



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
24 January 2025

Original: English

Committee on the Rights of the Child Ninety-eighth session

Summary record of the 2856th meeting*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 17 January 2025, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Skelton

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* No summary record was issued for the 2855th meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties *(continued)*

*Second periodic report of Saint Kitts and Nevis (continued) (CRC/C/KNA/2;
CRC/C/KNA/Q/2; CRC/C/KNA/RQ/2)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Saint Kitts and Nevis joined the meeting via video link.*
2. **A representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis**, responding to questions raised at the Committee's 2854th meeting, said that the Government, which had recently conducted a survey to track tobacco use among young people, had worked with the Pan American Health Organization to develop a national policy on substance use. Drafting instructions for laws and policies for the implementation of the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control had been prepared by the Ministry of Health. In 2023, the Smoking (Designated Areas) Act had been adopted to protect children and adults from the effects of second-hand smoke. The National Council on Drug Abuse Prevention employed three officers who were responsible for running educational sessions in schools and other settings.
3. Children had free access to all outpatient services offered by health centres. Hospital services for children were provided free of charge, with the exception of those, such as certain scans, that were delivered through public-private partnerships. In 2022, the Prime Minister, Mr. Terrance Drew, had established a fund to cover the medical expenses of children in need. Health centres, which were open daily, were accessible by bus. Each centre employed at least one midwife. As all physicians providing private prenatal care also worked in the public sector, the services offered by the two sectors were of a similar standard.
4. Voluntary HIV/AIDS counselling and testing services were provided by trained professionals at health centres, hospitals, the office of the National AIDS Secretariat and private medical establishments. In 2023, such services had been provided to more than 1,400 men and 2,900 women. Data on HIV/AIDS were examined on a regular basis by a committee on the elimination of mother-to-child transmission. Human papillomavirus vaccine coverage had fallen from 94 to 71 per cent. First and second doses of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines had been given to 21.8 per cent and 19.8 per cent of young people, respectively.
5. Data on the impact of climate change on the population were disaggregated by age, sex and location. The Government was working to address water shortages by constructing desalination plants, drilling more wells and reducing waste. Emergency water storage containers had been installed in schools, and steps had been taken to amend the Building Code to ensure that all new buildings were equipped with emergency water storage facilities.
6. Subcommittees had been established under the National Emergency Management Agency to meet the needs of children, including those with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups by identifying shelters that would enable families to remain together during emergencies and offering the necessary assistance after the event. All relevant information should be disseminated in sign language and translated into Spanish. The Government had recruited Spanish-speaking staff to engage with Spanish-speaking communities and improve awareness of the issues they faced.
7. Programmes and funds had been established to help people in need cover their medical expenses and purchase food and school uniforms. The purpose of another social protection programme, the Livelihood Improvement for Family Transformation Programme, was to alleviate poverty among certain vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities and their caregivers and households with three or more children. An initiative through which all individuals earning 5,000 East Caribbean dollars (EC\$) a month or less would receive EC\$ 1,500 over a six-month period in 2025 had been launched the previous week. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had helped the Government develop a means test to identify vulnerable households; the test, which was based on old data sets, needed to be recalibrated. An interministerial committee bringing together representatives of all ministries responsible for issues relating to health, education, social services and employment had been

set up to examine social protection programmes and address any weaknesses. Steps were being taken to prepare for the adoption of the new National Social Protection Policy, the aim of which would be to establish a social protection floor to guarantee that all persons identified as poor or vulnerable received the support they needed.

8. The Child Justice Committee had handled 55 cases between September 2019 and December 2024. Four cases remained outstanding. A number of issues had arisen as a result of police officers' lack of awareness of the Child Justice Act and the work of the Child Justice Committee; steps taken to remedy that situation had included the organization of consultations with senior police officers and the delivery of training on juvenile justice and the justice system for all new recruits.

9. The Government had sought to address the challenges faced by the Department of Probation and Child Protection Services by bringing in additional staff members and overseeing a change in its management. The Department was now split into one unit responsible for child welfare, a second handling child justice and a third dealing with out-of-home placements. Since the New Horizons Rehabilitation Centre was undergoing repairs, its residents were currently housed in temporary facilities. Juvenile offenders and young people who had been admitted to the Centre for protection purposes were housed in separate wings, and the two groups followed separate education and support programmes.

10. A committee had been set up to address child labour; it had a specific focus on children engaged in part-time work. The country encountered few cases of trafficking in persons; those that had been detected had involved individuals from Haiti and some African countries, some of whom had subsequently been integrated into local communities. The authorities had facilitated the return to their home countries of three women who had fallen victim to sex trafficking. Despite the small number of cases, efforts to monitor the phenomenon and share relevant information continued.

11. The structure of the Probation and Child Welfare Board was currently under review. The Government, which was aware of the report by the United States Agency for International Development on the prevalence of gangs in Saint Kitts and Nevis, was addressing the issue through the Elevate Programme, the key focus of which was rehabilitation. Young people at risk of joining gangs were provided with opportunities to participate in social programmes, camps, sports and groups run by police intervention teams; the aim was to foster a positive sense of belonging.

12. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that she would like to know whether the State party had ratified the International Labour Organization Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and what it considered light work.

13. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that the delegation might clarify whether criminal proceedings could be instituted against children from the age of 10.

14. **Ms. Aho** said that she wondered whether all parents managed to collect their children's birth certificates and, if not, what steps were taken to ensure that parents received them. She wondered, too, whether any programmes had been introduced to address issues such as obesity and alcohol use among young people. Lastly, it would be helpful to know whether the State party had established offices to support young people with mental health issues and, if so, what it had done to ensure that the staff members of those offices were suitably qualified.

15. **The Chair** said that she wished to know what procedures were in place to deal with children aged 10 and 11 who committed offences.

16. **A representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis** said that the Director of Public Prosecutions had the right to institute criminal proceedings against children under 12 who had committed serious offences only in the event that it had been certified that the child had the capacity to understand what he or she was doing wrong.

17. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** said that she wished to know whether the State party planned to conduct a review of legal provisions governing the age of criminal responsibility with a view to ensuring that children under the age of 12 who committed a serious offence were treated not as perpetrators but as children in need of protection.

18. **A representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis** said that the Child Justice Act would be amended to establish the treatment that should be afforded to children who committed an offence. Such children, who would be dealt with by the child protection services, would not be treated in the same way as adult offenders.

19. **A representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis** said that parents specified the name of their children upon their birth, whereupon the health officials transmitted the relevant records to the birth registry unit within the courthouse so that birth certificates could be issued. Measures would be taken to ensure that there were no obstacles to the issuance of birth certificates on the island of Nevis. Ordinarily, parents could visit the courthouse and obtain their child's birth certificate within three to five working days of the birth. Birth certificates could be used to register children for school and to apply for passports in their name.

20. A dedicated programme and pilot clinics had been established to promote breastfeeding. Public health clinics provided prenatal care to women throughout their pregnancies. The legal drinking age was 18, and the law had been amended to provide for stiffer penalties for businesses or events that sold alcohol to children. The Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs collaborated with festivals to prevent the sale of alcohol to children, including those who claimed to be buying it for their parents.

21. Two psychiatrists provided mental healthcare to anyone who required it. Mental healthcare was also provided by the Dr. Arthur W. Lake Mental Health Treatment Centre and by behavioural health centres on both islands. The National Counselling Centre in Saint Kitts provided psychosocial and psychological support to persons diagnosed with a mental health problem. A psychiatric ward in one of the country's hospitals admitted persons who required inpatient care. Child patients were separated from adult patients in the ward to ensure their safety. Visiting professionals assisted with the provision of psychiatric care and general mental healthcare in Saint Kitts and Nevis.

22. **Mr. Mezmur** (Country Task Force) said that he wished to know whether the Government had published any documentation on disaster responses in languages other than English and in formats accessible to children with disabilities. He wondered whether the UNICEF project relating to the provision of water in schools had already been launched or was at the planning stage. It would be useful to know why some schools had been closed in 2023 and whether water shortages had been a factor in any of those closures. He would be interested to hear about any measures being taken within or outside schools to prevent childhood obesity.

23. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** said that she wished to know whether schools could no longer be used as hurricane shelters.

24. **A representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis** said that, although schools could no longer be used as long-term shelters, they could still be used to provide temporary shelter before and during a hurricane in areas where other suitable buildings were unavailable. Once the hurricane had passed, the school building must be returned to its normal use so that children could resume their schooling. The National Emergency Management Agency had a housing and shelter committee that provided alternative accommodation, food vouchers and other forms of assistance to persons whose homes had been damaged in a hurricane. In some cases, such persons could be provided with medium- to long-term alternative accommodation in a hotel, guesthouse or rented property. Guidelines on shelters specified that they must contain adequate space for men, women and families and must be accessible to wheelchair users.

25. The UNICEF project to provide water to schools had already been implemented. In that connection, early childhood centres, primary schools and some secondary schools had been fitted with emergency water tanks. Information on disaster responses had been produced in Spanish and in sign language. It had sometimes been necessary to close schools or adjust their opening hours to allow the water services to do maintenance work. When schools were forced to close, children continued their education online. The Government implemented the One-to-One Laptop Programme to issue students with devices for remote learning.

26. **Ms. Marshall-Harris**, noting that the Ombudsman for Children had not submitted a report to the Committee, said that she wished to know whether the Ombudsman was still operating and, if so, what his or her duties were.

27. **A representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis** said that the position of Ombudsman for Children had been filled at the start of the current Administration. The Office of the Ombudsman was open to the general public, and its contact details had been published online.

28. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that she wished to know whether the State party had any plans to ratify the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure.

29. **A representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis** said that the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs would review those three instruments to determine whether ratifying them would entail any conflict with national law.

30. **Ms. Marshall-Harris**, noting that the State party was discussing the possibility of ratifying the Convention against Torture, said that she wished to know whether, in the light of those discussions, any measures would be taken to prohibit corporal punishment in all settings.

31. **A representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis** said that corporal punishment had already been banned in institutions such as prisons but was still permitted in schools and homes. Efforts might be made to encourage parents to use alternative forms of discipline. Discussions were being held with religious communities to identify religious arguments against the use of corporal punishment. The Government had also held discussions with representatives of UNICEF and other experts with a view to designing campaigns against corporal punishment. It would be interesting to hear about best practices that other States had employed in abolishing corporal punishment in the home.

32. **The Chair** said that the Government might consider consulting the website endcorporalpunishment.org and the judgments of the Constitutional Court of South Africa relating to corporal punishment.

33. **A representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis** said that she wished to thank all members of the Committee for their questions, for the best practices that they had shared and for acknowledging the progress that the Government had made in promoting and protecting children's rights.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.