



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

National Policy on Persons with Disabilities

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I. FOREWORD

The primary goal of the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities is to create a social and physical environment which promotes inclusion, accessibility, integration and full participation of persons with disabilities. The National Policy provides a comprehensive framework for achieving social inclusion and equality of opportunity for all persons with disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago.

This policy document is a revision of the 2005 National Policy on Persons with Disabilities, to reflect the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which was ratified by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in June 2015. The revision is also informed by the learning gleaned from a review of the implementation of the 2005 Policy. The views and opinions solicited from key stakeholders in 2016, are also incorporated.

The revised National Policy on Persons with Disabilities is intended to:

- i. Provide a framework which will guide the development of public policy to incorporate disability- related issues;
- ii. Improve the delivery of services to persons with disabilities (PWDs);
- iii. Provide national direction for greater inclusion of PWDs and;
- iv. Give greater visibility to disability issues and ensure that the intent of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is reflected in the development and implementation of public policy and legislation.

II. PREAMBLE

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) on September 27, 2007 and ratified said convention on June 21, 2015. The purpose of the Convention is 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 emphasizes 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, and the interaction of persons with disabilities into their own communities.

The revised National Policy on Persons with Disabilities is based on the human rights model of disability. It recognises a human rights framework for addressing disability and the development of a more “inclusive and barrier-free society”, which advocates for and empowers persons with disabilities, and the integration of persons with disabilities into their own communities.

This revised Policy will be critical in ensuring that the principles underpinning the UNCRPD are incorporated into policies and programmes impacting persons with disabilities and their families. The UNCRPD is both a human rights instrument and a development instrument, which aims to redress the social disadvantages experienced by persons with disabilities.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to implementing measures to promote the dignity and full inclusion of persons with disabilities. These measures will be implemented, in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders, utilizing a holistic and integrated approach to achieve the goals of social inclusion and equality of opportunity for all persons with disabilities.

III. POLICY FRAMEWORK

Purpose

The purpose of the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities is to promote an inclusive, barrier-free and enabling environment for all persons with disabilities.

It is recognized that persons with disabilities do not comprise a homogenous group; they have varying needs, priorities and perspectives based on their personal circumstances, including the type and level of support required, education, gender, age, ethnic, and cultural background. The UNCRPD emphasizes the critical role that Governments play in ensuring appropriate legislative, administrative, and regulatory arrangements for the protection and promotion of human rights of persons with disabilities.

This Policy reflects the spirit of the Articles of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is an indication of the commitment to advancing the well-being of persons with disabilities. It provides a framework for collaboration towards building a society that is inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based.

Implementing the Policy

Successful implementation of the policy would not be the role of government only but all stakeholders. Implementation would therefore be based on partnerships among the government, civil society, private sector organisations and the general public.

The Policy on Persons with Disabilities is applicable to all duty-bearers, including oversight institutions, government institutions, the judiciary, the private sector, the media, law and policy makers, public servants, frontline staff, as well as organisations of and for persons with disabilities. The main beneficiaries of the successful implementation of the Policy will be persons with disabilities as rights-holders and their families.

Monitoring and Reviewing the Implementation of the Policy

Monitoring and review of the progress towards the UNCRPD goals, would require disability-specific indicators, focusing on accessibility of education, transport, employment as well as in social, economic and political spheres. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services would have overall responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the Policy.

Reporting

In an effort to harmonize the reporting process, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services will develop a standardized framework for reporting from line Ministries and Departments on the progress of the implementation of the Policy. The implementation of the Convention will be monitored in accordance with the provisions set out in UNCRPD Article 33.

IV. POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the policy are to:

- a) Protect and promote the human rights of persons with disabilities;
- b) Provide a framework which will guide the development of public policy to incorporate disability- related issues;
- c) Improve the delivery of support services to persons with disabilities;
- d) Provide national direction for greater inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs);
- e) Encourage self-reliance, inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in the country's socio-economic development;
- f) Eliminate marginalisation of, and discrimination against persons with disabilities;

- g) Provide opportunities for a better quality of life for persons with disabilities and;
- h) To ensure the provision of quality service is being provided by state and non-state organizations involved in the provision of rehabilitative, skills training and other services to persons with disabilities.

V. GENERAL PRINCIPLES ¹

In keeping with the ratification of the UNCRPD and the Vision 2030 goal of “Putting People First” in order to rehabilitate, integrate and reintegrate vulnerable groups, the Government is committed to the under-mentioned principles regarding persons with disabilities as stated in Article 3 of the UNCRPD:

1. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one’s own choices, and independence of persons with disabilities;
2. Non-discrimination;
3. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
4. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
5. Equality of opportunity;
6. Accessibility;

¹ Article 3: UNCRPD

7. Equality between men and women; and

8. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities

VI. GENERAL OBLIGATIONS

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is obligated to taking action to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with disabilities. To this end, Government will adopt appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the promotion of the rights recognized in the Convention, towards the enhancement of the quality of life of persons with disabilities. Additionally, qualitative studies would be conducted to understand the effects of the existing barriers on the lives of people with disabilities, and to provide insights into how best to intervene.

VII. SITUATION ANALYSIS

In order to develop policies and programmes to achieve internationally agreed development goals, and to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), it is essential to have a clear understanding of the existing situation as it relates to the arrangement for providing services for persons with disabilities.

The articles of the Convention are not yet fully implemented, and it is therefore recognised that progress is still to be made towards the complete implementation of initiatives necessary to fully satisfy the expectations of the community of persons with disabilities and the organisations that

serve them. However, a wide range of initiatives have been, and are currently being implemented for the benefit of persons with disabilities. They include the following:

Equality and Non-Discrimination

- The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago confers upon its citizens, including persons with disabilities, the right to enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- A committee was established to review the Equal Opportunity Act and to make recommendations on the necessary amendments to address inequality and discrimination against persons with disabilities. It is expected that the relevant legislative amendments will be completed in 2017.

Work and Employment

- A National Employment Service was established among other things to integrate and promote PWDs into the labour market, including a pilot placement programme for visually impaired persons.
- Tech Assistive Technology and Employment Seminars are conducted on an on-going basis, aimed at breaking down barriers and opening up opportunities for people who are visually impaired through technology and innovative programming.
- The Occupational Safety and Health Agency ensures the safety of all persons, including PWDs in the workplace.

Accessibility

In order to facilitate accessibility to the built environment, the following measures were taken:

- The Government of Trinidad and Tobago amended the requirements for planning approval for physical developments to include Accessibility Codes in the Regulations for the Planning and Facilitation of Development Act 2014, to which all developers must

adhere. These codes were developed by the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards, in collaboration with the community of persons with disabilities and organisations for persons with disabilities.

- The Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC) continued to operate its specialized fleet of buses specifically designed for the transport of persons with disabilities, under the “ELDAMO – Elderly and Differently-Abled Mobile service. Since its inception, the ELDAMO service has conducted 98,285 client trips. There are 810 regular users of the service, 340 of whom are users of wheelchairs and 213 are elderly persons.
- Ramps, mechanical lifts and walkovers at major intersections and highways have been constructed, which facilitates access to the built environment by persons with disabilities.
- Ramps have been constructed where necessary, and curb cuts have been effected in close proximity to schools, health centres, businesses, groceries, gas stations and police stations.
- Buzzers and bells have been installed at traffic signals throughout the country to assist persons with visual impairment.
- Parking accommodation has been provided for wheelchair users of Government Offices to facilitate access to the offices.

Public Awareness

The Disability Affairs Unit of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, on an on-going basis, delivers public sensitization and awareness programmes. The Unit conducted specific sensitization workshops for recruitment agencies in the private sector to encourage the employment of persons with disabilities. In 2016, the Unit conducted a sensitisation workshop on “Appreciating Persons with Disabilities” for secondary school students.

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.

A fundamental role of the Disability Affairs Units is to advocate for and on behalf of persons with disabilities.

Children with Disabilities

Several initiatives have been implemented, which serve to advance the well-being of children with disabilities. They include:-

- An inclusive education project for children with disabilities in primary schools and early childhood care and education centres.
- Financial assistance for special education schools.
- Vision and hearing screening programme for students.
- Training for special education teachers and the supply of teaching aids.
- The Family Court and the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago provide a forum for all children, including children with disabilities, to express their view and concerns on issues affecting them in the home, in the community and nationally.
- A Special Child Grant of one thousand, one hundred and fifty dollars (\$1,150.00) is paid to eligible parents of children with special needs to assist with the expenses associated with caring for their children.

Habitation, Rehabilitation and Habilitation

Currently, support in the area of habitation and rehabilitation include, inter alia, the following:

- The provision of annual subventions and other transfers to civil society organisations providing habitation, rehabilitation and other critical services for PWDs. Approximately TT\$80 million of such funding is provided to organisations annually.
- Construction of a facility for the establishment of a National Development Centre for Persons with Disabilities was completed, to provide a range of therapeutic and rehabilitation services. It is expected that the Centre will be operationalised by the end of 2017.

Adequate standard of living and social protection

- The income qualifying ceiling for the Disability Assistance Grant was increased from three thousand, six hundred dollars (\$3,600.00) to twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000.00). This measure allowed for an increase in the number of persons with disabilities who would be eligible for the grant. The grant of TT\$1800.00 monthly, is paid to persons with disabilities 18-64 years of age, whose disability prevents them from earning an income. Approximately 24,000 persons receive the Disability Assistance Grant on a monthly basis.
- Cash Transfers are provided to PWDs to assist in the purchase of food items.
- Microbusiness grant funding is provided to poor and vulnerable individuals, up to a maximum of TT\$15,000.00 including PWDs, to establish Micro Enterprises or to upgrade their skills to enhance their employability.

Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

A number of initiatives have been undertaken in this areas as follows:

- A National Sport Policy was developed, which encourages all persons, including persons with disabilities, to lead healthy lifestyles by including sport as part of their regular living routine.
- Disability Training Programmes for Coaches and Swimming Pool Instructors were conducted.
- The availability of accessible Sporting and Recreational Programmes were increased, including the conduct of several Regional Sport Festivals for persons with disabilities.
- Ongoing provision of financial assistance to the Trinidad and Tobago Blind Cricket Association, and the Special Olympics and Paralympics Organizations of Trinidad and Tobago.
- Approximately ninety percent (90%) of Stadia, Indoor Sport Arenas and Community Swimming Pools have been modified to make them more accessible for PWDs.
- Community Centres throughout the country have been made accessible by equipping them with ramps, handrails, accessible toilets and elevators, as necessary.

Education and Training

In 2004, the Student Support Services Division (SSSD), Ministry of Education was established to provide multidisciplinary support services inclusive of special education and in 2009, the Ministry of Education developed an Inclusive Education Policy. This policy articulated that Ministry provide support and services to all learners by taking appropriate steps to make education available, accessible and adaptable. The Minsitry of Education current school

construction programme has targeted forty (40) primary and eight (8) secondary schools which will have facilities to accommodate PWDs. At present, PWDs can currently access education at:

- Fifty (50) out of four hundred and twenty-seven (427) primary schools;
- Thirty-three (33) out of one hundred and one (101) secondary schools; and
- Thirty-two (32) out of forty-five (45) tertiary schools.²

VIII. POLICY DIRECTION – PRIORITY AREAS FOR POLICY INTERVENTION

Persons with disabilities still face extensive barriers in accessing services, such as those for health care (including medical care, therapy and assistive technologies), education, employment, social services, housing and transport. The causes can be attributable to a wide range of factors including, for example, inadequate legislation; the lack of service provision; problems with the delivery of services; a lack of awareness and understanding about disability; negative attitudes and discrimination; lack of accessibility; inadequate funding; and lack of participation by persons with disabilities in decision-making that directly affect their lives. Specific barriers also exist in relation to persons with disabilities being unable seamlessly to express their opinions, access and disseminate information and ideas on an equal basis with others, and through their chosen means of communication.

Accordingly, the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities aims to continuously enhance the environment to facilitate full access to developmental opportunities for persons with disabilities. Accordingly, the Policy focuses on 14 priority areas for policy intervention as outlined below:

² JSC Second Report on Persons with Disabilities : July 2016

Priority Areas for Policy Intervention

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Legislation2. Public Awareness3. Education and Training4. Work and Employment5. Access to the Built Environment and Transport6. Access to Information and Communication Technology7. Promoting the Rights of Women and Children	<ol style="list-style-type: none">8. Health, Rehabilitation and Habilitation9. Housing10. Technical Aids and Equipment11. Income Maintenance and Social Security12. Disaster Management13. Regional and International Co-operation14. Evaluation and Review
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1. LEGISLATION

Legislation impacting persons with disabilities will be reviewed, and where appropriate, would be amended or enact new legislation enacted as necessary, to address discrimination and prejudice, and to promote equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

It should be noted that persons with disabilities are currently protected under the law so that they can pursue their interests on an equal basis with others. The measures implemented to protect persons with disabilities against all types of discrimination will be maintained and enhanced.

In this connection, the following action is proposed:

- Amend and enact new legislation, where necessary, to reflect the principles of the UNCRPD that relates to addressing discrimination and prejudice, and promoting equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

- Enact legislation to give effect to the International Labour Organization Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention (No. 159);

2. PUBLIC AWARENESS

Information empowers people, and a better informed society would also lead to greater understanding, reduce discrimination and enhance tolerance and support for the full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of the society.

Intensive and sustainable public sensitization and education programmes would be critical to inform the general population, and to create more awareness of disability prevalence and related issues. The intention will be to create greater awareness of disability issues at the national, and at the community level, and to foster an environment that facilitates greater advocacy on human rights and inclusion.

In this context, the pursuit of the following action items are proposed:

- Continue to conduct sensitisation programmes to raise public awareness on issues related to disability;
- Develop and implement programmes to strengthen the capacity of organisations of and for persons with disabilities to advocate on their behalf;
- Create mechanisms to strengthen coordination and collaboration among service providers;
- Provide resources to assist organisations to conduct advocacy and awareness and outreach programmes;
- Conduct public sensitization to inform the national community on the Convention;

3. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

It is recognized that there should be greater inclusivity of persons with disabilities into the mainstream education system. It is therefore important to facilitate access to education, from early childhood education to tertiary level, for persons with disabilities. An inclusive education system is therefore critical. There would be need for an approach to education that will meet the needs of all children with disabilities. The goal would be to implement progressive education programmes geared toward achieving an environment of completely barrier-free and accessible schools.

Accordingly, the policy proposes:

- Provide the appropriate support services for children with disabilities that would facilitate their full inclusion in the education system;
- Provide appropriate teaching aids and supports to enhance the methodology used by teachers;
- Develop modules in the school curriculum, to instil in students, respect for and appreciation of the differences among people;
- Establish and upgrade existing programmes designed to train persons with disabilities for productive employment and for creative pursuits;
- Establish appropriate educational facilities for persons with severe or multiple disabilities who cannot be integrated;
- Provide adequate sign language interpreters in all learning institutions;
- Provide special education teachers and resource personnel at all levels of the education system;
- Provide training in sign language to children with hearing impairments, their families and persons in their communities;
- Make available educational and training materials in an accessible format by all learning institutions and training centres;

- Foster co-operation among the community, Government, the private sector and organizations providing services for persons with disabilities to provide appropriate training opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Conduct research on best practices in inclusive education and special education to support the development of inclusive education initiatives;
- Conduct comprehensive pre- and in-service teacher training for all teachers, with methodology and techniques for teaching children with diverse abilities, and the development of flexible curriculum, teaching and assessment strategies.

4. WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

It is recognized that persons with disabilities have the right, not just to work, but also to decent work. In this regard, the intention is to facilitate their full participation in the labour market.

The objective is for persons with disabilities to enjoy equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of access to employment for which they are qualified. Accordingly, the following would be pursued:

- The development and implementation of mechanisms for monitoring the employment of persons with disabilities;
- The provision of incentives to encourage the appropriate support and job placement and business development services for persons with disabilities;
- The provision of incentives for the employment of persons with disabilities.
- Enact legislation to give effect to the International Labour Organization Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention (No. 159);
- Collaboration with organisations providing services for persons with disabilities to provide support for the seamless participation of persons with disabilities in the mainstream educational system and support their transition to employment.

5. ACCESS TO THE BUILT PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION

A high priority is placed on the right of persons with disabilities to participate in all aspects of the society. Accordingly, to promote accessibility, barrier-free features should be incorporated as a standard requirement in designs and plans for all constructions, renovations and expansion of buildings and facilities used by members of the public, including transportation infrastructure, public offices and buildings, housing, educational facilities, parks, sporting and recreational facilities.

The ability to move around seamlessly in the community underpins all aspects of life for persons with disabilities. Adequate, efficient, safe and accessible transport and unfettered access to the built environment are critical to supporting productivity and assisting citizens to access basic services.

In order to facilitate accessibility to the built physical environment and transportation to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities in society, the following measures are proposed:

- Increase enforcement of accessibility standards for planning and development of public facilities, infrastructure and transportation, including especially those in rural areas;
- Provide increased opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in sport, physical education, cultural programmes, and all related activities offered, by providing appropriate equipment, facilities and programmes;
- Encourage sporting facilities to promote the inclusion of PWDs in their wider activities and programmes;
- Conduct an Accessibility Audit of all Government and public buildings and infrastructure, and take the necessary action to make them accessible;

- Provide advisory services/technical advice and information for architects/designers/developers, on accessibility codes and application of inclusive design, and appropriate technology in the natural and built environments;
- Establish monitoring mechanisms to determine compliance with accessibility codes and standards;
- Ensure the allocation of parking spaces for persons with disabilities, according to international standards;
- Develop and implement a mechanism for relevant ministries agencies to report on the initiatives outlined in the UNCRPD;
- Provide supporting arrangements for the participation of persons with disabilities in sporting activities, including elimination of stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities.

6. 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. Importantly, it would be necessary to incorporate universal design principles in communication to meet minimum standards and requirements, and to make information and communication technology more accessible to Persons with Disabilities.

In order to facilitate greater access to information and communication by persons with disabilities, the following actions are proposed:

- Ensure that libraries , educational institutions and Government offices provide information and material in an accessible format to PWDs;
- Advocate for local television providers to offer inclusive programming;
- Conduct of a review of existing Government ICT Policy towards adopting appropriate accessibility guidelines for providing ICT services for persons with disabilities;
- Provide tax incentives for ICT devices used by persons with disabilities and subsidize the cost of assistive technology equipment to ensure that they are affordable, especially for needy persons with disabilities

7. PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Women and children with disabilities are more vulnerable to poverty than men with disabilities, and could also be subjected to greater discrimination within the family. Women and children with disabilities should have equal access to health care, education, vocational training, employment and income generating opportunities, and to be included in social and community activities. Women and children with disabilities encounter discrimination as they are exposed to greater risk of physical and sexual abuse, and women with disabilities are often not provided with adequate sexual health and reproductive rights services. There would be a commitment to empowering women and children with disabilities to understand and exercise their human rights, and to advocacy on anti-discriminatory measures, to safeguard the rights of women and children with disabilities.

In this regard, the following would be implemented:

- Provide information on available services to all parents and care-givers of children with disabilities;

- Raise awareness of the rights and services available for persons with disabilities with all organizations providing services for the family;
- Introduce as necessary, measures to uphold the rights of women with disabilities, and to protect them from discrimination. In particular, measures to ensure equal access to health services, education, training and employment, and protection from sexual and other forms of abuse and violence;
- Implement programmes to raise public awareness of the situation of women and children with disabilities to promote positive attitudes, role models and opportunities for their development;
- Develop an awareness campaign on abuse against women and children with disabilities;
- Educate women and children in reproductive health and family life education, including on issues related to HIV/AIDS and other STIs;
- Facilitate the representation of women with disabilities in decision-making positions in the public sector.

8. HEALTH, REHABILITATION, HABILITATION

There is a commitment to providing persons with disabilities with quality and affordable healthcare, including early identification and intervention, as appropriate, and services designed to minimise and prevent further disabilities, including among children and older persons with disabilities. There would also be a focus on implementing measures to enable persons with disabilities to attain and maintain maximum independence, physical and mental capability through comprehensive rehabilitation programmes.

The provision of continuous training for professionals and related staff working in rehabilitation programmes would be encouraged, as well as support for the availability and use of assistive devices and technologies designed for persons with disabilities, as they relate to rehabilitation.

In this context, the following will be implemented:

- Conduct a review of the current early detection, assessment and early intervention practices and programmes to determine their effectiveness and address any gaps that may exist;
- Expand existing health services to ensure persons with disabilities can access basic and specialised medical care through increased rehabilitation training, screening programmes, and record keeping;
- Develop a module in the areas of early detection and intervention in the training curriculum for teachers;
- Enhance the capacity of healthcare professionals who provide services for persons with disabilities;
- Train health care providers dealing with persons with disabilities to improve with persons with disabilities and their families
- Continue the immunization of all children against diseases known to cause disabilities;
- Conduct mandatory screening of all children from birth to five (5) years to detect risk of developing a disability;
- Continue to provide public education and counselling in pre-natal, maternal, child healthcare and family planning at public health clinics;
- Conduct sensitisation in safety procedures to prevent accidents in the home, the workplace, and in the community that may result in disabilities;
- Adapt workplaces to mitigate the existence of conditions, which lead to occupational disabilities and diseases;

- Disseminate information on issues such as genetic screening, counselling, effects of sexually transmitted diseases and the causes of disability to prevent such occurrences and facilitate early detection of impairment;
- Provide appropriate medical care to persons with disabilities at all healthcare institutions;
- Increase the number of scholarships to pursue education and training in the fields of speech and occupational therapy, and the prevention and rehabilitation of disabilities.

9. HOUSING

Housing is a basic need for everyone, including people with disabilities. The provision of adequate housing is integral to the economic and social inclusion of people 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 goal would be to make housing more accessible and affordable for Persons with Disabilities. Accordingly, the following measures would be implemented:

- Conduct of a review of the existing Government policies on housing and land provision to explore ways of better facilitating the needs of persons with disabilities;
- Provide assistance to homeowners to modify their houses in the event that an occupant acquires a disability;
- Review existing accommodation constructed/provided for persons with disabilities to ensure compliance with "universal design" specifications;

- Provide in-house support services allowing persons with disabilities to live in their community.

10. TECHNICAL AIDS AND EQUIPMENT

There is a commitment to ensuring that persons with disabilities who are in vulnerable situations, are provided with all 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 would be necessary to ensure that there are mechanisms to enable greater access to affordable prosthetic, assistive or adaptive devices, medical devices, and the related services. In order to facilitate access to technical aids and equipment, the following would be implemented:

- Provide access for persons with disabilities to services, devices and other appropriate assistance;
- Provide greater access to teaching/learning software and adaptive devices and materials (assistive and augmentative communication devices);
- Provide tax exemptions to facilitate the purchase of equipment and technological devices to be used for communication, education and independent living.

11. INCOME MAINTENANCE AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Economic security and social protection for persons with disabilities requires a comprehensive set of inter-related interventions. Persons with disabilities need adequate financial resources 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.

In order to provide income maintenance and social security for all persons with disabilities, the following initiatives would be implemented:

- Review existing social protection programmes to assess their adequacy, and the necessary restructuring of such programmes to ensure that they adequately meet the needs of persons with disabilities;
- Increase and enhance facilities for greater access by persons with disabilities to available grants and other forms of funding to pursue sustainable income generating activities.
- Develop social protection schemes such as school subsidies and/or health insurance for poor families with children and elderly persons with physical and intellectual disabilities;
- Facilitate greater opportunities for employment and self-employment for all persons with disabilities;
- Develop national poverty alleviation programmes that are informed by the concerns of persons with disabilities.

12. DISASTER MANAGEMENT

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. They require special assistance during situations of risk and disaster, and will be given 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, in order to minimize the adverse impact on them and their communities. Accordingly, the following measures would be implemented:

- Develop appropriate mechanisms for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in the National Emergency Management planning arrangements, so as to ensure that they are more intimately involved in the emergency planning process;
- Enhance the range of services available for persons with disabilities in times of disasters;
- 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.
- Conduct programmes to inform persons with disabilities on disaster preparedness;
- Ensure that emergency disaster management information and relevant protocol in accessible formats;
- Provide appropriate emergency shelters in local districts cater for persons with disabilities;
- All emergency and disaster management and occupational health and safety procedures should include a protocol to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to all critical information and service.
- Compile a the National Registry on Persons with Disabilities to include information on geographic locations of persons with disabilities, their particular disability and the location of community shelters for persons with disabilities, among other critical information.

13. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

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. Sharing of experiences and information, and lessons learned would be key to advancing the well-being of persons with disabilities.

To encourage international co-operation and the exchange of information, the following measures would be implemented:

- Expand and enhance the existing mechanisms for information sharing and advocacy at regional and international forums;
- Encourage and support the exchange of knowledge and expertise among Non-Governmental organizations, research institutions, professionals and national organisations concerned with persons with disabilities;
- Provide support for regional and international initiatives to address disability issues;
- Facilitate capacity-building for organizations of persons with disabilities, including the exchange and sharing of information, experiences, training programmes and best practices;
- Explore partnerships with, and assistance from international development partners in the implementation of the policy.

14. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

There is 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/progress, in keeping with reporting obligations of the UNCRPD, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the developmental goals and objectives of Vision 2030.

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 implementation of the UNCRPD in Trinidad and Tobago. Research would also be critical to this process, given the importance of historical and current data in conducting evaluation and review. Accordingly, the following would be implemented:

- Expand the national research agenda for disability-related issues;
- Categorize disability data to reflect gender, and other relevant socio-economic categorisation;
- The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services to work with CSO and organizations for and of persons with disabilities, to establish data collection mechanisms for disability related issues;
- Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, in collaboration with organizations for persons with disabilities, will identify relevant areas of research and obtain the necessary approval for the conduct of such research;
- Continuous assessment of the effectiveness of initiatives implemented to address disability issues;
- Generate on a continuous basis, the necessary information for satisfying reporting requirements under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

15. GENERAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Successful implementation of the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities would require a whole-of-government approach. Accordingly, the roles and responsibilities of the respective Ministries and agencies are outlined hereunder.

Government Departments/ Ministries	Roles and Responsibilities
Social Development and Family Services	Coordinates the implementation of the Policy—through policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; advocacy; mainstreaming of Policy and related issues by ensuring that departments/agencies which have to deliver on specific mandates, deliver effectively; facilitating the provision of social protection services to people with disabilities.
Health	Ensures inclusion of disability components in the National Health Plan for Universal Access to Primary Health Care. Ensures that medical equipment and the physical location of such equipment are accessible to facilitate full inclusion of persons with disabilities.
Education	Implementation of all areas of Student Support and accessibility in schools; main-streaming persons with disabilities in the education system.
Attorney General	Legislative amendments; creation and enactment of legislation for an inclusive, non- discriminatory and barrier free environment.
Works and Transport/Ministry of Planning and Development	Effective implementation and administration of existing and new barrier-free legislation, and monitoring their implementation. Enforcing compliance with National Building Codes and regulations.
Labour	Monitors implementation of Labour laws, to ensure protection of persons with disabilities seeking employment and existing workers with disabilities against unfair discrimination, and promotes an inclusive and safe work environment.

Government Departments/ Ministries	Roles and Responsibilities
Sports, Arts and Culture	Provides national guidelines for sporting, recreational and cultural activities to facilitate people with disabilities, and to ensure accessibility of existing sporting, recreational and cultural facilities; and make national and community events inclusive.
Housing/Ministry of Planning and Development	Development of housing standard and codes to ensure universal accessibility of homes; application of standards and Accessibility Codes in government housing programmes.
Gender Affairs	Inclusion of Gender-related policies for persons with disabilities
Tourism	Installation of appropriate signage at all sites and attractions in accordance with universal design and the maintenance and upgrading of existing and new tourism infrastructure to improve accessibility and mobility for persons with disabilities.
Finance	Ensuring that relevant line Ministries are provided with the appropriate funding to implement projects and programmes for persons with disabilities.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this Policy:

DISABILITY

The UNCRPD recognised “that disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full participation in society on an equal basis with others” (*UN, 2007: Preamble*). It can also be termed – A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity without regard to mitigating measures. (*Americans with Disabilities Act*).

The impairments include: Autism, Cancer, Diabetes, Deafness, Blindness, Cerebral Palsy, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Partially or Completely Missing Limb(s), Mobility Impairments Requiring Use of a Wheelchair, Intellectual Disability, Epilepsy, HIV/AIDS, Bipolar Disorder, Major Depression, Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Dystrophy. (*Americans Disabilities Act*).

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility refers to aims to dismantle the barriers that hinder the enjoyment of rights by persons with disabilities. The issue concerns not just physical access to places, but also access to information, technologies, such as the Internet, communication, and economic and social life. The provision of ramps, sufficiently large and unblocked corridors and doors, the placement of door handles, the availability of information in Braille and easy-to-read formats, the use of sign interpreters, and the availability of assistance and support can ensure that persons with disabilities have access to a workplace, a place of entertainment, a voting booth, transport, a court of law, and so on. Without access to information or the ability to move freely, other rights of persons with disabilities are also restricted.

ADVOCACY

The political act or process of supporting a cause, idea or policy by individuals or a group/s with an aim to influence the outcome. Advocacy should ensure that affected peoples voices are heard, their rights are promoted and that their views are considered when decisions that impact directly on their lives are being made.³

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Any device, product, equipment or tool that is designed or adapted to enable persons with disabilities to participate in activities, tasks or actions. They may include: (i) mobility aids such as wheelchairs, prostheses and crutches; (ii) Communication aids such as hearing aids, FM systems; (iii) Sensory aids such as white canes; noise reducing headphones and coloured lenses; (iv) Technology aids such as computers for alternate and augmentative communication, screen readers, magnifiers, text in audio format.⁴

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

It is an umbrella term that includes assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices and services for persons with disabilities, which enable persons with disabilities and learning differences to attain independence. They include for example, loop systems, sub texting and alternative input for cognitive assistance and computer or electrical assistive devices.⁵

BASIC SERVICES

Any device, product, equipment or tool that is designed or adapted to enable people with disabilities to participate in activities, tasks or actions. One of the key features of a developmental state is to ensure that all citizens – especially the poor and other vulnerable groups - have access to basic services. The Constitution of the country places the responsibility

³ Ibid 2

⁴ Ibid 2

⁵ Ibid 2

on government to ensure that such services are progressively expanded to all, within the limits of available resources.⁶

BRAILLE

Braille is a system of raised dots representing letters of the alphabet. To read Braille, the fingers gently glide over paper that has been embossed with the Braille code. The basis of the Braille system is known as a Braille cell. The cell is comprised of six dots numbered in a specific order. Each dot or combination of dots represents a letter of the alphabet.⁷

CAPTIONING

Text that is included with video presentations or broadcasts that enable people with hearing impairments to have access to the audio portion of the material.⁸

COMMUNICATION

Communication includes languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, accessible multimedia as well as written, audio, plain-language, lip-speaking services, speech reading services, whisper interpretation, note-taking services and augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, including accessible information and communication technology.⁹

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination is any act or omission, including a policy, law, rule, practice, condition or situation which directly or indirectly (a) imposes burdens, obligations or disadvantages on; and/or (b) withholds benefits, opportunities or advantages from, any person on one or more of

⁶ Ibid 2

⁷ Compiled from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind

⁸ Ibid 3

⁹ Ibid 2

the prohibited grounds, which include disability and any other ground that might disadvantage a person, undermines human dignity or adversely affects an individual's rights and freedoms.¹⁰

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination on the basis of disability means any distinction, exclusion or restriction of persons on the basis of disability, which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, on all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field. It encompasses all forms of unfair discrimination, whether direct or indirect, including denial of reasonable accommodation.¹¹

DUTY-BEARERS

Duty-bearers in human rights law include governments, national and local authorities, public officials and service providers.¹²

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD)

The composite cognitive, emotional, physical, mental, communicational, social and spiritual development of children that takes place from conception until they enter formal schooling (i.e. Grade R) or reach the age of 8 years (in the case of children with developmental delays and/or disabilities for whom entry into formal schooling is delayed), whichever occurs first.

EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION

Early childhood intervention is a broad term that describes a wide range of services that are offered to children who are at risk for developmental delays or who have disabilities, including support for their families.

EMPOWERMENT

¹⁰ Ibid 2

¹¹ Ibid 2

¹² Ibid 2

Empowerment refers to processes, procedures and actions aimed at affording access, equal treatment, inclusion, participation, accountability and efficiencies. It is premised on encouraging, and developing the skills for self-sufficiency, with a focus on eliminating the need for charity or welfare in individuals and groups. From a disability perspective this means empowering or developing the skills and abilities amongst persons with disabilities and/or their care givers to effectively communicate their socio-economic needs to others in society, advocate and lobby for these needs to be met, represent themselves and actively participate in all decision-making processes on matters that directly impacts on their lives. Empowerment is therefore identified as a core cross-cutting theme for enabling persons with disabilities to avail of and access all socio-economic development opportunities and rights that exist.¹³

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

Interrelated physical and other infrastructures, built environments, culture, laws, policies, information and communication technologies, and organisations that must be in place to facilitate the socio-economic development of persons with disabilities.¹⁴

EQUALITY

Equality refers to the full and equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms as contemplated in the Constitution and includes equality according to the law and in terms of outcomes. It ensures that individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly and equally and no less favourably, specific to their requirements. It is the right of different groups of people to have respect for their social position and receive equitable treatment in society.

FACILITY

All or any portion of a physical complex, including buildings, structures, equipment, grounds, roads, and parking lots.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid 2

¹⁴ Ibid 2

¹⁵ Ibid 3

GROUP HOME

A group home refers to a small-supervised residential facility, as for people with psychiatric or cognitive disabilities, in which residents typically participate in daily tasks and are often free to come and go on a voluntary basis.¹⁶

HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

Complete or partial loss of ability to hear caused by a variety of injuries or diseases including congenital defects.¹⁷

IMPAIRMENT

Impairment is a perceived or actual feature in the person's body or functioning that may result in limitation or loss of activity or restricted participation of the person in society with a consequential difference of physiological and/or psychological experience of life. For example, the International Classification of Disease (ICD) could be utilised for purposes of defining physical, sensory, intellectual, psychosocial and neurological impairments.¹⁸

INCLUSION

Inclusion is regarded as a universal human right and aims at embracing the diversity of all people irrespective of race, gender, disability or any other differences. It is about equal access and opportunities and eliminating discrimination and intolerance for all. It is about a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can best fully participate in society with no restrictions or limitations.¹⁹

¹⁶ Disability History Museum, (DHM Library web site)

¹⁷ Ibid 3

¹⁸ Ibid 2

¹⁹ Ibid 2

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education means disabled and non-disabled children and young people learning together in ordinary pre-school provision, schools, colleges and universities, with appropriate networks of support. Inclusion means enabling pupils to participate in the life and work of mainstream institutions to the best of their abilities, whatever their needs.²⁰

INDEPENDENT LIVING

The ability of a person to live just like anyone else, to have opportunities to make decisions that affect their lives and to be able to pursue activities of their own choosing with the necessary support to enable persons with disabilities to live independently.

INTERPRETER

Professional person who assists a deaf person in communicating with hearing people.²¹

MAINSTREAMING

The concept that students with disabilities should be integrated with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible, when appropriate to the needs of the child with the disability. Mainstreaming is one point on a continuum of educational options. The term is sometimes used synonymously with "inclusion."²²

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.²³

²⁰ CSIE Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education Web site

²¹ Ibid 3

²² Colorado school for the Deaf and the Blind

²³ Ibid 2

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Any building (public or private) that is available for use by members of the public.²⁴

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Reasonable accommodation refers to necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments, as well as assistive devices and technology, not imposing a situation, where needed in a particular case, to ensure persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.²⁵

REHABILITATION

An organized program of medical and clinical treatment designed to maximize residual physical, perceptual and cognitive abilities following disablement.²⁶

RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITY

A facility licensed to provide room and board, supervision and, sometimes, social and other services for individuals who need assistance with activities of daily living (ADLs) but do not routinely require nursing or medical care. Also known as a rest home.²⁷

SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT

These spaces offer short to long term employment to persons with disabilities who wish to participate in the development of the economy, but who lack sufficient work and technical skills and productivity levels. These programmes must focus on developing, facilitating and

²⁴ National Co-ordinating Committee on Disability

²⁵ Ibid 2

²⁶ Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago

²⁷ Inter generations web-site

strengthening initiatives to advance access to gainful and sustainable work for persons with disabilities, who require disability-specific vocational training.²⁸

SIGN LANGUAGE

Manual communication commonly used by deaf. The gesture or symbols in sign language are organized in a linguistic way. Each individual gesture is called a sign. Each sign has three distinct parts; the handshape, the position of the hands, and the movements of the hands. American Sign Language (ASL) is the most commonly used sign language in the United States. Deaf people from different countries speak different sign languages.²⁹

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Refers to policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labour markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to manage economic and social risks, such as unemployment, exclusion, sickness, disability and old age.³⁰

SOCIAL SERVICES

Refers to a range of public services provided by governmental or private organisations. These public services aim to create more effective organisations, build stronger communities, and promote equity and opportunity. Benefits and facilities such as education, food subsidies, health care, and subsidized housing provided by a government to improve the quality of life of citizens and to promote the welfare of those who are unable to provide for themselves.

²⁸ Ibid 2

²⁹ Ibid 3

³⁰ Ibid 2

STREET FURNITURE

Refers to all forms of public facilities or equipment signage, zebra crossings, public telephone booths, letter boxes, parks, curb cuts.³¹

TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICE FOR THE DEAF (TDD) OR TELETYPEWRITER (TTY)

A device which enables someone who has a speech or hearing impairment to use a telephone when communicating with someone else who has a TDD/TTY. TDD/TTYs can be used with any telephone, and one needs only a basic typing ability to use them.³²

UNIVERSAL ACCESS

Universal access means the removal of cultural, physical, social and other barriers that prevent people with disabilities from entering, using or benefiting from the various systems of society that are available to other citizens and residents. The absence of accessibility or the denial of access is the loss of opportunities to take part in the community on an equal basis with others.³³

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

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

Assistive devices and technologies for particular groups of persons with disabilities where these are needed, must also respond to the principles of universal design. Universal design is therefore the most important tool to achieve universal access.³⁴

³¹ Ibid 3

³² Ibid 3

³³ Ibid 2

³⁴ Ibid 2