



# Project Information Document (PID)

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Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 22-Jul-2020 | Report No: PIDC28184



## BASIC INFORMATION

### A. Basic Project Data

Country St Maarten	Project ID P172753	Parent Project ID (if any)	Project Name RESILIENT SCHOOLS PROJECT (P172753)
Region LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN	Estimated Appraisal Date Oct 15, 2020	Estimated Board Date Dec 18, 2020	Practice Area (Lead) Education
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Ministry of General Affairs	Implementing Agency National Recovery Program Bureau	

### Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Project Development Objective is to (i) restore access to a safe education, learning and cultural environment and (ii) improve the resilience of Sint Maarten's education system.

### PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)

#### SUMMARY

<b>Total Project Cost</b>	30.00
<b>Total Financing</b>	30.00
<b>of which IBRD/IDA</b>	0.00
<b>Financing Gap</b>	0.00

#### DETAILS

##### Non-World Bank Group Financing

Trust Funds	30.00
Free-standing Single Purpose Trust Fund	30.00

Environmental and Social Risk Classification  
Moderate

Concept Review Decision  
Track II-The review did authorize the preparation to continue



## B. Introduction and Context

### Country Context

- 1. Sint Maarten is a high-income constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Caribbean, along with Aruba and Curacao.** It occupies the southern half of an island shared with the French overseas collectivity of Saint Martin and is the most densely populated country in the Caribbean, with a population of over 40,000 in an area of 34 square kilometers. Sint Maarten's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of US\$25,381<sup>1</sup> was among the highest in the region, prior to the COVID pandemic. Sint Maarten is particularly vulnerable to natural disasters which periodically cause extreme disruption of living conditions, infrastructure and economic activities, with catastrophic impacts on the country's tourism-driven economy. Tourism accounted for 45 percent of Sint Maarten's GDP and 73 percent of its foreign exchange in 2016.
- 2. On September 6, 2017, Hurricane Irma, a Category 5 hurricane, caused significant destruction on Sint Maarten.** Damages were compounded by smaller-scale Hurricane Maria, two weeks later. Although loss of life was limited, Sint Maarten incurred damages and losses estimated at 129 percent of GDP respectively, or US\$2.7 billion. Ninety percent of all infrastructure was affected and much of this infrastructure still requires repair. Though little is known about the distribution of hurricane impacts and their effect on vulnerable groups in Sint Maarten, international experience shows that disasters disproportionately affect the poor and vulnerable, who include Sint Maarten's female-headed households (38.7 percent of households) and children.
- 3. In April 2018, to support rapid and sustainable recovery from Hurricane Irma, the Government of the Netherlands established a Sint Maarten Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience Trust Fund (SXM TF) for up to EUR470 million to be managed by the World Bank.**<sup>2</sup> Since July 2018, the SXM TF, governed by a Steering Committee composed of Sint Maarten, the Netherlands and the World Bank, has begun to implement selected activities in support of recovery, reconstruction, and resilience under the framework of the NRRP in Sint Maarten. These activities are chiefly implemented by the country's National Reconstruction Planning Bureau (NPRB). This proposed Resilient School Project aims to contribute to the Trust Fund's overall objective of resilient reconstruction.
- 4. Sint Maarten's people and economy have been hit hard by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, with significant impacts on its economic prospects and pace of recovery.** A country-wide lock down from mid-March to mid-May shut down all schools and non-essential businesses and closed borders in an effort to stem infections on the island. Tourism came to a standstill and economic activity sharply decreased. Once infection rates and hospitalizations returned to low single digits, the Government began a phased reopening of economic activities in mid-May and Sint Maarten re-opened its borders to travelers from selected geographical areas on July 1, with precautions. However, tourism recovery, particularly from the Americas (a key market for Sint Maarten), as well as reconstruction rates remain hampered by the global pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup> Central Bank of Curacao and Sint Maarten, based on 2018 estimates

<sup>2</sup> Sint Maarten is not a self-standing member country of the World Bank. The SXM TF was the first engagement between The World Bank and Sint Maarten. F



## Sectoral and Institutional Context

5. **Relative to its size, Sint Maarten's education system is highly fragmented in terms of governance and language of instruction.** The Ministry of Education, Culture and Youth's (MECYS) records 22 primary schools in Sint Maarten<sup>3</sup>, including seven public schools, eleven private schools subsidized by the Government and managed by four religious-based school boards<sup>4</sup>, and four unsubsidized private schools. The yearly subsidies that subsidized schools receive (contractually) from the Government are based on a National Subsidy Ordinances<sup>5</sup>. English and Dutch are used as languages of instruction. Thirteen schools (seven public and six subsidized private schools) use English as their primary language of instruction. The remaining 4 schools use Dutch.

6. **Access to learning environments of quality has declined since Hurricane Irma damaged affected education infrastructure in 2017.** All schools were affected by the hurricane, with public schools closing for four to six weeks. Damages to education, culture, youth and sport facilities were estimated at approximately US\$60.2 million and total financing needs for their reconstruction at US\$120 million<sup>6</sup>. Four schools were damaged beyond repair<sup>7</sup>. Students from both schools were relocated either to other functioning schools or temporary pre-assembled classrooms, causing a deterioration in the learning environment for both for relocated and host students. Moreover, almost two thirds of sports facilities sustained major damage<sup>8</sup>.

7. **Irreparable damage to Sint Maarten's Heritage Center has constrained learning, community-building and resilience.** The Heritage Center houses the country's Museum, Archeological Center, and a Library, showcasing a rich cultural heritage and supporting a vibrant artistic community. Before the hurricane, it organized frequent cultural, artistic, and community events. The Library/learning center attracted about 40,000 visitors annually, with free access to the internet, local archives, print, audio and digital media, and books. Temporarily relocated, the Library now offers limited reading services, but continues to attract many visitors (23,500 in 2018).

8. **Public spending on education in Sint Maarten is high, but not oriented to sustainable infrastructure investments.** Sint Maarten spends a higher share of its GDP (6.1 percent) and total government expenditure (32 percent) on education than comparator countries<sup>9</sup>. However, public spending is almost exclusively allocated to teacher salaries and recurrent costs. New school construction and capital expenditures are limited, and chiefly financed by the Dutch Government.

9. **The SXM Trust Fund, including through this project, significantly contributes to Sint Maarten's investment needs to rebuild education facilities after Hurricane Irma.** Infrastructure activities financed by the SXM TF which contribute to improving education access and supporting a quality learning environment include: two full school reconstructions and

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<sup>3</sup> Comprehensive Education Report, MECYS 2017-2018

<sup>4</sup> Methodist Agogic Center (MAC - 2 schools); Foundation for Protestant Christian Education (SPCOBE – 2 schools); Foundation for 7th Day Adventist (SDA - 1school); Stichting Katholiek Onderwijs St. Maarten (SKOS -6 schools)

<sup>5</sup> The National Ordinances Basic Education, Special Education, Secondary Education and Secondary Vocational Education and Training require that the personnel and operating costs of a school are reimbursed on the basis of number of students per criteria defined in the contractual arrangement between the schools and GoSXM.

<sup>6</sup> National Recovery and Resilience Plan

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF Post Hurricane Assessment, November 2017

<sup>8</sup> National Recovery Program Bureau - The assessment focused on public and subsidized schools as data on private schools was not available. The estimates for public schools was provided by MECYS based on site assessments by experts from VROMI.

<sup>9</sup> Sint Maarten Public Expenditure Review, The World Bank, unpublished draft. Percentage of GDP and national revenues spent on education in OECD 4.1 percent and 13.1 percent respectively and in the OECD 4.5 percent and 10.2 percent respectively



the reconstruction of the Heritage Center under the present project, repairs to over half of damaged schools in Sint Maarten under the ongoing Emergency Recovery Project, and non-structural repairs to sports facilities under the Civil Society Partnership Facility for Resilience being launched in the summer of 2020.

10. **While Sint Maarten’s education system has strengths, better data and policy analysis are needed to ensure quality learning and to promote education equity.** The country is close to achieving universal primary and secondary education, with ninety-nine percent of children and adolescents enrolled. The education system comprises a suitable number of schools and teachers<sup>10</sup> and absenteeism rates are low for teachers and students at the primary level.<sup>11</sup> With 7,726 students and 726 teachers in 2019<sup>12</sup>, student-teacher ratios are low (10.8 in primary, 9.34 in secondary) compared both to neighboring OECS countries (14, 11) and other high-income countries such as the OECD (15,13). However, high repetition and social promotion rates relative to both OECS and OECD countries<sup>13</sup> point to risks of poor learning and better data is needed for MECYS to analyze whether its repetition and tracking policies contribute to negative outcome for students from less advantaged families, increasing education inequities<sup>14</sup>. This would further compound the likely decrease in access to quality learning environments and in equity due to the Hurricane and to further learning and equity challenges that have arisen from uneven student access and affinity for distance learning during the COVID lock down.

11. **Also, gaps in education sector preparedness and resilience revealed by Irma also need to be addressed. First, the preparedness of the education system and of schools for a natural disaster merits strengthening.** A comprehensive education sector plan to prepare for, respond to, and mitigate the impact of national disasters is lacking, as is the ministerial oversight to ensure school preparedness and a transition plan for resumption of school activities when schools are used as shelters. **Second, it is important to build capacity to cope with the psycho-social consequences of natural disasters on students and school staff.** Irma likely exacerbated reportedly high incidences of risky behavior and violence among youth prior to the hurricane. Despite the referral mechanism for specialized care in place in schools, it is unclear whether sufficient services exist to ensure that care is accessible to school children and youth. School staff were themselves affected and remain ill equipped to respond to students’ psycho-emotional needs. **Third, the capacity and coordination of the Child Protection system call for improvements.** During and after the emergency, capacity appears to have been insufficient to address a rise in child abuse and neglect, and coordination gaps between the ministries of Education, Justice and Health resulted in some minor children remaining on the island without a legal guardian.

12. **To address the above and improve school management and performance, MECYS needs an efficient Education Management Information System (MMIS).** The current system does not collect data at the student level, does not provide real-time information or financial data and does not connect the various departments. Available data does not systematically feed into decision-making, and cannot be shared with other government agencies involved in child development and protection. A strong MMIS would support short- and long-term policy planning, based on meaningful data, and improve the overall governance, performance and resilience of the education sector.

<sup>10</sup> There are: 17 primary schools, 6 secondary schools (including vocational training schools); 37 daycare centers (0 to 4 years); 20 schools/community centers offering after-school activities; and two tertiary education institutes.

<sup>11</sup> Sint Maarten Public Expenditure Review, draft document, July 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Inspectorate of Education, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> In 2017-2018, repetition rates were 6 percent in primary schools, and 7 percent of students were promoted because of their age (social promotion), Sint Maarten Public Expenditure Review, draft document

<sup>14</sup> Sint Maarten Public Expenditure Review, draft document, July 2020.



#### Relationship to higher Level objectives

13. **The proposed Project supports the objectives of Sint Maarten’s 2018 NRRP** and contributes to achieving three objectives of the SXM TF Strategic Framework: Objective 5 - Increase access to quality health, education and sports services; Objective 7 - Improve capacity for disaster response and Objective 8 - Strengthen fiscal resilience and modernize the public sector.

14. **The proposed Project is aligned with the Government’s 2018 Education Master Plan (EMP).** The project supports the EMP’s first and second components, which focus on (i) repair and reconstruction of schools, the Cultural Heritage Center, and sports facilities and (ii) a care and special aid program, which aims to provide students and education staff with a safe learning environment and addresses the needs of special care students and students from lower-income families, their families, teachers, and education staff who were affected by the hurricane.

15. **The proposed Resilient Schools Project and was developed at the request of the SXM TF Steering Committee<sup>15</sup>** and complements a (smaller) Child Protection and Development Project (CDPP – P172582, currently under preparation), which will be implemented by UNICEF NL<sup>16</sup>. The Resilient Schools Project and CDPP share a comprehensive results chain to facilitate the alignment of activities. Activities will be coordinated and synergies will be sought with the ongoing Emergency Reconstruction Project (ERP), the Digital Government Transformation Project, and the Civil Society Partnership Facility for Resilience Project, also financed by the SXM TF.

#### C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

16. The Project’s objectives are to (i) restore access to a safe education, learning and cultural environment; and (ii) improve the resilience of Sint Maarten’s education system.

#### Key Results (From PCN)

17. The following key results are expected to be achieved:
- Restore access to an adequate learning environment through the reconstruction of at least two schools;
  - Restore access to learning and cultural facilities through the reconstruction of the Library (as part of the Heritage Center);
  - Increase MECYS preparedness and capacity to respond to natural hazards;
  - Improve MECYS oversight of education services by developing a Ministry Management Information System (MMIS).

#### D. Concept Description

18. The Project will include four components: (i) Rebuilding safe schools, (ii) Restoring a community learning and cultural environment; (iii) Strengthening the Ministry’s Management Information System, and (iv) Project management. The Project will also include a fifth component: “Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC),” without funding allocation, which will allow for a prompt reallocation of resources in case of emergency.

<sup>15</sup> Steering Committee Decision of July 2019.

<sup>16</sup> CDPP will aim at strengthening (a) the resilience of students and staff to the emotional and physical impacts of natural disasters, and (b) the child protection systems and services to improve preparation and response to natural disasters, through: i) the establishment of a nurturing learning environment and safe spaces for children and adolescents, (ii) the strengthening of the education sector and school capacity to prepare and respond to natural disasters, and (iii) child protection.



## Component 1: Rebuilding safe schools

19. Component 1 aims at restoring student access in the Middle Region district and the Cape Bay district to two primary schools damaged beyond repair by Hurricane Irma, which will be rebuilt and equipped. These schools were selected by the GoSM based on the catchment area, the demand for and availability of schools in the area, and the relative vulnerability of the communities they serve. Both schools were already offering programs for children with behavior problems and students with special needs. These programs are a priority since both the education services and the police department have reported an increase in violent youth behavior and psycho-social trauma, which impede learning.

20. **Sister Marie Lawrence (SML) Primary School** is a subsidized school<sup>17</sup> located in the Middle Region district, which is considered a low-income area. At the time of the 2017 hurricane, the school welcomed 185 students, between the ages of 3 and 12, and 68 students in an after-school program. SML served the community, through a variety of learning, social and cultural of programs and a special care program for students with special needs. SML's building was damaged beyond repair by the hurricane and further vandalized, making its buildings uninhabitable and requiring the construction of a new school. Students and the after-school program have been relocated to two other Catholic schools in other districts.<sup>18</sup>

21. **Charles Leopold Bell (CLB)** is a public primary school located in Cole Bay. Before the hurricane, CLB had 165 students with 16 teachers, a care team, and management. After the Hurricane, students and their teachers were relocated to the Leonard Conner School, the closest public school. An Educational Care Center (ECC) for 75 public school students with behavioral issues that cannot be handled by the public-school system is on hold because CLB is currently unusable.

22. During project preparation, MECYS will assess students' special needs as well as the corresponding training needs of teachers and staff to interact with these students. Training will include training on gender-based violence. Teachers and school staff will also receive training on and the application of health protocols, including COVID-19 protocols. The objectives and scope of SML special care and CLB ECC programs that can be supported by the Project will be further defined during after the assessment. MECYS

23. The Project will finance the reconstruction of the SML and CLB primary schools, ensuring that they are fully accessible to students and staff with special needs. The project may also finance relevant technical assistance and training of teachers, school staff, MECYS staff, and stakeholders. The exact scope of works and other activities will be determined during appraisal.

## Component 2: Restoring a community learning and cultural environment

24. This component aims to restore access to a community learning and cultural environment through the reconstruction of the Sint Maarten Library. The Museum, and Sint Maarten Archeological Center are part of the Heritage Center Project. They are located on different sites and will not be supported by the Project.

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<sup>17</sup> Sister Marie Lawrence is managed by the Catholic school board - SKOS

<sup>18</sup> From SML's 2019 proposal. "In school year 2016/2017, 40% of the student body received critical care from the Care team. The school has a student body with very diverse and unique needs. This school is facing severe issues with students' academic performance, behavior issues and general well-being. During school year 2016-2017, two-thirds of the student body received moderate to critical support from the Care Team. TO better meet the needs of the students, the SML school is preparing a 3-year plan to transform the school from a "regular" school into an "Exceptional School" and aims to provide inclusive and equitable education by incorporating an holistic development program which will comprehensively address all the needs of all the children."



25. MECYS' objective is to have the Library facilitate access to culture and learning for the entire community, especially for low-income populations. The Library will continue to provide access to books, media, print and digital archives, and computers for all and will host after-school and reading programs. In addition, the GoSXM will expand the Library's role as a community center through the organization of special events such as introduction to arts, awareness, protection and response to gender-based violence (GBV). Finally, the Library will provide full access to information, facilitate research and innovation, preserve heritage, and present a unique community platform, notably through a collaboration with the Museum and the Sint Maarten Archeological Center (SIMARC).

26. The Project will finance the reconstruction of the Library. At appraisal of the project, the provision of furniture and equipment, the facilitation of cultural and learning exchanges, the establishment of a digital platform for the library and the community center will be considered. Further details are to be discussed during project preparation.

27. The constructions will take place on the current sites of the damaged buildings, and demolition will be needed to clear the way for construction. It is expected that there will be no land acquisition (relevant documentation will be required during project preparation) and no population displacement. However, since the construction could involve an influx of workers, recommendations from the Good Practice Note on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in projects involving major civil works will be used to guide the design of this component.

### **Component 3: Strengthening the Ministry Management Information System**

28. Information is a key parameter of a resilient education system. The objective of this component is to help the education system become more resilient to external shocks, such as natural or human disasters, and more efficient, through the design and implementation of an MMIS. The MMIS will also help improve the overall performance of the education system.

29. The Project will support the development of a comprehensive MMIS to support data-based decision-making. The MMIS will allow the efficient collection and treatment of data, as well as the sharing of information within MECYS and between MECYS and other government institutions and School Boards. The MMIS will facilitate the management of MECYS's human and financial resources and infrastructure, the monitoring of students' attendance and progress, as well as teachers' and schools' performance. The MMIS will enable MECYS to increase its efficiency by improving its human resources and financial management, including the allocation and management of subsidies to schools and scholarships.

30. The MMIS will also help strengthen MECYS's disaster management capacity and efficient allocation of resources before and after a natural disaster or epidemic. It could support the design and/or implementation of a school reopening plan, including health and safety protocols, staggered reopening, use of technology, remedial classes, and facilitate the reopening of schools and relocation of students and faculty. The MMIS would also allow the sharing and exchange of data between MECYS, the Court of Guardianship of the Ministry of Justice, and VSA and help strengthen coordination and complementary responses by the responsible entities to address child protection issues in a timely and appropriate manner.

31. The Project is expected to finance: (i) a needs assessment and, if needed, recommendations for changes in MECYS's institutional set-up; (ii) the design and implementation of the MMIS; (iii) the procurement of required software and equipment; and (iv) training of MECYS staff in data collection, treatment and analysis. The Project will also finance relevant training of teachers and School Boards, as well as staff in the Court of Guardianship and Ministry of Health. Lastly, close coordination with and input from the Digital Government Transformation project will be sought to align intervention and strategies for improving governance through digital means.





**Component 4: Project Management**

32. This Component will support project management and coordination, including monitoring and evaluation, procurement, financial management, safeguards and citizen engagement, and other technical assistance. As a result, the Project will finance, *inter alia*, technical assistance, goods, audits, workshops, training and operating costs.

**Component 5: Contingency Emergency Response Component – CERC**

33. Due to Sint Maarten’s high vulnerability to natural disasters, including those exacerbated by climate change, an unfunded Contingency Emergency Response Component is included, to allow for rapid response in the event of an eligible emergency. The CERC would be activated upon GoSM’s request, based on triggers and under conditions, defined during project preparation. In the event of an emergency, uncommitted funds may be reallocated from other components based on a Government Emergency Action Plan. The amount to be reallocated to the CERC is decided at the time of the emergency in agreement with the World Bank.

Legal Operational Policies	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No
Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts	

The Environmental and Social Risk Category (ESRC) of the proposed project is considered Moderate. Project activities will have essentially positive social impacts by guaranteeing an expedited access of many people to public services and increased community safety and disaster preparedness. The potential adverse risks and impacts on the environment and social are likely to be moderate, highly localized, temporary in nature and manageable through environmental and social risk management instruments that NRBP will develop and apply through the implementation of the project. The main environmental risks and impacts of the project are related to the construction of school and library facilities under components 1 and 2 where in situ temporary impacts might occur associated with construction and demolition works and waste, release of contaminants to the air, soil, and water during the construction or accidental circumstances during the works. The main social risks and impacts are related to the limited interaction with various stakeholders during the consultation process, management of cultural heritage, as well as managing construction labor. The ESMF for the project, including for the CERC Component will provide guidance on how to assess the environmental risks and impacts of each constructions, the measures and plans to reduce, mitigate and/or offset potential adverse risks and impacts, provisions for estimative and budgeting the costs of proposed mitigation measures, and their implementation arrangements.



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## APPROVAL

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