



National Policy on Persons with Disabilities

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FOREWORD



As Trinidad and Tobago continues to forge ahead with the implementation of policies and plans for a more inclusive, disciplined and productive society, it brings me great pleasure, as Minister of Social Development and Family Services, to present the revised National Policy on Persons with Disabilities.

In recent years, there have been many positive changes in the attitudes and behaviours that surround the socio-economic development and rights of persons with disabilities. To date however, this Policy by the Ministry represents the most holistic attempt at capturing and evaluating the concerns, opinions and recommendations of the key stakeholders. As such, this Policy stands as an essential part of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's Vision 2030 National Development Strategy and is positioned to address some of the gaps and inconsistencies in existing legislation. The former has at its heart, the nurturing of sustainable families and communities, towards the re-establishment of a robust and competitive economy for our country. This can only be achieved however, when policies and practices are genuinely representative, inclusive and anticipatory of the needs and issues that impact our citizens. As it relates specifically to persons with disabilities, the Policy also formally recognizes the contributions of persons with disabilities to socio-economic, political and national development.

The Policy also represents a strategic commitment by the Ministry to ensure equality and equity in the provision and development of plans and services to the community of persons with disabilities. This is extremely important as the demands for social assistance far outweigh the State's present resources.

As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, this document is also proof of Trinidad and Tobago's commitment to uplifting and protecting the

basic human rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities, so that, they continue to lead fulfilling and industrious lives. Consistent with the need to be evidence based and data driven, the Ministry has incorporated data from the 2005 National Policy, as well as, feedback from various national public consultations that were held in 2016 and 2017.

Throughout the pages to follow, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services has combined the contributions from the Division of Health, Wellness and Family Development, Tobago House of Assembly, persons with disabilities, a team of sector experts, organizations and a disability and gender specialist to develop a comprehensive policy document which reflects, inter alia, Government's responses and intentions related to awareness, accessibility, participation and the general well-being and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

I therefore wish to acknowledge and thank all contributors, as we work towards improving the lives of every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

"It is that fundamental belief that I am my brother's keeper

I am my sister's keeper

That makes this country work,

It's what allows us to pursue our individual dreams and

Yet still, come together as one"

(Barack Obama, Former President of the United States of America.)

Hon. Cherrie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn
Minister of Social Development and Family Services

Acknowledgements

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services acknowledges the invaluable contributions made to the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities by the various stakeholders including persons with disabilities, members of civil society, participants in the national consultations, the Division of Health, Wellness and Family Development (Tobago House of Assembly), the Review Committee, staff of the Ministry of Social Development and Family services and all other Ministries.



ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW:	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC:	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ELDAMO:	Elderly and Differently Abled Mobile Service
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology
NALIS:	National Library and Information System Authority
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODPM:	Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management
SEED:	Sowing Empowerment through Entrepreneurial Development
UN:	United Nations
UNCRPD:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accessibility

Accessibility refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments for persons with disabilities.

Assistive Technology

Any item, piece of equipment or product system that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

Barriers

Barriers refer to factors in a person's environment that, through their absence or presence, limit functioning and create a disabling environment. These barriers can be attitudinal and environmental.

Communication

Communication refers to language, display of text, Braille, tactile, large print, as well as, audio, human-reader and alternative modes and formats of communication.

Disability

Disability is an umbrella term for impairment, activity limitations and participation restrictions. It denotes the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual and the individual's personal and environmental factors.

Discrimination

The practice of treating one person, or group of people less fairly or less well than other people or groups.

Empowerment

This is the process of enabling people to increase control over their lives or to gain control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives.

Equalisation of Opportunity

The process through which the general system of society such as the physical and cultural environment, housing and transportation, social and health services, educational and work opportunities, cultural and social life, are made accessible to all.

Habilitation

Habilitation refers to a process aimed at helping persons with disabilities attain, keep or improve skills and functioning for daily living.

Impairment

Impairment refers to any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a process in a school where all children are participating and treated equally. It is a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within and from education.

Independent Living

A well-organised movement among people with disabilities, to enhance self-esteem and self-determination, as well as the socio-economic resources available to choose and maintain individual, independent lifestyles.

Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Reasonable accommodation

Reasonable accommodation means providing one or more modifications that are appropriate and necessary to accommodate a worker or job candidate's individual characteristics so that he or she may enjoy the same rights as others.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation refers to regaining skills, abilities, or knowledge that may have been lost or compromised as a result of acquiring a disability or due to a change in one's disability or circumstances.

Universal Design

Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation or specialised design.

INTRODUCTION

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) on September 27, 2007 and ratified the said Convention on June 25, 2015. Article 1 of the Convention states that each country should aim “to promote, protect and enable the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.” The UNCRPD emphasises the critical role that governments play in ensuring that appropriate legislative, administrative, and regulatory arrangements are established for the protection and promotion of the human rights of persons with disabilities.

The UNCRPD promotes a progression for the rights of persons with disabilities by enabling them to be productive members of society with equivalent rights on the same level as all other persons and as such prevents viewing them as objects of charity. Each state party to the Convention, must therefore ensure that steps are taken towards achieving this Convention standard. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is also committed to the implementation of measures to promote the dignity and full inclusion of persons with disabilities. Through the implementation of this National Policy on Persons with Disabilities, it is hoped that the outlined policy directives will allow for a more inclusive environment in which state and private entities will embrace a rights-based approach. It is envisaged that the National Policy will also provide a foundation for the development of appropriate legislation.

The National Policy provides a comprehensive framework for achieving social inclusion and equality of opportunity for all persons with disabilities in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The scope of the Policy covers a wide range of areas that are to be improved for the benefit of persons with disabilities. Some of these areas include legislation, raising awareness on disability issues, accessibility, education, work and employment, women and children concerns, health, habilitation and rehabilitation, access to justice and a number of other areas. Therefore, the Policy will influence every aspect of the lives of persons with disabilities. Measures will be implemented, in collaboration with key stakeholders and will utilise a

holistic and integrated approach to achieve the goals of social inclusion and equalisation of opportunity for all persons with disabilities. This will ensure that the principles underpinning the UNCRPD are incorporated into policies and programmes impacting persons with disabilities and their families. The formulation of strategies, ideas and ensuing necessary actions have been made possible through a consultative process involving persons with disabilities, civil society representatives and other individuals with extensive experience in the area of disability. The Policy articulates the position of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities. It also outlines the legislative and administrative measures that will be taken to improve their lives. The National Policy on Persons with Disabilities is therefore intended to:

- i. Provide a framework which will guide the development of legislation and public policy to incorporate disability related issues;
- ii. Give greater visibility to disability issues and ensure that the intent of the UNCRPD is reflected in the development and implementation of public policy and legislation;
- iii. Improve the delivery of services to persons with disabilities;
- iv. Enable the participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making and implementation of important measures within the different institutions in society; and
- v. Enable further development of persons with disabilities and their families.



SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

An estimated 15% of the world population live with some form of disability with 2-4% of these persons experiencing significant difficulties with their ability to function. In the Caribbean, “there are approximately 1.3 million persons with a disability of some kind and around 250,000 persons with a significant disability”¹. Similarly, Trinidad and Tobago experiences a rising disability sector due to an increasing trend in the ageing population and the spread of chronic diseases². Moreover, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America 2018, projections of the prevalence of disability for persons 60 years and older reveal a percentage of 28.2 by the year 2050³. Therefore, the effectiveness of this Policy is dependent on critical knowledge that will give a clear understanding of the existing situation as it relates to the status of persons with disabilities within the society.

One of the key factors faced in understanding the issue of disability is the lack of in-depth research that can influence policy. The unavailability of recent comprehensive statistical data presents a challenge in adequately assessing disability and disability related issues. It affects the capacity to adequately indicate the number of persons with disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago and additionally presents challenges in evaluating, reporting, planning and development. The 2011 Trinidad and Tobago Population and Housing Census reveals that there are approximately 52,244 persons living with a disability, representing at least 4% of the total population of 1,328,019. Of this total, 96.5% (50,390) reside in Trinidad and 3.5% (1,858) in Tobago. Moreover, this total reflects a slight increase over the 2000 Population and Housing Census, which recorded 45,496 persons living with a disability. Such increases may be related to increased or improved reporting, as well as the rapid ageing of the population. The 2011 Census data also indicates that the number of persons with disabilities when categorized using gender, showed a slightly greater number of females. Females accounted for approximately 26,234 (50.2%) and males 26,010 (49.8%) of the population of

¹ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECALC) Disability, human rights and public policy in the Caribbean (2018)

² Social Sector Investment Programme 2018 (SSIP 2018)

³ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) on the basis of national population and housing censuses and United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015), World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision.

persons with disabilities. Looking at the regional breakdown, the Tunapuna/Piarco area showed the highest portion of persons with disabilities, with 7,436 individuals followed closely by Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo with 6,570 and San Juan/ Laventille with 6,564. For Tobago, St. Andrew reported the largest number of persons with disabilities, with 589 and St. Patrick with the second highest of 466.⁴

Regarding children with disabilities, the Census recorded approximately 3,302 children (i.e. persons aged 0-17 with a disability); which is equivalent to 6.3% of the population of persons with disabilities and 1% of the population of children (i.e. 330, 102 children) in Trinidad and Tobago. This figure while relatively low may not present the full scope of young pre-school children having some level of impairment. The accuracy of these figures can often be impacted by the challenges that may arise in the area of early detection and diagnosis of younger children with disabilities.

Given the number of persons living with disabilities, emphasis must be placed on ensuring their rights and affording them the opportunity for equal participation in the society. During the last fifteen to twenty years, a wide range of initiatives toward achieving this have been proposed by Government, civil society and persons with disabilities. Implementation of some of these initiatives has occurred with varying levels of success.

Equality and Non-Discrimination /Legislation

The Legislative framework in Trinidad and Tobago requires amendment to bring the country in line with Convention standards. The Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago confers upon all citizens, the right to enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms; however, it does not speak specifically to disability issues. Various pieces of legislation do not contain the provisions for, or redress on issues specific to the needs of persons with disabilities.



⁴ Research Note: Disability by the Social Investigations Division of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (2013)

Women with Disabilities

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which seeks to end discrimination, particularly against all women, was ratified by the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on January 12, 1990. While persons with disabilities are generally regarded as being more vulnerable to abuse, women are often subjected to multiple forms of abuse. This suggests that there is need for substantial attention to be paid to the needs of women with disabilities. This has generally occurred through the efforts of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and some Government interventions but, a more concentrated effort is required to adequately address the needs of women with disabilities.

The Green Paper on Gender and Equality has also identified disability as one of the factors for addressing inequalities with special attention to be paid to education, employment, social security and social adjustment.

Children with Disabilities

Children with disabilities are often faced with the challenge of negative attitudes and are often victims of abuse and subjected to marginalisation from their peers. There is therefore



a great need to ensure that they are afforded their rights as children, regardless of having a disability. The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on December 5, 1991 and also has in place the Children Act, Chap. 46:01 and the

Draft Child Policy. While there are ongoing efforts to provide for children in general, there is acknowledgement of the need for more efforts to address the needs of children with disabilities in areas such as, protection from abuse of all forms and provision of adequate education, health and therapeutic services.

Awareness-Raising

It is important to raise awareness on the issue of disability and engage in sensitisation of the public on an ongoing basis in order to ensure that disability is widely understood. Overall, the level of awareness in relation to persons with disabilities has shown some improvements, however, there is still the existence of negative public perception and biases against persons with disabilities. In this regard, the following efforts have been made:



- The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, Disability Affairs Unit has conducted public sensitisations and awareness programmes in the workplace, schools and communities. The efforts have generally addressed the understanding of disability but, there is a need for continued collaboration to provide a wider gamut of awareness-raising in partnership with the community of persons with disabilities, in the areas of education, independent living, health and recreation.
- The Tobago House of Assembly has also established a Disability Affairs Unit to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in Tobago. The Unit is responsible for the coordination, development and implementation of comprehensive programmes for persons with disabilities.



Accessibility

While there has been some effort to ensure access to the built environment, transportation, information and communication, the approach has not been as effective as required and therefore there is recognition of the need for a strategic implementation plan to ensure that accessibility is addressed through a more structured approach.

- The accessibility standards guideline titled “Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities (2014)” was developed by the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards, in collaboration with the community of persons with disabilities and organisations for persons with disabilities. These national standards for accessibility are based on international standards, provide valuable guidelines for persons constructing or refurbishing buildings and the areas which grant access to these buildings. This document is used by organisations and entities which have committed to ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities, however, it is mostly utilised on a voluntary basis as mandatory use will require the appropriate legislation changes.
- Transportation is an important issue for persons with disabilities as it helps to provide the opportunity for a greater degree of participation, promotion of equality and independent movement. The existing public transport system is not adequate to facilitate all persons with disabilities. The Elderly and Differently Abled Mobile Service (ELDAMO) currently in place is a public transport special service for persons with disabilities. The operation of this service however is not similar to the general public transport routes and is considered more of a special service as opposed to being an inclusive service.

- The Government being cognisant of the needs of persons with disabilities to facilitate their mobility and to enhance access to public spaces, has been making efforts to enhance the built environment through construction of ramps in various locations and efforts continue to be made in this regard.
- Buzzers and bells have been installed at some of the traffic signals throughout the country to assist persons with visual impairment. During the period 2017-2018 there has been the installation of Accessible Pedestrian Signal traffic lights at fifteen (15) locations throughout Trinidad and Tobago. These lights are equipped with audible warnings and touch signals and allow for safer use of the surroundings by persons with visual impairments.
- Parking accommodation has been provided at some private and public facilities to facilitate access for wheelchairs, however, there is no system to ensure that only persons with disabilities utilise the designated spaces.
- Persons with disabilities require the ability to be able to communicate in a different way to ensure inclusion and it is important that accessibility to information and effective communication systems are available. In recognition of this right to access information, the National Library Service (NALIS) has provided service and technological access through the introduction of assistive devices and screen reading software. This service is available across numerous regions and is utilised by many persons with disabilities including students. However, there is the need for more widespread training and use of sign language interpreters in public gatherings and for the broadcast media.

Education

The availability of quality education for persons with disabilities is a major factor that has implications for their life direction and by extension, the overall quality of life for persons with disabilities. Children with disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago are currently educated within thirteen public special schools and fourteen private special schools, which are funded by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. In addition to the special education schools, there has also been the placement of some students with disabilities in the mainstream schools where efforts have been made to provide the appropriate environment for the student. Private institutions, as well as, Early Childhood Centres have also been increasing their intake of

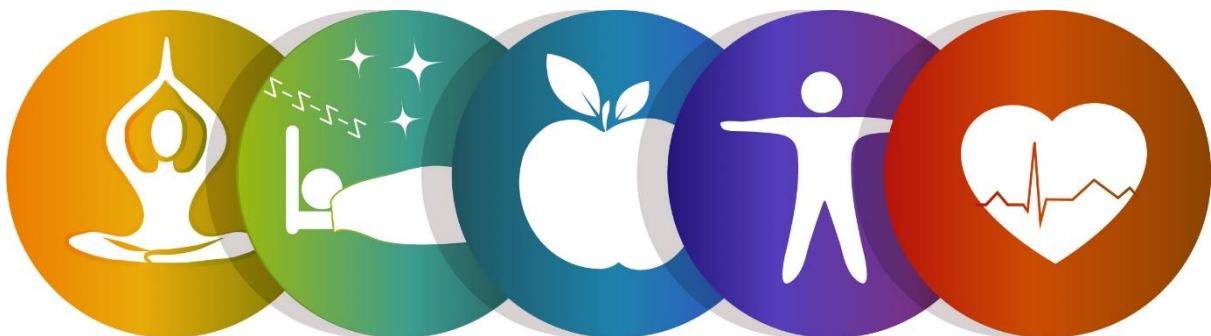
persons with disabilities. Tertiary institutions have also established units dedicated to providing the required supports and accommodations for their students with disabilities. Teacher training and certification are currently available in the area of Special Education and provision has also been made to ensure that programmes offered in education comprise a component that addresses disability. These efforts have resulted in some improvements in the delivery of education to students with disabilities and have also served to highlight the need for a more holistic approach to facilitating and fostering an environment that delivers inclusive education to persons with disabilities. The achievement of inclusion in education in Trinidad and Tobago will require focus on a range of areas which include, but are not limited to, the issue of access, increased specialised personnel and training, emphasis on curriculum delivery and increased resources for assessment. The Ministry of Education is also currently working on the Draft Education Policy Paper (2017-2022) which is expected to address these issues in seeking to provide access to a high quality education for all persons.

Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies

A National Register for Persons with disabilities is proposed and one of its objectives will be to assist in efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of persons with disabilities, in the event of emergencies. Additionally, it will ensure the documentation of persons with disabilities within the society which can assist with the development and implementation of relevant services and programmes for persons with disabilities.

Health

The Ministry of Health continues to provide services to citizens, including persons living with disabilities. There is also the availability of some therapy services and emphasis continues to be placed on the importance of nutrition and prevention in maternity care in public health administration. Pre-natal, genetic screening services for disability are more readily available



in private institutions and need to be more easily accessible in the public health care system. Overall, more structured services are required.

Work and Employment

The Occupation, Health and Safety Act, Chap. 88:08 (as amended), addresses the safety of all persons within the workplace and will require some amendments to address the specific needs of workers with disabilities.

While there have also been previous efforts which sought to provide employment, training and opportunities for persons with disabilities, there is need for a multi-faceted approach to the employment of persons with disabilities. To ensure success and sustainability in this regard requires raising awareness among employers, greater emphasis being placed on collaboration with persons with disabilities, extensive research, conceptualisation of project ideas, and sustainability of initiatives.

Adequate standard of living and social protection

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago continues to provide various grants including the Disability Assistance grant. In 2019, the Disability Assistance grant was increased from eighteen hundred dollars (\$1800.00) to two thousand dollars (\$2000.00) monthly. In the fiscal period 2017-2018, the Grant was received by 23,370 persons. Also, in 2019, a Disability grant for children was introduced to give children under eighteen years of age fifteen hundred dollars (\$1500.00) per month. This Grant replaced the Special Child grant which was of a lower monetary value. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services also provides other grants which can be accessed by persons with disabilities. These other grants include the Medical Equipment grant, Pharmaceutical grant, Prosthetic grant, as well as dietary, housing and clothing grants. Additionally, the Sowing Empowerment through Entrepreneurial Development (SEED) grant is provided to vulnerable persons to undertake small business initiatives or engage in skills training. The level of these grants, in some instances, does not ensure an adequate standard of living when the costs associated with having a disability are considered. These grants may require periodic reviews to ensure they are in keeping with the cost of living of the population.

Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

- Participation for persons with disabilities in sport has been occurring in a more formalised context through hosted games and competitions specifically for persons with disabilities. These events previously occurred through the provision of financial assistance to the Trinidad and Tobago Blind Cricket Association, the Special Olympics and the Paralympics Association of Trinidad and Tobago. In addition, access to stadia and sporting complexes still remain a challenge in terms of gaining entrance and availability of appropriate seating provisions. There have been and continue to be efforts to make the appropriate modifications, however there is a recognised need for more collaboration with persons with disabilities in order to ensure that these efforts are effectively instituted.
- The opportunity for participation in cultural life, recreation and leisure has improved over the past few years, through governmental and private sector efforts. Entrances to social venues, open spaces for leisure, entertainment establishments have shown varying levels of improvements. There is however, significant need to improve the level of access and greater effort will allow better opportunities for persons with disabilities to be able to engage more fully in public spaces and environments.

While it is evident that there is the commitment to continuously assess and improve service delivery to persons with disabilities, ratification of the UNCRPD by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is a further indication of the level of its commitment to the improvement of the current status of persons with disabilities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

It is recognised that national policy development is necessary and critical to fully recognise the rights of all persons with disabilities and to support the organisations that serve them.

The objectives of the Policy are to:

- Protect and promote the human rights of all persons with disabilities;
- Provide a framework which will guide the development of public policy to incorporate disability related issues;
- Eliminate marginalisation of, and discrimination against all persons with disabilities ensuring effective access to justice;
- Empower persons with disabilities and their families to participate in discussions on the implementation of disability related initiatives;
- Provide national direction for greater inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in social, educational, cultural, economic and recreational aspects of society;
- Reinforce institutions and establish additional facilities to enhance provision of services to persons with disabilities;
- Provide the atmosphere for the participation of persons with disabilities in the decision-making and implementation process;
- Create a barrier-free environment to allow for independent functioning of persons with disabilities.

GENERAL/FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, having ratified the UNCRPD, must demonstrate a commitment to its fundamental principles and to ensuring that these principles are upheld. These principles include:

- Non-discrimination;
- Accessibility;
- Equality of opportunity;
- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy, including the freedom to make one's own choices and independence of persons;
- Equality between men and women;
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
- Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.



POLICY DIRECTION

The National Policy will reflect the operational articles of the UNCRPD and it is envisaged that it will ultimately be the guide for ensuring that there is full and equal enjoyment of rights for persons with disabilities. In acknowledgement of measures that must be implemented in order to bring the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in line with the Convention standards and best practices, as well as, to foster an environment where the rights of persons with disabilities are upheld, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago will pursue the directives outlined in this Policy document. The measures highlighted in the Policy vary in the level of implementation that is required and for this reason will be implemented over short, medium and long- term periods by the respective Ministries and all other relevant stakeholders.



INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND LEGISLATION

There is presently limited legislation that effectively provides protection for persons with disabilities. The legislation which presently exists is inadequate and does not provide the required support for persons with disabilities as articulated in Article 4 of the Convention. In this regard, there is the need for a legislative framework to be put in place. There is also the need to address elements of legislation which require review and amendment as they can be

considered as discriminatory towards persons with disabilities. The Equal Opportunity Act, Chap. 22:03 is currently the only piece of legislation specifically referencing the rights of persons with disabilities. Legislative changes will be required in many areas including those related to laws governing accessibility, employment, education, health and rehabilitation. Given that all legislation will have some level of impact on the lives of persons with disabilities a comprehensive legislative review will be required. The development of new legislative measures will also be critical in order to effectively uphold the rights of persons with disabilities. Government will therefore be working towards a robust legislative framework to adequately address the present gaps and weaknesses.

In order to ensure the successful implementation of the policy initiatives there must be appropriate institutional arrangements which will foster the right conditions for effective implementation of the Policy. In this regard, it is imperative that mechanisms and systems are in place. Legislation is therefore required to protect persons with disabilities and ensure that they can enjoy their rights and fundamental freedoms. This will be accomplished through:

- Identification and amendment of legislation which contains discriminatory provisions;
- Enactment of new legislation to fill the existing gaps;
- Improvement of additional access to courts;
- Improvements to ensure equitable access to service delivery, consumer complaint mechanisms and institutions;
- Enforcement of the accessibility guidelines as outlined in the “Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities,” to support directives for modification of public buildings (where possible) to ensure universal access;
- Review of all relevant legislation to ensure equal recognition before the law for persons with disabilities, inclusive of persons with psychosocial disabilities, in order to prevent discrimination and denial of the right to legal capacity;
- Enforcement of all laws, inclusive of provision of mandated access to buildings and other infrastructure; and
- A system of recourse for non-compliance of the recommendations outlined in this Policy.

AWARENESS-RAISING

Article 8 of the UNCRPD mandates the raising of awareness with emphasis on addressing negative stereotypes and prejudice and the promotion of the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities within the society. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago will be the leading body that will undertake the implementation of strategic actions to address the negative attitudes and beliefs that influence people's behaviour and affect persons with disabilities. There will be provision for support in the areas of planning and implementation, advocacy and outreach, funding, human resources, and a continued collaborative approach between Government, the private sector and organisations of and for persons with disabilities. The following measures will be taken to raise awareness:

- Development and implementation of a structured national disability awareness campaign to be conducted across all sectors of the society;
- Sensitisation of media on disability related topics and the use of the appropriate terms;
- Promotion of attitude change based on the human rights approach to disability;
- Targeted programming at all levels of the educational system to promote awareness of the inclusion and capabilities of persons with disabilities;
- Development and delivery of awareness programmes to build capacity among persons with disabilities and their organisations.

ACCESSIBILITY

Article 9 of the UNCRPD relates not only to equal access to the physical environment and removing physical barriers, but also to the ability to access, on an equal basis as others, services, facilities, transportation, information and communications technologies and systems that are available to the public.



Access to the Built Environment

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to collaboration with ministerial bodies, civil society and the private sector to ensure implementation of measures

geared towards identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility in all physical spaces such as indoor and outdoor facilities, buildings, roads and housing. This will be achieved through:

- Enactment of the appropriate legislation for mandatory use of the standards identified in the Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities guidelines for public institutions, and new and restoration projects;
- Conduct of accessibility audits of all government buildings, public buildings and infrastructure;
- Promotion of the use of the standards identified in the accessibility standards document titled “Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities,” in relation to the construction of and major buildings such as hospitals, police stations and government buildings; curbs, ramps, pathways, corridors, elevators, and bathroom facilities;
- Incorporation of the accessibility standards into the National Building Code;
- Establishment of monitoring mechanisms to determine compliance with implemented standards.

Access to Housing

The provision of adequate housing is integral to the economic and social inclusion of persons with disabilities. Therefore, housing with the appropriate design specification must be available to meet the particular needs of people with disabilities. In this regard, it would be appropriate to adopt the concept of 'Universal



Design' in all housing developments to ensure accessibility for all persons with disabilities. The additional aim would be to make housing more accessible and affordable for persons with disabilities. In an effort to reduce discrimination and allow persons with disabilities to access housing and enjoy independent living, the following measures would be undertaken:

- Review of the existing governmental policies on housing and land provision to explore ways of better facilitating the needs of persons with disabilities;

- Implementation of processes to facilitate modification of houses in cases of acquired disabilities;
- Review of existing accommodation, constructed or provided, for persons with disabilities to ensure adequate design specifications;
- Review of the process of allocation and quotas for housing available to persons with disabilities.

Access to Transportation

Access to an adequate and reliable transportation service is of paramount importance, in order to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to travel in their chosen mode of transportation. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to the



implementation of specific measures so that persons with disabilities have equal access to transportation to ensure inclusion, independent living and personal mobility, as articulated in Articles 19 and 20. In this regard, the following will be undertaken:

- Development of a public transportation service that is fully accessible to persons with disabilities inclusive of measures for the Deaf and hard of hearing;
- Development of sensitisation campaigns and training for specialised staff, caregivers and other persons who interact directly with persons with disabilities in the use of public transport;
- Ensuring inter-island transport and facilities are appropriately suited to accommodate persons with disabilities;
- Introduction of a disability parking permit system to ensure disability parking is utilised only by persons with disabilities;
- Provision of an efficient specialised public transport service to facilitate the needs of persons with more specific transportation requirements;

- Introduction of exemptions to facilitate independent living for persons with disabilities, through purchase of transferrable implements and retrofitting of vehicles which they have purchased.

Access to Information and Communication

When information and communication technology is accessible and affordable, it can significantly improve inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of the society.



Every effort would therefore be made to ensure that information is accessible to persons with disabilities, to enhance their opportunity for personal and professional development. It would therefore be necessary to incorporate universal design principles in communication to make information and communication more accessible to persons with disabilities. In order to facilitate greater access to information and communication by persons with disabilities, the following will be pursued:

- Phased upgrades to ensure that libraries, educational institutions and governmental offices provide information and material in an accessible format to persons with disabilities;
- Encouragement of the private sector entities to make their information more accessible to persons with disabilities;
- Review of existing Government ICT Policy towards adopting appropriate accessibility guidelines for providing ICT services for persons with disabilities;
- Review of the provision of tax incentives for ICT devices and for assistive technology;
- Development of a national communication plan to facilitate all forms of communication including braille, augmentative and alternative means of communications;
- Collaboration with the deaf community on the implementation of national Sign language;
- Training in Sign language for identified employees within the various Ministries;
- Government led initiative to ensure the implementation of all forms of accessibility, including use of sign language interpreters, to disseminate information on government-owned television broadcasts;

- Government will encourage media outlets to also implement appropriate methods of delivery that allow for access by persons with disabilities.

Access to Technical Aids and Equipment

Persons with disabilities must have the necessary support to access technical aids and equipment that would contribute to their mobility and access to all the amenities, services and activities that impact their quality of life. It is necessary to ensure that there are mechanisms to enable greater access to affordable prosthetic, assistive or adaptive devices, medical devices, and all related services. In order to facilitate access to technical aids and equipment, the following would be implemented:

- Development of programmes in conjunction with relevant agencies to provide technical aids and equipment at a subsidised cost to persons with disabilities as well as training in how to use these devices to the fullest capacity;
- Provision of greater access to teaching aids, learning software and adaptive devices and materials;
- Provision of tax exemptions to facilitate the purchase of equipment and technological devices to be used for communication, education and independent living.



EDUCATION

In order for persons with disabilities to participate fully in their environment, there must be equal opportunity for education, training of equal standard to peers, and the promotion of inclusion in schools. As indicated in Article 24, access to education, from primary level, for persons with disabilities, must be inclusive and should cater to the varied requirements of persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, the Ministry of Education and other relevant Ministries and stakeholders, will seek to partner in the effective implementation of all initiatives with respect to lifelong learning for persons with disabilities. In order to promote their right to education without discrimination the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago commits to the following:

- Ensuring that the appropriate legislation is in place to ensure an inclusive education system which does not discriminate against persons with disabilities, but enables participation in mainstream education at all levels, from primary to tertiary levels, inclusive of adult education;
- Reviewing and ensuring adequate allocation of the appropriate resources for physical, information and communication accessibility, funding and delivery of inclusive education for students with disabilities;

- Reviewing and restructuring of delivery of the national curriculum to ensure that it is inclusive for persons with disabilities;
- Ensure availability of pre-school access to Sign language;
- Reviewing of training programmes to ensure required skills in early identification, and intervention strategies for students;
- Review and modification of the process for access to scholarships to ensure equality of opportunities for persons with disabilities
- Implementation of adequate measures to ensure children with disabilities who require education in special schools are provided with the appropriate staff, equipment and trained personnel;
- Incorporation of life and development skills, peer support, and individualised support measures to facilitate the holistic needs of students with disabilities;
- Provision of adequate and appropriate professional support staff, assessment services and use of Individualised Educational Plans for all students with disabilities at primary and secondary level;
- Delivery of comprehensive pre-service training programmes and identified in-service training to equip educators to meet the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities;
- Ensuring continuous skills upgrade to ensure teachers are equipped with current strategies relevant to teaching and learning for persons with various disabilities;
- Ensuring that the recruitment process for employment in education is fair and provides opportunities for persons with disabilities to become staff members, educators and administrators;
- Provision of accessible technical and vocational training;
- Provision of access to a team of professionals with the ability to assess, recommend and provide required interventions for students with disabilities.



WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

Article 27 of the UNCRPD recognises that persons with disabilities have the right to decent work. In this regard, the intention is to facilitate their participation in the labour market. The objective is for persons with disabilities to enjoy equality of opportunity and treatment in respect to being able to earn a living and be accepted in the workplace. In addition, there must also be the opportunity to earn equal pay on an equal basis with other employees. The Government will uphold the rights of persons with disabilities to employment through:

- Review and amendment of existing legislation relevant to employment that may be discriminatory to persons with disabilities;
- Enactment of legislation to give effect to the International Labour Organization Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention (No. 159);
- Legislative measures to ensure equal opportunity for employment, promotion and pay in the workplace and in the labour market;
- Implementation of systems and procedures to protect persons with disabilities from discrimination and harassment in the workplace;
- Awareness programmes with employers on the provision of accessible information, and the incorporation of reasonable accommodations, for persons with disabilities inclusive of those to support employees with mental disabilities.
- Conduct of periodic consultations with employers, civil society organisations and training institutes to facilitate informed decision making for employment initiatives;

- Implementation of measures to prevent or reduce discrimination in recruitment, interviewing, work environment and access to aids and required equipment;
- Collaboration with employers in the public and private sectors and persons with disabilities to increase employment opportunities;
- Encouragement of affirmative action to ensure persons with disabilities who have the required skills and qualifications are given an opportunity for employment;
- Promotion of access to opportunities for self-employment;
- Raising awareness among employers and employees on the development of return to work programmes and rehabilitative measures for job retention of persons who acquire a disability while employed;
- Review of the Occupational Safety and Health Act to ensure the Act does not contain discriminatory guidelines;
- Provision of vocational and entrepreneurial training.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Women with disabilities are frequently impacted by both their gender and their disability, resulting in even greater challenges. Discrimination on the basis of gender and disability is prevalent across all sectors. Their



access to education, employment, income generating options, micro-entrepreneurship opportunities and vocational training are limited due to discrimination and unfair societal stereotypes. In addition, women with disabilities are sometimes limited when it comes to the issue of accessibility to services.

As indicated in Article 6 and 7 of the UNCRPD, women with disabilities and children with disabilities are often faced with instances of multiple discrimination and multiple types of abuse. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to the

protecting of the rights of women and children with disabilities and ensuring that the interests of the child will be a primary focus. The following will be undertaken:

Children with Disabilities

- Ensuring that children with disabilities are protected against sexual abuse and all forms of abuse and exploitation and are provided the opportunity for care and security in all environments;
- Measures to ensure that the rights of children with disabilities are upheld through provision of an adequate and enabling environment that fosters development with dignity;
- Ensure there is equality in the systems, services and supports for children to enjoy equal opportunities and full participation;
- Place emphasis on provision of all necessary requirements to ensure equality and care for children with severe disabilities;
- Provision of clear remedies and protocols for assessing and addressing investigation of violence and abuse violations against children with disabilities.

Women with Disabilities

- Measures to protect women with disabilities from discrimination, exploitation, sexual abuse and other forms of abuse;
- Conduct of public awareness programmes on violence and abuse of women;
- Ensuring that sexual and reproductive services are delivered in a manner appropriate to the needs of women with disabilities;
- Ensuring that all public programmes and services provide the opportunity for women with disabilities to access education, training, health services, micro-entrepreneurship, vocational training and employment;
- Ensuring that social service agencies and other organisations providing services to women acquire the required awareness training on issues faced by women with disabilities.

HEALTH

Persons with disabilities require the same general health care as everyone else and in some cases may require additional health care in order to prevent occurrences of secondary disabilities. Article 25 of the UNCRPD reinforces the right of persons with disabilities to access the “highest standard of health care, without discrimination.” In addition, the World Health

Organisation outlines several approaches required for providing effective health care for persons with disabilities. It is important that there is access to the required facilities and services and in this context, the following will be undertaken:

- Reviewing the current early detection, assessment and early intervention practices, and programmes to determine their effectiveness and address any gaps that may exist;
- Developing the appropriate health and disability laws to ensure that the principles of the Convention are upheld;
- Assessing of health centres to ensure the system allows for inclusion of persons with disabilities (Short-Medium);
- Ensure access to mental health services within all health centres;
- Engaging in discussion to address discriminatory insurance (health and life insurance) practices toward persons with disabilities in order to develop a comprehensive system;
- Provision of required personnel and accommodations to facilitate direct communication between health care professionals and patients with visual and hearing impairments;
- Expanding health care services with special priority placed on ensuring that persons with disabilities can access basic and specialised medical care in both urban and rural communities;
- Raising awareness in relation to free and informed consent for health services;
- Reviewing screening programmes for babies and children between birth and the age of 5 years old;
- Ensuring that services related to sexual and reproductive health are delivered in an appropriate and effective manner;
- Ensuring that health care providers at all levels are provided with knowledge and training to ensure an understanding of disability;
- Training programmes to enhance the capacity of health care professionals to provide quality service to persons with disabilities;
- Conducting preventative awareness programmes in communities;
- Continuing to provide public education and counselling in pre-natal, maternal, child health care and family planning at public health clinics;
- Providing access to prenatal genetic screening in the public health system;

- Implementing programmes which utilise a community based approach in relation to prevention of disabilities;
- Ensuring the provision of mental health services within all community health centres.



HABILITATION AND REHABILITATION

There is a commitment to providing persons with disabilities with quality and affordable health care, including early identification and intervention, and services designed to minimise and prevent further disabilities. There will also be a focus on implementing measures to enable persons with disabilities to access services and programmes which allow for a level of independent participation and inclusion as articulated in Article 26 of the Convention. The Government is committed to:



- Developing a programme to provide both urban and rural rehabilitation and counselling services within community health centres;
- Establishing a multi-purpose Government-owned rehabilitation services facility;
- Implementing systems to ensure early intervention of rehabilitation for children with disabilities;
- Increasing the number of scholarships to eligible citizens to pursue education and training in Speech and language therapy, Sign language interpreting and Deaf education Occupational and other required therapies;
- Developing a database of health care professionals in the local health care system to assist in the provision of specialised care and therapy services inclusive of Physical Therapy, Occupational, Speech therapy, Physiotherapy, Audiological rehabilitation and other required therapies;

- Developing programmes that encourage the involvement of families and communities in the rehabilitation process;
- Engaging in the necessary research to ensure that the level of rehabilitation care is continuously being improved;
- Engaging in strategies to ensure that the appropriate assistive technologies and required equipment used in the rehabilitation process are of a high standard and effective in the rehabilitative care of persons with disabilities.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Access to justice for persons with disabilities is expected to be on an equal basis with others and is required to be as effective in its delivery to persons with disabilities. Article 13 of the UNCRPD indicates the need for effective and appropriate procedures, training and accommodations to be made available to persons with disabilities. This requires that all areas of the justice system be structured to provide appropriate mechanisms that allow for access and use by persons with disabilities. In order to achieve this and to create a more inclusive system that will accommodate various needs, it is necessary to undertake the following:

- Enactment of the relevant legislative changes to ensure equal opportunity for participation of persons with disabilities within all levels of the justice system;
- Ensure that changes are implemented to facilitate persons with disabilities with the appropriate means of identifying perpetrators of crime;
- Establishment of written procedures to ensure equitable and humane treatment of accused persons with disabilities;
- Development and execution of training programmes on disability discrimination issues for persons working in the field of administration of justice, including legal and judicial officers and the protective services;
- Enhancement of services through use of assistive technology, live assistance, Sign language interpreters and required accommodations necessary to facilitate persons with varying disabilities.



EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Persons with disabilities are often deeply impacted by inequalities in treatment and opportunities. These go against the tenets of the UNCRPD which emphasise the human rights of persons with disabilities and the need for them to be seen as equal under the law. Article 5 of the Convention states that all persons “are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law.” In recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities to be treated equally and to protect persons with disabilities from discrimination the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago commits to:

- Amending all legislation which infringes on the policy of equal rights and recognition;
- Developing and implementing programmes which focus on informing and empowering persons with disabilities about their rights;
- Establishing a representative ombudsman to intervene in disability related issues;
- Developing training on the issue of disability discrimination;
- Ensuring mental health laws are updated to protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

RIGHT TO LIFE

Article 10 states that, “every human being has the inherent right to life” and the State parties must do all that is necessary to ensure enjoyment of life by persons with disabilities. The right to life guarantees that persons with disabilities also have to be given the opportunity to live and be provided the necessary requirements to have their lives protected. In acknowledgement of this right and with the commitment to ensure that persons with disabilities have the right to life and to the enjoyment of said life, the Government will:

- Develop and amend legislation, policies and programmes aimed at protecting life for persons with disabilities;

- Implement the appropriate measures which will provide equitable protection to prevent loss of life;
- Develop strict investigative protocols for loss of life of persons with disabilities in both state and private facilities.

PERSONAL MOBILITY

Article 20 of the UNCRPD highlights the need for measures to be put in place to facilitate the personal mobility of persons with disabilities in the manner, at the time of their choice, and at affordable cost and in an effective manner. Personal mobility is one of the factors which helps to create a greater sense of independence and empowerment for persons with disabilities



and impacts the level at which they are able to feel more connected to their environments and more involved in their communities. The Government will foster the empowerment of persons with disabilities through:

- Engaging in the appropriate partnerships to make aids, assistive technology and required devices affordable and accessible to all persons with disabilities;
- Establishing partnerships with providers to make mobility aids more affordable for persons with disabilities;
- Enhancing services and environs to facilitate personal mobility;
- Capacity building of professionals in the teaching of mobility skills.

EQUAL RECOGNITION BEFORE THE LAW

Persons with disabilities have a right to be equally recognised before the law. Article 12 requires that State Parties must give equal recognition before the law to persons with disabilities, in this regard, they have the right to legal capacity, safeguards to exercise these rights and shall not be deprived of the



benefits that this equal recognition entails. This is critical as there has been a tendency to restrict and sometimes remove the legal capacity of persons with disabilities. This restriction often hinders the opportunity for them to make decisions about their own lives and can significantly impact their life direction. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago will therefore undertake the following:

- Reviewing of all legislation to ensure the right to equal recognition before the law for persons with all forms of disabilities;
- Ensuring that systems such as the justice system are designed to appropriately facilitate the needs of persons with disabilities in order to prevent unfair denial of legal capacity;
- Implementing measures to ensure that persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities are given the required assessments before there is any denial of legal capacity;
- Enacting legislation which would allow for supported decision-making for persons suitably assessed as having limited legal capacity;
- Ensuring there are outlined procedures to address infringement of rights and recourse for such infringement;
- Developing training programmes to foster greater person-centred planning in order to help persons with disabilities feel more empowered in exercising their legal capacity.

LIBERTY OF MOVEMENT AND NATIONALITY

The ability for persons with disabilities to travel and be able to experience other countries is equally as important as for other persons who may not have a disability. Article 18 states that persons with disabilities also have the freedom to choose their residence and should not be deprived in any way in trying to obtain and possess the required documentation for such movement. In addition, receiving necessary documentation to facilitate such movement is dependent on having the provisions made to allow for this important equal access to persons with disabilities. Measures to address these limitations and to facilitate equal treatment in terms of movement and nationality will include:

- Ensuring that the Immigration act is reviewed and amended to eliminate any discriminatory screening processes;
- Reviewing the application process for travel documents to ensure accessibility;
- Ongoing awareness training for officers employed at the various entry points and for personnel involved in the facilitation of travel documents;
- Ensuring that immigration offices are suitably designed and located to permit access for persons with varying disabilities.

LIBERTY AND SECURITY OF PERSON

It is important to take serious consideration of the challenges presented for persons with disabilities as they relate to depriving them of liberty and restricting their rights through arbitrary detention. Persons with disabilities are also faced with the additional issue of trying to demand and receive these rights in order to ensure that they are not unjustly treated. In accordance with Article 14 there should be no deprivation of liberty and the presence of a disability cannot be advanced as the reason for such deprivation. In order to fulfil our commitment to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy the right to liberty and security of person, the following will be implemented:

- Mandating that the detention of persons with disabilities should be on an equal basis as relates to other persons and with appropriate safeguards;
- Establishing efficient systems to prevent arbitrary detention of persons with disabilities;
- Ensuring mechanisms are in place for protection of person with mental health conditions who are detained;
- Providing support services to ensure a fair hearing for persons with disabilities.



PROTECTING THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON

Persons with disabilities must be given respect to protect their minds and bodies in the same ways as other persons are allowed to as articulated in Article 17 which states “every person with disabilities has a right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity on an equal basis with others.” This requires that emphasis be placed on ensuring that both their physical and mental integrity is protected, the Government will therefore:

- Develop and implement quality assurance programmes and strengthen monitoring systems for all types of institutions and facilities which provide care to persons with disabilities;
- Implement measures to strengthen human rights monitoring mechanisms for older persons with disabilities in state institutions or residing in group residential care facilities;
- Collaborate with the relevant ministry to spread awareness on the issue of legal capacity and informed consent;
- Ensure ongoing educational and awareness programmes for police officers to ensure adequate skills in interaction, arrest or detention of persons with mental disabilities;
- Provide sensitisation and training to ensure that legal and judicial staff are equipped to provide the adequate requirements to protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

RESPECT FOR PRIVACY

This issue of privacy for persons with disabilities relates to personal issues, issues related to their health, information related to conduct of their personal affairs and even details of their finances. The issue is sometimes difficult to address because persons with visual and other

impairments may in some instances require the assistance of another individual. This however does not negate the fact that ultimately, as for all individuals, persons with disabilities have the right to determine the conditions under which their personal information is shared. Article 22 identifies the importance of privacy in correspondence, communication and personal information. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago will therefore place emphasis on:

- Conducting public education on the importance of clearly written and specific disability policy by organisations and businesses which deal with personal information of persons with disabilities;
- Partnering with persons with disabilities and their organisations on awareness campaigns to highlight the right to privacy for persons with disabilities;
- Raising awareness on the necessity to protect personal data including medical and financial data;
- Raising awareness on the need for consent in relation to the sharing of personal data;
- Engaging in public campaigns to educate citizens on the rights of persons who have the capability to make their own personal decisions without intervention.

RESPECT FOR HOME AND THE FAMILY

There is often the misconception that persons with disabilities do not desire or need to have a family and this belief has been one of the stereotypes held in relation to persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities however, do have the desire to share their lives with a partner, have children and engage in family life. In acknowledgement and respect for home and family as outlined in Article 23, the following will be undertaken:



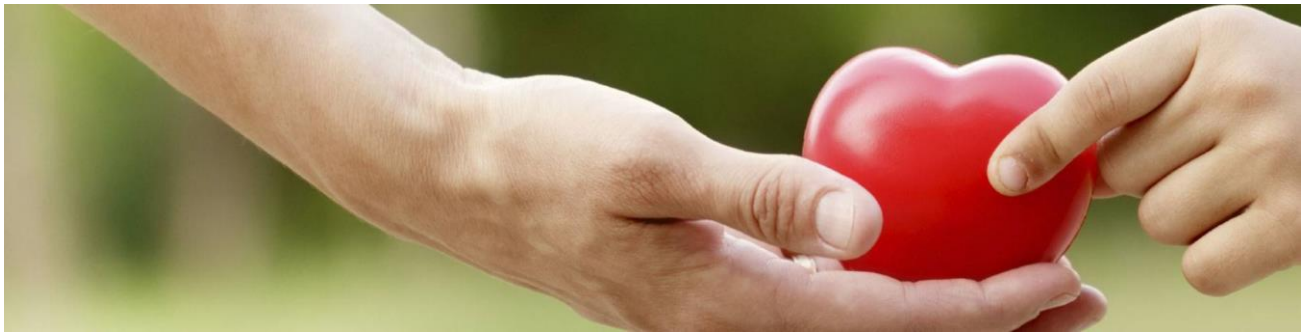
- Collaboration with other entities which provide support for family life;
- Public education on respecting and facilitating rights of freedom to pursue family life;
- All agencies with responsibility for reproductive health and rights to provide programmes and information in a format that is accessible to persons with disabilities;
- Empowerment of families that choose to care for persons with disabilities in the home;

- Ensure persons with disabilities have the same level of access to organisations that provide support for family life;
- Engage in a public awareness drive to encourage elimination of discrimination on matters such as relationships and family life;
- Raise awareness on sexual and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities;
- Ensure that the adoption and foster care processes are not discriminatory to persons with disabilities.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE OR CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

Persons with disabilities face many forms of torture and inhumane treatment within the home and also within residential institutions. Many persons with mental disabilities are often forced to endure forced medical treatment or treatment that severely limits their ability to engage in basic activities, as well as, being forced to endure other treatments that may severely hamper their cognitive ability. Many other persons with disabilities are also subject to extensive confinement, taunting and denial of basic rights. These are in violation of Article 15, which states that persons with disabilities must not be subjected to such treatment and the State parties must ensure “legislative, administrative, judicial and other measures” to prevent or address such treatment. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago will therefore:

- Ensure the appropriate legislation is in place to protect persons with disabilities from torture and cruel acts;
- Place emphasis on ensuring that there is a systematic process for anonymous reporting of degrading treatment of persons with disabilities;
- Implement an inspectorate body assigned to inspect and report on all care facilities for persons with disabilities;
- Provide training for social workers to enhance their skills in investigating instances of mistreatment;
- Develop measures to specifically address homeless persons with disabilities in order to protect them from cruel treatment.



FREEDOM FROM EXPLOITATION, VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

Instances of violence, abuse and exploitation are frequently committed against persons with disabilities. In addition, there is often a high level of physical and sexual abuse and other forms of abuse such as financial and emotional abuse. Article 16 of the UNCRPD emphasises that State parties must therefore ensure that the required measures are put in place to prevent such treatment of persons with disabilities. To achieve this, the following will be implemented:

- Development of appropriate programmes and material on prevention of violence and abuse on persons with disabilities;
- Enactment or amendments to ensure appropriate legislative, administrative, social and other required measures that will lead to protection of persons with disabilities in and out of the home;
- Appropriate systems are put in place to prevent, identify and investigate instances of abuse;
- Ensure that systems are put in place for holistic support for persons with disabilities who are victims of exploitation, violence and abuse;
- Development of written protocols on provision of alternative accommodation for persons subjected to abuse in homes or institutions;
- Independent bodies to monitor effectiveness of programmes which addresses violence and abuse of persons with disabilities in order to ensure their effectiveness;
- Structured state programmes to address the issue of psychological recovery from abuse;
- Community outreach to ensure a sense of wider support and protection of persons with disabilities residing in the community;
- Provision of information to empower persons with disabilities to be able to identify abuse;

- Outreach to sensitise law enforcement on the provisions that may be necessary in handling reports of abuse of persons with disabilities;
- Enhance the capacity of communities and organisations to recognise persons with disabilities who are being exploited and abused.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION OPINION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Persons with disabilities have opinions and can make valuable contributions to society through their input. In order for this to occur there must be an available



means to do so. Article 21 indicates that there must be the freedom to seek and give opinion and access information in a form of communication of their choice. To facilitate this process requires making the necessary changes as articulated in Article 9 and will additionally require the following additional measures:

- Implementation of a national peer support programme to encourage and empower persons with disabilities to engage in greater self-representation;
- Implementation of the required communication systems to allow persons with disabilities to freely seek and receive important information by way of their required form of communication;
- Ensuring that all public institutions can facilitate information queries and complaints through multiple means.

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY AND BEING INCLUDED IN THE COMMUNITY

Independent living is one of the ways in which persons with disabilities become more empowered to have control over their lives and day to day living. Article 19 encourages independent living and for persons with disabilities it provides the opportunity to make day to day decisions and engage in community life which can foster a greater sense of being true participants in the society. In this regard, following will be undertaken:

- Improve accessibility to community development programmes and community facilities;

- Provision of equal opportunities for enjoyment of social and cultural life within the community;
- Establishment of partnerships with trained professionals to ensure provision of support services to enhance independent living;
- Collaboration towards implementation of banknotes with tactile features;
- Encouragement of community involvement among persons with disabilities and other community members;
- Development of daily living skills programmes to help persons with disabilities feel more empowered to live independent lives;
- Development of a wide cadre of professionals trained to provide personal assistance in the home and community as required.

PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL AND PUBLIC LIFE

Participation in political and public life is a means of ensuring that persons with disabilities play a role in the exercise of their right to vote and also to be elected to serve their country. This participation is also facilitated through the provisions made in many other areas of the Policy including equal recognition before the law, accessibility and education. Being part of this process ensures that there are increased opportunities to aspire towards a career or some level of participation in political and in public life. This can be achieved through the relevant legal, social and physical changes. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago will engage in:

- Ensuring that there is physical and informational access to allow participation in the electoral process and other public roles;
- Developing written procedures for proxy and independent voting;
- Facilitating training for election officers and all staff involved in the political process;
- Ensuring availability of enough technical aids in order to limit third party involvement;
- Ensuring adequate support services to facilitate an appropriate voting process;
- Providing political documentation and literature in accessible format;
- Ensuring that there is physical access to parliament and provision of information in a manner that is accessible to persons with disabilities;
- Ensuring that there is physical access to polling stations, representative offices and venues for political events;
- Implementing procedures that allow for individual support in both houses of parliament.

PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL LIFE, RECREATION, LEISURE AND SPORT

Being able to live, work and enjoy leisure activities is equally as important for persons with disabilities and their families. Engaging in these activities enhances physical and mental well-being and provides the opportunity to interact with others and feel a true sense of belonging. In addition, it provides the opportunity to discover and enhance capabilities and skills. To ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy the rights to which they are entitled under Article 30 the following will be done:

- Ensuring that places for recreation, cultural activities, sports, hotels, beaches and facilities and other public spaces are equipped with facilities, signage and trained personnel to accommodate persons with disabilities;
- Providing opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in mainstream sporting activities;
- Ensuring that sporting facilities and information is accessible for persons with disabilities;
- Partnering with the Ministry with responsibility for sport administration to ensure accessibility to facilities;
- Ensuring that information is accessible in public recreational spaces and at cultural and sporting events;
- Increasing support for athletes with disabilities participating in the Special Olympic and Paralympic competitions;
- Ensuring the development of community parks and centres to facilitate persons with disabilities;
- Collaborating with persons with disabilities to ensure that operators of recreational entities are aware of the importance of facilitating the needs of persons with disabilities.

STATISTICS AND DATA COLLECTION

As indicated in Article 31 the State undertakes to “collect appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable it to formulate and implement policies” to give effect to the UNCRPD. This indicates that the issue of data collection and dissemination must be seen as an area of priority as it will be an important factor in the assessment of disability, programme development and effective implementation of the policy initiatives outlined. In order to achieve this, considerable efforts will be taken to ensure that all public institutions are made aware of the importance of collecting such data, and of the need to review their

data and statistics management systems with the view of incorporating disability disaggregation where relevant. The disability dimension must be included in all national census, household, labour and other socio-economic surveys.

All research focusing on the general population within the focus areas covered in this Policy must be disability disaggregated. A national disability research agenda for purposes of policy and programme development and tracking the reduction of inequality, must be developed.

Systems will be strengthened to ensure that all periodic reporting on ratified international treaties of the United Nations include the disability-related obligations and dimensions of the UNCRPD are undertaken. The following will be pursued:

- Ensuring the systems and resources are in place to allow for disability related data collection and dissemination;
- Development of a national disability research agenda for purposes of policy, programme development and tracking the reduction of inequality;
- Ensuring that persons with disabilities can directly participate in the census and standard of living surveys;
- Creating a registry of persons with disabilities to be continuously updated;
- Collaborating with organisations for and of persons with disabilities to ensure a wide reach in accessing persons with disabilities for collection of data;
- Ensuring that collected data is adequately disaggregated by sex and age and other relevant socio-economic categorisations;
- Continuous collection and analysis of data related to assessing socio-economic conditions pertaining to persons with disabilities;
- Placing greater emphasis on data collection on disability specifically among all Government agencies, and Non-Governmental Organisations;
- Implementing systems to ensure data relating to the socio-economic status of persons with disabilities is updated for 5 year intervals;
- Placing emphasis on the use of collected statistics for implementation and improvement of programmes and services for persons with disabilities.

ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Economic security and social protection for persons with disabilities require a comprehensive set of inter-related interventions. Adequate financial resources are needed to cover the additional costs associated with being a person with a disability. A robust arrangement that encompasses income support, access to employment, among other initiatives to facilitate economic sustainability would be critical.

The Government is committed to strengthening social security measures and providing opportunities for income ventures. In order to provide income maintenance and social security for all persons with disabilities, the following initiatives will be implemented:

- Compilation of data through regional corporations to identify and intervene with persons with disabilities who are living without basic amenities;
- Review of existing social protection programmes to assess their adequacy and capacity to adequately meet the needs of persons with disabilities;
- Review of the criteria for persons wishing to access the Disability Assistance Grant with optional review of minimum wage ceiling or review of grant quantum every three to five years;
- Increased and enhanced facilities for greater accessibility to available grants and other forms of funding to pursue sustainable income-generating activities;
- Development of social protection schemes such as school subsidies and health insurance for families living in poverty with children and elderly with disabilities;
- Collaboration with persons with disabilities on the development of national poverty alleviation programmes;
- Partner with international agencies to provide training and grants for income generating initiatives for individuals with disabilities.

SITUATIONS OF RISK AND HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

Persons with disabilities, when compared to the general population, face higher risks in emergency situations and are therefore disproportionately affected by natural and other disasters. Some persons may require special assistance during situations of risk and disaster and as such should be considered a priority for disaster relief intervention.

Disaster management measures would ensure that the special needs of persons with disabilities are adequately addressed prior to and during the recovery phase of a disaster, as this would help to minimize the adverse impact on them and their communities. Accordingly, the following measures will be implemented:

- Development of appropriate mechanisms for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in the National Emergency Management planning arrangements;
- Inter-ministerial committees to identify the various interrelated services required to ensure the range of services available for persons with disabilities in times of disasters;
- Conduct of an evaluation of all existing infrastructure earmarked for use during emergencies to ensure that they are accessible to persons with disabilities;
- Conduct of programmes to inform persons with disabilities on disaster preparedness;
- Development of a pool of volunteers with disability training to be assigned to shelters during disaster events;
- Ensuring that all emergency and disaster management and safety procedures are delivered in a manner, inclusive of visual and audio warnings, to all persons with disabilities;
- Utilisation of a National Registry of Persons with Disabilities to access relevant information for effective use in disaster prevention and management for persons with disabilities;
- Implementation of a review system on disaster management plans from local municipal level to national level to assess the suitability for persons with disabilities;
- Extension of the system of disability mapping to allow for effective disaster management and to aid in evacuation and monitoring during disaster events;
- Implementation of phased disability training for all disaster management personnel to ensure safe evacuations of persons with disabilities;
- Implementation of capacity building programme to ensure the presence of trained staff at local municipal and national disaster management centres;
- Ensuring a cadre of professionals to provide psychosocial support services to all persons as required in disaster events;
- Raising awareness among volunteers and disaster shelter management on provision of appropriate accommodations and support systems;

- Implementation of a system of trained emergency personnel in place to ensure equitable and immediate access to emergency services for persons with disabilities.

LOCAL, REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

It is recognised that, in order to fulfil the commitments to full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in national development, cooperation and collaboration with international development partners would be critical. The sharing of experiences, information and lessons learned would be key to advancing the well-being of persons with disabilities.

To encourage international cooperation and the exchange of information, the following measures would be implemented:

- Strengthen the relationship between Government and local Non-governmental organisations with a view to engagement on all issues related to disability;
- Establish and maintain a comprehensive database and mapping system of persons with disabilities and registered Non-governmental organisations;
- Expand and enhance the existing mechanisms for information sharing and advocacy at regional and international forums;
- Collaboration with other regional nations to further advance the cause of persons with disabilities;
- Encourage and support the exchange of knowledge and expertise among non-governmental organizations, research institutions, professionals and national organisation concerned with persons with disabilities;
- Provision of support for regional and international initiatives to address disability issues;
- Facilitation of capacity-building for organizations of persons with disabilities, including the exchange and sharing of information, experiences, and best practices;
- Exploration of partnerships with, and assistance from international development partners in the implementation of the Policy;
- Ensuring that priority is given to attendance and participation in discussions and forums related to persons with disabilities.

NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

There is a full appreciation of the importance of establishing all the appropriate mechanisms for continuous evaluation and review of policies and programmes pertaining to persons with disabilities, to ensure their continued relevance. Such evaluation and review will seek to foster overall efficacy in meeting the policy objectives.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services will be responsible for coordination of the development of the relevant performance indicators for assessing performance and progress, in keeping with reporting obligations of Article 33 of the UNCRPD.

Mechanisms will be implemented to facilitate the involvement of civil society, in particular, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, in the evaluation and review process and preparation of the relevant national reports. Evaluations will assess relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, and provide information to key stakeholders on the progress of the implementation of the UNCRPD in Trinidad and Tobago. Accordingly, the following would be implemented:

- Establishment of a committee of persons with disabilities, their representative organisations, other members of civil society and representatives of the various implementing Ministries in order to monitor and evaluate compliance with the UNCRPD;
- Capacity building within Government Ministries on disability-related issues;
- Expansion of the national research agenda for disability-related issues;
- Collaboration with the Central Statistical Office, Universities and organizations for and of persons with disabilities to establish data collection mechanisms for disability-related issues;
- Collaboration with organizations for and of persons with disabilities, to help identify and conduct relevant areas of research;
- Continuous assessment of initiatives implemented to address disability issues;
- Generation of the necessary information for satisfying reporting requirements under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- Collaboration with implementing agencies on their role in fulfilling the mandate outlined in the UNCRPD, Sustainable Development Goals as well as the Vision 2030;
- Evaluation of the Policy every five years in order to determine its progress towards compliance with the guidelines outlined in the document as well as the UNCRPD.

ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan will be implemented in phases over the short (0-2 years), medium (3-5 years) and long-term (5-7 years). This implementation will take place through continued collaboration with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations. Some of the initiatives may begin in the specific term and span other time frames, additionally, there will also be several ongoing initiatives.

LEGISLATION

Short-Term

- Review of all relevant legislation to ensure equal recognition before the law for persons with disabilities, inclusive of persons with Psychosocial disabilities, in order to identify areas of discrimination and denial of the right to legal capacity (Short);
- Improvements to ensure equitable access to service delivery, consumer complaint mechanisms and institutions (Short);
- Improvement of additional access to courts (Short);
- Identification and amendment of legislation which contains discriminatory provisions (Short-medium).

Medium-Term

- Enactment of new legislation to fill existing legislative gaps;
- Enforcement of the accessibility guidelines as outlined in the “Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities,” to support directives for modification of public buildings to ensure universal access;
- Enforcement of all laws, inclusive of provision of mandated access to buildings and other infrastructure;
- Provision of a system of recourse for non-compliance of the recommendations outlined in the Policy.

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Ministry of Works and Transport

Ministry of Planning and Development

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

AWARENESS-RAISING

Ongoing

- Development and implementation of a structured national disability awareness campaign to be conducted across all sectors of the society;
- Sensitisation of media on disability related topics and the use of the appropriate terms;
- Targeted programming in the educational system to promote inclusion;
- Promotion of attitude change based on the human rights approach to disability;
- Development and delivery of awareness programmes to build capacity among persons with disabilities and their organisations.

* All awareness raising initiatives will be initiated in the short term and be maintained as ongoing programmes.

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Education

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

ACCESSIBILITY

Access to the Built Environment

Short-Term

- Conduct of accessibility audits of all government buildings, public buildings and infrastructure (Short);
- Promotion of the use of the standards identified in the accessibility standards document titled "Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities," in relation to the construction of curbs, ramps, pathways, corridors, elevators, and bathroom facilities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Engagement in appropriate process to incorporate the accessibility standards into the National Building Code (Short-Medium).

Medium-Term

- Enactment of the appropriate legislation for mandatory use of the standards identified in the Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities for public institutions and new and restoration projects (Medium);
- Establishment of monitoring mechanisms to determine compliance with implemented standards (Medium);
- Upgrade and retrofitting of outdoor environs, public facilities and buildings to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities (Medium-Long).

Access to Housing

Short-Term

- Review of the process of allocation and quotas related to housing for persons with disabilities (Short);
- Implementation of processes to facilitate modification of houses in cases of acquired disabilities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Review of existing accommodation constructed or provided for persons with disabilities to ensure adequate design specifications; (Short-term and ongoing);
- Review of the existing governmental policies on housing and land provision to explore ways of better facilitating the needs of persons with disabilities; (Short-Medium).

Access to Transportation

Short-Term

- Introduction of a disability parking permit system to ensure disability parking is utilised only by persons with disabilities (Short);
- Ensuring inter-island transport and facilities are appropriately suited to accommodate persons with disabilities (Short);
- Development of sensitisation campaigns for specialised staff, caregivers and other persons who interact directly with persons with disabilities who utilise public transport (Short-term and ongoing).

Medium-Term

- Introduction of exemptions for the purchase of transferrable implements and retrofitting of vehicles (Medium);
- Development of a public transportation service that is fully accessible to persons with disabilities inclusive of measures for the Deaf and Hard of hearing (Medium-Long);
- Provision of an efficient specialised public transport service to facilitate the needs of persons with more specific transportation requirements (Medium-Long).

Access to Information and Communication

Short-Term

- Government led initiative to ensure the implementation of all forms of accessibility, including use of sign language interpreters, to disseminate information on government-owned television broadcasts(Short);
- Encouragement of private sector entities to work towards making information more accessible to persons with disabilities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Review of existing Government ICT Policy towards adopting appropriate accessibility guidelines for providing ICT services for persons with disabilities (Short-Medium);
- Review of the provision of tax incentives for ICT devices and for assistive technology (Short-Medium);
- Phased upgrades to ensure that libraries, educational institutions and governmental offices provide information and material in an accessible format to persons with disabilities (Short-Medium);
- Collaboration with the deaf community on the implementation of national Sign language (Short-Medium);
- Training in Sign language for identified employees within the various Ministries of Government (Short-Medium).

Medium-Term

- Development of a national communication plan to facilitate all forms of communication including Braille, augmentative and alternative means of communications (Medium).

Access to Technical Aids and Equipment

Short-Term

- Development of programmes in conjunction with relevant agencies to provide technical aids and equipment at a subsidised cost to persons with disabilities, as well as, training in the use of these devices. (Short-Medium);
- Provision of greater access to teaching aids, learning software and adaptive devices and materials (Short-term and ongoing).

Medium-Term

- Provision of tax exemptions to facilitate the purchase of equipment and technological devices to for use in communication, education and independent living (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Ministry of Works and Transport

Ministry of Planning and Development

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

Ministry of Housing and Urban Development

Ministry of Finance,

Ministry of Education

Ministry of Public Administration and Communication

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

EDUCATION

Short-Term

- Incorporation of life and development skills, peer support, and individualised support measures at all levels of the education system (Short);
- Delivery of comprehensive pre-service training programmes and identified in-service training to equip educators to meet the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities (Short-term and ongoing);

- Provision of adequate and appropriate professional support staff, assessment services and use of Individualised Educational Plans for all students with disabilities at primary and secondary level (Short-term and ongoing);
- Allocation of the appropriate resources for physical and informational accessibility, funding and delivery of inclusive education at all levels (Short-term and ongoing);
- Ensure that the recruitment process for employment in education is fair and provides opportunities for persons with disabilities to become educators and administrators (Short-Medium);
- Review and restructuring of delivery of the national curriculum to ensure that it is inclusive for persons with disabilities (Short-Medium);
- Ensure availability of pre-school access to Sign language (Short-Medium);
- Review process and ensure equality in access to scholarships for persons with disabilities (Short-Medium);
- Review of training programmes to ensure required skills in early identification, and intervention strategies for students (Short-Medium);
- Ensuring continuous skills upgrade to ensure teachers are equipped with current strategies relevant to teaching and learning for persons with various disabilities; (Short-term and ongoing);
- Ensuring that the recruitment process for employment in education is fair and provides opportunities for persons with disabilities to become staff members, educators and administrators (Short-term and ongoing).

Medium-Term

- Provision of access to a team of professionals with the ability to assess, recommend and provide required interventions for students with disabilities (Medium);
- Provision of accessible vocational training of same standard as delivered to other students. (Medium);
- Provision of accessible technical and vocational training; (Medium);
- Ensure that the appropriate legislation is in place to ensure an inclusive education system which does not discriminate against persons with disabilities, but enables participation in mainstream education at all levels, from primary to tertiary levels, inclusive of adult education (Medium-Long);

- Reviewing and ensuring adequate allocation of the appropriate resources for physical, information and communication accessibility, funding and delivery of inclusive education for students with disabilities (Medium-Long);
- Implementation of adequate measures to ensure children with disabilities who require education in special schools are provided with the appropriate staff, equipment and trained personnel (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Education

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions



WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

Short-Term

- Promotion of access to opportunities for self-employment (Short);
- Implementation of systems and procedures to protect persons with disabilities from discrimination and harassment in the workplace (Short-term and ongoing);
- Awareness programmes with employers on the concept of reasonable accommodation in the work place (Short-term and ongoing);
- Conduct of periodic consultations with employers, civil society organisations and training institutes to facilitate informed decision making for employment initiatives (Short-term and ongoing);
- Implementation of measures to prevent or reduce discrimination in recruitment, interviewing, work environment and access to aids and required equipment (Short-term and ongoing);
- Collaboration with employers in the public and private sectors and persons with disabilities to increase employment opportunities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Encouragement of affirmative action to ensure persons with disabilities who have the required skills are given an opportunity for employment. (Short-term and ongoing);
- Raising awareness among employers and employees on the development of return to work programmes and rehabilitative measures for job retention of persons who acquire a disability while employed (Short-term and ongoing);
- Provision of vocational and entrepreneurial training (Short-term and ongoing);
- Awareness programmes with employers on the provision of accessible information, and the incorporation of reasonable accommodations, for persons with disabilities in the workplace (Short-term and ongoing);
- Legislative measures to ensure equal opportunity for employment, promotion and pay in the workplace and in the labour market (Short-Medium);
- Enactment of legislation to give effect to the International Labour Organization Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention (No. 159) (Short-Medium);
- Review of the Occupational Safety and Health Act to ensure the Act does not contain discriminatory guidelines (Short-Medium).

Medium

- Review and amendment of existing legislation relevant to employment that may be discriminatory to persons with disabilities (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development

Ministry of Finance

Ministry of Education

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

WOMEN AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Short-Term

- Conduct public awareness programmes on violence and abuse of women and children (Short-term and ongoing);
- Ensure that sexual and reproductive services are delivered in a manner appropriate to the needs of women with disabilities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Ensure that social service agencies and other organisations providing services to women acquire the required awareness training on issues faced by women with disabilities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Ensure that children with disabilities are protected against abuse and exploitation (Short-term and ongoing);
- Introduce measures to uphold the rights of women and children with disabilities to protect them from discrimination, exploitation, sexual abuse and other forms of abuse (Short-Medium).



Medium-Term

- Ensuring that children with disabilities are protected against all forms of abuse and exploitation and are provided the opportunity for care and security in all environments;
- Provision of clear remedies and protocols for all forms of abuse and violations against children with disabilities;
- Measures to ensure that the rights of children with disabilities are upheld through provision of an adequate and enabling environment that fosters development with dignity;
- Ensure there is equality in the systems, services and supports for children to enjoy equal opportunities and full participation;
- Place emphasis on provision of all necessary requirements to ensure equality and care for children with severe disabilities.
- Ensure that all public programmes and services provide the opportunity for women with disabilities to access education, training, health services, micro-entrepreneurship, vocational training and employment (Medium-Long);

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Office of the Prime Minister (Gender and Child Affairs)

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Health

Ministry of National Security

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

HEALTH

Short-Term

- Review of the current early detection, assessment and early intervention practices and programmes to determine their effectiveness and address any gaps that may exist (Short);
- Raise awareness in relation to free and informed consent for health services (Short-term and ongoing);

- Ensure access to mental health services within all health centres (Short-term and ongoing);
- Conduct preventative awareness programmes in communities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Continue to provide public education and counselling in pre-natal, maternal, child healthcare and family planning at public health clinics; (Short-term and ongoing);
- Implementation of programmes which utilise a community based approach in relation to prevention of disabilities; (Short and ongoing);
- Ensure that health care providers are provided with the knowledge and training to ensure an understanding of disability (Short-term and ongoing);
- Assessment of health centres to ensure the system to allows for inclusion of persons with disabilities (Short-Medium);
- Assess and improve the community based health care system to allow for inclusion of persons with disabilities (Short-Medium);
- Expansion of health care services with special priority placed on ensuring that persons with disabilities can access basic and specialised medical care in both urban and rural communities (Short-Medium);
- Ensure that services related to sexual and reproductive health are delivered in an appropriate and effective manner (Short-Medium);
- Conduct training programmes to enhance the capacity of health care professionals to provide quality service to persons with disabilities (Short-Medium);
- Ensure the provision of mental health services within all community health centres (Short-Medium);
- Engage in discussions to address discriminatory insurance (health and life insurance) practices toward persons with disabilities in order to develop a comprehensive system (Short-Medium);
- Improvement in community based health care in all areas to allow accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities (Short-Medium);

Medium-Term

- Development of the appropriate health and disability laws to ensure that the principles of the convention are upheld (Medium-Long);
- Provision of access to prenatal genetic screening in the public health system (Medium);

- Review of screening programmes for babies and children between birth and the age of 5 years old (Medium);
- Provision of required personnel and accommodations to facilitate direct communication between health care professionals and patients with visual and hearing impairments. (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES:

Ministry of Health

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Ministry of Finance

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

HABILITATION AND REHABILITATION

Short-Term

- Engage in strategies to ensure that the appropriate assistive technologies and required equipment used in the rehabilitation process are of a high standard and effective in the rehabilitative care of persons with disabilities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Development of a programme to provide both urban and rural rehabilitation and counselling services within community health centres (Short-Medium);
- Establishment of a multi-purpose Government-owned rehabilitation services facility (Short-Medium);
- Increasing the number of scholarships to eligible citizens to pursue education and training in Speech and language therapy, Sign language interpreting and Deaf education, Occupational and other required therapies (Short-Medium);
- Engage in the necessary research to ensure that the level of rehabilitation care is continuously being improved (Ongoing).

Medium-Term

- Implement systems to ensure early intervention rehabilitation for children with disabilities;

- Development of a database of therapy professionals in the local health care system to assist in the provision of specialised care and therapy services inclusive of Speech therapy, Physiotherapy, Audiological rehabilitation;
- Development of programmes that encourage the involvement of families and communities in the rehabilitation process.

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES:

Ministry of Health

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Education

Ministry of Trade and Industry

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Short-Term

- Development of appropriate training programmes for persons working in the field of administration of justice, including legal and judicial officers and the protective services (Short-term and ongoing);
- Enhancement of services through use of assistive technology, live assistance, Sign language interpreters and required accommodations necessary to facilitate persons with varying disabilities (Short-term and ongoing).



Medium-Term

- Establishment of written procedures to ensure equitable and humane treatment of accused persons with disabilities (Medium);
- Ensure that changes are implemented to facilitate persons with disabilities with the appropriate means of identifying perpetrators of crime; (Medium);
- Enactment of the relevant legislative changes to ensure equal opportunity for participation of persons with disabilities within all levels of the justice system (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES:

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of National Security

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

EQUALITY AND NON DISCRIMINATION

Short-Term

- Development and implementation of programmes which focus on informing and empowering persons with disabilities about their rights. (Short-term and ongoing);
- Development of training on the issue of disability discrimination (Short-Medium);
- Amendment of all legislation which infringes on the policy of equal rights and recognition (Short-Medium);
- Ensure mental health laws are updated to protect the rights of persons of persons with disabilities(Short-Medium);
- Establishment of a representative ombudsmen to intervene in disability related issues (Medium).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES:

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development

RIGHT TO LIFE

Short-Term

- Implement appropriate measures which will provide equitable protection to prevent loss of life. (Short-Medium);
- Develop of strict investigative protocols for loss of life of persons with disabilities in both state and private facilities (Short-Medium).

Medium -Term

- Develop and amend legislation, policies and programmes aimed at protecting life for persons with disabilities (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES:

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Ministry of Health, Office of the Prime Minister (Gender and Child Affairs)

Minister of National Security

PERSONAL MOBILITY

Short-Term

- Engage in capacity building of professionals in the teaching of mobility skills;
- Enhancement of services and environs to facilitate personal mobility (Short-term and ongoing).

Medium-Term

- Engage in the appropriate partnerships to make aids, assistive technology and required devices affordable and accessible to all persons with disabilities (Medium).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Social Development and Family Social Services

Ministry of Works and Transport

Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

Ministry of Public Administration and Communication

EQUAL RECOGNITION BEFORE THE LAW

Short-Term

- Development of training programmes to foster greater person-centred planning in order to help persons with disabilities feel more empowered in exercising their legal capacity (Short-term and ongoing);
- Review of all legislation to ensure the right to equal recognition before the law for persons with all forms of disabilities (Short-Medium);
- Ensure that systems such as the justice system are designed to appropriately facilitate the needs of persons with disabilities in order to prevent unfair denial of legal capacity (Short-Medium).

Medium-Term

- Ensure there are outlined procedures to address infringement of rights and recourse for infringement related to equal recognition before the law(Medium);
- Implement measures to ensure that persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities are given the required assessments before there is any denial of legal capacity (Medium);
- Enact legislation which would allow for supported decision-making for persons suitably assessed as having limited legal capacity (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Ministry of Social Development

Ministry of Health

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

LIBERTY OF MOVEMENT AND NATIONALITY

Short-Term

- Conduct awareness training for officers employed at the various entry points and for personnel involved in the facilitation of travel documents (Short-term and ongoing);
- Ensure that the Immigration act is reviewed and amended to eliminate any discriminatory screening processes (Short-Medium);

- Review of the application process for travel documents to ensure accessibility (Short-Medium).

Medium-Term

- Ensure that immigration offices are suitably designed and located to permit access for persons with varying disabilities (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of National Security

Ministry of Planning and Development

LIBERTY AND SECURITY OF PERSON

Short-Term

- Ensure mechanisms are in place for protection of persons with mental health conditions who are detained (Short-term and ongoing);
- Mandate that the detention of persons with disabilities should be on an equal basis as relates to other persons and with appropriate safeguards (Short-Medium);
- Implementation of efficient systems to prevent arbitrary detention of persons with disabilities (Short-Medium).

Medium-Term

- Provision of support services to ensure a fair hearing for persons with disabilities (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

PROTECTING THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON

Short-Term

- Implement measures to strengthen human rights monitoring mechanisms for older persons with disabilities in state institutions or residing in group residential care facilities (Short);
- Collaborate with the relevant ministry to spread awareness on the issue of legal capacity and informed consent (Short-term and ongoing);
- Provision of sensitisation and training to ensure that legal and judicial staff are equipped to provide the required accommodations to protect the rights of persons with disabilities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Ensure educational and awareness programmes for police officers to ensure adequate skills in interaction, arrest or detention of persons with mental disabilities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Develop and implement quality assurance programmes and strengthen monitoring systems for all types of institutions and facilities for persons with disabilities (Short-Medium).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Health, Ministry of Planning and Development

Ministry of Trade and Industry



RESPECT FOR PRIVACY

Short-Term

- Conduct public education on the importance of clearly written and specific disability policy by organisations and businesses which deal with personal information of persons with disabilities (Short);
- Partner with persons with disabilities and their organisation on awareness campaigns to highlight the rights to privacy for persons with disabilities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Raise awareness on the necessity to protect personal data, medical and financial data (Short-term and ongoing);
- Raise awareness on the need for consent in relation to the sharing of personal data (Short-term and ongoing);
- Conduct public campaigns on respecting the rights of persons who have the capability to make their own personal decisions without intervention (Short-term and ongoing).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Health

Ministry of Finance

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

RESPECT FOR HOME AND FAMILY

Short-Term

- Empower families who choose to care for persons with disabilities in the home; (Short-term and ongoing);
- Collaboration with other entities which provide support for family life (Short-term and ongoing);
- Public education on respecting and facilitating rights of freedom to pursue family life (Short-term and ongoing);
- Ensure persons with disabilities have the same level of access to organisations that provide support for family life (Short-Medium);
- Engage in a public awareness drive to encourage elimination of discrimination on matters such as relationships and family life (Short-term and ongoing);
- Raise awareness on sexual and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Mandate all agencies with responsibility for reproductive health and rights to provide programmes and information in a format that is accessible to persons with disabilities (Medium).

Medium-Term

- Ensure that the adoption and foster care process is not discriminatory to persons with disabilities (Medium).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Office of the Prime Minister (Gender and Child Affairs)

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE OR CRUEL INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

Short-Term

- Provide training for social workers to enhance their skills in investigating instances of mistreatment (Short-term and ongoing);
- Place emphasis on ensuring that there is a systematic process for anonymous reporting of degrading treatment of persons with disabilities (Short-Medium);
- Implement an inspectorate body assigned to inspect and report on all care facilities for persons with disabilities (Short-Medium);
- Ensure the appropriate legislation is in place to protect persons with disabilities from acts of torture, cruel inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment (Short-Medium);
- Develop measures to specifically address homeless persons with disabilities in order to protect them from cruel treatment (Short-Medium).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Health

Ministry of National Security

Ministry of Public Administration and Communication

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

FREEDOM FROM EXPLOITATION VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

Short-Term

- Enhance the capacity of communities and organisations to recognise persons with disabilities (Short);
- Develop written protocols on provision of alternative accommodation for persons subjected to abuse in homes or institutions (Short);
- Develop appropriate levels of information for organisations and schools to recognise persons with disabilities who are being exploited and abused (Short);

- Engage in outreach to sensitise law enforcement on the provisions that may be necessary in handling reports of abuse of persons with disabilities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Engage in community outreach to ensure a sense of wider support and protection of persons with disabilities residing in the community (Short-term and ongoing);
- Provision of information to empower persons with disabilities to be able to identify abuse (Short-term and ongoing).

Medium-Term

- Ensure there are well structured state programmes to address the issue of psychological recovery from abuse (Medium);
- Allow for independent bodies to monitor the effectiveness of programmes tasked with addressing violence and abuse of persons with disabilities (Medium-Ongoing);
- Ensure that there is appropriate legislative, administrative, social and other required measures that will lead to protection of persons with disabilities in and out of the home (Medium-Long);
- Ensure that appropriate systems are put in place to prevent, identify and investigate instances of abuse (Medium-Long);
- Ensure that systems are put in place for holistic support for persons with disabilities who are victims of exploitation, violence and abuse (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of National Security

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Ministry of Education

Office of the Prime Minister (Gender and Child Affairs)

Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION OPINION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Short-Term

- Implementation of a national peer support programme to encourage and empower persons with disabilities to engage in greater self-representation (Short);

Medium-Term

- Ensure that all public institutions can facilitate information queries and complaints through multiple means (Medium);
- Implementation of communication systems to allow persons with disabilities to freely and receive important information by way of their required form of communication (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs

Ministry of Public Administration and Communication

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions



LIVING INDEPENDENTLY AND BEING INCLUDED IN THE COMMUNITY

Short-Term

- Encourage community involvement among persons with disabilities and other community members (Short);
- Development of a cadre of professionals trained to provide personal assistance in the home as required (Short-term and ongoing);
- Collaboration towards implementation of banknotes with tactile features (Short-Medium);

- Provide equal opportunities for enjoyment of social and cultural life within the community (Short-Medium);
- Development of daily living skills programmes to help persons with disabilities to feel more empowered to live independent lives (Short-Medium);
- Create greater accessibility to community development programmes and community facilities. (Short-Medium);
- Establishment of partnerships with trained professionals to ensure provision of support services for independent living (Short-Medium).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Finance

Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL AND PUBLIC LIFE

Short-Term

- Facilitation of training for election officers and all staff involved in the political process (Short-term and ongoing);
- Ensure availability of enough technical aids in order to limit third party involvement (Short-Medium);
- Ensure adequate support services to facilitate an appropriate voting process (Short-Medium);
- Provision of political documentation and related literature in accessible format (Short-Medium);
- Development of written procedures for proxy and independent voting (Short-Medium);



- Ensure that there is physical access to polling stations, representative offices and venues for political events (Short-Medium);
- Implement procedures that allow for individual support in both houses of parliament (Short-Medium).

Medium-Term

- Ensure that there is physical and informational accessibility to allow participation in the electoral process and other public roles (Medium-Long);
- Ensure that there is physical access to parliament and provision of information in a manner that is accessible to persons with disabilities (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Works and Transport

Elections and Boundaries Commission

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions



PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL LIFE, RECREATION, LEISURE AND SPORT

Short-Term

- Collaboration with persons with disabilities to ensure that operators of recreational entities are aware of the importance of facilitating the needs of persons with disabilities(Short);
- Provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in mainstream sporting activities (Short);
- Increase support for athletes with disabilities participating in the Special Olympic and Paralympic competitions (Short);
- Ensure that information is accessible in public recreational spaces and at cultural and sporting events (Short-Medium);
- Partner with the Ministry with responsibility for sport administration to ensure accessibility to facilities (Short-Medium);
- Promote the opportunity for persons with disabilities to access training facilities (Short-Medium);
- Ensure the development of community parks and centres to facilitate persons with disabilities (Short-Medium);

Long-Term

- Ensure that places for recreation, cultural activities, sports, hotels, beaches and facilities and other public spaces are equipped with facilities, signage and trained personnel to accommodate persons with disabilities (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Community Development Culture and the Arts

Ministry of Tourism

Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

STATISTICS AND DATA COLLECTION

Short-Term

- Collaborate with organisations for and of persons with disabilities to ensure a wide reach in accessing persons with disabilities for collection of data (Short-term and ongoing);
- Ensuring the systems and resources are in place to allow for disability related data collection and dissemination (Short-term and ongoing);
- Development of a national disability research agenda for purposes of policy, programme development and tracking the reduction of inequality (Short-term and ongoing);
- Create a registry of persons with disabilities to be continuously updated (Short-term and ongoing);
- Continuous collection and analysis of data related to assessing socio-economic conditions pertaining to persons with disabilities (Ongoing);
- Ensure that persons with disabilities can directly participate in the census and standard of living surveys (Short-term and ongoing);
- Ensure that collected data is adequately disaggregated by sex and age and other relevant socio-economic categorisations (Short-Medium).



Medium-Term

- Implement systems to ensure data relating to the socio-economic status of persons with disabilities is updated for 5 year intervals (Medium);
- Place emphasis on the use of collected statistics for implementation and improvement of programmes and services for persons with disabilities (Medium and Ongoing);
- Collaborate with other Government agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations to place greater emphasis on data collection on disability (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Planning and Development

ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING AND PROTECTION

Short-Term

- Compile data through regional corporations to identify and intervene with persons with disabilities who are living without basic amenities (Short);
- Review existing social protection programmes to assess their adequacy and capacity to adequately meet the needs of persons with disabilities (Short-Medium);
- Review the criteria for persons wishing to access the Disability Assistance Grant with optional review of minimum wage ceiling or review of grant quantum every three to five years (Short-Medium);
- Increase and enhance facilities for greater accessibility to available grants to pursue sustainable income-generating activities (Short-Medium);
- Develop national poverty alleviation programmes that are informed by the concerns of persons with disabilities (Short-Medium).



Medium-Term

- Develop social protection schemes such as school subsidies and health insurance for families living in poverty with children and elderly persons with disabilities (Medium-Long);
- Partner with international agencies to provide training and grants for income generating initiatives for individuals (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development

SITUATIONS OF RISK AND HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

Short-Term

- Development of appropriate mechanisms for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in the National Emergency Management planning arrangements (Short);
- Implement inter-ministerial committees to identify the various interrelated services required to provide support for person with disabilities in times of disasters (Short);
- Conduct an evaluation of all existing infrastructure earmarked for use during emergencies to ensure that they are accessible and meet the special needs of persons with disabilities (Short);
- Conduct programmes to inform persons with disabilities on disaster preparedness (Short)
- Develop a pool of volunteers with disability training to be assigned to shelters during disaster events (Short);
- Implement a review system on disaster management plans from local municipal level to national level to assess the suitability for persons with disabilities (Short);
- Ensure that all emergency and disaster management and health and safety procedures are delivered in a manner that is inclusive of visual and audio warnings for all persons with disabilities (Short);
- Implement phased disability training for all disaster management personnel to ensure safe evacuations of persons with disabilities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Implement a capacity building programme to ensure the presence of trained staff at local municipal and national disaster management centres (Short-term and ongoing);



- Raise awareness among volunteers and disaster shelter management on provision of appropriate accommodations and support systems (Short-term and ongoing);
- Ensure a cadre of professionals to provide psychosocial support services to persons with disabilities, if required, before, during or after disaster events (Short-Medium);
- Implement a system of trained emergency personnel to ensure equitable and immediate access to emergency services for persons with disabilities (Short-Medium).

Medium-Term

- Utilise the National Registry of Persons with to access the relevant information for disaster prevention and management(Medium);
- Extend the system of disability mapping to allow for effective disaster management and to aid in evacuation and monitoring during disaster events (Medium).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

Ministry of Health

Ministry of National Security

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

LOCAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Short-Term

- Ensure that priority is given to attendance and participation in discussions and forums related to persons with disabilities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Strengthen the relationship between Government and local Non-governmental organisations with a view to engagement on all issues related to disability (Short-term and ongoing);
- Collaborate with other regional nations to further advance the cause of persons with disabilities (Short);
- Establish and maintain a comprehensive database and mapping system of persons with disabilities and registered Non-governmental organisations; (Short-Medium);
- Provide support for regional and international initiatives to address disability issues (Short-Medium);
- Expand and enhance the existing mechanisms for information sharing and advocacy at regional and international forums (Short-Medium);
- Encourage and support the exchange of knowledge and expertise among non-governmental organizations, research institutions, professionals and national organisation concerned with persons with disabilities (Short-Medium);
- Facilitate capacity-building for organizations of persons with disabilities, including the exchange and sharing of information, experiences, and best practices (Short-Medium);
- Explore partnerships with, and assistance from, international development partners in the implementation of the Policy (Short-Medium).



RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs



NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Short-Term

- Capacity-building within Government Ministries on disability-related issues (Short-term and ongoing);
- Establish a committee of persons with disabilities, their representative organisations and representatives of the various implementing Ministries in order to monitor and evaluate compliance with the UNCRPD (Short);
- Expand the national research agenda for disability-related issues (Short-term and ongoing);
- Collaborate with the Central Statistical Office, Universities and organizations for and of persons with disabilities, to establish data collection mechanisms for disability-related issues (Short-term and ongoing);
- Collaborate with universities and organizations for and of persons with disabilities, to help identify and conduct relevant areas of research (Short-term and ongoing);
- Continuously assessing the effectiveness of initiatives implemented to address disability issues (Short-term and ongoing);

- Generating of the necessary information for satisfying reporting requirements under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Short-term and ongoing);
- Collaborate with implementing agencies on their role in fulfilling the mandate outlined in the UNCRPD (Short-term and ongoing).

Medium-Term

- Policy review will be carried out every five years to determine its progress towards compliance with the guidelines outlined in the document as well as the UNCRPD (Medium-Long).

RESPONSIBLE MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Ministry of Planning and Development

Ministry of Public Administration and Communication

Tobago House of Assembly Divisions

CONCLUSION

The National Policy on Persons with Disabilities outlines the framework through which persons with disabilities can become full participants in society and are able to lead more fulfilling lives. While there have been significant efforts to draft this Policy similar efforts are also required to ensure that what is articulated in the Policy translates into improved lives for persons with disabilities. It is envisaged that the document will provide a basis on which we continue to strive towards a society which fosters inclusion and encourages empowerment of persons with disabilities. This requires continued cooperation and support among the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and all of the stakeholders inclusive of persons with disabilities, communities, civil society, private entities and local and international counterparts.

The ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has articulated clearly what we must aspire, as a country, to create a more inclusive environment. It is therefore important that we engage in the actions which will foster the right environment to allow persons with disabilities to live, work, socialise, be educated and to be true participants in Trinidad and Tobago. This Policy covers over twenty-five of the significant articles pertaining to the human rights of persons with disabilities, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It has been drafted in this way, so that, there is transparency in relation to the actions that are required in specific areas to ensure that the inclusion articulated in the Policy can be realised. The Policy therefore, directly addresses equality and non-discrimination, accessibility, health, education and employment. In addition, it also addresses the important issue of right to life, home, family, recreation and independent living. There is also important emphasis throughout the Policy on collaboration and partnerships which are fundamental in being able to achieve an inclusive society.

As outlined in the Policy there is the need for legislative changes and amendments to ensure successful implementation of the measures outlined. Of equal importance in ensuring the success of the Policy is the recognition of the need to foster a culture change in the way that the issue of disability is viewed. It is for this reason that one area of continued emphasis

outlined in the Policy is raising the levels of awareness about disability and inclusion. Ensuring a transformation process therefore requires the removal of physical and attitudinal barriers and through collaborative efforts and continued commitment it is envisaged that these efforts will see the development of a society that is more conducive to persons with disabilities being able to participate fully in society.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago stands committed to fulfilling its mandate of ensuring that all citizens are given the opportunity to indeed enjoy their fundamental rights. It is recognised that this will not be an easy task but, through the commitment of the Government, the citizenry and all stakeholders there can be success in achieving the ultimate goal of an inclusive Trinidad and Tobago.



NOTES