, childcare leaders and teachers play a major role in children's upbringing. Collaboration between parents, childcare leaders and teachers is essential for a child's educational and emotional development. When they work together, they can provide consistent and effective support for children's growth, learning or development. The link between parents, childcare leaders and teachers can be strengthened when parents are mentally healthy, have access to community support and are not unduly burdened by work-related stress. Consistent expectations at home and at school also contribute to a more stable and supportive environment.

4. Family-friendly employment: Balancing work and family life is a challenge for many parents. Family-friendly employment practices, such as flexible schedules, parental leave and child support, allow parents to fulfill their professional responsibilities while being available to their families. When parents have the flexibility and support to meet both work and family needs, it contributes to their overall effectiveness as parents and employees. It also contributes to reduced stress and burnout (essential for both parents and children) and employee satisfaction and retention. Moreover, family-friendly labor policies can also help promote gender equality in the workplace. By offering flexibility and support for both male and female employees, organizations and companies can help break down traditional gender roles.

Integrated approach

As mentioned earlier, the integrated approach involves two levels. In addition to the substantive areas that must be explicitly included to achieve the intended change, it is also clear that a number of system supporters are included. These system supports can be imagined as a house, with each wall representing a critical component that encloses and supports a solid, holistic structure.

Legislation and policy: This wall can be thought of as the foundation wall that supports the entire structure. These features are fundamental to the robustness and functionality of the parental support system.

Cross-sectoral coordination: This can be imagined as the central wall, which connects different rooms and symbolizes the integration of various sectors. It represents the importance of seamless interaction and flow between the different components of the support system.

Personnel commitment and financial resources: Can be seen as the outer walls that protect and shield the house. These resources keep the parental support system resilient and responsive.

Monitoring and evaluation system: Can be considered as the interior walls with mirrors and windows, which provide the opportunity to reflect in and see out.

Together these walls form a complete structure, creating a safe and supportive environment. Every wall is crucial; if one is weak, it affects the stability and effectiveness of the entire house. Likewise, for an optimally functioning holistic system of parenting support, every precondition must be robust and actively maintained. To emphasize the importance of a systems-oriented approach to parenting support, it is important to recognize that supporting parents is not only about providing resources, but also about ensuring that there is a strong demand for such resources, that the social and legal environment is conducive to their effective use, and that the services offered are effective and of good quality. This is included in the Theory of Change in the

form of a circle in which the interdependence of the demand side, supply side and the support side is visualized and further explained.

The demand side

The demand side of parenting support is divided into three closely linked pathways aimed at strengthening the role of parents and families. The first trajectory, the awareness trajectory, is committed to increasing awareness of parenting activities through informative campaigns and addressing individuals and broad public groups. The focus is on informing about the existence and benefits of parenting interventions, as well as improving their awareness and accessibility. The accessibility trajectory is intended to make parenting support interventions more easily accessible to all parents and families. This includes removing logistical, psychological and socio-cultural barriers that make it difficult for families to access available resources and support. Finally, the self-management trajectory focuses on strengthening the ability of parents and families to take control themselves. This means equipping parents and families with the knowledge, skills and resources needed to actively seek out and participate in parenting interventions, allowing them to play a more active role in their own support journey and that of their children.

The supply side

The supply side of parenting support includes three processes: program development, infrastructure and capacity strengthening. These trajectories focus on designing programs that meet the diverse needs of parents, through effective, data-based methods and materials. At the same time, an infrastructure is built that facilitates this parenting support, both through physical locations and digital platforms. Attention is also given to continuously strengthening the capacities of professionals who provide parenting support, through training, coaching and supervision so that they can better transfer their knowledge and skills regarding positive parenting to parents.

The support side

On the support side, there are four trajectories that form the basis for effective implementation of parenting support. The first trajectory focuses on research and innovation, with the aim to understand developments in the field of parenting support through research and data collection and to move towards relevant and appropriate innovations. This also includes monitoring and evaluating interventions to provide a basis for evidence-based decision-making. The second pathway, collaboration and coordination, encourages collaboration and coordination among stakeholders, including government and non-governmental organizations, to jointly promote positive parenting. Legislation, policy integration, and financing form the third pathway, focusing on creating a legal and policy framework that integrates innovative approaches and technologies and adds value through a comprehensive policy approach with sufficient financial resources.

The fourth and final trajectory concerns socio-cultural norms. This trajectory pays attention to influencing social and gender-related norms and values regarding parenting behavior and involving the community to jointly achieve positive changes, aimed at stimulating a favorable environment for both the demand and supply sides of parenting support.

Intended results

A holistic, inclusive, accessible and evidence-based system of parenting support, delivered by trained professionals, contributes to increased knowledge and resources, improved parenting skills, empowered parents and reduction of parental stress and anxiety, which will ultimately ensure positive well-being and development of children. All of this contributes to creating a supportive environment in which parents feel secure and supported, which is essential to enable them to provide a warm, safe and stimulating environment for their children.

DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND INFORMATION

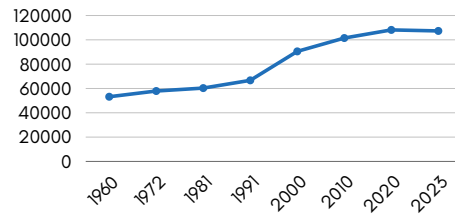
Total population Aruba in 2023



107.327

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics and Civil Registry and Population Office

Population growth Aruba 1960 - 2023



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics and Civil Registry and Population Office

Sex ratio in 2023



47%



53%

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics and Civil Registry and Population Office

Total households in 2020



38.830

Source: Census 2020

Age distribution in 2023

Baby + preschool period
0 - 4 years



4.675

Children
5 - 9 years



5.811

Teenagers
10 - 19 years



13.386

Young adults
20 - 24 years



5.228

Adults
25 - 64 years



58.817

Elderly
65 years or older

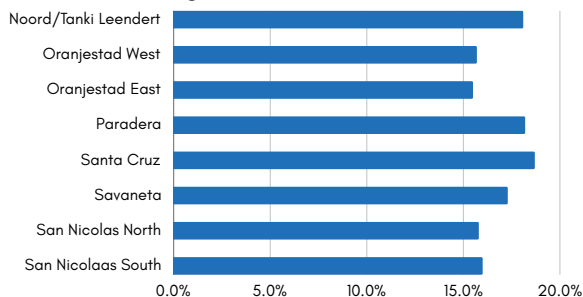


19.410

22%

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics and Civil Registry and Population Office

Percentage children 0 - 14 years old compared to the total population per neighborhood in 2020



Source: Census 2020

Vulnerable target group: parents and/or children with disabilities



2.952

Adults
20 - 60 years
with a disability

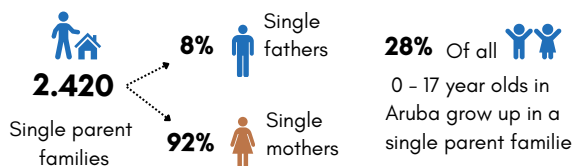
525



4 - 17 year olds
with a disability
who do not attend school

Source: Census 2010

Vulnerable target group: single parents



Source: Census 2010

Vulnerable target group: teenage mothers



219

Teenage mothers
15 - 19 years



6%

Of all teenage girls
15 - 19 years in Aruba

Source: Census 2010

FINAL WORD

With the completion of this vision document for educational support, we are taking a fundamental step towards a promising future for the children of Aruba. Our commitment to providing parents with data- and information-based parenting programs and interventions is at the core of our mission to improve the well-being of children and protect them from abuse and neglect.

This document is more than a plan; it is a promise to our current and future generations. It reflects our collective responsibility and our strategic decision to intensify and expand support to parents and caregivers. By developing a clear vision, compiling a Resource Directory for Parenting Support, and encouraging targeted communication and research, we build a foundation for a society in which every child has the opportunity to grow up in a stimulating, loving and safe environment.

The effectiveness, scalability and cost-effectiveness of parenting programs and interventions are clear. They provide essential support to parents and caregivers in their crucial role as educators. Parenting support is also essential for children because it helps them develop into healthy, happy and resilient individuals.

Let us embrace this vision document as a guide to action and as a source of inspiration. Together we can create lasting change and provide a safe, loving environment in which every child in Aruba has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. Our efforts today determine the strength and resilience of future generations. Let's work together to make this promise a reality.

Aruba, June 2024

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Action plan 2024 - 2025

In consultation with professionals and parents, the vision on parenting support was validated on February 22, 2024 and we jointly brainstormed which activities deserve priority to translate the vision into reality. It has clearly emerged that it is important to start with:

- anchoring the implementation process
- a lot of attention to awareness and communication about a better family-work balance, at the very least among parents and employers
- gain more insight into the challenges, needs and wishes of parents
- achieving some specific short-term successes

This is a first step, at a later stage a detailed implementation plan will be developed with a division of roles as to who is responsible for what, specific activities, milestones, planning and budget.

