

OECS REGIONAL CHILD POLICY AND STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2032

**Building a Region Where Every Child Can Survive,
Thrive and Reach Their Full Potential.**

PROTECTED



HEALTHY



EDUCATED



SUPPORTED



HEARD



Acknowledgements

The development of this Regional Child Policy and Strategic Plan (the 'Policy') was made possible through the collective efforts, expertise, and commitment of a wide range of stakeholders.

Special appreciation goes to the Technical Working Group of dedicated focal points from OECS members for their leadership, expertise, advocacy and commitment to developing this Policy: Mrs Kiesha Gumbs-Bibby, Social Development Planner, Ministry of Social Development, Government of Anguilla; Ms Marsha James-Pharoah, Deputy Director, Family and Social Services Division, Antigua and Barbuda; Ms Laurel Freeman, Deputy Chief Social Development Officer, British Virgin Islands; Ms Marcia Baron, Assistant Chief Youth Development Officer, Youth Development Division, Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Community Development, Dominica; Ms Nakitha Noel, Social Worker, Early Childhood Unit, Grenada; Mrs Teresena Fergus, Director, Social Services, Montserrat; Mr Naren Maynard, Director, Probation and Child Protection Services, Saint Kitts; Mrs Anesta Maynard-Wallace, Family Division Supervisor, Department of Social Services, Nevis; Ms Blanda Lansilo, Senior Field Social Worker, Government of Saint Lucia; and Ms Jemma Alexander, Director, Child Development Division, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Special thanks and gratitude are expressed to Dr Roxanne Brizan-St. Martin, the Programme Director for Health, Social Inclusion and Social Protection at the OECS Commission, for her stewardship and management of the project, and to Ms. Sharon Jacob, Senior Administrative Assistant, Social Development Unit, OECS Commission, for her support throughout this endeavour.

The OECS would also like to express special thanks to the UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area for its technical guidance and financial support throughout every stage of this project, from inception to completion. This Policy was drafted with the technical expertise of Ms Awaz Raoof and Mrs Mathilde Guntzberger from the research and consultancy organisation, Coram International. Thanks are expressed to the drafters as well as to the team of researchers from Coram International who provided technical expertise for the targeted situational analysis of children that underpins this Policy: Professor Dame Carolyn Hamilton; Ms Awaz Raoof; Mrs Mathilde Guntzberger; Ms Jen Joy; Ms Sihana Bina; and Ms Ramyah Harrichandiran. Thanks are also expressed to Maya Reynoso for her supporting with editing the document.

Above all, the OECS would like to give its special thanks to the children, parents, caregivers, professionals and practitioners in the OECS who participated in research and consultations to develop this landmark Policy.

Acronyms

CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARPHA	Caribbean Public Health Agency
CPSS	Child protection system-strengthening
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSOs	Civil society organisations
ECE	Early childhood education
FGD	Focus group discussion
GER	Gross enrolment rate
HPV	Human papillomavirus
KII	Key informant interview
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and/or questioning
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
NER	Net enrolment rate
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

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01

Our Introduction

OECS Regional Child Policy
and Strategic Plan.
2026-2032



Introduction

1.1 Overview

All children in the OECS are entitled to the fundamental rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The OECS is committed to ensuring that all children in the region enjoy these rights without discrimination. Children are also the bedrock of social, economic and environmental development and interconnectivity in the OECS; investing in children today not only upholds their inherent rights as individuals but also yields higher returns for our communities in the longer-term.

In full recognition of our child rights obligations and as part of our commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the OECS has developed this Regional Child Policy and Strategic Plan (the 'Policy') to outline our commitment, vision and approach to respecting, protecting and fulfilling children's rights.

For the purposes of this Policy, a child is a person under the age of 18 years, in line with international standards.

Our vision is that, by 2032, every child in the OECS feels valued, safe, supported, loved and empowered, and enjoys the full range of rights in the CRC, regardless of the child's, or their parent's or legal guardian's, gender, national or ethnic origin, socio-economic status, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or other status.

OECS members will achieve this vision through five thematic outcomes focusing on the following priority areas:

1. Child protection;
2. Access to justice;
3. Health;
4. Education; and
5. Social protection.

We will achieve each of these outcomes through a series of thematic and five cross-cutting strategic priorities. Our cross-cutting strategic priorities cover the following areas:

1. Strengthening practices and procedures for monitoring children's rights, including the collection, analysis, verification and use of disaggregated data to address inequities in the enjoyment of children's rights;
2. Integrating public financing for children into government planning and programme implementation;
3. Prioritising disaster risk reduction and recovery and climate adaptation in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of reforms relating to children;
4. Mainstreaming child participation throughout the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of reforms relating to children;
5. Systematically integrating equity issues throughout the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of reforms that relate to children, with a strong focus on children who are most at risk of being discriminated against or of being underserved, including girls, children with disabilities, children from poor socio-economic backgrounds, children affected by migration, LGBTIQ+ children, among others.

In terms of scope, this Policy applies to all OECS Protocol Member States and Overseas Territories of the United Kingdom, namely:

- Anguilla
- The British Virgin Islands
- Antigua and Barbuda
- Commonwealth of Dominica
- Grenada
- Montserrat
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Unless expressly stated otherwise, references in this report to the ‘OECS’ or ‘OECS member’ refers to the nine members listed above.

By endorsing this Policy, each OECS member commits to ensuring the implementation of this Policy within its jurisdiction.

1.2. Development of this Policy

The OECS developed this Policy based on an assessment of the situation of children in the region (referred to in this Policy as the 2025 assessment). The 2025 assessment, which was conducted between January and September 2025, was a mixed-methods study which answered the questions in Figure 1.



¹ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and/or questioning.

01

What are the main child rights issues that children face in the OECS?

02

What are the key drivers of these issues and the barriers and bottlenecks to children enjoying their rights?

03

What are the main policy, legislative and system gaps in protecting children's rights?

04

Are there any specific groups of children who are particularly vulnerable to inequities and non-implementation of their rights? Why?

05

What are the key issues that should be included in the regional child policy and strategic plan and any country-specific considerations that should be taken into account?

The research was carried out via a literature review; collection of secondary quantitative data and administrative data on children in the OECS; and primary data collection using a U-Report survey, key informant interviews (KIIs), semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and observations of court hearings.

Primary data collection was carried out with stakeholders, children, parents and caregivers in all nine OECS members using a hybrid approach, as follows:

- Online (U-Report) surveys with children, young people and adults;
- Online KIIs with stakeholders at the regional and national levels and online semi-structured interviews with professionals and practitioners;
- In-person data collection in three OECS members (Saint Lucia, Grenada and Montserrat) consisting of:
 - KIIs with national level stakeholders;
 - Individual or group interviews with key child protection and child justice stakeholders;
 - FGDs and individual interviews with children;
 - FGDs and individual interviews with parents and caregivers;
 - FGDs and individual interviews with professionals and practitioners from the education, healthcare and social protection sectors; and
 - Observations of court hearings relating to children.

The U-Report was deployed in August and September 2025, with a total of 93 respondents (74 women and girls and 19 men and boys). Respondents included adolescents and adults across diverse age groups, with children aged 12 to 17 years comprising the majority (56 per cent) of respondents. Grenada accounted for the majority of responses, limiting country-level disaggregation.

The findings of the research and this Policy were consulted upon with the OECS, a technical working group of focal points from each OECS member and the OECS Council of Ministers for Health,² before its formal adoption by the OECS Council of Ministers for Human and Social Development.



² Online consultation workshops and meetings were held on: 15 October 2025 (technical working group, OECS Commission and UNICEF); 16 October 2025 (OECS Commission and UNICEF); 22 October 2025 (OECS Council of Ministers for Health); 4 March 2026 (technical working group, OECS Commission and UNICEF); and 5 March 2026 (OECS Commission and UNICEF)

02

The Background

OECS Regional Child Policy
and Strategic Plan.
2026-2032



Background

2.1 Overview

Eastern Caribbean States have shown commitment to advancing children's rights, with the OECS building on a long history of regional cooperation and shared institutions designed to promote sustainable development and social cohesion. This is particularly evident in regional child-focused initiatives, such as the development of OECS Model Bills in 2007 on child protection and child justice,³ as well as the adoption of the 2022 OECS Policy and Strategic Framework for Online Child Protection.⁴ Over the last two decades, the region has also recorded important gains in key development indicators, with declining maternal, neonatal and under-five mortality,⁵ increased gender parity and enrolment rates in education, poverty reduction and expansion in access to essential services and developing and implementing climate-resilient programming in several OECS members.⁸

However, the region faces a unique set of structural challenges shaped by its small size, geography and exposure to external shocks. The OECS is composed of small island states with limited land, dispersed populations and high dependency on sectors such as tourism and agriculture, conditions that amplify vulnerability to global crises and climate-related hazards.⁹ Recent hurricanes, volcanic eruptions and the COVID-19 pandemic have caused extensive social and economic disruption, strained public finances, damaged critical infrastructure and affects the wellbeing of children and families across various dimensions of their lives.

The OECS has a combined population of 676,915, including 161,000 children who represent nearly one quarter of all residents.¹⁰ Child population proportions vary widely across the region, reflecting diverse demographic pressures and service needs. At the same time, children continue to bear a disproportionate share of poverty and vulnerability, with pre-pandemic estimates showing significantly higher poverty rates among children than adults and persistent inequalities affecting access to education, health services, protection mechanisms and opportunities for development.¹¹

³ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Social Development Bills. Retrieved from www.oecs.int/en/our-work/knowledge/library/social-development/bills.

⁴ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) OECS Policy and Strategic Framework for Child Online Protection (COP) in the OECS. Retrieved from www.oecs.int/en/our-work/knowledge/library/education/oecs-policy-and-strategic-framework-for-child-online-protection-cop-in-the-oecs.

⁵ World Health Organisation (WHO) WHO-SRH-21.21. Retrieved from www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-SRH-21.21; World Health Organisation (WHO) (2024) Data Portal. Retrieved from www.data.who.int/countries; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Data Portal: www.data.unicef.org/country/; UNICEF State of the World's Children. Retrieved from www.data.unicef.org/resources/sowc-2024/.

⁶ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Page: Analysis of Key Education Performance Indicators. OECS Regional Education Digest 2022–2023. Castries, Saint Lucia: OECS Commission, January 27, 2025. Retrieved from www.oecs.int/en/our-work/knowledge/library/education/oecs-education-statistical-digest.

⁷ World Bank, Charting a Course for Sustainable Growth: OECS Systematic Country Diagnostic, 2022, p.1. Retrieved from www.openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/6d8b9205-001f-5e3e-8406-970fb481f915/content (Accessed 4 April 2025).

⁸ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Eastern Caribbean Adapt Action. Retrieved from www.oecs.int/en/eastern-caribbean-adapt-action

⁹ World Bank (2026) The World Bank in the Eastern Caribbean, www.worldbank.org/en/country/oecs/overview (Accessed: 1 April 2025); United Nations, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, 'About Small Island Developing States' and 'List of SIDS'. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/ohrls/content/about-small-island-developing-states> and www.un.org/ohrls/content/list-sids (Accessed: 26 March 2025).

¹⁰ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2024) Country Profile Snapshots.

¹¹ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (2017) Final Report: Child Poverty in the Eastern Caribbean Area, December 2017, p. 17. Retrieved from www.unicef.org/lac/media/5056/file/PDF%20Child%20Poverty%20in%20the%20Eastern%20Caribbean%20Area%20.pdf (Accessed: 2 April 2025).



2.2 International commitments

OECS members have taken deliberate steps to strengthen the enabling environment for children's rights through both national and regional commitments. All OECS Member States are parties to the CRC and most have ratified other core human rights treaties, complemented by efforts to harmonise legislation, develop safeguarding protocols and enhance services to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights.

Progress toward the SDGs has been more constrained.¹² While most countries in the region were found to have faced significant or major challenges in reaching the SDGs, more than half faced 'stagnating' or 'decreasing' progress with regard to SDG 2 (End Hunger), SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land).¹³ In addition, according to the World Food Programme in 2023, 3.7 million people, or 52 per cent of the population of the English-speaking Caribbean, were considered food insecure in 2023, despite a 10 per cent decrease from the previous year.¹⁴ Barriers to SDG progress include increasing financial strain on families and a rising cost of living post-COVID-19.¹⁵



¹² United Nations Caribbean (2021) Caribbean Common Multi-Country Analysis, p. 15. Retrieved from <www.jamaica.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/CMCA%202021.pdf> (Accessed: 1 April 2025).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ World Food Programme (WFP) (2023) Food Security improves in the Caribbean yet challenges persist, 27 June 2023. Retrieved from <www.wfp.org/news/food-security-improves-caribbean-yet-challenges-persist> (Accessed: 1 April 2025).

¹⁵ Ibid.

2.3 Situation of children in the OECS

2.3.1. Violence against children

2.3.1.1. Key trends

According to existing data on violence against children in the OECS, children are experiencing violence in their daily lives^{16 17 18} This includes sexual and gender-based violence, sexual and physical abuse, neglect, peer violence at school, online abuse and exploitation. Most perpetrators are found within children's immediate environments, particularly in the home or within close relationship circles. The consequences of violence against children are lifelong and profoundly damaging for children who often fear to report. Cultural norms and stigma also play a major role in preventing disclosure. In small island contexts, close community ties, the acceptance of corporal punishment and fear of shame or reprisal make reporting especially difficult. Other contextual risks enhance the risk of violence against children in the OECS region, including risks linked to migration, where children may be left behind or exploited in host communities. Additionally, natural disasters further increase the risk of violence against children by disrupting family life, displacing children into temporary living arrangements and stretching already limited services including within the child protection and social protection systems.

Key statistics relating to violence against children:

- In the U-report survey, online violence and crime within the community were among the top two concerns raised by respondents followed by violence against children (at home, school and the community). More generally, the creation of safe spaces for children for play and leisure was highlighted by U-Report respondents as a priority area for reform.
- According to a recent study on women's health and life experiences, one in every five women in Grenada reported having been sexually abused during childhood (20.5 per cent).¹⁹
- 24 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 in Saint Lucia were married or in a union before age 18.²⁰
- Approximately two in three children aged two to 14 experience at least one form of psychological or physical punishment from their parents or other adults in Saint Lucia.²¹
- 45 per cent. of people surveyed in the OECS in a recent social survey support the use of corporal punishment of children.²²
- The child homicide rate in Saint Lucia is 8.3 per 100,000, which is well above the worldwide average of 1.7.²³

¹⁶ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) A Statistical Profile of Violence against Children in Latin America and the Caribbean. Retrieved from: www.unicef.org/lac/en/reports/statistical-profile-of-violence-against-children-in-latin-america-and-caribbean (Accessed: 16 September 2025).

¹⁷ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) A Study of Child Vulnerability in Barbados, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, p. 14, UNICEF Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, in association with the Governments of Barbados, St. Lucia and St. Vincent & the Grenadines. Retrieved from www.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/St-Vincent-and-the-Grenadines-April-2019.pdf (Accessed: 16 September 2025).

¹⁸ Fry, Deborah; Padilla, Karina; Germanio, Amanda; Lu, Mengyao; Ivatury, Srividya; and Vindrola, Stefania. Violence Against Children in Latin America and the Caribbean 2015-2021: A Systematic Review. Panama City: UNICEF, 2021. Retrieved from www.unicef.org/lac/media/34481/file/Violence-against-children-full-report.pdf (Accessed: 16 September 2025).

¹⁹ Government of Grenada, UN Women Caribbean. Women's Health and Life Experiences Study Report. St. George's, Grenada, 2018. Retrieved from www.caribbeanwomencount.unwomen.org/countries.html?country=5 (Accessed: 12 September 2025).

²⁰ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Saint Lucia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2012. New York: UNICEF, 2012. Retrieved from www.unicef.org/sites/mics/files/Saint%20Lucia%202012%20MICS_English.pdf (Accessed: 12 September 2025).

²¹ UNICEF, Saint Lucia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2012: Final report. Government of Saint Lucia & United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Retrieved from www.mics.unicef.org/sites/mics/files/Saint%20Lucia%202012%20MICS_English.pdf

²² United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) & Caribbean Development Research Services (CADRES), 2024. Social Survey Report in the Eastern Caribbean on Violence Against Children. UNICEF Eastern Caribbean (unpublished). Retrieved from www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/4036/file/Poll%20on%20Corporal%20Punishment,%20Child%20Sexual%20Abuse,%20Domestic%20Violence%20.pdf

²³ Fry, Deborah; Padilla, Karina; Germanio, Amanda; Lu, Mengyao; Ivatury, Srividya; and Vindrola, Stefania (2021) Violence Against Children in Latin America and the Caribbean 2015-2021: A Systematic Review. Panama City: UNICEF, p.50. Retrieved from www.unicef.org/lac/media/34481/file/Violence-against-children-full-report.pdf (Accessed: 16 September 2025).



2.3.1.2. Key reforms to date

OECS members have developed several laws to prohibit violence against children and strengthen their child protection systems. In 2007, the OECS spearheaded the development of a series of ‘model bills’ relating to child protection and various aspects of personal status and family law, the most relevant to this part being the Children (Care and Adoption) Bill and Domestic Violence Bill. Alongside these legal reforms, regional assessments and recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child have driven efforts to develop or update national child protection policies, protocols and action plans, improve inter-agency coordination for child protection, establish specialised child protection units, and introduce licensing and monitoring systems for residential care. Although many national action plans have expired and implementation gaps remain, countries have continued to introduce important institutional reforms, such as new child protection units and safeguarding boards, to improve accountability and strengthen their child protection systems.²⁴

2.3.1.3. Main barriers and bottlenecks

Despite significant progress, there is a need to continue the process of legal reform in the OECS to ensure compliance with international child rights obligations and good practices. UN human rights monitoring mechanisms have recently issued recommendations to various OECS members to amend their legislation to prevent and respond to violence against children.²⁵ Most recommendations have focused on introducing explicit prohibition of corporal punishment and removal of provisions which permit its use in certain settings.²⁶

There is a need to ensure that regulations and guidance are in place, including guidelines, standard operating procedures and protocols to guide frontline workers in implementing child protection laws.²⁷ Policy gaps remain as none of the OECS members have in force a national strategy or action plan for child protection reform or the elimination of violence against children except for Antigua and Barbuda. Also, the 2025 assessment highlighted that safeguarding is not yet embedded across sectors, with limited training on child safeguarding for professionals and practitioners, leading to inconsistent identification and reporting of child safeguarding issues in health, education, emergency response and other sectors, and gaps in accountability for failure to report abuse.

Alongside these structural gaps, entrenched social norms create significant barriers to protecting children. Corporal punishment remains widely accepted, victim blaming attitudes persist and reluctance to report abuse is reinforced by stigma, lack of trust in authorities and fear of retaliation.²⁸

The 2025 assessment found that early intervention and community-based services to prevent violence against children are particularly limited. Parenting support, after school care, child and youth-friendly structured leisure and play activities and affordable childcare services are not evenly distributed across the OECS. Specialist services such as trauma-informed services or disability support are sometimes non-existent or difficult to access.

Of significant concern are reports and observations during the 2025 assessment of children being placed in closed residential care settings for their protection, resulting in their de facto detention, contrary to the CRC and international standards. Children with perceived ‘challenging’ or ‘difficult’ behaviours are particularly at risk of institutionalisation. The continued placement of babies in residential care, including in children’s

homes and with older children, is also a significant issue. Other key challenges relate to children remaining in limbo in temporary alternative care arrangements, creating instability and uncertainty for the child. Foster and kinship care remain underdeveloped due to stigma associated with these forms of care, and a lack of training and support for caregivers. Legal and administrative barriers to adoption also create challenges to finding long-term, stable arrangements for children in care. Further, high caseloads, staff shortages, limited professional development, the absence of minimum service standards and largely paper-based case management and data systems constrain the ability of social workers and other agencies to respond effectively to child protection concerns, while weak data collection and monitoring create barriers to developing evidence-based child protection reforms.

Regarding child protection proceedings, there is need to strengthen judicial scrutiny and monitoring of child protection cases to ensure that the child's best interests are met. The 2025 assessment identified instances of children in care not having care plans in place, and the absence of an updated care plan before extension of the child's placement. Further, children are not represented in child protection proceedings, for example by a 'guardian ad litem' or similar measure. Though not the focus of the 2025 assessment, the findings indicated that similar gaps arise in private family law proceedings, such as in divorce proceedings involving decisions about parental care and access arrangements without any independent representation of the views or best interests of the children involved.

²⁸ Sealy-Burke, J. and OECS and UNICEF (2016-2017) OECS Assessment of Child Protection Services: Country Report for Anguilla (pp. 29, 35, 56), British Virgin Islands (pp. 18-19, 31, 36, 64,) Saint Lucia (p. 65), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (p. 68) and Antigua (pp. 15, 53); OECS and UNICEF (2017) for Saint Kitts and Nevis (pp. 17, 34, 68), Montserrat (pp. 15, 25) and Dominica (pp. 34, 54).

²⁹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2025) Concluding Observations for Saint Kitts and Nevis, paras. 7 and 8(c).

³⁰ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2025) Concluding Observations for Saint Kitts and Nevis, para. 34(a); UN Human Rights Council (2021) Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Antigua and Barbuda, 20 December 2021, para. 54.

³¹ Semi-structured interview, justice participants, Saint Lucia, 2 June 2025; Online KII, regional stakeholder, 27 May 2025.

³² United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Caribbean Development Research Services (CADRES) (2024) Social survey report in the Eastern Caribbean on violence against children. UNICEF Eastern Caribbean (unpublished). Retrieved www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/4036/file/Poll%20on%20Corporal%20Punishment,%20Child%20Sexual%20Abuse,%20Domestic%20Violence%20.pdf (Accessed 23 March 2026).

2.3.2. Children in conflict with the law

2.3.2.1. Key trends

Crime involving children has been highlighted as an ongoing concern across the OECS. However, there remains a significant gap in reliable, up-to-date data on the scale of offences committed by children in the region. However, based on the limited data available, the 2025 assessment found that boys generally make up a significant majority of the numbers of children arrested, referred to probation and in detention.²⁹

Most recurring offenses committed by children are property-related offences, followed by violent offences, particularly assault and other forms of physical harm. In Dominica, snapshot data from 2018 of residents in a detention centre showed that three of the five children in detention were sentenced for theft.³⁰ The Caribbean Youth Detention Survey (2014–15) found that approximately one-quarter of all detained youth were remanded or sentenced for violent offences.³¹ Participants during the 2025 assessment reported that drug-related offences are also common, with cannabis possession and distribution being a common concern across the OECS. The 2025 assessment also highlighted specific barriers to reporting sexual offenses, including social stigma and, particularly if the perpetrator is a family member, family pressure to keep the issue ‘private’.

According to the 2025 assessment, one of the main drivers of criminal activity among children is gang membership and ‘gang culture,’ which have been reported as key causes of concern in the region.³² Poverty, limited employment opportunities, family breakdown and a prevalence of gang culture within schools and social media were also identified as drivers of criminal behaviour among children in the region by many stakeholders consulted during the 2025 assessment.

²⁹ See for example: Blake, D. (2020) ‘The Status of Youth Incarceration in the Caribbean’, *Social Sciences*, 10(2), 52, p.61. Retrieved from http://www.researchgate.net/publication/349121005_The_Status_of_Youth_Incarceration_in_the_Caribbean (Accessed: 20 October 2025).

³⁰ United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (2021) OECS/UNICEF Country Assessment of the Child Protection Systems in Dominica, p. 46 UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Area Office. Retrieved from www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/2866/file/Dominica%20report%20on%20child%20protection%20systems.pdf (Accessed: 20 October 2025).

³¹ Blake, D. (2020) ‘The Status of Youth Incarceration in the Caribbean’, *Social Sciences*, 10(2), 52. Retrieved from www.researchgate.net/publication/349121005_The_Status_of_Youth_Incarceration_in_the_Caribbean (Accessed: 20 October 2025).

³² See for example: Katz, C.M, and Nuño, L.E. (2017) Prevalence and Patterns of Troublesome Youth Groups in the Caribbean: Final Report, p.3. Arizona State University. Retrieved from www.scm.oas.org/pdfs/2024/CP49826_4.2_1.pdf (Accessed: 21 October 2025).

2.3.2.2. Key reforms to date

Over the past decade, OECS members have introduced substantial reforms aimed at making their justice systems more child-friendly, moving away from punitive models to embed rights-based, rehabilitative approaches.³³ New laws aim to give children a stronger voice in proceedings, introduce diversion, promote alternatives to detention, and create clearer, more consistent procedures for frontline workers. Together with the development of specialised courts and police units, these reforms reflect a wider normative shift towards treating children in conflict with the law as rights holders rather than offenders, with their best interests and rehabilitation being a primary consideration. The 2025 assessment found that good practices exist, for instance in Montserrat, where the Royal Police Service has a specialist Child Safeguarding Unit that investigates cases involving children in conflict with the law (as well as child victims and witnesses).

Multi-agency bodies like Anguilla's Child Justice Board and Saint Kitts and Nevis' diversion monitoring committee aim to strengthen coordination in the implementation of child justice. Regional initiatives have also supported diversion and rehabilitation across multiple countries and contributed to improving the ability of the workforce to implement child-friendly procedures, safeguarding and child-sensitive interviewing, helping embed consistent, rights-based practice across the justice sector.^{34 35 36}

³³ Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (2023), Improving juvenile justice in the Eastern Caribbean. Retrieved from www.oecs.int/en/juvenile-justice-in-the-eastern-caribbean-jjrp-ii.

³⁴ Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (2023), Improving juvenile justice in the Eastern Caribbean. Retrieved from www.oecs.int/en/juvenile-justice-in-the-eastern-caribbean-jjrp-ii.

³⁵ Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Turning the tides on youth crime: Launch of OASYS in St. Kitts and Nevis. Retrieved from <http://pressroom.oecs.int/turning-the-tides-on-youth-crime-launch-of-oasys-in-st-kitts-and-nevis>.

³⁶ Improved Access to Justice in the Caribbean (IMPACT Justice) (2025) Faculty of Law, The University of the West Indies at Cave Hill, Barbados. Retrieved from www.cavehill.uwi.edu/Law/about-us/centres.aspx.

2.3.2.3. Main barriers and bottlenecks

The child justice systems across the OECS continue to face significant structural barriers despite the progress outlined above. Minimum ages of criminal responsibility remain below the minimum recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (14 years). Antigua and Barbuda and the British Virgin Islands, and several jurisdictions have not fully operationalised recently-enacted child justice laws due to missing infrastructure, funding gaps, and limitations in institutional and workforce capacities. Common challenges identified during the 2025 assessment included the absence of community-based rehabilitation and diversion services, inconsistent use of detention as a last resort, inadequate conditions in detention, and limited legal aid systems that fall short of providing specialised child-friendly legal assistance. Stakeholders also reported procedural delays caused by limited court sittings, court delays and case backlogs, the absence of clear inter-agency coordination protocols, and chronic shortages in specialist staff including judges, probation officers, psychologists, social workers, and legal professionals.

Resourcing constraints remain the central barrier to reform. The end of major donor-funded initiatives has left governments unable to sustain diversion services or national justice strategies, while material shortages affect even basic standards in police custody and detention. The 2025 assessment indicated persistent data limitations that undermine accountability and planning; existing records are fragmented or outdated, rarely disaggregated for children, and often maintained manually due to expired systems or insufficient statistical capacity.



³⁷ United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019). General Comment No. 24 on children's rights in the child justice system, CRC/C/GC/24. Geneva, United Nation.

³⁸ Child Justice Act, No. 23 of 2015, s. 5.

³⁹ Criminal Code (No. 1 of 1997), s.12(2).

2.3.3. Children in contact with the law

2.3.3.1. Key trends

As outlined in part 2.3.1, children experience multiple forms of violence in the home, school and community. Regional reviews consistently highlight that administrative records on child victims (and children in conflict with the law) are fragmented, inconsistently compiled, and rarely disaggregated by age or gender.⁴⁰ Only few such cases reach the justice system, either because the violence is not fully prohibited or recognised as a crime (e.g. corporal punishment) or due to the barriers to reporting mentioned in part 2.3.1.

Physical violence against children was the most reported offence against children during the 2025 assessment. Participants reported that these cases often involve peer- and gang-related violence though sexual offences against children including rape and incest were also reportedly common (but not always reported). Cases of statutory rape involving ‘consensual’ sexual relationships between adolescents of similar ages were also reported, though these reportedly often result in mediation or diversion rather than prosecution. Further, justice stakeholders flagged the growth or emergence of online abuse and exploitation of children, including the sharing of self-generated sexual material involving children and adults grooming children online.

2.3.3.2. Key reforms to date

Across the OECS, important reforms have strengthened access to justice for child victims and witnesses. The 2025 assessment revealed examples of multiple special measures to support children’s safe participation in legal proceedings, including age-appropriate communication techniques, reduced formalities in court, closed court hearings, use of protective screens and video link testimony, and ‘Achieving Best Evidence’ interviews. There was also evidence of magistrates and judges adapting their approach to children’s needs, and in some jurisdictions, police and social workers provide psychosocial support to child victims and witnesses.

⁴⁰ United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (2019) Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean. Bridgetown, Barbados: UNICEF

2.3.3.3. Main barriers and bottlenecks

Despite this progress, child victims and witnesses of crime still face significant barriers to accessing justice. The 2025 assessment revealed that persistent delays and backlogs lead to criminal proceedings spanning several years, discouraging reporting and child participation and weakening evidence. Special measures are unevenly applied, with some children still testifying in open court or facing direct cross-examination by the accused. Limited or ad hoc training leaves justice professionals with capacity gaps to support children with disabilities or to undertaking a trauma-informed approach to legal proceedings. Stigma, cultural norms and community pressure also discourage reporting and influence case outcomes, particularly in sexual offence matters where victims may be discredited or discouraged from pursuing justice.

2.3.4. Health

2.3.4.1. Key trends

The OECS have made progress in the attainment of health-related SDGs. At the same time, the region is undergoing demographic change, with declining fertility rates. Health systems also continue to face challenges with equity and access.

According to latest published studies, maternal mortality, neonatal mortality and under-five mortality have significantly decreased in the Eastern Caribbean in the last 30 years with some remaining challenges in certain states/territories. The presence of skilled birth attendants is critical in reducing maternal and neonatal mortality and coverage is generally high, with nearly 99 per cent of births attended by trained health professionals in 2018. However, there are disparities between within countries and territories when it comes to antenatal care provision.^{41 42}

Immunization rates across the OECS remain high for core vaccines, with most countries recording around 94 to 96 per cent coverage and Saint Kitts and Nevis consistently above 96 per cent. Measles vaccination is the main concern, with notable declines since 2000 and coverage ranging from 73 per cent in the British Virgin Islands to full coverage in Antigua and Barbuda and Montserrat.

⁴¹ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area (2019) Situation analysis of children in the Eastern Caribbean, p.53. Bridgetown, Barbados: UNICEF. Retrieved from: www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/1896/file/ECA_Sitan.pdf.

⁴² Ibid.

Available data on malnutrition in the OECS are scarce, with Saint Lucia the only country reporting stunting and wasting, although figures from neighbouring Caribbean countries suggest undernutrition may also be present elsewhere in the subregion.⁴³ Childhood overweight and obesity are more clearly documented and represent a growing concern. Around one third of adolescents are overweight and about 14 per cent are obese, with trends worsening between 2000 and 2016 and girls showing slightly higher rates.^{44 45}

Adolescent pregnancy remains a significant public health concern in Latin America and the Caribbean, though data for OECS members specifically are limited. As of 2023, the adolescent birth rate in the Latin America and Caribbean region stood at 51.4 births per 1,000 females aged 15–19 years, making it one of the highest globally, second only to sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁶

Adolescent mental health concerns are rising across the OECS, with data showing that approximately one in four adolescents experience suicidal thoughts and almost one in five attempt suicide in some countries.⁴⁷ Boys are more likely to report having no close friends, reflecting gender norms that discourage emotional expression.⁴⁸ Isolation and emotional distress are widely documented, and professionals note that many children and young people struggle silently. The crisis has intensified since COVID-19, with reports of increased depression, anxiety and stress linked to poverty, family difficulties and exposure to violence. These concerns are reinforced by a 2025 study on the mental health of children and young people in the Caribbean, which found that over half of the respondents did not feel optimistic about the future, were constantly worried, were feeling down, depressed and hopeless, and did not think that they had a trusted person to contact if they ever needed mental health support.⁴⁹

Children with disabilities are among the most marginalised in the OECS, facing barriers to survival, development and social participation. Although precise prevalence data are limited, regional estimates suggest that approximately 10 per cent of children in Latin America and the Caribbean live with disabilities.⁵⁰ Census data from the Caribbean indicate wide variation in rates of children with disabilities that are likely to underestimate the true scale,⁵¹ largely due to stigma associated with disabilities, which discourages parents and caregivers from seeking specialist input and leading to them concealing the child's disability. Barriers facing children with disabilities are explored further below in part 2.3.4.3.

⁴³ Ministry of Social Transformation, Local Government and Community Empowerment (Saint Lucia), Central Statistics Office (Saint Lucia) and United Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2012). St. Lucia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2012. Saint Lucia: Ministry of Social Transformation; Central Statistics Office; UNICEF. Retrieved from <www.microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/2209>.

⁴⁴ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area (2019). Situation analysis of children in the Eastern Caribbean. Bridgetown, Barbados: UNICEF. Retrieved from: www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/1896/file/ECA_Sitan.pdf.

⁴⁵ Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) (2024). Saint Vincent and the Grenadines-country profile. Retrieved from <www.hia.paho.org/en/country-profiles/saint-vincent-and-the-grenadines>.

⁴⁶ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Teenage maternity indicator (CEPAL Gender Equality Observatory). And World Health Organisation (WHO) (2023) Adolescent Pregnancy Fact Sheet. Retrieved from <https://oig.cepal.org/en/indicators?id=2276> and <www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-pregnancy>

⁴⁷ World Health Organisation (WHO) Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS); indicators include percentage of students who seriously considered attempting suicide, attempted suicide one or more times and had no close friends during the past 12 months. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/surveillance/systems-tools/global-school-based-student-health-survey> (Accessed: 25 September 2025).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2025). Caribbean Child and Youth Mental Health Research Study Report. Retrieved from <www.caricom.org/wp-content/uploads/CARICOM-and-UNICEF-Youth-Mental-Health-Survey-Report-V6.pdf> (Accessed: 19 March 2026).

⁵⁰ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2024). Children with Disabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Statistical Overview of Their Well-being, p.53. Retrieved from <[www.data.unicef.org/resources/children-disabilities-latin-america-caribbean-statistical-overview/](http://data.unicef.org/resources/children-disabilities-latin-america-caribbean-statistical-overview/)> (Accessed: 26 September 2025).

⁵¹ Jones, F. and Serieux-Lubin, L. (2018). Disability, Human Rights and Public Policy in the Caribbean: A Situation Analysis. Studies and Perspectives — The Caribbean, No. 64, p.19. Santiago: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Retrieved from <www.repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/fc08744f-1f1f-4bff-9b50-193fd4b0c369/content> (Accessed: 26 September 2025).



2.3.4.2. Key reforms to date

OECS members have introduced a wide range of health reforms, with most countries implementing national health plans and advancing Universal Health Coverage through new financing models, strategic plans, mental health policies and national insurance schemes.⁵² Regional frameworks led by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) and Caribbean Community (CARICOM) further support child and adolescent health through technical cooperation, surveillance, immunisation, nutrition, mental health integration and preparedness.^{54 55 56 57}



⁵² World Bank and Government of Saint Lucia (2024). White Paper on Universal Health Coverage: Saint Lucia. Washington, DC: World Bank. Retrieved from <www.documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099080724165027120/pdf/P176662-debc9462-2bcc-4a42-a562-d7371e88f280.pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2025).

⁵³ KPMG International (2018). Progressing towards universal health coverage in the Caribbean: What role does the private sector play? Retrieved from <www.assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/bs/pdf/2018-UHC-Caribbean-TL-Final.pdf>.

⁵⁴ World Health Organization (WHO) (2018). Barbados: WHO country cooperation strategy 2018–2024 (WHO/CCU/18.02/Barbados). Geneva: World Health Organization. Retrieved from <https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/8f688060-c053-4cbf-bcf2-076800b0eca9/content> (Accessed: 24 September 2024).

⁵⁵ Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) (2016). Strategy for Technical Cooperation with the United Kingdom Overseas Territories in the Caribbean, 2016–2022. Washington, DC: PAHO. Retrieved from <https://iris.who.int/items/687b2ce7-f1e2-43cd-9856-bd3466039e63> (Accessed: 24 September 2024).

⁵⁶ Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) (2024). CARPHA Strategic Plan 2025–2030: Stronger Together. Retrieved from https://www.carpha.org/Portals/0/Publications/Strat%20Plan_Updated%20Final.pdf (Accessed: 14 October 2025).

⁵⁷ World Health Organization (WHO) (2018). Barbados: WHO country cooperation strategy 2018–2024 (WHO/CCU/18.02/Barbados). Geneva: World Health Organization. Retrieved from <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/272851/ccs-brb-2018-2024-eng.pdf>.

2.3.4.3. Main barriers and bottlenecks

Despite these efforts, children still face major inequities in access to healthcare. Health systems struggle with limited public financing, high out of pocket costs, dependence on donor funding and uneven progress toward Universal Health Coverage.^{58 59} Systemic constraints undermine quality healthcare for children across the subregion. Severe health workforce shortages, high turnover and outward migration affect paediatrics, mental health and disability services, while training opportunities remain scarce.^{60 61} Infrastructure gaps, limited diagnostic capacity, weak systems for water, sanitation and hygiene, and climate-related risks further restrict timely care, and specialist services often require costly overseas referrals. Social norms create barriers to adolescent sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, contributing to early pregnancy, while obesity and physical inactivity are rising due to poor diets and limited access to affordable healthy food options.⁶² Vaccine hesitancy has also grown, lowering uptake of several vaccines.^{63 64} Child protection within the health sector remains weak, with limited safeguarding mechanisms, inconsistent reporting practices, and limited regular training or facilities for responding to violence against children.⁶⁵

Healthcare, including improving mental health and psychosocial support, was consistently highlighted as a priority issue among research participants in the 2025 assessment, including children and U-Report respondents. In addition to the barriers above, there are notable legal barriers to protecting and promoting children's mental health in the OECS. These include the criminalisation of suicide and attempted suicide in Grenada and Saint Lucia,⁶⁶ which contributes to the fear, stigmatisation and socio-cultural barriers that discourage children (and adults) in distress from seeking help.⁶⁷ This approach also fails to recognise the socio-economic, cultural and psychological drivers of suicide,⁶⁸ which should be addressed as part of each state's holistic approach to protecting and promoting children's rights to life, survival and development and to physical and mental health.

⁵⁸ KPMG International (2018). Progressing towards universal health coverage in the Caribbean: What role does the private sector play? Retrieved from: <https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/bs/pdf/2018-UHC-Caribbean-TL-Final.pdf>.

⁵⁹ World Bank and Government of Saint Lucia (2024). White Paper on Universal Health Coverage: Saint Lucia. Washington, DC: World Bank. Accessed from <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099080724165027120/pdf/P176662-debc9462-2bcc-4a42-a562-d7371e88f280.pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2025).

⁶⁰ World Health Organization (WHO) (2018). Barbados: WHO country cooperation strategy 2018–2024 (WHO/CCU/18.02/Barbados). Geneva: World Health Organization. Retrieved from <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/272851/ccs-brb-2018-2024-eng.pdf>.

⁶¹ Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) (2024). Health financing and access to medicines in the Caribbean. Barbados: PAHO. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.37774/9789275128008>.

⁶² United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2023). Childhood overweight on the rise: Is it too late to turn the tide in Latin America and the Caribbean?, pp.12-1. New York: UNICEF. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/reports/childhood-overweight-rise-latin-america-caribbean>.

⁶³ Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) (2023) Antigua and Barbuda first Caribbean nation to benefit from PAHO/WHO HPV guidance, 29 September 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.paho.org/en/news/29-9-2023-antigua-and-barbuda-first-caribbean-nation-benefit-pahowho-hpv-guidance> (Accessed: 25 September 2025).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Wirtz, A., Alvarez, C., Guedes, C.A., Brumana, L., Modvar, C. and Glass, N. (2016) 'Violence against children in Latin America and Caribbean countries: A comprehensive review of national health sector efforts in prevention and response', BMC Public Health, 16(1), 1006. Retrieved from <[www.doi.org/10.1186/s12889-016-3562-3](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-016-3562-3)>.

⁶⁶ Caribbean Regional Coalition for the Decriminalization of Suicide the Decriminalization of Suicide in Grenada, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago, p. 13. Retrieved from www.csdcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CSDC-Policy-Brief-for-the-Decriminalization-of-Suicide-in-GD-SLU-TT-1.pdf (Accessed: 19 March 2026).

⁶⁷ World Health Organisation (WHO) (2023) WHO Policy brief on the health aspects of decriminalization of suicide and suicide attempts. 2023. Retrieved from <[www.iris.who.int/handle/10665/372848](https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/372848)> (Accessed: 26 March 2026).

- ⁵⁸ KPMG International (2018). Progressing towards universal health coverage in the Caribbean: What role does the private sector play? Retrieved from: <https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/bs/pdf/2018-UHC-Caribbean-TL-Final.pdf>.
- ⁵⁹ World Bank and Government of Saint Lucia (2024). White Paper on Universal Health Coverage: Saint Lucia. Washington, DC: World Bank. Accessed from <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099080724165027120/pdf/P176662-debc9462-2bcc-4a42-a562-d7371e88f280.pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2025).
- ⁶⁰ World Health Organization (WHO) (2018). Barbados: WHO country cooperation strategy 2018–2024 (WHO/CCU/18.02/Barbados). Geneva: World Health Organization. Retrieved from <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/272851/ccs-brb-2018-2024-eng.pdf>.
- ⁶¹ Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) (2024.) Health financing and access to medicines in the Caribbean. Barbados: PAHO. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.37774/9789275128008>.
- ⁶² United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2023). Childhood overweight on the rise: Is it too late to turn the tide in Latin America and the Caribbean?, pp.12-1. New York: UNICEF. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/reports/childhood-overweight-rise-latin-america-caribbean>.
- ⁶³ Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) (2023). Antigua and Barbuda first Caribbean nation to benefit from PAHO/WHO HPV guidance, 29 September 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.paho.org/en/news/29-9-2023-antigua-and-barbuda-first-caribbean-nation-benefit-pahowho-hpv-guidance> (Accessed: 25 September 2025).
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.
- ⁶⁵ Wirtz, A., Alvarez, C., Guedes, C.A., Brumana, L., Modvar, C. and Glass, N. (2016). 'Violence against children in Latin America and Caribbean countries: A comprehensive review of national health sector efforts in prevention and response', BMC Public Health, 16(1), 1006. Retrieved from <[www.doi.org/10.1186/s12889-016-3562-3](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-016-3562-3)>.
- ⁶⁶ Caribbean Regional Coalition for the Decriminalization of Suicide the Decriminalization of Suicide in Grenada, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago, p. 13. Retrieved from www.csdcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CSDC-Policy-Brief-for-the-Decriminalization-of-Suicide-in-GD-SLU-TT-1.pdf (Accessed: 19 March 2026).
- ⁶⁷ World Health Organisation (WHO) (2023). WHO Policy brief on the health aspects of decriminalization of suicide and suicide attempts. 2023. Retrieved from <[www.iris.who.int/handle/10665/372848](https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/372848)> (Accessed: 26 March 2026).
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.

2.3.5. Education

2.3.5.1. Key trends

The education landscape in the OECS shows steady progress alongside persistent gaps that limit children's full and equitable participation in learning. Early childhood development services have expanded, yet poorer households and rural communities still face limited access. Early childhood education is not compulsory in the OECS and is delivered through a mixed system of public/ private and church-assisted providers. Enrolment in early childhood education is low for children aged zero to two at around 20 per cent and rises to approximately 63 per cent for children aged three to four. However, access remains constrained by limited public options and the high cost of private services.^{69 70}

Access to primary education is generally strong, with many OECS members reporting primary net enrolment rates above 90 per cent and secondary enrolment rates that remain high for both girls and boys. However, attrition is often greater among boys in the transition to secondary school.⁷¹ Out-of-school children tend to be concentrated among boys, adolescents (particularly boys), children with disabilities and those from low income or migrant families.⁷²

Pupil to teacher ratios vary widely, affecting classroom support, and curriculum reforms to strengthen foundational and '21st-Century Skills' are progressing unevenly.^{73 74 75} While the OECS curriculum is largely harmonized across its members, providing a unified framework for learning outcomes, teaching methodologies and assessment practices, there are concerns that the curriculum does not adequately prepare students for the practical demands of adulthood or the workplace. Several critical gaps in the curriculum were highlighted by stakeholders during the 2025 assessment, including limited education on children's rights, sexuality education and climate change.

Academic outcomes show marked gender disparities; girls often outperform boys in literacy, while boys sometimes perform slightly better in numeracy. National and regional examinations also consistently show lower completion and pass rates among boys.^{76 77}

Given the high unemployment and school drop-out rates in the region, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is receiving growing attention across the region, reflecting wider recognition that education systems need to equip adolescents and young people with more practical, relevant and transferable skills.⁷⁸ There are signs of progress in the expansion and modernization of TVET in the broader region, including stronger emphasis on digital skills and school-to-work transitions.⁷⁹ However, progress remains uneven across the OECS and current training offers are not always considered attractive and aligned with market needs.^{80 81}

Violence in schools remains significant concerns, with the 2025 assessment identifying reports of physical, psychological and sexual abuse of children, including through the use of digital technologies, from peers and, in some instances, teaching staff. Corporal punishment in school settings is also documented.⁸² Peer-to-peer violence manifests primarily as bullying or physical altercations between students. Data from the Global School-Based Student Health Survey, conducted in 2007 across four Caribbean countries including Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago, found that approximately one-quarter of the 6,780 students aged 13 to 15 surveyed reported being bullied within the 30 days prior to the survey.⁸³

Barriers to education are particularly acute for children with special educational needs and disabilities, with some jurisdictions estimating that up to one in four children may require additional educational support (Montserrat). The 2025 assessment also highlighted that there is a need to strengthen mechanisms for meaningful and inclusive child participation in school decision-making.

⁶⁹ UNICEF Eastern Caribbean (2019) Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean, p.58. Bridgetown, Barbados: UNICEF. Retrieved from: https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/1896/file/ECA_Sitan.pdf (not verified against current legislation).

⁷⁰ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (2025) OECS Regional Education Digest 2022–2023: Analysis of Key Education Performance Indicators. Castries, Saint Lucia: OECS Commission. Retrieved from <https://oece.int/en/our-work/knowledge/library/education/oece-education-statistical-digest>.

⁷¹ These figures naturally vary between states due to differences in population size and demographics.

⁷² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2024) Class size and student-teacher ratios. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/class-size-and-student-teacher-ratios.html>; and World Economic Forum (WEF) (2022) Student-teacher ratios vary across the globe. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2022/09/student-teacher-ratios-vary-across-the-globe/>.

⁷³ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (2025) Page: Analysis of Key Education Performance Indicators. OECS Regional Education Digest 2022–2023. Castries, Saint Lucia: OECS Commission.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2024) Class size and student-teacher ratios. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/class-size-and-student-teacher-ratios.html>; and World Economic Forum (WEF) (2022) Student-teacher ratios vary across the globe. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2022/09/student-teacher-ratios-vary-across-the-globe/>.

⁷⁶ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (2024) Student Performance in CSEC Examinations 2019 -2023, Part of the Series: Thematic/Analytical Reports in Education. Castries, Saint Lucia: OECS.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ World Bank (2024) World Bank supports investments in youth skills and innovation in OECS countries. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/01/11/world-bank-supports-investment-in-youth-skills-and-innovation-in-oece-countries> (Accessed: 23 March 2026).

⁷⁹ Caribbean Community (CARICOM) (n.d.) Digital revolution in Caribbean TVET: Caricom pilots online training platform. Retrieved from <https://caricom.org/digital-revolution-in-caribbean-tvet-caricom-pilots-online-training-platform/>. (Accessed: 23 March 2026).

⁸⁰ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (2012) OECS Education Sector Strategy 2012–2021, p.42. Castries, Saint Lucia: OECS. Retrieved from https://www.globalpartnership.org/node/document/download?file=sites/default/files/2012-2021-oece-education-sector-strategy_0.pdf (Accessed 23 March 2026).

⁸¹ Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports & Culture, Grenada (2023) National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy, p.50. Grenada: Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports & Culture. Retrieved from <https://www.grenadanta.gd/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/National-TVET-Policy-Grenada.pdf> (Accessed 23 March 2026).

⁸² United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017) Concluding Observations on the Combined Second to Fourth Periodic Reports of Antigua and Barbuda (CRC/C/ATG/CO/2-4), 30 October; United Nations Human Rights Council (2020) Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Grenada, 19 March paras. 53-54 and 94.136-138; United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2025) Concluding Observations on the second periodic report of Saint Kitts and Nevis, 26 February, para. 34.

⁸³ World Health Organisation (WHO) (2026) Noncommunicable diseases surveillance data. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/surveillance/data>.

⁸⁴ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (2012) OECS Education Sector Strategy 2012–2021, p.42. Castries, Saint Lucia: OECS. Retrieved from https://www.globalpartnership.org/node/document/download?file=sites/default/files/2012-2021-oece-education-sector-strategy_0.pdf (Accessed 23 March 2026).

⁸⁵ Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports & Culture, Grenada (2023) National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy, p.50. Grenada: Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports & Culture. Retrieved from <https://www.grenadanta.gd/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/National-TVET-Policy-Grenada.pdf> (Accessed 23 March 2026).

⁸⁶ United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017) Concluding Observations on the Combined Second to Fourth Periodic Reports of Antigua and Barbuda (CRC/C/ATG/CO/2-4), 30 October; United Nations Human Rights Council (2020) Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Grenada, 19 March paras. 53-54 and 94.136-138; United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2025) Concluding Observations on the second periodic report of Saint Kitts and Nevis, 26 February, para. 34.

⁸⁷ Abdurahman, H.A., Bah, T.T., Shrestha, H.L., and Jacobsen, K.H. (2012). "Bullying, Mental Health, and Parental Involvement among Adolescents in the Caribbean." West Indian Medical Journal, 61(5), 504-508. <https://www.mona.uwi.edu/fms/wimj/article/1406>



2.3.5.1. Key reforms to date

The reforms in education across the OECS members have focused on harmonising and improving the education systems, guided by comprehensive regional strategies developed over several decades. The OECS Education Sector Strategy (OECS) 2021–2026 serves as the guiding framework for member states to align their national education strategies and plans. This strategy draws on the successes of previous programmes such as Foundations for the Future (1991–2000) and Pillars for Partnership and Progress (2000–2010). The OECS emphasizes inclusive education, curriculum harmonization, teacher professional development, and data-driven policymaking.⁸⁴ CARICOM and UNICEF developed the Health and Family Life Education Regional Curriculum Framework to guide member states in creating primary and secondary school health curricula centred on life skills. The framework covers key themes such as sexuality and sexual health, interpersonal relationships, healthy eating and fitness, and environmental responsibility.^{85 86}

2.3.5.2. Main barriers and bottlenecks

The 2025 assessment highlighted quality education as a priority area for reform, including among children and U-Report respondents. Indeed, research shows that education systems across the OECS face persistent structural challenges that undermine equitable access, instructional quality and resilience to external shocks. In particular:

- Workforce capacity is a major constraint, with many untrained teachers including 43 per cent at secondary level, limited access to teacher preparation, resistance to change and structural challenges linked to migration and the loss of training institutions during natural disasters.^{87 88}
- Inclusive education for children with disabilities and children with special educational needs is undermined by shortages of trained staff, therapists and assistive services, delayed identification, parental non-consent, inadequate infrastructure and the continued use of separate classes, which contribute to the exclusion or isolation of these children within schools and communities.⁸⁹
- Barriers to safeguarding children persist, including a lack of safeguarding policies and procedures, lack of related training for staff, lack of safe and confidential reporting mechanisms for children and related barriers to reporting violence (see part 2.3.1.3), and legal provisions which either permit corporal punishment in schools in certain circumstances (e.g. Grenada) or which lack explicit prohibitions against corporal punishment.⁹⁰
- Education systems are highly vulnerable to shocks, with hurricanes, volcanic eruptions and COVID-19 causing repeated disruption, infrastructure damage, widened inequalities, significant learning loss and/or increased dropouts among low-income students and boys.^{91 92}
- TVET is constrained by under-funding, and lack of relevance and linkages to the labour market.
- Data systems are fragmented and inconsistent, with recent reporting gaps and limited cross-country comparability, which weakens effective monitoring and planning.

⁸⁴ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (2012). OECS Education Sector Strategy 2012–2021: Every Learner Succeeds. Castries, Saint Lucia: OECS Commission. Retrieved from <https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/oecs-education-sector-strategy-2012-2021.pdf>? (Accessed: 26 March 2026).

⁸⁵ Caribbean Community (CARICOM) (2022) Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) Curriculum Guide. Retrieved from https://caricom.org/wp-content/uploads/HFLEbook_v6_20220506_FINAL_digitalcopy-1.pdf.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (2025) OECS Regional Education Digest 2022–2023: Analysis of Key Education Performance Indicators. Castries, Saint Lucia: OECS Commission, 27 January Retrieved from https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1eoiMB8_Lil6gT1g6p8pmjldW6MqMDGkX/edit?gid=1760151543#gid=1760151543.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Eastern Caribbean (2019) Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean, pp.70-71. Bridgetown, Barbados: UNICEF. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/1896/file/ECA_Sitan.pdf

⁹⁰ Education Act No.21 of 2002 (Grenada), para 53.

⁹¹ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Eastern Caribbean (2019) Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean, pp.70-71. Bridgetown, Barbados: UNICEF. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/1896/file/ECA_Sitan.pdf

⁹² Parker, M. and Alfaro, P. (2022) Education during the COVID-19 pandemic: access, inclusion and psychosocial support. Studies and Perspectives series-ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, No. 104 (LC/TS.2021/211-LC/CAR/TS.2021/6). Santiago: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Retrieved from https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/events/files/series_104_lcarts2021_6_education_during_the_covid-19_pandemic.pdf.



2.3.6. Social protection

2.3.6.1. Key trends

While poverty has declined significantly in parts of the OECS, child poverty remains a significant concern. According to pre-COVID-19 data, children bore a disproportionate share of poverty in the region. According to UNICEF estimates based on secondary analyses of country poverty assessments published in 2017, one in three children (32.7 per cent) lived in poverty (in households with total expenditure below the national poverty line) compared to 20.6 per cent of adults in the Eastern Caribbean region.⁹³ These statistics reflect monetary poverty only. A more recent round of Country Poverty Assessments in the OECS has been completed and includes a multidimensional poverty analysis, providing a fuller picture of children's deprivations to inform more targeted social policy and programming.⁹⁴

Unemployment among adolescents and youth represents a major barrier to social and economic inclusion in the OECS, with unemployment rates among 15 to 24-year-olds⁹⁵ consistently higher than adult unemployment rates and often marked by wide gender disparities. In Saint Lucia for instance, female youth unemployment reached 43.4 per cent compared to 28.6 per cent among males (2023).⁸⁹ Children and adolescents living in poverty often face overlapping deprivations, including limited access to essential services like adequate nutrition, housing, education and protection.⁹⁶ Available data show that almost half of young women (48.1 per cent) and more than one-third of young men (37.7 per cent) were unemployed in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in 2015.⁹⁷ The link between poverty and adolescent pregnancy in the region is also a concern, as girls from low-income backgrounds are more likely to experience motherhood, disrupting their education and limiting future employment opportunities as well as health.⁹⁸

2.3.6.2. Key trends

In the Caribbean, the expansion of social protection systems has been triggered not only by persistent inequalities and unemployment but also by a growing recognition of child poverty and inequality as central policy concerns. Developing child-sensitive social protection systems is a relatively recent effort in some Eastern Caribbean countries. Social protection policies and legislation are increasingly incorporating child-sensitive measures, with countries at different stages of institutionalising social protection systems that prioritise children.⁹⁹ Grenada has recently launched a review of its social protection system to ensure that is resilient to shocks and serves the needs of children and their families.¹⁰⁰

At regional level, the OECS has spearheaded a regional-level framework via its Social Inclusion and Social Protection Strategic Action Plan 2022-2030, which aims to harmonize social protection systems across its members and specifically highlights children as a key group given the multiple vulnerabilities they face in the region. It mentions the need for family and life-cycle approaches and includes key provisions targeting children and their families including child grants, foster care allowances, daycare, nutrition and school feeding programmes, subsidized transport support for school age children and child disability grants.¹⁰¹

⁹³ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (2017) Final Report: Child Poverty in the Eastern Caribbean Area, December 2017, p. 17, retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/lac/media/5056/file/PDF%20Child%20Poverty%20in%20the%20Eastern%20Caribbean%20Area%20.pdf> (Accessed: 2 April 2025).

⁹⁴ Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) OECS and CDB successfully conclude enhanced country poverty assessment project. Retrieved from <https://www.caribank.org/newsroom/news-and-events/oecs-and-cdb-successfully-conclude-enhanced-country-poverty-assessment-project> (Accessed: 1 October 2025). This data had not been published at the time of writing.

⁹⁵ Disaggregated data for 15–17-year-olds was unavailable for review.

⁹⁶ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (2017) Final Report: Child Poverty in the Eastern Caribbean Area. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/lac/media/5056/file/PDF%20Child%20Poverty%20in%20the%20Eastern%20Caribbean%20Area%20.pdf> (Accessed: 2 April 2025).

⁹⁷ Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) Country data reports. Retrieved from <https://www.caribank.org/data/country-data-reports> (Accessed: 1 October 2025).

⁹⁸ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2024) A Child-focused Lens for Small Island Developing States Position Paper and Call to Action, April 2024.

⁹⁹ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (2017) Final Report: Child Poverty in the Eastern Caribbean Area. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/lac/media/5056/file/PDF%20Child%20Poverty%20in%20the%20Eastern%20Caribbean%20Area%20.pdf> (Accessed: 2 April 2025).

¹⁰⁰ Smith, K., Grenada launches review of social protection system to better support children and families, <https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/stories/grenada-launches-review-social-protection-system-better-support-children-and-families> (Accessed 27 April 2026).

¹⁰¹ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (2023) Social Inclusion and Social Protection Strategic Action Plan 2022-2030. Retrieved from https://oecs.int/en/?option=com_edocman&view=document&layout=viewpdf&id=2686&documenturl=8f8c7e18e198e9e9240401eabecb9fa0.pdf (Accessed: 3 October 2025).

2.3.6.3. Main barriers and bottlenecks

Social protection systems have the potential to deliver tangible and durable benefits for children and youth who face highest levels of poverty and exclusion.¹⁰² A number of social protection initiatives exist across the region, which benefit children and families;^{103 104} however they face major constraints including low coverage, high fragmentation, weak targeting and outdated eligibility data as well as duplication across schemes that may affect the inclusion of children. Their effect on children is not always visible; some OECS members do not have data management systems that collect data specifically on the children involved in social protection schemes.¹⁰⁵ Several programmes rely heavily on short-term measures such as food vouchers, clothing distribution and ad-hoc assistance schemes.¹⁰⁶ While these measures help to mitigate immediate hardship, they are not designed to address structural poverty and often fail to build resilience for children and families at risk of structural deprivation and poverty.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² ILO and UNICEF. 2023. More than a Billion Reasons: The Urgent Need to Build Universal Social Protection for Children. Second ILO–UNICEF Joint Report on Social Protection for Children. Geneva and New York: International Labour Organization and United Nations Children's Fund. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/135211/file/More%20than%20a%20billion%20reasons:%20The%20urgent%20need%20to%20build%20universal%20social%20protection.pdf> (Accessed 27 April 2026).

¹⁰³ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2019) Situation analysis of children in the Eastern Caribbean Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean. Bridgetown, Barbados: UNICEF. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/1896/file/ECA_Sitan.pdf (Accessed: 26 March 2026).

¹⁰⁴ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area and Government of Montserrat (2016) Situation Analysis of Children in Montserrat, pp.39-40, 52. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/1356/file/Montserrat-SitAN-2016-WEB.pdf> (Accessed: 3 October 2025).

¹⁰⁵ Beazley, Rodolfo. 2018. Study on Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean: Dominica Case Study. Oxford Policy Management and World Food Programme, September 2018, p. 13. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/dominica/study-shock-responsive-social-protection-latin-america-and-caribbean-dominica-case> (Accessed 27 April 2026).

¹⁰⁶ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2020) Shock-Responsive Social Protection in the Caribbean: A Policy Viewpoint. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/4086/file/Shock-Responsive%20Social%20Protection%20in%20the%20Caribbean%3A%20A%20Policy%20Viewpoint%20.pdf> (Accessed: 4 October 2025).

¹⁰⁷ Antigua Newsroom Board of Guardians beneficiaries longing to see a cheque while port fees expected to be hiked soon. Retrieved from: <https://antiguanewsroom.com/board-of-guardians-beneficiaries-longing-to-see-a-cheque-while-port-fees-expected-to-be-hiked-soon/> (Accessed: 3 October 2025).

2.3.7. Disaster risk reduction and recovery and climate adaptation

2.3.7.1. Key trends

Children across the Eastern Caribbean face a complex range of risks that stem from environmental threats and recent health emergencies.^{108 109} Climate and environment-related hazards remain among the most severe challenges facing OECS members. Hurricanes and tropical storms strike with increasing intensity, as seen in 2017 when Hurricane Irma rendered Barbuda uninhabitable and Hurricane Maria caused destruction to more than 90 per cent of buildings in Dominica. Recovery costs can surpass the GDP of small island nations, with Hurricane Maria generating losses equivalent to 226 per cent of Dominica's GDP.¹¹⁰ These disasters disrupt education, damage health and water systems and expose children to protection risks, particularly in shelters that lack child-friendly spaces. Longer term environmental pressures also affect children's food and water security. For instance, the British Virgin Islands relies entirely on desalination for its public water supply, while unpredictable rainfall presents risks to the agricultural sector.¹¹¹

Health emergencies such as COVID-19 have deepened vulnerabilities. The abrupt halt in tourism on which several OECS members rely (e.g. comprising 50 per cent of GDP in Antigua and Barbuda), triggered widespread job losses that affected families' ability to provide for children.¹¹² Fragile health systems struggled to cope and required external support.¹¹³ Prolonged school closures widened inequalities for children without digital access, increased risks of dropout and heightened concerns about domestic violence and mental health.¹¹⁴ Stakeholders in the 2025 assessment also reported long lasting effects on children's resilience and wellbeing, particularly among those already facing social or economic marginalisation.

¹⁰⁸ UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Area Office. 2020. The Socio-economic Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Young People in the Eastern Caribbean Area: Impact of COVID-19. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/reports/socio-economic-impact-covid-19-children-and-young-people-eastern-caribbean-area> (Accessed 27 April 2026).

¹⁰⁹ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2019) Child Alert: Children uprooted in the Caribbean- how stronger hurricanes linked to a changing climate are driving child displacement. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/media/62836/file/Children-uprooted-in-the-Caribbean-2019.pdf?> (Accessed: 26 March 2026).

¹¹⁰ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (n.d.) Caribbean climate change report (Eastern Caribbean Area). Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/1691/file/ECA_Caribbean%20climate%20change%20report.pdf (Accessed: 26 March 2026).

¹¹¹ WaterWorld (2014) Tortola Desalination Plant Now Fully Operational in British Virgin Islands. Retrieved from: <http://www.waterworld.com/home/article/16215208/tortola-desalination-plant-now-fully-operational-in-british-virgin-islands> (Accessed: 1 April 2026).

¹¹² The Commonwealth (2023) The Blue Economy Context in Antigua and Barbuda. Retrieved from <https://thecommonwealth.org/publications/rapid-readiness-assessment-transition-sustainable-blue-economy-pilot-project-antigua-and-barbuda/blue-economy-context-antigua-and-barbuda>

¹¹³ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (202) World Bank provides US\$45 million to support Saint Vincent and the Grenadines COVID19 emergency response. Retrieved from <https://pressroom.oecs.int/world-bank-provides-45-million-to-support-saint-vincent-and-the-grenadines-covid-19-emergency-response>.

¹¹⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2016) Drought characteristics and management in the Caribbean. Retrieved from <http://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/10ca2b57-1344-4c8e-ab6a-b877748f6d64/content> (Accessed: 1 April 2026).



2.3.7.2. Key trends

OECS members are taking significant steps at the international level to strengthen prevention and response to environmental and climate change-related risks. All Eastern Caribbean countries are members of the Alliance of Small Island States¹¹⁵ and have ratified key Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement and, in some cases, the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol.¹¹⁶ All OECS member states have also committed to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

2.3.7.3. Main barriers and bottlenecks

Despite developments in this area, there is a need to strengthen the mainstreaming of children's rights in national laws, policies and programmes for climate change and disaster risk reduction and emergency response. As of 2025, only a few OECS members have National Adaptation Plans: Grenada; Antigua and Barbuda; Saint Lucia; and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.¹¹⁷ The 2025 assessment found instances where national disaster policies had not been updated in several years and did not mainstream children's rights.¹¹⁸ Moreover, stakeholders in the assessment reported that child safeguarding is often not highlighted as a priority in these plans and were developed with limited participation from children and young people.¹¹⁹ Where child protection laws and protocols are in place, they are not always implemented in disaster management responses. Some stakeholders identified specific areas for development, such as making sure that disaster kits have provisions for children¹²⁰ and child-friendly and family-friendly spaces in emergency shelters,¹²¹ while others emphasised the need for integrated training on child protection and children's issues for all actors involved in disaster prevention and management.¹²²

¹¹⁵ Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) (2025) Member states. Retrieved from <www.aosis.org/about/member-statesm.

¹¹⁶ United Nations (UN) (2016.) Multilateral treaty series: Treaty XXVII2f. Retrieved from https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=XXVII-2-f&chapter=27&clang=_en

¹¹⁷ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (2021) National adaptation plan progress report. Retrieved from <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/UNFCCC-NAP2021-Progress-report.pdf>

¹¹⁸ Key Informant Interview (KII), Government Official, Grenada\

¹¹⁹ Online KII, Regional stakeholder, 3 June 2025

¹²⁰ Online KII, Government stakeholder, Dominica, 17 June 2025

¹²¹ Online KII, Government stakeholder, Dominica, 17 June 2025; Online KII, Regional stakeholder, 3 June 2025

¹²² Online KII, Regional stakeholder, 3 June 2025

03

Conceptual Framework

OECS Regional Child Policy
and Strategic Plan.
2026-2032

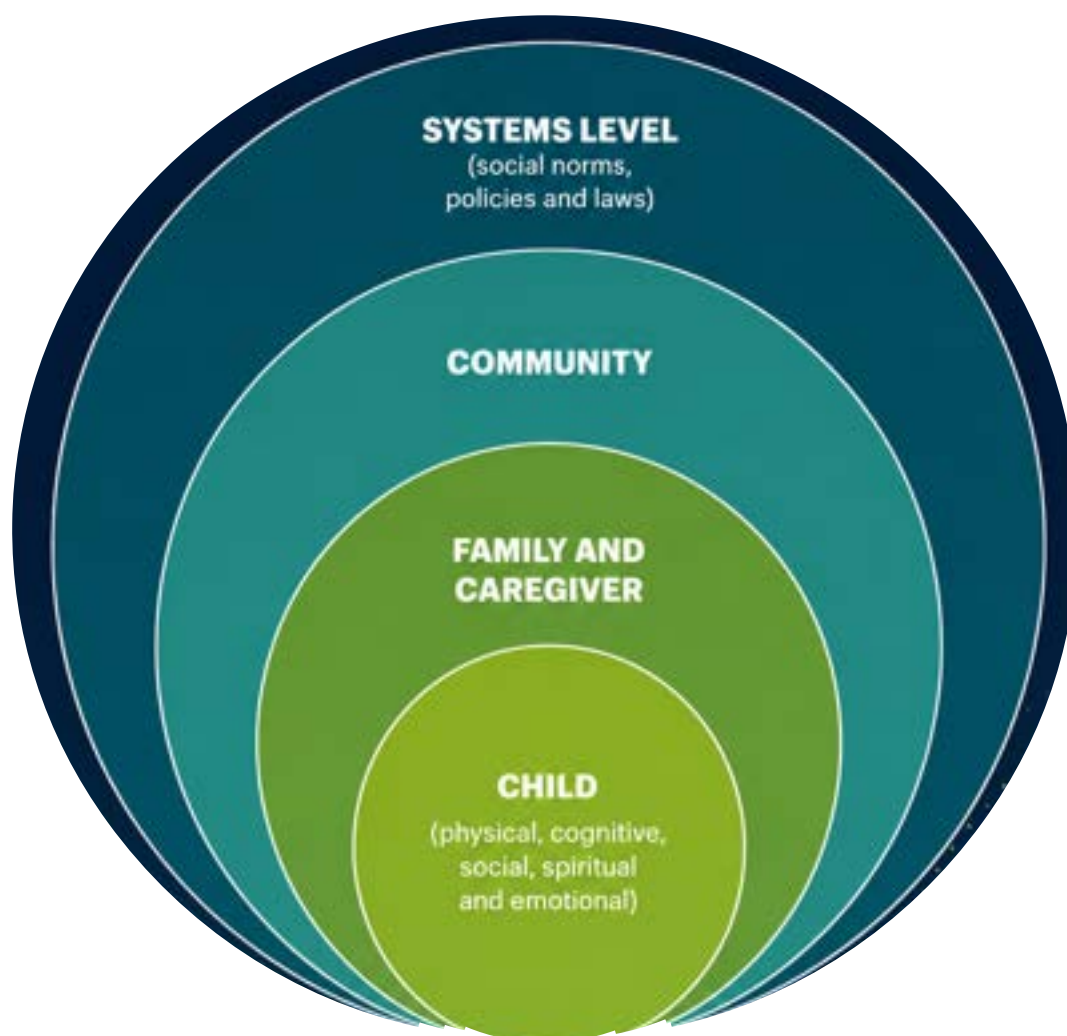


3. Conceptual Framework

This Policy adopts a child rights-based approach, rooted in the CRC and other international child rights standards. This approach ensures the recognition of children as rights-holders with entitlements and corresponding duties on OECS members to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights. It ensures that special attention is paid to understanding inequities in the enjoyment of children's rights and to developing strategic priorities and outcomes to address these. It also ensures that this Policy captures the diversity of needs and views of children and to upholding the rights of each individual child.

This Policy also adopts a whole child approach, rooted in the social ecological model of child development. This approach recognises the multi-dimensional nature of children's lives, the indivisibility and interconnectedness of children's rights, and that child development is shaped by factors at various levels (**Figure 2**). Special attention is paid to the barriers, enablers and other factors at the level of the individual, family/caregiver, community and systems level, that shape a child's enjoyment of their rights and their holistic development.

Figure 2: Social ecological model



04

Guiding Principles

OECS Regional Child Policy
and Strategic Plan.
2026-2032



4. Guiding principles

The following nine principles guide the development, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of this Policy.

1. Prioritising the best interests of the child

The best interests of the child are our priority. In all matters relating to this Policy, whether law or policy reform, programme design or implementation, social and behaviour change, monitoring and evaluation activities or other, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

2. Non-discrimination

All children in the OECS are entitled to the full enjoyment of their rights, without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or the parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status. It is recognised that children experience different and overlapping forms of disadvantages that shape their safety, wellbeing and access to opportunities. The combined effects of gender, disability, poverty, migration status, geographical location, ethnicity and other layers of vulnerability that affect children differently across the region shall be considered, facilitating the building of systems that actively remove inequalities, promote dignity and ensure that no child is left behind.

3. Tackling gender inequalities

Tackling gender-based inequalities among children is a fundamental cornerstone of this Policy. OECS members commit to moving beyond treating symptoms of gender inequality to actively challenging and changing harmful norms and practices that drive gender inequalities among children. Emphasis shall also be placed on empowering children who are at risk of being marginalised to create lasting gender equality for all children.

4. Embracing children's diversity

Children are not a homogenous group; each child is unique with their own views, needs and preferences. OECS members commit to embracing this diversity and paying special attention to understanding the realities of children across the multiple island contexts and to meeting their diversity of needs.

5. Listening to children's voices

The views of children shall be heard in all aspects relating to this Policy. To achieve this, OECS members commit to providing meaningful opportunities for child participation, including the provision of up-to-date information to facilitate informed decision-making by children. Children should be supported to express their views in all matters affecting them, using safe and age-appropriate spaces in schools, communities and national forums such as youth parliaments and advisory groups. Children shall be empowered to understand their rights and to contribute safely to policy discussions, programme development, advocacy interventions and other activities relating to this Policy.

6. Accountability

All duty bearers in the OECS share responsibility for implementing the commitments to children outlined in this Policy. Accountability shall be reflected through clear allocation of roles and responsibilities and transparent procedures at the regional and national levels for implementing, monitoring and evaluating this Policy, thereby fostering collective regional standards for children's rights in line with the CRC.

7. Meeting the evolving needs of children

This Policy recognises that children across OECS members experience different needs from early childhood through to adolescence. Services and other interventions implemented under this Policy shall reflect children's evolving capacities and provide age-appropriate support at each stage of the child's development. Critical windows of development, school transitions and periods of increased vulnerability shall be considered, ensuring the delivery of services and other interventions tailored to these evolving needs and capacities.

8. Protecting and promoting children's mental health and wellbeing

Children in the OECS may be affected by trauma related to violence, family circumstances, migration, poverty, disasters or other experiences. A trauma-informed approach shall be adopted, including creating safe and predictable environments to support the healing, trust and emotional wellbeing for all children. Special attention will be paid to recognising and promoting the resilience, capacities and protective factors present in children, families and communities. Through this, OECS members will foster positive engagement, reduce the risk of mental harm to children and promote empowerment, recovery and holistic wellbeing for all children.

9. Multi-sectoral and coordinated systems

The OECS recognises that effective support for children depends on strong collaboration among all stakeholders, including within the health, education, justice, social welfare, community development and disaster management systems. The OECS commit to strengthening referral pathways, information sharing and joint planning to ensure that children receive coherent and integrated support in accordance with their needs.

05

Strategic Framework

OECS Regional Child Policy
and Strategic Plan.
2026-2032



5. Vision, outcomes, strategic objectives and activities

Vision: By 2032, every child in the OECS feels valued, safe, supported, loved and empowered, and enjoys the full range of their rights, regardless of gender, disability, migration status, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation or other status.

The OECS will achieve this vision through the following **five outcomes** (see also *Figure 3*):

1. **Child protection:** By 2032, children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, have increased protection from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, including in the digital environment.
2. **Access to justice:** By 2032, children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, have increased equitable access to trauma-informed and child-friendly justice.
3. **Health:** By 2032, children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, enjoy improved physical, reproductive and mental health through equitable access to preventive, protective and quality health services.
4. **Education:** By 2032, all children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, have improved equitable access to inclusive, quality education and learning opportunities that enable them to develop their personality, talents and physical and mental abilities to their fullest potential.
5. **Social protection:** By 2032, all children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, have increased equitable access to inclusive and shock-responsive social protection systems that strengthen resilience and provide greater protection against social exclusion.



Figure 2: Social ecological model

OUTCOMES

CHILD PROTECTION

By 2032, children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, have increased protection from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, including in the digital environment.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

By 2032, children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, have increased equitable access to trauma-informed and child-friendly justice.

HEALTH

By 2032, children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, enjoy improved physical, reproductive and mental health through equitable access to preventive, protective and quality health services.

EDUCATION

By 2032, all children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, have improved equitable access to inclusive, quality education and learning opportunities that enable them to develop their personality, talents and physical and mental abilities to their fullest potential.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

By 2032, all children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, have increased equitable access to inclusive and shock-responsive social protection systems that strengthen resilience and provide greater protection against social exclusion.

Each outcome will be achieved through a series of strategic objectives and activities, as outlined in this section. The following cross-cutting strategic objectives have been integrated throughout:

1. Strengthening practices and procedures for monitoring children's rights, including the collection, analysis, verification and use of disaggregated data to address inequities in the enjoyment of children's rights;
2. Integrating public financing for children into government planning and programme implementation;
3. Prioritising disaster risk reduction and recovery and climate adaptation in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of reforms relating to children;
4. Mainstreaming child participation throughout the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of reforms relating to children;
5. Systematically integrating equity issues throughout the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of reforms that relate to children, with a strong focus on children who are most at risk of being discriminated against or of being underserved, including girls, children with disabilities, children from poor socio-economic backgrounds, children affected by migration, LGBTIQ+ children, among others.



OUTCOME 1 - Child Protection: By 2032, children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, have increased protection from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, including in the digital environment.

Strategic Objective 1.1: Normative and institutional framework for the protection of children from all forms of violence, including in the digital environment, and the development of the child protection system, are reviewed and updated in line with the CRC and other international child rights standards

Activities:

1. Legal framework for the protection of children from all forms of violence, including corporal punishment and online abuse and exploitation, are reviewed and updated in line with the CRC and other international child rights standards
2. Legal framework for the development of the child protection system, including the system of alternative care, are reviewed and updated in line with the CRC and other international child rights standards, including the removal of legal barriers to adoption where this is in the best interest of the child
3. Laws and policies are amended to prohibit the placement of children under the age of seven in institutions and residential care and instead require placement of the child in a family setting, according to the child's best interests
4. A national child protection strategy and action plan is adopted and implemented outlining country-specific child protection reforms and roadmap to deinstitutionalisation
5. A national-level, multi-sectoral coordination body is established or designated by law with a clear mandate of overseeing and coordinating child protection policy development and implementation
6. Standard operating procedures and inter-sectoral working protocols for the referral and multi-disciplinary handling of child protection cases at the sub-national levels are developed and adopted

Strategic objective 1.2: Social behavioural change interventions address harmful social norms, attitudes and practices that perpetuate violence against children, including corporal punishment, gender-based violence and online violence against children

Activities:

1. Social behavioural change interventions for the elimination of violence against children are rolled out, including a focus on ending corporal punishment, gender-based violence and online violence against children, and how to report child protection concerns
2. The social behavioural change interventions are available in minority languages and have a specific focus on reaching children, families and communities that have been marginalised, including non-nationals of OECS members, non-mainland island communities and persons with disabilities
3. Capacity-building trainings for frontline professionals and practitioners including social workers, guidance counsellors, early childhood educators, teachers, healthcare workers, police, prosecutors, judges, NGO workers and disaster management officials include a focus on identifying and reporting child protection concerns and changing harmful beliefs, attitudes and practices that perpetuate violence against children, including corporal punishment, gender-based violence and online violence against children

Strategic objective 1.3: A continuum of shock-responsive child protection services is put in place to prevent and respond effectively to violence against children, including services to rehabilitate child survivors of violence, services to prevent family separation and support deinstitutionalisation of children, and services to prevent girls and boys from coming into conflict with the law

Activities:

1. Parental support programmes with a focus on positive parenting techniques, peaceful conflict resolution, 'parenting for the digital age,' and ending (children's exposure to) intimate partner violence in the home, are introduced as part of the minimum package of social support services for children and their families
2. Community-based programmes to support and address the needs of children particularly at risk of institutionalisation, such as children who run away from home and girls and boys at risk of sexual abuse or exploitation, are piloted and rolled out
3. Health, social welfare and education authorities collaborate to develop and implement a deinstitutionalisation strategy for children with disabilities including the strengthening of inclusive education and piloting and roll out of community-based specialised support services including day care and respite care
4. Programme for the recruitment, training and support of foster carers, with a focus on 'hard to place' children including children with disabilities and children at risk of offending, is piloted and rolled out
5. Confidential, trauma-informed and gender-responsive community-based rehabilitation services for children who have experienced violence, are piloted and rolled out
6. Community-based, family-focused and gender- and shock-responsive programmes and outreach for preventing children from coming into conflict with the law are piloted and rolled out, including a focus on girls and boys at risk of involvement in gangs or community violence

Strategic objective 1.4: System for monitoring and inspection of child protection services, enforcement and accountability mechanisms, and an integrated data collection and management system for child protection issues are in place

Activities:

1. Independent mechanisms for the monitoring and inspection of child protection services, and accountability for child protection service providers are established
2. Minimum service standards for the delivery of child protection services are developed and adopted
3. A data collection and management system relating to child protection matters is developed and harmonised across the OECS to facilitate monitoring at the national and regional levels

Strategic objective 1.5: The social service workforce for child protection is strengthened with a focus on their education, training, development and support

Activities:

1. Education scholarships, bursaries and other appropriate incentives and support are provided to attract new talent to the sector and support social work education, including specialist education in child protection
2. A system of accredited social work training is introduced, with a focus on child protection and skills in upholding the child's right to be heard in child protection matters, including compulsory pre-service and regular in-service refresher training
3. Ministries and agencies responsible for child protection ensure the allocation of an appropriate number of social service workers dedicated to handling child protection matters to avoid overburdening staff
4. Systems are put in place for the supportive supervision and career progression of social service workers for child protection including appropriate compensation and mentoring to support workforce retention and wellbeing

Strategic objective 1.6: Child protection services are adequately funded with sustainability strategies in place for services that rely on private sector or donor funding

Activities:

1. Public financing for child protection is mainstreamed in Government planning and budgeting
2. Tertiary level child protection services are funded by national budgets
3. Sustainability strategies or mechanisms are put in place for child protection services that rely on private sector or donor funding



OUTCOME 2 - Access to justice: By 2032, children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, have increased equitable access to trauma-informed and child-friendly justice.

Strategic objective 2.1: Provision of quality, gender and shock-responsive community-based services to promote rehabilitation and reintegration into the community of children in conflict with the law

Activities:

1. A range of pre-trial diversion options and gender and shock-responsive community-based rehabilitation schemes are piloted and rolled out with a view to ensuring that the rehabilitation of the child is prioritised and that detention is a measure of last resort

Strategic objective 2.2: Normative framework for the child justice system is reviewed and updated in line with the CRC and other international child rights standards

Activities:

1. Legal framework, including implementing regulations, for a child-friendly justice system in line with the CRC and international child rights standards is introduced or updated, ensuring prioritisation of rehabilitation and reintegration of the child
2. Minimum age of criminal responsibility is increased to at least 14 years of age

Strategic objective 2.3: Specialist capacities are developed among justice professionals ensuring the delivery of child-friendly, trauma-informed and gender-responsive justice for all children, including child victims and witnesses and children involved in child protection matters

Activities:

1. Accredited, compulsory pre-service and regular in-service training on access to child-friendly justice is introduced and delivered to all justice professionals, including police, prosecutors, lawyers, judges and social workers, with a focus on delivering gender-responsive, trauma-informed and child-friendly practices and procedures
2. Regional service agreements and rotations of judges specialising in child justice, child protection and family law are put in place to ensure the prompt handling of these cases

Strategic objective 2.4: Child-friendly legal aid is strengthened

Activities:

1. A national system for the provision of free legal information and advice to children and their parents/caregivers on child rights and how to access complaints mechanisms is rolled out and made available in minority languages and disability-inclusive formats
2. A programme for the provision of free legal representation for children in conflict with the law from the point of arrest and throughout criminal proceedings, is piloted and rolled out

Strategic objective 2.5: Special measures and mechanisms for child-friendly proceedings are put in place

Activities:

1. Mechanisms permitting the recorded cross-examination of child victims and witnesses in advance of criminal trials are put in place to reduce the stress and trauma of giving evidence in a live courtroom environment and to mitigate against the risk of recall-bias
2. Mechanisms are introduced to ensure that the child's voice is heard and best interests are upheld in child protection proceedings and private family law matters that affect children (e.g. custody disputes between divorcing parents), such as a guardian ad litem or similar mechanism



OUTCOME 3 – Health: By 2032, children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, enjoy improved physical, reproductive and mental health through equitable access to preventive, protective and quality health services.

Strategic objective 3.1: Universal access to maternal, newborn and early childhood health services is strengthened, including antenatal and postnatal care and routine childhood immunisation

Activities:

1. Strengthen universal access to skilled birth attendance and quality antenatal/postnatal care, particularly in OECS members where coverage is declining
2. Expand neonatal intensive care and referral systems to address disparities in neonatal mortality
3. Strengthen incentives to promote exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months and beyond
4. Reverse declining measles coverage by investing in demand-generation campaigns and tackling vaccine hesitancy

Strategic objective 3.2: Nutrition, physical activity and leisure programmes for children and adolescents are strengthened and expanded, supported by regulatory measures that reduce exposure to unhealthy food environments

Activities:

1. To prevent overweight and obesity, implement regulatory policies for the private sector including taxes on sugary drinks and restrictions on marketing unhealthy foods to children
2. Strengthen school-based nutrition and physical activity programmes, inclusive of adolescent girls and boys

Strategic objective 3.3: Safe, confidential and gender-responsive adolescent SRH services are expanded, including access to modern contraception, HPV vaccination and comprehensive sexuality education in schools and youth settings

Activities:

1. Expand access to adolescent SRH services in line with international standards by harmonising laws and policies to remove parental consent barriers, in line with the child's right to be heard and evolving capacities
2. Promote comprehensive sexuality education aligned with international standards and good practices, ensuring that it addresses gender and power relations, is integrated into schools and youth settings, and is monitored for age-appropriateness and completeness
3. Scale up HPV vaccination coverage for adolescent girls and ensure routine monitoring

Strategic objective 3.4: Child and adolescent mental health are improved through the integration of MHPSS into primary care, expansion of school and community-based support programmes and strengthened suicide-prevention and anti-stigma initiatives

Activities:

1. Invest in and expand school-based, gender-responsive MHPSS services, including anti-bullying programmes that integrate prevention and response to online bullying
2. Repeal of legal provisions which criminalise suicide and suicide attempts (Grenada and Saint Lucia)
3. Working protocols and referral pathways are in place for frontline workers on providing basic (non-specialist) MHPSS and referring children to more specialised MHPSS services where appropriate
4. Roll-out basic training for all frontline professionals and practitioners who work with children on providing basic MHPSS and identifying and referring children to appropriate MHPSS services when mental health concerns arise
5. Expand training opportunities for specialists on providing child-focused and trauma-informed MHPSS, building on regional pools of expertise and online provision opportunities
6. Implement suicide prevention strategies tailored to adolescents and social behavioural change initiatives to reduce stigma around seeking MHPSS

Strategic objective 3.5: Early identification, assessment and rehabilitative services for children with disabilities are strengthened and made more accessible across all health settings

Activities:

1. Health facilities are made accessible to and inclusive of children with disabilities
2. Expand specialist capacity for early disability diagnosis and support (screening services, educational psychologists, speech and language therapists)

Strategic objective 3.6: Child safeguarding within the health sector is strengthened through confidential reporting mechanisms, child-friendly procedures, multidisciplinary collaboration and climate-resilient, inclusive health infrastructure

Activities:

1. Prioritise prevention of violence in schools, communities and family settings as a public health concern affecting children, with responses designed to be intersectional and sensitive to determinants such as gender and social norms
2. Institutionalise safeguarding in every health facility through confidential and child-friendly reporting routes, working protocols for the identification and confidential referral and handling of child safeguarding concerns, staff codes of conduct, and trained designated child safeguarding focal points
3. Provide regular child rights-based training to healthcare workers on preventing and responding to child safeguarding concerns

Strategic objective 3.7: Regional and national child health policies and strategies for the delivery of accessible and quality healthcare services are strengthened and aligned with evidence-based standards through improved universal health care planning, professional development of the workforce, pooled procurement mechanisms, stronger public financing for children and enhanced child health data monitoring/ surveillance systems

Activities:

1. Develop and implement comprehensive child and adolescent health policies that integrate universal health care, SRH rights and mental health within a coherent rights-based framework
2. Strengthen and retain a child-focused health workforce through specialised training and continuous professional development supported by regional and online platforms
3. Strengthen public financing for children and expand national health insurance coverage to include all children regardless of their status
4. Upgrade child health data monitoring/ surveillance systems
5. Strengthen regional mechanisms and cooperation to improve health services for children (including online services, medicines and vaccines)

OUTCOME 4 - Education: By 2032, all children, including girls, boys, adolescents, children with disabilities and children with special educational needs, have improved equitable access to inclusive, quality education and learning opportunities that enable them to develop their personality, talents and physical and mental abilities to their fullest potential.

Strategic objective 4.1: Improve access to quality early childhood education

Activities:

1. Increase the availability of free and inclusive early childhood education including for low-income families, families living in remote locations, children with disabilities and children with special educational needs
2. Introduce minimum service and quality standards, curricula, monitoring and inspection, and accountability mechanisms for the provision of early childhood education

Strategic objective 4.2: Improve relevance, quality and continuity of learning through curriculum reform and targeted support

Activities:

1. Ensure that Education Sector Plans, aligned with the OECS Education Strategy, are sufficiently funded and aligned with the specific learning needs of children
2. Based on evidence (education monitoring data), update curricula to reflect children's learning gaps and needs, adapting and integrating good teaching practices, '21st Century Skills' and socio-emotional learning
3. Establish regional guidance and national benchmarks for learning outcomes (e.g. literacy, mathematics and science) at all education levels
4. Introduce targeted academic support and remedial or innovative learning to lower repetition rates
5. Integrate comprehensive sexuality education and children's rights into education curricula, as appropriate to the evolving capacities of children and adolescents
6. Expand quality and relevant TVET pathways and programmes and support transition to and between pathways

Strategic objective 4.3: Strengthen inclusive, gender-responsive and accessible education to meet the educational needs of all children, including a focus on children with special educational needs and children with disabilities

Activities:

1. Increase the number of teachers trained to work with children with disabilities and children with special educational needs, including identification and referral of children potentially requiring specific support to appropriate bodies for early identification, screening, diagnosis and/or additional specialist support, as appropriate
2. Ensure curricula and learning materials are gender-responsive, promote aspirations among children equitably and are adaptable to the needs of children with disabilities and children with special educational needs
3. Promote gender-sensitive classroom practices and school cultures that address stigma, discrimination and harmful norms, particularly against children with disabilities, children with special educational needs, LGBTIQ+ children and non-national children
4. Improve children's access to inclusive extra-curricular activities and out-of-school learning opportunities

Strategic objective 4.4: Improve teacher training, professional development and workforce quality

Activities:

1. Increase access to accredited pre-service and regular in-service refresher training for teachers and support staff across all education levels, including equivalent qualifications for staff without formal pedagogical preparation
2. Create induction schemes, structured mentoring and supportive supervision for teachers and clear framework for career progression

Strategic objective 4.5: Create safe, supportive and non-violent school environments through a 'whole school' approach, rooted in the Comprehensive School Safety Framework

Activities:

1. Prohibit corporal punishment across all educational settings
2. Education facilities are physically accessible, safe and resilient, and support child learning and development
3. Develop safeguarding policies and codes of conduct to be deployed in schools including a 'zero tolerance' approach to online and offline violence against children, including bullying, sexual abuse and harassment, and discrimination against children, particularly non-national children, children with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ children
4. Train all school staff on identifying and reporting safeguarding concerns, prevention of bullying and discrimination, positive discipline techniques and basic MHPSS

Strategic objective 4.6: Promote meaningful participation by children, parents and caregivers in school life, including children and adults with disabilities

Activities:

1. Establish or strengthen active, inclusive and accessible student councils and other mechanisms for meaningful child participation in school life
2. Create child-friendly, confidential and accessible feedback and complaints systems for students across all education settings
3. Establish or strengthen active, accessible and inclusive mechanisms to promote parent and teacher collaboration in supporting children's learning and development

Strategic objective 4.7: Improve the resilience of education systems to shocks and disruptions

Activities:

1. Risk management and reduction, and emergency response plans are in place to minimise disruption during hurricanes, eruptions, public health or other crises
2. Ensure that online materials and distance learning tools (e.g. devices) are accessible to children with disabilities and special educational needs, and to children in areas of low internet connectivity
3. Learning facilities are resilient to disasters, shocks and emergencies
4. Children, parents and caregivers and teaching staff have access to risk reduction and resilience education
5. Provide remedial learning and catch-up support after major disruptions, prioritising vulnerable children including children with disabilities and special educational needs, children from low-income families and areas of poor internet connectivity.



OUTCOME 5 - Social protection: By 2032, all children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, have increased equitable access to inclusive and shock-responsive social protection systems that strengthen resilience and provide greater protection against social exclusion.

Strategic objective 5.1: Adequate and sustained social protection programmes are available and accessible to children and their families, including those particularly at risk of poverty and social exclusion

Activities:

1. Expand coverage of programmes to address high child poverty rates (over 50 per cent in some countries) and ensure benefits reach children in particularly vulnerable households or situations including female-headed households, large families, adolescents, and non-national children
2. Integrate education, health and protection linkages into cash transfers and school-based programmes to break intergenerational cycles of poverty

Strategic objective 5.2: Emergency social assistance programmes are in place for sustained support to children and their families after disasters

Activities:

1. Increase coverage and value of social protection/ cash transfers that benefit children and families in emergencies
2. Develop clear preparedness and contingency financing mechanisms to enable rapid scale-up during crises and make allocations to children more visible

Strategic objective 5.3: Foster empowerment and transition from welfare to resilience

Activities:

1. Move beyond welfare assistance towards empowerment models that combine cash with training, financial literacy and community development
2. Institutionalise graduation pathways linking social protection beneficiaries to sustainable livelihoods

Strategic objective 5.4: Strengthen the enabling environment (legal, policy and institutional frameworks and socio-cultural norms) for social protection

Activities:

1. Accelerate the passage of comprehensive and inclusive Social Protection Acts and policies in OECS members where frameworks remain outdated or in draft (e.g. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica and Montserrat), ensuring inclusion of children based on need
2. Harmonise national frameworks with the OECS Social Inclusion and Social Protection (SISP) Strategic Action Plan 2023–2030
3. Social and behavioural change interventions are implemented to strengthen public knowledge of and support for the positive potential of social protection and its role in supporting children's rights

Strategic objective 5.5. Ensure sustainable financing of social protection schemes

Activities:

1. Consolidate fragmented schemes under stronger institutional coordination to improve efficiency and reduce duplication
2. Increase social protection spending levels (currently modest in some countries, below 2 percent of GDP) and prioritise allocations for children and adolescents

Strategic objective 5.6: Data, monitoring and inspection frameworks and mechanisms relating to the social protection system are strengthened

Activities:

1. Mechanisms for inspection and accountability of social protection services and providers are in place
2. Establish integrated and comprehensive social registries and unique identifiers of service users to facilitate monitoring of social protection programming across the OECS, avoiding overlaps and gaps in service provision
3. Conduct regular multidimensional poverty and vulnerability assessments including disaggregated data on children to inform systems-reforms and ensure that children's social protection needs are met

06

Our Commitment

OECS Regional Child Policy
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6. Policy implementation: roles and responsibilities

This Policy provides a shared framework to guide the OECS in strengthening systems to uphold children's rights across the region. While OECS members share many historical, cultural and institutional linkages, each OECS member also operates within its own legal, economic and social context, with distinct priorities, resources and levels of system maturity. Effective implementation therefore requires a balance between regional coherence and national flexibility.

Within this framework, the primary responsibility for advancing the Policy rests with national governments, supported by community stakeholders, civil society organisations and regional bodies. OECS members will adapt and sequence policy measures in accordance with their national needs, institutional capacities and developmental trajectories, ensuring that all actions remain aligned with the minimum regional standards and commitments set out in this document. Integration of the Policy's goals into national development plans, sector strategies and budget processes will facilitate coordinated implementation and strengthen accountability across jurisdictions.

6.1. Roles and Responsibilities of the OECS Commission

The OECS Commission, through its relevant programmatic departments, provides the regional support necessary to support OECS members in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating this Policy. Its role aims to ensure coherent, harmonised and mutually reinforcing action across the OECS and reflects the Commission's mandate in areas such as model legislation, regional standards, sector coordination, and evidence generation.

The OECS Commission will:

1. Promote high-level political engagement across the OECS to ensure endorsement and sustained commitment to the Policy, its implementation and monitoring and evaluation.
2. Support the relevant OECS Council of Ministers to monitor and evaluate the implementation of this Policy, including the development of a regional tracking tool that can be used by OECS members to report on their progress to the regional level and the development of an annual progress reports on the implementation of this Policy.
3. Facilitate coordination and collaboration between the OECS Council of Ministers for Human and Social Development, Council of Ministers for Health, Council of Ministers for Education and other relevant OECS bodies to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate progress and ensure multi-sectoral coherence.
4. Serve as the regional focal point for aligning OECS members with international child rights standards, providing technical guidance to implement this Policy within national contexts and continuously address shared challenges such as data gaps, climate vulnerability, disaster risk reduction and recovery, and disparities in system capacities.
5. Strengthen coordination between the OECS and other regional institutions, technical bodies and sectoral agencies, including those working on health (PAHO), education, social protection and disaster management (Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency), to ensure coherent multi-sector approaches to upholding children's rights.

6. Identify and address bottlenecks and support mutual accountability, including support for regional platforms such as technical working groups, multi-sectoral committees and communities of practice to foster ongoing dialogue, collaboration and knowledge exchange.
7. Develop awareness of the Policy and facilitate public engagement, including among children, to ensure relevance and accountability towards children, who are the rights holders and ultimate beneficiaries of this Policy.

6.2. Roles and Responsibilities of the OECS Council of Ministers

The OECS Council of Ministers for Human and Social Development, with the support of its Technical Advisory Committee, will:

1. Monitor the implementation of this Policy at its annual meetings and define the actions needed to address any barriers or bottlenecks, and progress implementation of this Policy.
2. Coordinate with other Council of Ministers to agree actions for addressing any barriers or bottlenecks to the implementation of this Policy and progress Policy implementation, particularly the Council of Ministers for Health (for Outcome 3) and the Council of Ministers for Education (for Outcome 4).
3. Follow up with relevant stakeholders at the national level to implement the action point endorsed by the Council of Ministers to progress implementation of the Policy and contribute to ensuring accountability within OECS members towards children.
4. Contribute to awareness-raising of the Policy and promote its implementation at the regional level and within their respective countries/territories.



6.3. Roles and Responsibilities of OECS Members

Given the diversity of contexts across the OECS, each OECS member will refine the activities implemented under this Policy according to its national context, while ensuring that it upholds the strategic priorities and guiding principles to achieve the outcomes and vision of this Policy.

OECS members will:

1. Define and assign responsibilities for leading the implementation of each component of this Policy to a relevant government line Ministry within the OECS member.
2. Establish or assign to an existing multi-sectoral working group at the national level, responsibilities for coordinating implementation of this Policy and monitoring and evaluating its implementation within the OECS member, including the development of a national action plan and monitoring framework and reporting upon its implementation to the OECS (via the OECS Commission).
3. Mobilise resources across government, civil society and the private sector to implement this Policy, drawing on identified gaps including workforce gaps, financial constraints and vulnerabilities to shocks.
4. Strengthen multi-sectoral collaboration and coordination at national level and between stakeholders at national and subnational levels to ensure timely implementation of this Policy. This includes partnerships with civil society organisations, faith-based groups, community organisations, academia, private sector partners and child- and youth-led groups, which are essential for the implementation of this Policy. OECS members recognise the value of the contextual knowledge of these organisations and the trust instilled in them by children and local communities. Multi-sector collaboration is particularly important for:
 - a. Supporting social behaviour change interventions, community mobilisation and public awareness-raising efforts using culturally relevant and locally trusted communication channels.
 - b. Mobilising resources and identifying innovative approaches to reaching underserved children, in line with this Policy and international child rights standards.
 - c. Collaborating and coordinating to plan, implement, and monitor and evaluate this Policy, drawing upon their unique knowledge and expertise.
 - d. Establish or strengthen mechanisms for child participation at school, community and national levels, ensuring that children's voices are heard in the planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of this Policy.

07

Monitoring & Evaluation

OECS Regional Child Policy
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7. Monitoring and evaluation

7.1. Regional level monitoring mechanisms

The OECS Commission will provide technical and logistical expertise to support OECS members to implement their monitoring¹²³ and evaluation functions. Monitoring at the regional level will be carried out by relevant OECS Councils of Ministers, with the support of the OECS Commission.

The OECS Commission will ensure that the indicators for this Policy are integrated into the monitoring and evaluation frameworks for other interlinking OECS policies and programmes, including the OECS's Social Inclusion and Social Protection Action Plan.

7.2. National level monitoring mechanisms

OECS members are responsible for monitoring and evaluating implementation of this Policy within their national jurisdictions. Each OECS member will either establish or assign to an existing multi-sectoral working group at the national level, the responsibility of monitoring and evaluating this Policy within their respective jurisdictions. The designated lead government line Ministry/ Ministries responsible for implementing each aspect of this Policy will be represented on this working group.

The working group will:

- Collaborate with civil society, private sector, children, families and communities, as relevant, throughout their monitoring and evaluation processes, paying particular attention to the guiding principles and inclusion of children's voices;
- Develop a national action plan and monitoring framework to implement this Policy;
- Monitor and evaluate implementation of this Policy according to the plan in Table 1 below; and
- Keep minutes of all working group meetings.

To facilitate monitoring at the national level, consideration will be made to the OECS Commission developing a standardised questionnaire that will be distributed to OECS members to facilitate their reporting to the regional level.

¹²³ References to 'monitoring' refer to the collection, analysis, reporting and use of data to inform and strengthen the implementation of this Policy, to achieve its strategic priorities, outcomes and vision.

7.3. Regional level monitoring mechanisms

The OECS Council of Ministers for Human and Social Development, with the assistance of its Technical Advisory Committee, shall be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the Policy as a whole and specifically Outcomes 1 (child protection), Outcome 2 (access to justice) and Outcome 5 (social protection). It shall also coordinate with other relevant OECS Councils of Ministers and committees to agree actions to improve implementation, particularly the OECS Council of Ministers for Health (for in-depth monitoring of Outcome 3) and the OECS Council of Ministers for Education (for in-depth monitoring of Outcome 4).

7.4. Monitoring inequities in children's rights

When monitoring and evaluating this Policy, particularly attention will be paid to inequities in the realisation of children's rights, to ensure that no child is left behind. The results framework for this Policy (see Annex) therefore calls upon OECS members to monitor and evaluate disaggregated results, particularly according to age, gender, disability status, wealth quintile, nationality, ethnicity and LGBTIQ+, so far as possible.

7.5. Monitoring and evaluation plan

The monitoring and evaluation plan is set out in Table 1 followed by the results framework in the Annex.

¹²³ References to 'monitoring' refer to the collection, analysis, reporting and use of data to inform and strengthen the implementation of this Policy, to achieve its strategic priorities, outcomes and vision.

Figure 2: Social ecological model

Monitoring and Evaluation Activity	Timeframe	Responsibilities
Monitoring of activities, their outputs and progress towards meeting the Policy outcomes	Annually from 2026 to 2032	• Lead line Ministry/ Ministries, acting through the national multi-sector working group – monitors results at the national level and reports these to the OECS Commission • OECS Commission to consolidate results into an annual report for consideration by the relevant Council of Ministers together with recommended action points to improve implementation • OECS Council of Ministers define and endorse the actions needed to progress implementation of this Policy • OECS members implement the actions endorsed by the OECS Council of Ministers
Mid-term evaluation	Three years into Policy implementation (2029)	• OECS Commission, with the technical and financial support of UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area, leads the mid-term evaluation • Results reported to the relevant Council of Ministers to endorse action points to improve implementation of the Policy • OECS members implement the actions directed by the OECS Council of Ministers
Summative evaluation	End of Policy term (2032)	• OECS Commission, with the technical and financial support of UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area, leads the summative evaluation • Results reported to the relevant Council of Ministers to endorse action points to improve implementation of the Policy • OECS members implement the actions directed by the OECS Council of Ministers

08

Commitment to Invest

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8. Commitment to Invest in Children

It is well documented that public spending on children is important, not only for upholding children's rights, but also for improving outcomes and social cohesion for communities and nations more broadly. It is also a smart choice; by investing in child protection, access to justice, health, education and social protection, we can prevent child rights violations and inequities in our societies, thereby avoiding the extensive costs that are associated with responding to and curing these issues and their broader societal, economic and political impacts after they have occurred. By investing more efficiently in these sectors, we can improve outcomes for children, communities and our nations in a more cost-effective way.

For this reason, 'public financing for children' has been integrated throughout this Policy. In implementing this Policy, OECS members should ensure that:

- these Policy commitments are reflected in national and regional budgetary and spending processes;
- yearly workplans for the implementation of this Policy are costed with clear indications of the funding sources;
- where sources are mobilised from external funders, including multilateral organisations, donors and the private sector, strategies are put in place to promote the sustainability of services and other interventions after the cessation of funding;
- Expenditure on interventions implemented under this Policy are maintained to enable monitoring and evaluation, and learning.

9. Communications

OECS members will work with partners and other stakeholders to raise knowledge and awareness of the vision and commitments in this Policy. Awareness-raising among children is key, particularly among children who are at risk of being marginalised or underserved. This Policy serves all children in the OECS; understanding their views and needs is critical for the development, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of this Policy and achievement of its vision.

OECS members will also promote the vision and commitments in this Policy among key stakeholders at the regional, national and sub-national levels. This awareness-raising is key to strengthening buy-in and demand for the reforms, supporting the social and behavioural change interventions outlined in this Policy, mobilising the resources needed to put these Policy commitments into practice, and ensuring coherence between the implementation of this Policy and other related interventions. Key stakeholders include governments and other duty-bearers, potential donors, multi-lateral organisations, civil society and the private sector. Parents, caregivers and frontline workers must not be forgotten in these efforts; these stakeholders play a critical role in supporting children's wellbeing and realisation of their rights, and to the ultimate achievement of this Policy.

Table 2 provides an overview of the communications strategy to support this Policy.

Table 2: Communications strategy

Audience	Objectives & Purpose	Approaches & channels	Lead & partners
Global and regional multi-lateral organisations, potential donors and funders, private sector and civil society	Raise knowledge and awareness of the vision, strategic objectives and commitments of the Policy to establish or strengthen technical partnerships, mobilise resources and ensure coherence between the implementation of this Policy and other related policies and programmes	• Regional event to launch the Policy • Discussions among OECS Council of Ministers and other regional fora • Expert and donor roundtables • Other bi-lateral and multi-lateral targeted engagement (at meetings; conferences; related webinars etc.) • Dedicated page on the Policy on the OECS website providing key technical information • Media	• OECS Commission and Councils of Ministers (lead); • UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area (support); • other multi-lateral partners of the OECS (support); • media (support)
Duty bearers within OECS members at the national level	Raise knowledge and awareness of the vision, strategic objectives and commitments of the Policy and advocacy for its implementation, to: generate or strengthen national buy-in, leadership and support for the implementation of the Policy; secure public financing and planning for the implementation of the Policy; ensure monitored implementation; and contribute to creating an enabling environment for the social and behavioural change interventions implemented under the Policy.	• Regional event to launch the Policy • National level Policy launch event within each OECS member • Targeted engagement (at Parliament; meetings; conferences; related webinars etc.) • National strategies and action plans adopted at the national level • Media	• Members of the OECS Council of Ministers (co-lead for their respective sector) • Lead Ministry/ Ministries within OECS members (co-lead for their respective sector) • OECS Commission (support) • UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area (support) • other multi-lateral partners (support) • media (support)

<i>Audience</i>	<i>Objectives & Purpose</i>	<i>Approaches & channels</i>	<i>Lead & partners</i>
Civil society, private sector and other stakeholders at the national level (excluding Government and State agencies)	Raise knowledge and awareness of the vision, strategic objectives and commitments of the Policy and advocacy for its implementation, to: generate or strengthen national buy-in and support for the implementation of the Policy; mobilise resources, innovation and partnerships for the implementation of the Policy; collaboration to ensure monitored implementation; and contribute to creating an enabling environment for the social and behavioural change interventions implemented under the Policy.	• National level Policy launch event within each OECS member • Targeted engagement (at meetings conferences; related webinars etc.) • Multi-sectoral strategies and action plans adopted at the national level • Meetings of the national level multi-sector working group • Media and social networks	• National level multi-sector working group (lead) • OECS Commission (support) • UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area (support) • other multi-lateral partners (support) • media (support)
Sub-national duty bearers and frontline workers	Raise knowledge and awareness of the vision, strategic objectives and commitments of the Policy and advocacy for its implementation, to: generate or strengthen national buy-in and support for the implementation of the Policy; collaboration to ensure monitored implementation; and contribute to creating an enabling environment for the social and behavioural change interventions implemented under the Policy (e.g. capacity-building trainings for frontline workers).	• Sector-specific policies and action plans • Sector-specific meetings, conferences, etc. • Education and training of sub-national workers and other sub-national • Media and social networks	• National level multi-sector working group (lead) • Education and training providers (support) • OECS Commission (support) • UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area (support) • other multi-lateral partners (support) • Civil society (support) • media (support)

<i>Audience</i>	<i>Objectives & Purpose</i>	<i>Approaches & channels</i>	<i>Lead & partners</i>
General public, including parents, caregivers and local community groups (e.g. faith-based organisations)	Raise general knowledge and awareness of the vision and strategic objectives of the Policy to: generate or strengthen demand for children's rights and the Policy; and contribute to creating an enabling environment for the social and behavioural change interventions implemented under the Policy.	• Dissemination of the policy including in minority languages • National launch with public statements • Radio interviews and television features • Social media content • Partnership agreements aligning community initiatives with the Policy (e.g., joint campaigns promoting positive parenting participation inclusion and non-violent norms, youth groups acting as peer educators) • Information sessions (and targeted messaging to parents and caregivers) through schools, primary healthcare centres, churches and other places of religious congregation, community groups and parent associations • Participation in national celebrations for children / children's rights including International Children's Day, World Children's Day, International Day of the Girl, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, World Autism Day etc.; • Media promotion during carnival celebrations	• National level multi-sector working group (co-lead) • Community leaders and leaders of youth groups (co-lead) • OECS Commission (support) • UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area (support) • other multi-lateral partners (support) • Civil society (support) • media (support)

<i>Audience</i>	<i>Objectives & Purpose</i>	<i>Approaches & channels</i>	<i>Lead & partners</i>
Children, particularly children who are at risk of being marginalised or underserved	Knowledge and awareness-raising to: support their participation in the development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the Policy in an informed way; contributing to creating an enabling environment for the social and behavioural change interventions implemented under the Policy.	• Child-friendly and disabilities-inclusive versions of the Policy to be developed and disseminated online and in schools, clubs and other children's spaces, including in minority languages • Child-led messaging at the national launch of the Policy with public statements targeting children • Radio interviews and television features targeting children • Social media content • Targeted messaging and discussions at events delivered by youth groups / children's clubs, schools and other education settings, churches and other places of religious congregation • Child-led messaging at national celebrations for children / children's rights and carnivals	• National level multi-sector working group (co-lead) • Community leaders and leaders of youth and children's groups (co-lead) • OECS Commission (support) • UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area (support) • other multi-lateral partners (support) • civil society (support) • media (support)

ANNEX

Results Framework

OECS Regional Child Policy
and Strategic Plan.
2026-2032



Annex - Results Framework

Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
Outcome 1 - Child Protection: By 2032, children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, have increased protection from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, including in the digital environment.				
Indicators (linked to SDGs 5, 8.7.1 and 16 (esp. 5.1-5.2 and 16.2); UNICEF's Benchmarks for Child Protection System-Strengthening (CPSS)) – Phase of development of the child protection system according to CPSS outcomes (by OECS member) – % change in prevalence of violence against children (by OECS member; type of violence) – % change in the rate of children in formal alternative care (by OECS member; type of care)				
Disaggregation: age; gender; disability; wealth quintile; disability; nationality; ethnicity; LGBTQ+				
Normative and institutional framework for the protection of children from all forms of violence, including in the digital environment, and the development of the child protection system, are reviewed and updated in line with the CRC and other international child rights standards	Legal framework for the protection of children from all forms of violence, including corporal punishment and online abuse and exploitation, are reviewed and updated in line with the CRC and other international child rights standards	# of OECS members which prohibit all forms of violence against children # of OECS members that explicitly prohibit corporal punishment of children in all settings including schools, by law # of OECS members which legislate for the protection of children from online abuse and exploitation Phase of development of CPSS Outcome 1 (by OECS member)	National laws and policies	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Normative and institutional framework for the protection of children from all forms of violence, including in the digital environment, and the development of the child protection system, are reviewed and updated in line with the CRC and other international child rights standards	Legal framework for the development of the child protection system, including the system of alternative care, are reviewed and updated in line with the CRC and other international child rights standards, including the removal of legal barriers to adoption where this is in the best interests of the child	# of OECS members with updated child protection laws in line with international standards # of OECS members with implementing regulations/ secondary legislation in force Phase of development of CPSS Outcome 1 (by OECS member)	National laws	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Normative and institutional framework for the protection of children from all forms of violence, including in the digital environment, and the development of the child protection system, are reviewed and updated in line with the CRC and other international child rights standards	Laws and policies are amended to prohibit the placement of children under the age of seven in residential care and instead require placement of the child in a family setting, according to the child's best interests	# of OECS members prohibiting such placements, by law and policy # of OECS members requiring placement of the child in a family setting according to the child's best interests, by law and policy	National laws and policies	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Normative and institutional framework for the protection of children from all forms of violence, including in the digital environment, and the development of the child protection system, are reviewed and updated in line with the CRC and other international child rights standards	A national child protection strategy and action plan is adopted and implemented outlining country-specific child protection reforms and roadmap to deinstitutionalisation	# of OECS members with strategy and action plan in force	National policies	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Normative and institutional framework for the protection of children from all forms of violence, including in the digital environment, and the development of the child protection system, are reviewed and updated in line with the CRC and other international child rights standards	A national-level, multi-sectoral coordination body is established or assigned by law with a clear mandate of overseeing and coordinating child protection policy development and implementation	# of OECS members with national level coordination mechanism in place Phase of development of CPSS sub-domain 2.2 (by OECS member)	National policies and governance documents	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare

Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
Normative and institutional framework for the protection of children from all forms of violence, including in the digital environment, and the development of the child protection system, are reviewed and updated in line with the CRC and other international child rights standards	Standard operating procedures and inter-sectoral working protocols for the referral and multi-disciplinary handling of child protection cases at the sub-national levels are developed and adopted	# of OECS members with multi-disciplinary standard operating procedures and working protocols in force Phase of development of CPSS sub-domain 3.2 (by OECS member)	National policies and procedures	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Social behavioural change interventions address harmful social norms, attitudes and practices that perpetuate violence against children, including corporal punishment, gender-based violence and online violence against children	Social behavioural change interventions for the elimination violence against children are rolled out, including a focus on ending corporal punishment, gender-based violence and online violence against children, and how to report child protection concerns	# of persons reached by these interventions (by OECS member)	Monitoring data	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare; campaign providers
Social behavioural change interventions address harmful social norms, attitudes and practices that perpetuate violence against children, including corporal punishment, gender-based violence and online violence against children	The social behavioural change interventions are available in minority languages and have a specific focus on reaching children, families and communities that have been marginalised, including non-nationals of OECS members, non-mainland island communities and those with disabilities or special educational needs	# of OECS members with social behavioural change tools tailored for these groups # of persons reached (disaggregated by age; language; nationality; geographical location; gender; disability)	Campaign materials and monitoring data	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare; campaign providers
Social behavioural change interventions address harmful social norms, attitudes and practices that perpetuate violence against children, including corporal punishment, gender-based violence and online violence against children	Capacity-building trainings for frontline professionals and practitioners including social workers, guidance counsellors, early childhood educators, teachers, healthcare workers, police, prosecutors, judges, NGO workers and disaster management officials include a focus on identifying and reporting child protection concerns and changing harmful beliefs, attitudes and practices that perpetuate violence against children, including corporal punishment, gender-based violence and online violence against children	% of professionals and practitioners trained (by OECS members and sector) % of trained professionals and practitioners self-report that the training was effective (by OECS members and sector)	Monitoring data and training self-assessment and evaluation forms	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare, in collaboration with justice, health, education and disaster management stakeholders
A continuum of shock-responsive child protection services is put in place to prevent and respond effectively to violence against children, including services to rehabilitate child survivors of violence, services to prevent family separation and support deinstitutionalisation of children, and services to prevent girls and boys from coming into conflict with the law	Parental support programmes with a focus on positive parenting techniques, peaceful conflict resolution, 'parenting for the digital age' and ending (children's exposure to) intimate partner violence in the home, are introduced as part of the minimum package of social support services for children and their families	# of OECS members integrating parental support services as part of the minimum package of social services # of parents and caregivers accessing parental support services (by OECS member; gender; wealth quintile; disability; nationality; language) # of OECS members which integrate disaster risk management into the programme model	Monitoring data	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
A continuum of shock-responsive child protection services is put in place to prevent and respond effectively to violence against children, including services to rehabilitate child survivors of violence, services to prevent family separation and support deinstitutionalisation of children, and services to prevent girls and boys from coming into conflict with the law	Community-based programmes to support and address the needs of children particularly at risk of institutionalisation, such as children who run away from home, and girls and boys at risk of sexual abuse or exploitation, are piloted and rolled out	# of children enrolled in the community-based programme (by OECS member; age; gender; wealth quintile; disability; nationality; language) # of OECS members which integrate disaster risk management into the programme model	Monitoring data	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare; service providers

Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
A continuum of shock-responsive child protection services is put in place to prevent and respond effectively to violence against children, including services to rehabilitate child survivors of violence, services to prevent family separation and support deinstitutionalisation of children, and services to prevent girls and boys from coming into conflict with the law	Health, social welfare and education authorities collaborate to develop and implement a deinstitutionalisation strategy for children with disabilities including the strengthening of inclusive education and piloting and roll out of community-based specialised support services including day care and respite care	# of OECS members with a deinstitutionalisation strategy in force # of children with disabilities and children with special educational needs accessing community-based specialised support services (by OECS member; age; gender; disability; nationality; language) # of OECS members which integrate disaster risk management into the service model	Monitoring data	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare; in collaboration with ministries of health and education and service providers
A continuum of shock-responsive child protection services is put in place to prevent and respond effectively to violence against children, including services to rehabilitate child survivors of violence, services to prevent family separation and support deinstitutionalisation of children, and services to prevent girls and boys from coming into conflict with the law	Programme for the recruitment, training and support of foster carers, with a focus on 'hard to place' children including children with disabilities and children at risk of offending, is piloted and rolled out	# of trained foster carers (by OECS member; specialised v. non-specialised foster carers)	Monitoring data	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
A continuum of shock-responsive child protection services is put in place to prevent and respond effectively to violence against children, including services to rehabilitate child survivors of violence, services to prevent family separation and support deinstitutionalisation of children, and services to prevent girls and boys from coming into conflict with the law	Confidential, trauma-informed and gender-responsive community-based rehabilitation services for children who have experienced violence, are piloted and rolled out	# of children accessing the services (by OECS member; age; gender; disability; nationality; language) # of OECS members which integrate disaster risk management into the model	Monitoring data	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare; service providers
	Community-based, family-focused and gender- and shock-responsive programmes and outreach for preventing children from coming into conflict with the law, are piloted and rolled out, including a focus on girls and boys at risk of involvement in gangs or community violence	# of children enrolled in / reached by community-based prevention programmes and activities (by OECS member; age; gender; wealth quintile; disability; nationality; ethnicity; language) # of OECS members which integrate disaster risk management into the programme model	Monitoring data	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
System for monitoring and inspection of child protection services, enforcement and accountability mechanisms, and an integrated data collection and management system for child protection issues, are in place	Independent mechanisms for the monitoring and inspection of child protection services, and accountability for child protection service providers, are established	Phase of development of CPSS sub-domain 4.1 (by OECS member)	Laws, policies, regulations, annual inspection reports	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare; inspection authorities
System for monitoring and inspection of child protection services, enforcement and accountability mechanisms, and an integrated data collection and management system for child protection issues, are in place	Minimum service standards for the delivery of child protection services are developed and adopted	Phase of development of CPSS sub-domain 4.2 (by OECS member)	Laws, policies, regulations	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
System for monitoring and inspection of child protection services, enforcement and accountability mechanisms, and an integrated data collection and management system for child protection issues, are in place	A data collection and management system relating to child protection matters is developed and harmonised across the OECS to facilitate monitoring at the national and regional levels	Regional database integrating key child protection indicators is established Phase of development of CPSS benchmark 7 (by OECS member)	Database, monitoring data and reports, laws on data protection	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare

Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
The social service workforce for child protection is strengthened with a focus on their education, training, development and support	Education scholarships, bursaries and other appropriate incentives and support are provided to attract new talent to the sector and support social work education, including specialist education in child protection	# of new social service work graduates (by OECS member) % of new graduates employed in social service work in the OECS one year after qualification (by OECS member)	Monitoring and employment data	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare in collaboration with the ministry responsible for labour and employment
The social service workforce for child protection is strengthened with a focus on their education, training, development and support	A system of accredited social work training is introduced, with a focus on child protection and skills in upholding the child's right to be heard in child protection matters, including compulsory pre-service and regular in-service refresher training	# of OECS members requiring mandatory pre-service and in-service training for child protection social service workers % of social service workers with the minimum required training (by OECS member)	Training curricula and monitoring data	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare; training providers
The social service workforce for child protection is strengthened with a focus on their education, training, development and support	Ministries and agencies responsible for child protection ensure the allocation of an appropriate number of social service workers dedicated to handling child protection matters to avoid overburdening staff	Ratio of children to social service worker (by OECS member)	Employment data	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
The social service workforce for child protection is strengthened with a focus on their education, training, development and support	Systems are put in place for the supportive supervision and career progression of social service workers for child protection including appropriate compensation and mentoring to support workforce retention and wellbeing	# of OECS members with supportive supervision frameworks in place for social service workers Average frequency and duration of 1-1 supervision sessions per cadre of social service worker (by OECS member) Retention rate of social service workers (by OECS member) % of social service workers reporting at least a good level of job satisfaction (by OECS member)	Policies and procedural documents outlining supervision framework and procedures; anonymised monitoring data based on supervision records; social service worker feedback forms	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Child protection services are adequately funded with sustainability strategies in place for services that rely on private sector or donor funding	Public financing for child protection is mainstreamed in Government planning and budgeting	Phase of development of CPSS sub-domain 5.2 (by OECS member)	Budgets, management and annual accounts	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare; ministries of finance
Child protection services are adequately funded with sustainability strategies in place for services that rely on private sector or donor funding	Tertiary level child protection services, at the very least, are funded by national budgets	Phase of development of CPSS sub-domain 5.2 (by OECS member)	Budgets, management and annual accounts	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare; ministries of finance
Child protection services are adequately funded with sustainability strategies in place for services that rely on private sector or donor funding	Sustainability strategies or mechanisms are put in place for child protection services that rely on private sector or donor funding	Phase of development of CPSS sub-domain 5.2 (by OECS member)	Budgets, management and annual accounts	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare; ministries of finance
Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency

Outcome 2 – Access to justice: By 2032, children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, have increased equitable access to trauma-informed and child-friendly justice.

Indicators (linked to SDG 16 (esp. 16.1.1, 16.3 and 16.a), UNICEF's CPSS Benchmarks (sub-domain 16.1) and to Strategic Objective 1.3 of Outcome 1 of this Policy (relating to rehabilitation of child survivors)):

- Phase of development of CPSS sub-domain 16.1 (by OECS member)
- % reduction in the rate of child offending (by OECS member, type of crime)
- % reduction in the rate of child reoffending (by OECS member)
- % reduction in the rate of offending against children (by OECS member, type of crime)
- Reduction in the # of children deprived of their liberty (by OECS member; by type of detention (administrative detention v. pre-trial detention v. post-sentencing v. civil measure)
- % of children in child protection proceedings with a guardian ad litem or similar mechanism (by OECS member)

Disaggregation: age; gender; disability; wealth quintile; disability; nationality; ethnicity; LGBTIQ+

Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
Quality, gender- and shock-responsive community-based services to promote rehabilitation and reintegration into the community of children in conflict with the law and at risk of offending	A range of pre-trial diversion options and gender- and shock-responsive community-based rehabilitation schemes are piloted and rolled out with a view to ensuring that the rehabilitation of the child is prioritised and that detention is a measure of last resort	Increase in the % of children in conflict with the law who are diverted before charge (compared against the % of cases dropped and % of cases prosecuted) # of children diverted pre-charge, by diversion measure (by OECS member)	Monitoring and administrative data	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare; Ministries of Justice
Normative framework for the child justice system is reviewed and updated in line with the CRC and other international child rights standards	Legal framework, including implementing regulations, for a child-friendly justice system in line with the CRC and international child rights standards is introduced or updated, ensuring prioritisation of rehabilitation and reintegration of the child	# of OECS members with legislation in force # of OECS members with implementing regulations in force	Laws and regulations	Ministries of Justice
Normative framework for the child justice system is reviewed and updated in line with the CRC and other international child rights standards	Minimum age of criminal responsibility is increased to at least 14 years of age	# of OECS members with a minimum age of criminal responsibility of at least 14 years, with any exceptions	Laws and regulations	Ministries of Justice
Specialist capacities are developed among justice professionals ensuring the delivery of child-friendly, trauma-informed and gender-responsive justice for all children, including child victims and witnesses and children involved in child protection matters	Accredited, compulsory pre-service and regular in-service training on access to child-friendly justice is introduced and delivered to all justice professionals, including police, prosecutors, lawyers, judges and social workers, with a focus on delivering gender-responsive, trauma-informed and child-friendly practices and procedures	# of OECS members requiring mandatory pre-service and in-service training for child justice professionals and practitioners % of professionals and practitioners with the minimum required training (by OECS member and type of worker)	Administrative and monitoring data; training curricula and materials	Ministries of Justice supported by other justice stakeholders
Specialist capacities are developed among justice professionals ensuring the delivery of child-friendly, trauma-informed and gender-responsive justice for all children, including child victims and witnesses and children involved in child protection matters	Regional service agreements and rotations of judges specialising in child justice, child protection and family law are put in place to ensure the prompt handling of these cases	# of OECS members participating in the regional scheme Average duration of criminal cases (i.e. period from initial report to final court decision at first instance or case closure) involving a child victim or witness (by OECS member) Average duration of criminal proceedings (i.e. duration between charge and final court decision at first instance or case closure) involving a child in conflict with the law (by OECS member)	Monitoring and administrative data; regional agreements	Ministries of Justice, magistrates courts, in collaboration with the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court
Child-friendly legal aid is strengthened	A national system for the provision of free legal information and advice to children and their parents/caregivers on child rights and how to access complaints mechanisms is rolled out and made available in minority languages and disability-inclusive formats	# of persons accessing free legal information or advice (by OECS member, age, gender, language and disability)	Monitoring data	Ministries of Justice; supported by legal aid providers
Child-friendly legal aid is strengthened	A programme for the provision of free legal representation for children in conflict with the law from the point of arrest and throughout criminal proceedings, is piloted and rolled out	% of children in conflict with the law with legal representation at the point of arrest (i.e. from first contact with police as a child suspected of committing a crime)	Administrative and monitoring data	Police service, supported by legal aid providers
Special measures and mechanisms for child-friendly proceedings are put in place	Mechanisms permitting the recorded cross-examination of child victims and witnesses in advance of criminal trials are put in place to reduce the stress and trauma of giving evidence in a live courtroom environment and to mitigate against the risk of recall-bias	% of child victims and witnesses of crime participating in pre-recorded cross examinations (by OECS member)	Administrative and monitoring data	Prosecution services
Special measures and mechanisms for child-friendly proceedings are put in place	Mechanisms are introduced to ensure that the child's voice is heard and best interests are upheld in child protection proceedings and private family law matters that affect children (e.g. custody disputes between divorcing parents), such as a guardian ad litem or similar mechanism	# of OECS members with a guardian ad litem or similar mechanism in place	Administrative and monitoring data	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare

Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
Outcome 3 – Health: By 2032, children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, enjoy improved physical, reproductive and mental health through equitable access to preventive, protective and quality health services.				
indicators (linked to SDGs 3.1.2; 3.2.2; 3.b.1; 2.2.2; 3.7.1; 3.4.2) - % of women attending 4+ antenatal care visits - Neonatal mortality rate - % of children covered by measles vaccination - % of children exclusively breastfed up to 6 months - % of children covered by HPV vaccination - % of women of reproductive age whose need for family planning is satisfied with modern methods - % of schools implementing programmes to protect and promote child and adolescent mental health - Suicide mortality rate among children				
Disaggregation: age; gender; disability; wealth quintile; disability; nationality; ethnicity; LGBTIQ+				
Universal access to maternal, newborn and early childhood health services is strengthened, including antenatal and postnatal care and routine childhood immunisation	Strengthen universal access to skilled birth attendance and quality antenatal/postnatal care, particularly in OECS members where coverage is declining	# of trained birth attendants (per OECS member) % of women attending 4 or more antenatal visits (per OECS member)	National health workforce registries; annual monitoring reports; annual reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health reports	Ministries of Health
Universal access to maternal, newborn and early childhood health services is strengthened, including antenatal and postnatal care and routine childhood immunisation	Expand neonatal intensive care and referral systems to address disparities in neonatal mortality	# of OECS members with decreased neonatal mortality rate # of facilities with neonatal intensive care (per OECS member)	National vital statistics systems; infrastructure and equipment inventories	Ministries of Health
Universal access to maternal, newborn and early childhood health services is strengthened, including antenatal and postnatal care and routine childhood immunisation	Strengthen incentives to promote exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months and beyond	% of children exclusively breastfed up to six months (per OECS member)	Hospital reports; community health facilities reports	Ministries of Health
Universal access to maternal, newborn and early childhood health services is strengthened, including antenatal and postnatal care and routine childhood immunisation	Reverse declining measles coverage by investing in demand-generation campaigns and tackling vaccine hesitancy	% of child population covered by measles vaccination (per OECS member) # of campaigns tackling vaccine hesitancy (per OECS member)	Immunization ('Expanded Programme on Immunization') administrative data; vaccination registers	Ministries of Health
Nutrition, physical activity and leisure programmes for children and adolescents are strengthened and expanded, supported by regulatory measures that reduce exposure to unhealthy food environments	To help prevent overweight and obesity, implement regulatory policies for private sector including taxes on sugary drinks and restrictions on marketing unhealthy foods to children	% of overweight children (per OECS member) # of campaigns tackling obesity within child population (per OECS member)	Ministry of Health annual reports	Ministries of Health
Nutrition, physical activity and leisure programmes for children and adolescents are strengthened and expanded, supported by regulatory measures that reduce exposure to unhealthy food environments	Strengthen school-based nutrition and physical activity programmes, inclusive of adolescent girls and boys	# of programmes tackling nutrition and promoting physical activity for children including adolescent girls and boys (per OECS member)	Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education monitoring data and reports	Ministries of Health and Ministries of Education
Safe, confidential and gender-responsive adolescent SRH services are expanded, including access to modern contraception, HPV vaccination and comprehensive sexuality education in schools and youth settings	Expand access to adolescent SRH services in line with international standards by harmonising laws and policies to remove parental consent barriers, in line with the child's right to be heard and evolving capacities	# of OECS members with parental consent laws and policies relating to SRH services that align with international child rights standards # of facilities providing adolescent-friendly confidential SRH services (per OECS member)	National laws and policies; Ministry of Health adolescent health service mappings or facility assessments	Ministries of Health

Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
Safe, confidential and gender-responsive adolescent SRH services are expanded, including access to modern contraception, HPV vaccination and comprehensive sexuality education in schools and youth settings	Promote comprehensive sexuality education aligned with international standards and good practices, ensuring that it addresses gender and power relations, is integrated into schools and youth settings, and is monitored for age-appropriateness and completeness	# of OECS members which have integrated comprehensive sexuality education into the education curriculum in line with international standards and good practices	Ministry of Education curriculum audits, school reports	Ministries of Education
Safe, confidential and gender-responsive adolescent SRH services are expanded, including access to modern contraception, HPV vaccination and comprehensive sexuality education in schools and youth settings	Scale up HPV vaccination coverage, particularly for adolescent girls, and ensure routine monitoring	% of children covered by HPV vaccination (by OECS member)	Expanded Programme on Immunization administrative data; vaccination registers	Ministries of Health
Child and adolescent mental health are improved through the integration of MHPSS into primary care, expansion of school and community-based support programmes and strengthened suicide-prevention and anti-stigma initiatives	Invest in school-based, gender-responsive MHPSS services including anti-bullying programmes that integrate prevention and response to online bullying	# of schools implementing gender-responsive programmes to protect and promote child and adolescent mental health	Ministry of Education and school reports; civil society reports	Ministries of Education
Child and adolescent mental health are improved through the integration of MHPSS into primary care, expansion of school and community-based support programmes and strengthened suicide-prevention and anti-stigma initiatives	Decriminalisation of suicide and attempted suicide (Saint Lucia and Grenada)	% of OECS members that do not criminalise suicide or attempted suicide (target: 100%)	Primary legislation	Ministries of Justice
Child and adolescent mental health are improved through the integration of MHPSS into primary care, expansion of school and community-based support programmes and strengthened suicide-prevention and anti-stigma initiatives	Working protocols and referral pathways are in place for frontline workers on providing basic (non-specialist) MHPSS and referring children to more specialised MHPSS services where appropriate	# of OECS members which have adopted working protocols and established referral pathways for MHPSS	Policies, regulations and working protocols	Ministries of Health
Child and adolescent mental health are improved through the integration of MHPSS into primary care, expansion of school and community-based support programmes and strengthened suicide-prevention and anti-stigma initiatives	Roll-out basic training for all frontline professionals and practitioners who work with children on providing basic MHPSS and identifying and referring children to appropriate MHPSS services when mental health concerns arise	# of OECS members with training integrated into existing training curricula for frontliners % of frontliners who have completed this training (by OECS member)	Ministry of Health training reports and annual monitoring reports	Ministries of Health
Child and adolescent mental health are improved through the integration of MHPSS into primary care, expansion of school and community-based support programmes and strengthened suicide-prevention and anti-stigma initiatives	Expand training opportunities for specialists on providing child-focused and trauma-informed MHPSS, building on regional pools of expertise and online provision opportunities	# of OECS members with training integrated into existing training curricula for specialists # and % of specialists who have completed this training (by OECS member)	Ministry of Health training reports and annual monitoring reports; training provider reports	Ministries of Health, supported by training providers

Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
Child and adolescent mental health are improved through the integration of MHPSS into primary care, expansion of school and community-based support programmes and strengthened suicide-prevention and anti-stigma initiatives	Implement suicide prevention strategies tailored to adolescents and social behavioural change initiatives to reduce stigma around seeking MHPSS	# of OECS members which have delivered suicide prevention strategies and social behavioural initiatives to reduce stigma around seeing MHPSS # of children reached by the prevention strategies social behavioural change initiatives	Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education annual reports; school reports	Ministries of Health
Early identification, assessment and rehabilitative services for children with disabilities are strengthened and made more accessible across all health settings	Health facilities are made accessible to and inclusive of children with disabilities	% child-friendly and accessible health facilities (per OECS member)	Disability inclusion facility audits	Ministries of Health
Early identification, assessment and rehabilitative services for children with disabilities are strengthened and made more accessible across all health settings	Expand specialist capacity for early disability diagnosis and support (screening services, educational psychologists, speech and language therapists)	# of programmes developed to address specific needs of children with disabilities # healthcare workers trained in identification, diagnosis and support to children with disabilities	Ministry of Health annual reports; civil society reports	Ministries of Health
Child safeguarding within the health sector is strengthened through confidential reporting mechanisms, child-friendly procedures, multidisciplinary collaboration and climate-resilient, inclusive health infrastructure	Prioritise prevention of violence in schools, communities and family settings as a public health concern affecting children, with responses designed to be intersectional and sensitive to determinants such as gender and social norms	# of OECS members which have implemented programmes on preventing violence against children # of persons reached by these programmes (by OECS member)	Ministry of Health annual monitoring reports; civil society reports	Ministries of Health
Child safeguarding within the health sector is strengthened through confidential reporting mechanisms, child-friendly procedures, multidisciplinary collaboration and climate-resilient, inclusive health infrastructure	Institutionalise safeguarding in every health facility through confidential and child-friendly reporting routes, working protocols for the identification and confidential referral and handling of child safeguarding concerns, staff codes of conduct, and trained designated child safeguarding focal points	# of OECS members which have safeguarding codes of conduct for healthcare workers # of OECS members which have working protocols for healthcare workers on identifying, referring and handling child safeguarding concerns % of healthcare facilities with confidential child-friendly reporting routes in place (by OECS member) % of healthcare facilities with a trained designated child safeguarding focal point in place	Ministry of Health monitoring data; training programmes; policies and regulations; codes of conduct and working protocols	Ministries of Health
Child safeguarding within the health sector is strengthened through confidential reporting mechanisms, child-friendly procedures, multidisciplinary collaboration and climate-resilient, inclusive health infrastructure	Provide regular child rights-based training to healthcare workers on preventing and responding to child safeguarding concerns	% health staff trained in safeguarding and referral mechanisms (by OECS member)	Ministry of Health annual monitoring reports; training programmes	Ministries of Health
Regional and national child health policies and strategies for the delivery of accessible and quality healthcare services are strengthened and aligned with evidence-based standards through improved universal health care planning, professional development of the workforce, pooled procurement mechanisms, stronger public financing for children and enhanced child health data monitoring/ surveillance systems	Develop and implement comprehensive child and adolescent health policies that integrate universal health care, SRH rights and mental health within a coherent rights-based framework	Regional policies (CARPHA; PAHO) include key child health indicators National policies include key child health indicators National policies are coherent with regional frameworks	Regional and national policies	OECS Council of Ministers for Health (regional level); Ministries of Health (national levels)

Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
Regional and national child health policies and strategies for the delivery of accessible and quality healthcare services are strengthened and aligned with evidence-based standards through improved universal health care planning, professional development of the workforce, pooled procurement mechanisms, stronger public financing for children and enhanced child health data monitoring/surveillance systems	Strengthen and retain a child-focused health workforce through specialised training and continuous professional development supported by regional and online platforms	# of OECS members which have developed training programmes for healthcare workers that include child health including SRH and MHPSS % of healthcare workers who have received the training (by OECS member) Retention rates of healthcare workers (by category of worker and by OECS member)	Ministry of Health annual monitoring reports; training programmes	Ministries of Health
Regional and national child health policies and strategies for the delivery of accessible and quality healthcare services are strengthened and aligned with evidence-based standards through improved universal health care planning, professional development of the workforce, pooled procurement mechanisms, stronger public financing for children and enhanced child health data monitoring/surveillance systems	Strengthen public financing for children and expand national health insurance coverage to include all children regardless of their status	# of OECS members which have increased their public financing commitments and spending on child health % of households with children reporting zero out of pocket costs for essential child health services (by OECS member)	National budgets and expenditure analyses; OECS/UNICEF 'Public Financing for Children' reports	Ministries of Health
	Upgrade child health data monitoring/surveillance systems	# of OECS members which have child health information systems in place	National health statistics and monitoring data; health databases and data monitoring tools	Ministries of Health
	Strengthen regional mechanisms and cooperation to improve health services for children (including online services, medicines and vaccines)	# of child consultations conducted via telemedicine (by OECS member) % of essential child medicines/vaccines procured through pooled mechanisms (by OECS member)	National health statistics and databases; pooled pharmaceutical procurement services reports; PAHO data	OECS (regional level); Ministries of Health (national level); close collaboration with PAHO
Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency

Outcome 4 – Education: By 2032, all children, including girls, boys, adolescents, children with disabilities and children with special educational needs, have improved equitable access to inclusive, quality education and learning opportunities that enable them to develop their personality, talents and physical and mental abilities to their fullest potential.

indicators (linked to SDGs 4 and 8.6; targets and indicators of the Global Comprehensive School Safety Framework):

- % change in NER, GER and attendance rates (by education level)
- % change in rate of school completion (by education level)
- % change in school repetition rates (by education level)
- % change of NEET rate for adolescents and young people (15-24)
- % change in NER, GER and attendance rates of children with disabilities in mainstream education
- % change in NER, GER and attendance rates of children with special educational needs in mainstream education
- % change in attainment rates of minimum proficiency in reading, mathematics and science
- % of children 24-59 months who are developmentally on track in learning (and health and psychosocial wellbeing; linked with Outcome 3 of this Policy)
- % of older adolescents (15 years and older) in formal and non-formal education and training in the last 12 months

Disaggregation: age; gender; disability; wealth quintile; disability; nationality; ethnicity; LGBTIQ+

Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
Improve access to quality early childhood education	Increase the availability of free early childhood education, including for low-income families, families living in remote locations, children with disabilities and children with special educational needs	# of OECS members legislating for the right to early childhood education NER, GER and attendance rates for children in early childhood education (linked to SDG Target 4.2; indicator 4.2.1), including disaggregation for children aged: zero to two years, and three to five years of age Children per educator/teacher ratio (per OECS member), including disaggregation for children aged: zero to two years, and three to five years of age	SDG data; Ministry of Education monitoring data and reports	Ministries of Education
Improve access to quality early childhood education	Introduce national minimum service and quality standards, curricula, monitoring and inspection, and accountability mechanisms for the provision of early childhood education (State-funded and private)	# OECS members outlining national minimum service and quality standards, curricula etc. in law and policy	Ministry of Education monitoring data and reports	Ministries of Education
Improve relevance, quality and continuity of learning through curriculum reform and targeted support	Education Sector Plans, aligned with the OECS Education Strategy, are sufficiently funded and aligned with the specific learning needs of children	# of OECS members with costed and aligned Education Sector Plans in force	Ministry of Education policy documents	Ministries of Education
Improve relevance, quality and continuity of learning through curriculum reform and targeted support	Based on evidence (education monitoring data), update curricula to reflect children's learning gaps and needs, adapting and integrating good teaching practices, '21st Century Skills' and socio-emotional learning	# of OECS members with updated, evidence-based curricula	Ministry of Education curricula, monitoring data and policy documents	Ministries of Education
Improve relevance, quality and continuity of learning through curriculum reform and targeted support	Establish regional guidance and national benchmarks for learning outcomes (e.g. literacy; mathematics; science) at all education levels	Regional framework for establishing national benchmarks adopted # of OECS members with evidence-based national benchmarks in place, aligning with regional framework (by level of education)	Ministry of Education policy and monitoring data	Ministries of Education
Improve relevance, quality and continuity of learning through curriculum reform and targeted support	Introduce targeted academic support and remedial or innovative learning to lower repetition rates	# of OECS members with compulsory teacher training on supporting students with a range of abilities and needs # of OECS members which have a national policy on providing remedial or other appropriate educational support to lower repetition rates	Ministry of Education policies and teacher training curricula	Ministries of Education
Improve relevance, quality and continuity of learning through curriculum reform and targeted support	Integrate comprehensive sexuality education and children's rights into education curricula, as appropriate to the evolving capacities of children and adolescents	# of OECS members with comprehensive curricula in place % of teachers trained (knowledge, attitudes and skills training) on delivering curricula (by OECS member)	Ministry of Education curricula and policy documents; monitoring data on teacher training	Ministries of Education, supported by teacher training providers
	Expand quality and relevant TVET pathways and programmes and support transition to and between pathways	# of OECS members with a national policy on alternative education and training pathways and supporting transition between pathways Enrolment and attendance rates in TVET programmes (include disaggregation by type of programme)	Government policies and monitoring data; TVET curricula/ programmes	Ministries of Education, supported by TVET providers

Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
Strengthen inclusive, gender-responsive and accessible education to meet the educational needs of all children, including a focus on children with special educational needs and children with disabilities	Increase the number of teachers trained to work with children with disabilities and children with special educational needs, including identification and referral of children potentially requiring specific support to appropriate bodies for early identification, screening, diagnosis and/or additional specialist support, as appropriate	# of teachers trained to support and work with children with disabilities and children with special educational needs (per OECS member) Ratio of children with special educational needs or disabilities to trained teacher (per OECS member) % of children with special educational needs with an education plan in force (per OECS member)	Ministry of Education curricula and policy documents; monitoring data on teacher training	Ministries of Education, supported by teacher training providers
Strengthen inclusive, gender-responsive and accessible education to meet the educational needs of all children, including a focus on children with special educational needs and children with disabilities	Ensure curricula and learning materials are gender-responsive, promote aspirations among children equitably and are adaptable to the needs of children with disabilities and children with special educational needs	# of OECS members with curricula adopted	Ministry of Education policy and curricula	Ministries of Education
Strengthen inclusive, gender-responsive and accessible education to meet the educational needs of all children, including a focus on children with special educational needs and children with disabilities	Promote gender-sensitive classroom practices and school cultures that address stigma, discrimination and harmful norms, particularly against children with disabilities, children with special educational needs, LGBTIQ+ children and non-national children	# of OECS members with non-discrimination laws that cover education settings % of schools with non-discrimination policies in place (per OECS member) # of OECS members that have regular teacher training on non-discrimination in place # of OECS members that integrate equality and non-discrimination in school curricula	National laws, policies, education curricula and teacher training curricula	Ministries of Education, supported by schools and teacher training providers
Strengthen inclusive, gender-responsive and accessible education to meet the educational needs of all children, including a focus on children with special educational needs and children with disabilities	Improve children's access to inclusive extra-curricular activities and out-of-school learning opportunities	% of children enrolled in weekly extra-curricula activities or out-of-school learning programmes (by OECS member) Average number of hours spent per week on the activity or in the programme	Survey of children; activity providers	Ministries of Education, supported by activity providers
Improve teacher training, professional development and workforce quality	Increase access to accredited pre-service and regular in-service refresher training for teachers and support staff across all education levels, including equivalent qualifications for staff without formal pedagogical preparation	# of OECS members which mandate core competencies, qualifications and professional development for teaching % of teachers with the minimum required qualifications and training (by OECS member) Ratio of pupils-to-trained teacher (by OECS member and education level) % of teachers who received in-service training in the last 12 months, by type of training (by OECS member)	Ministry of Education and teacher training monitoring data; laws, policies and curricula relating to teacher qualifications and training	Ministries of Education and teacher training providers
Improve teacher training, professional development and workforce quality	Create induction schemes, structured mentoring and supportive supervision for teachers and clear framework for career progression	% of teaching staff with updated job descriptions in line with an established framework for career progression (by OECS member) # of OECS members with supportive supervision frameworks in place for teaching staff Average frequency and duration of 1-1 supervision sessions per cadre of teaching staff (by OECS member)	Ministry of Education monitoring data, career progression framework and job descriptions	Ministries of Education

Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
Create safe, supportive and non-violent school environments through a 'whole school' approach, rooted in the Comprehensive School Safety Framework	Prohibit corporal punishment across all educational settings	# of OECS members that prohibit corporal punishment of children in all settings including schools, by law	National laws	Ministries of Education
Create safe, supportive and non-violent school environments through a 'whole school' approach, rooted in the Comprehensive School Safety Framework	Education facilities are physically accessible, safe and resilient, and support child learning and development	# of OECS members with legal regulations and monitoring systems in place on safe learning facilities (aligned with the Comprehensive School Safety Framework) % of learning facilities that meet minimum safety standards (by OECS member)	Ministry of Education reports and policies	Ministries of Education
Create safe, supportive and non-violent school environments through a 'whole school' approach, rooted in the Comprehensive School Safety Framework	Develop safeguarding policies and codes of conduct to be deployed in schools including a 'zero tolerance' approach to online and offline violence against children, including bullying, sexual abuse and harassment, and discrimination against children, particularly non-national children, children with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ children	% of schools with publicly-available written policies and staff codes of conduct (by OECS member)	Ministry of Education policies; codes of conduct from educational institutions	Ministries of Education
Create safe, supportive and non-violent school environments through a 'whole school' approach, rooted in the Comprehensive School Safety Framework	Train all school staff on identifying and reporting safeguarding concerns, the prevention of bullying and discrimination, positive discipline techniques and basic MHPSS	# of OECS members integrating these topics into mandatory teaching training % of staff within schools who meet mandatory training requirements (by OECS member)	Ministry of Education and teacher training providers	Ministries of Education, supported by teacher training providers
Promote meaningful participation by children, parents and caregivers, in school life, including children and adults with disabilities	Establish or strengthen active, inclusive and accessible student councils and other mechanisms for meaningful child participation in school life	% of schools with active and inclusive student councils or similar mechanism (by OECS member)	Ministry of Education; schools	Ministries of Education
Promote meaningful participation by children, parents and caregivers, in school life, including children and adults with disabilities	Create child-friendly, accessible and confidential feedback and complaints systems for students across all education settings	% of schools with written, child-friendly and confidential complaints policies and procedures (by OECS member)	Ministry of Education; schools	Ministries of Education
Promote meaningful participation by children, parents and caregivers, in school life, including children and adults with disabilities	Establish or strengthen active, accessible and inclusive mechanisms to promote parent and teacher collaboration in supporting children's learning and development	# of schools with active and inclusive parent-teacher associations (by OECS member)	Ministry of Education; schools	Ministries of Education
Improve the resilience of education systems to shocks and disruptions	Risk management and reduction, and emergency response plans and standard operating procedures are in place to minimise disruption during hurricanes, eruptions, public health or other crises	# of OECS members with national plans in force % of educational institutions with disaster management standard operating procedures in force (by OECS member)	Ministry of Education policy documents; policies of educational institutions	Ministries of Education
Improve the resilience of education systems to shocks and disruptions	Ensure that online materials and distance learning tools (e.g. devices) are accessible to all children, including children with disabilities and children with special educational needs, and children in areas of low internet connectivity	# of OECS members with accessible online contingency plans and tools in place	Ministry of Education policies and programme documents	Ministries of Education
Improve the resilience of education systems to shocks and disruptions	Learning facilities are resilient to disasters, shocks and emergencies	# of OECS members integrating risk reduction and resilience into minimum legal standards, regulations and monitoring frameworks for safe learning facilities (by OECS member) % of learning facilities that meet the minimum standards (by OECS member)	Ministry of Education policies, regulations and monitoring reports	Ministry of Education

Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
Improve the resilience of education systems to shocks and disruptions	Children, parents, caregivers and teaching staff have access to risk reduction and resilience education	# of OECS members meeting the risk reduction and resilience education targets of the Comprehensive School Safety Framework	Ministry of Education policies, regulations and monitoring reports	Ministries of Education
Improve the resilience of education systems to shocks and disruptions	Provide remedial learning and catch-up support after major disruptions, prioritising vulnerable children including children with disabilities and children with special educational needs, children from low-income families and areas of poor internet connectivity	# of OECS members including remedial or catch-up learning in risk management, reduction and emergency response plans	Ministry of Education policy documents	Ministries of Education
Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Means of Verification	Responsible agency
Outcome 5 – Social protection: By 2032, all children, including girls, boys, adolescents and children with disabilities, have increased equitable access to inclusive and shock-responsive social protection systems that strengthen resilience and provide greater protection against social exclusion.				
indicators (linked to: SDGs 1.3.1; 1.a.2; 1.5.4; 4.3.1) - # of OECS members which have reduced the percentage of children living in poverty - % of children living in households receiving at least one social protection benefit - % of households with children affected by shocks receiving emergency social assistance - % of OECS members that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies sensitive to children's needs				
Disaggregation: age; gender; disability; wealth quintile; disability; nationality; ethnicity; LGBTIQ+				
Adequate and sustained social protection programmes are available to support children and their families, including those particularly at risk of poverty and social exclusion	Expand coverage of programmes to address high child poverty rates (over 50 per cent in some OECS members) and ensure benefits reach children in particularly vulnerable households or situations including female-headed households, large families, adolescents, and non-national children	% of children/households receiving child/family cash benefits # of OECS members with outreach programmes in place to identify particularly vulnerable families and children	Administrative records from relevant Ministry / Social Development Department; beneficiary registry	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Adequate and sustained social protection programmes are available to support children and their families, including those particularly at risk of poverty and social exclusion	Integrate education, health and protection linkages into cash transfers and school-based programmes to break intergenerational cycles of poverty	# of cash transfer programmes integrated with health, education, or protection services (by OECS member)	Programme design documents; memoranda of understanding between relevant government line ministries; programme reports	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Emergency social assistance programmes are in place for sustained support to children and their families after disasters	Increase coverage and value of social protection/ cash transfers that benefit children and families in emergencies	# of OECS members which have increased social protection budget for households with children in emergencies	National budget documents; Ministry of Finance budget	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare and Ministries of Finance
Emergency social assistance programmes are in place for sustained support to children and their families after disasters	Develop clear preparedness and contingency financing mechanisms to enable rapid scale-up during crises and make allocations to children more visible	# of OECS members which have included child considerations in contingency planning processes	National contingency plans; disaster risk management strategies	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Foster empowerment and transition from welfare to resilience	Move beyond welfare assistance towards empowerment models that combine cash with training, financial literacy and community development	% of cash transfer recipients participating in complementary services (training, financial literacy, mentoring etc.) (by OECS member)	Programme monitoring reports; attendance records from complementary services	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Foster empowerment and transition from welfare to resilience	Institutionalise graduation pathways linking social protection beneficiaries to sustainable livelihoods	% of households "graduating" from social assistance to sustainable livelihoods every year (by OECS member)	Social protection programme exit records; graduation assessments; programme monitoring and evaluation reports	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Strengthen the enabling environment (legal, policy and institutional frameworks and socio-cultural norms) for social protection	Accelerate the passage of comprehensive and inclusive Social Protection Acts and policies in OECS members where frameworks remain outdated or in draft (e.g. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica and Montserrat), ensuring inclusion of children based on need	# OECS members which have adopted comprehensive and inclusive social protection laws and policies aligned with international and regional standards	National legislation; government gazettes	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Strengthen the enabling environment (legal, policy and institutional frameworks and socio-cultural norms) for social protection	Harmonise national frameworks with the OECS Social Inclusion and Social Protection Strategic Action Plan 2023–2030	# of OECS members harmonising national frameworks with OECS Social Inclusion and Social Protection Strategic Action Plan 2023-2030	OECS Commission reports	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare

Strategic objective	Activities	Measurable indicator	Key data sources	Responsible agency
Strengthen the enabling environment (legal, policy and institutional frameworks and socio-cultural norms) for social protection	Social and behavioural change interventions are implemented to strengthen public knowledge of and support for the positive potential of social protection and its role in supporting children's rights	Number of persons reached by the social behavioural change intervention (by OECS member)	Programme monitoring data	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Ensure sustainable financing and monitoring of social protection schemes	Consolidate fragmented schemes under stronger institutional coordination to improve efficiency and reduce duplication	# of OECS members with at least a good score using the Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment Initiative's Core Diagnostic Instrument % of social protection programmes using harmonised targeting criteria (by OECS member)	Completed diagnostic tool reports; assessment scorecards; social registry documentation	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Ensure sustainable financing and monitoring of social protection schemes	Increase social protection spending levels and prioritise allocations for children and adolescents	# of OECS members with increased government spending on social protection as % of GDP	National budget documents; Ministry of Finance fiscal reports	Ministries of Finance
Data, monitoring and inspection frameworks and mechanisms relating to the social protection system are strengthened	Mechanisms for inspection and accountability of social protection services and providers are in place	# of OECS members which have inspection and accountability mechanisms established by law and policy covering all services and providers # of inspection recommendations/ decisions that have been implemented/ enforced (by OECS member)	Laws, policies and regulations; inspection reports	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
Data, monitoring and inspection frameworks and mechanisms relating to the social protection system are strengthened	Establish integrated and comprehensive social registries of service users and standardised social assessment tools to facilitate monitoring of social protection programming nationally and regionally, and avoid overlaps and gaps in service provision	# of OECS members with social registries in place # of OECS members with standardised assessment tools (by OECS members)	Social registry documentation and tools	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare
	Conduct regular multidimensional poverty and vulnerability assessments including disaggregated data on children to inform systems-reforms and ensure that children's social protection needs are met	# of OECS members with completed multi-dimensional poverty assessments with disaggregated results relating to children	National poverty assessment reports; child poverty analysis reports	Ministry responsible for social development and welfare

Notes

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