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# Comprehensive Report of the National Advisory Committee to Guide the Establishment of a Commission for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities

AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE UNDER THE  
AUSPICES OF THE MINISTRY OF PEOPLE  
EMPOWERMENT AND ELDER AFFAIRS

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## Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

AML	Anti-Money Laundering
ATM	Automated Teller Machines
BCD	Barbados Council for the Disabled
CAP	Common Alerting Protocol
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CTUSAB	Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados
DEM	Department of Emergency Management
GOB	Government of Barbados
KYC	Know Your Client
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ILO	International Labour Organization
LRC	Law Reform Commission
MPEA	Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs
NACPWD	National Advisory Committee for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities
NDU	National Disabilities Unit
NIS	National Insurance Scheme
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RBM&E	Results-Based Monitoring & Evaluation System
RPWDB	Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TOR	Terms of Reference
TTY	Teletypewriter
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural  
Organization

VAT

Value-Added Tax

WHO

World Health Organization

## Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately 15% of the world's population, totaling one billion individuals are persons with disabilities (PWDs). PWDs are the single largest minority globally given that numbers continue to ascend as populations age (United Nations 2022). In the Caribbean, UNESCO reports that one million persons live with some form of disability (UNESCO 2021). PWDs are more likely to experience adverse socio-economic conditions than persons without disabilities as they "*face overlapping socio-cultural, economic and political barriers*" (Caribbean Development Bank 2018). In fact, multiple Country Poverty Assessments (CPA) studies found that disability is a significant contributor to poverty in the Caribbean, including Barbados (Caribbean Development Bank 2018).

Pointedly, while 80% of PWDs reside in developing countries, only 45 countries have passed anti-discrimination and other disability specific legislation (United Nations 2022) despite the fact that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly states that disability does not preclude access to development programming nor entitlement to human and legal rights (World Bank 2022). In this respect, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) includes seven (7) targets that clearly refer to PWDs and six (6) further targets on persons in vulnerable situations inclusive of PWDs (World Bank 2022). Cumulatively, these targets aim to ensure the meaningful inclusion, participation and non-discrimination of PWDs in all aspects of the socio-economic development of societies.

Notwithstanding, the reality is that PWDs are more likely to be under-educated, unemployed, have limited access to healthcare and are poverty-stricken as quality socio-economic opportunities are either limited or inaccessible (World Bank 2022). In addition, concurrent intersectionality such as gender and age heighten vulnerabilities (Caribbean Development Bank 2018) as exemplified in research conducted by (Nepomuceno, di Lego and Turra 2021) which showed that while women lived longer than men, it is anticipated that they will endure poorer health. The results align with plausible assumptions that greater life expectancy of women increases their likelihood of having a disability as a result of chronic illnesses. Women who live out their old age in more economically vulnerable circumstances than men further increase their risk of any health problem becoming a disability.

Inclusivity mandates the dismantling of socio-economic and communication barriers, increasing the availability and access to assistive devices and technologies, bridging gaps in the delivery of social services and tackling discrimination and stigma (World Bank 2022) through sensitisation and increasing public awareness initiatives. Inclusivity also involves promoting independent living and facilitating greater access to housing.

## Executive Summary

The National Advisory Committee for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities (NACPWD) have found that all of these global issues apply to Barbados as PWDs contend with inaccessibility to limited social protection measures and continuously face higher rates of violence and abuse, discrimination, social exclusion and systematic marginalisation in all socio-economic and legal spheres within society. The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 further compounded this disadvantageous situation, deepening the tremendous daily challenges faced by PWDs.

The last published population and housing census in Barbados in 2010 reported that approximately 11,546 persons - just over 4% of the population were recognized as having disabilities (Barbados Statistical Service 2013). It is expected that the results of the latest island census which was undertaken in 2022 will indicate an increased number and a higher percentage of PWDs, including persons who now possess a disability consequential on the global health pandemics and increasing longevity among persons.

To remedy this, the Government of Barbados is actively working towards passing legislation on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and has developed a National Disabilities Policy. The prospective legislation was drafted by legal consultant Dr. Jason Haynes of the University of Birmingham while Professor Dwayne Devonish of the University of the West Indies crafted the National Disabilities Policy. It is envisioned that the forthcoming National Commission for PWDs will serve to implement the Disabilities Policy in compliance with the legislation to improve the lives of PWDs.

To this end, the NACPWD hereby submits its Report to Guide the Establishment of a Commission for Improving the lives of PWDs. This Report offers pointed guidance on the most viable means to redress discrimination, social exclusion and systematic



marginalization of PWDs with a view to facilitating greater inclusivity in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) as informed by the completed draft RPWDB and the draft NDP. In this regard the Report details the:

- a) Terms of Reference and Mandate of the NACPWD;
- b) Situation Analysis of PWDs in Barbados;
- c) Specific proposals to promote inclusivity and improve the lives of PWDs by developing greater avenues for access to opportunities, resources and assistance;
- d) Proposals for extending the quantity and quality of the delivery of social, economic and legal services;
- e) NACPWD's Review of the Draft 2023-2030 National Policy for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities in Barbados;
- f) Institutional Alignment of the proposed Disabilities Commission and the proposed Family Services Department;
- g) Usefulness of a Development Programme to facilitate inclusivity;
- h) Urgent necessity for education reform for special needs children and children with disabilities;
- i) Need for an Employment Programme for PWDs; and
- j) Institutional Framework to Guide the Establishment of the National Commission for PWDs.

It is hoped that the submission of the NACPWD will serve as a comprehensive guide to the Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs (MPEA) in the establishment of the future Disabilities Commission and the proposals herein will adequately service the needs and interest of all persons with disabilities in Barbados.

## Contextualising Government's Recent Efforts to Improve the Lives of Persons with Disabilities

The Government of Barbados, through its various Ministries and Departments, has succeeded in advancing the cause of PWDs within recent times even in the absence of a strategic policy or legislative framework in which to effect transformational change. Total disabilities benefits disbursed by the MPEA have increased by 60% in the last five years since 2018. Additionally, total subventions to the various organisations established under the umbrella of the Council for the Disabled have been increased by 40% in 2021.

The National Disabilities Unit (NDU) is the department within the MPEA tasked with the responsibility of facilitating, advocating and promoting the advancement and empowerment of PWDs in order to ensure their equal opportunity for integration and participation in all aspects of community living. During the last five years, it continued its involvement in the construction of ramps and handrails at the various homes of PWDs who have mobility challenges in order to facilitate their domestic access. This department also advanced its commitment to aid in the daily living of PWDs through its distribution of wheelchairs, prostheses, walking canes, shower chairs, crutches, walkers and grab bars.

Also, the NDU has retained the services of an Adjustment to Blindness Officer to assist persons who have recently lost their vision to cope and adapt to their loss. This is facilitated through counselling and training in the use of adaptive equipment to function independently in their homes and external environment. Additionally, in an attempt to change the stereotypical perceptions of PWDs, there has been sensitisation campaigns through the broadcasting and telecasting of tips on how to interact with PWDs; publication of articles outlining the circumstances of PWDs and the staging of public awareness exercises through rallies and discussions on radio and television programmes as well as participation in outreach activities.

Measures to promote the integration of PWDs in all aspects of social and community life have been introduced through the hosting of the popular Movie Nights and Public Lectures. Sign Language training for relatives of the deaf and hard of hearing was resumed post COVID-19 as well as entrepreneurial training through the Flower Arranging Course.

Furthermore, the MPEA and the NDU have sought to educate PWDs on entrepreneurship through the hosting of entrepreneurial markets aimed to also provide

such persons with an opportunity to showcase their products and services. Additionally, an entrepreneurship symposium for PWDs was sponsored in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Business Development.

Correspondingly, within the last three years, the Barbados Transport Board has purchased fifth-nine (59) electric buses, all of which facilitate wheelchair users. The NDU purchased three (3) vehicles in 2022, two of which are equipped with wheelchair lifts, which are used to transport wheelchair users and other PWDs to medical appointments at a more cost effective basis than would otherwise be the case.

Since May 2022, the City of Bridgetown has possessed four (4) reserved parking spaces designated for vehicles transporting PWDs for up to three hours at a time. Furthermore, audible traffic signals have been installed by the Ministry of Transport, Works and Water Resources near to the NDU in Lower Collymore Rock to accommodate deaf person's safety in crossing that street.

In 2021, a recreational and rehabilitative facility was established at the NDU, with recreational equipment provided by the 'Clean and Green' Programme of the Ministry of the Environment and National Beautification. In addition, for the last two summer periods, Camp Reach has been staged at the NDU for children with disabilities in association with the National Summer Camp Programme of the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment.

Finally, Barbados became a signatory to the Marrakesh Treaty in February, 2023, permitting the adaptation of published works to be accessible in the country to blind persons and protecting our Republic from sanction in adapting copyrighted materials for use by blind and visually impaired persons.

## SECTION A

### Terms of Reference of the National Advisory Committee

The Terms of Reference (TOR) of the National Advisory Committee for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities (NACPWD), is premised on systematic challenges faced by Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Barbados. The TOR is also informed by Government of Barbados' commitment to empower and enfranchise PWDs as documented in the 2022 Barbados Labour Party manifesto titled "Our Barbados: Owning our Future." The manifesto pledged to institute an "Include Me Bim" initiative to mainstream economic activities for PWDs and to develop national policy, legislation, strategies and interventions to ensure better access in employment, education and the built environment as well as to significantly advance the work of fully integrating PWDs into the country's social and economic life.

Further, the Throne Speech delivered by the then Governor General of Barbados, (now the sitting President of Barbados), Her Excellency Dame Sandra Mason on September 15, 2020, enunciated that in order to *"ensure that none of our citizens are left behind, a Commission for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities will be set up."* Again, this commitment was reiterated by the Prime Minister, The Hon. Mia Amor Mottley, S.C., M.P., on the occasion of the swearing in of Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries and Members of both Chambers of Parliament on January 26, 2022.

The need for legislative, policy and institutional frameworks are rationalised by the fact that PWDs constitute an extremely vulnerable group of citizens who confront daily challenges of inaccessibility to free education, affordable healthcare, reliable and affordable transportation, quality employment, non-standardised social security support and impaired access to public environments.

The Government of Barbados, through the Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs (MPEA), is cognizant and sensitive to these issues and comprehends the degree of work required to execute its mandate. This is evidenced at the February 2022 meeting chaired by the Minister of the MPEA, the Hon. Kirk Humphrey M.P. with the Hon. Edmund Hinkson M.P. and Senator Andwele Boyce where the concern was expressed that a significant amount of preparatory work is needed to establish a Commission and its creation could possibly take several months to come to fruition.

Therefore, it was determined that an interim mechanism should be formed and tasked with the responsibility of conducting the preparatory work necessary for the

Commission to function. The recommendation was taken that the mechanism will take the form of a National Advisory Committee. Subsequently, the NACPWD was established to assist the MPEA in highlighting the unique challenges of the community of PWDs with a view to developing practical solutions in accordance with the Cabinet directive dated May 12, 2022 in Note (22) (2)369/MPEA. 08.

## Mandate of the National Advisory Committee

In compliance with the TOR, the mandate of the National Advisory Committee is to:

- a) Present the Barbados Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill (RPWDB) to the MPEA;
- b) Develop a National Disabilities Policy as the regulatory framework in compliance with the RPWDB;
- c) Prepare an institutional framework for the establishment of a Disabilities Commission which would oversee the improvement of the lives of persons with disabilities through the implementation of legislation and the National Disabilities Policy; and
- d) Increase public awareness and sensitisation on the challenges facing PWDs.

It was determined that the National Disabilities Unit (NDU) will function as the Secretariat. In addition, the MPEA informed in its correspondence Ref. No. M.P.2413/9 Vol. I dated May 25, 2022, that the membership of the Advisory Committee will comprise of:

The Hon. Edmund Hinkson, M.P.	Chairman
Ms. Kerryann Ifill, SCM	Deputy Chairperson
Mr. John Hollingsworth	Ex Officio Member
Senator Andwele Boyce	Member
Ms. Joy-ann Haigh	Member
Mr. Larry Smith, Q.C.	Member
Ms. Janeil Odle	Member
Mr. Granville Carter	Member
Ms. Dawn Rudder, B.S.S.	Member

Ms. Sonia Rawlins replaced Ms. Rudder as a Committee Member owing to the latter's inability to accept membership.

## Justification for the Institution of Legislative, Policy & Institutional Frameworks

To date, Barbados does not have legislation nor an updated policy that comprehensively safeguards the interests of PWDs. However, Barbados signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on July 19, 2007. This Convention came into force on May 3, 2008. Thereafter, Barbados ratified the CRPD on February 27, 2013.

The Government of Barbados is therefore obliged at the international level, to enact legislation and implement national policy to protect and promote the full and equitable enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of and by PWDs without discrimination in Barbados by facilitating their access to and inclusivity as well as their participation in all aspects of society and daily life.

In this regard, legislative, policy and institutional frameworks are necessary to effect domestication of international obligations in compliance with the Convention; advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and ensure that PWDs receive concrete deliverables commensurate to their needs in fulfillment of the GOB'S documented commitment to service the needs of PWDs and ensure their comprehensive human rights and dignity as members of the human race.

## The Inaugural Meeting of the National Advisory Committee

The NACPWD was launched at the MPEA on June 1, 2022 by Minister, the Hon. Kirk Humphrey, M.P. in the presence of Ministry officials and representatives from various media houses. Thereafter, the Chairman of the Advisory Committee held its inaugural meeting with Minister Humphrey M.P. and senior officials of the MPEA on June 7, 2022. This meeting discussed the context and work of the NACPWD, concluding with a consensus that wide consultations will be held with all stakeholders with an interest in fulfilling the Advisory Committee's mandate.

## The Methodological Approach

In execution of its duties, the NACPWD conducted a non-empirically-based form of document analysis. Documents were reviewed for the purpose of obtaining insight into regional and international disabilities policies, comparative analysis and to answer pointed questions on socio-economic policy matters. In this respect, the document type was information-oriented reference material which proved to be useful in understanding different realities and policies across countries (O'Leary 2017).

### Documents Examined

The NACPWD reviewed the:

- a) Barbados Green Paper on Persons with Disabilities which was laid in Parliament on May 30, 2000;
- b) Barbados White Paper on Persons with Disabilities which was laid in Parliament on August 20, 2002;
- c) Report by Impact Justice on Access to Justice for Persons with Disabilities in CARICOM Countries dated December 2021;
- d) Employment Code (Draft) on Persons with Disabilities proposed by CTUSAB and the Social Partnership in 2019; and
- e) Trinidad & Tobago National Policy on Persons with Disabilities dated July, 2018.

In addition to document analysis, the National Advisory Committee also convened extensive meetings with a wide spectrum of stakeholders in the public and private sectors including:

- a) All Ministries of Government along with some of their major departments and Statutory Corporations;
- b) The twenty-one (21) organisations representing PWDs under the auspices of the Barbados Council for the Disabled;
- c) Labour Organisations & Trade Unions;
- d) Business, Commerce, Employers Organisations & the Private Sector Association;
- e) The Hotel & Tourism Association;
- f) Banking & Financial Sector;
- g) Building & Civil Engineering Industries;
- h) Civil Society Organisations;

- i) Tertiary Institutions, namely the University of the West Indies, Barbados Community College and the Samuel Jackman Prescod Institute;
- j) Private Special Needs Schools;
- k) Insurance Companies;
- l) The Associations of Medical, Dental, Occupational Therapy & Pharmaceutical Practitioners;
- m) Political Parties, notably the Democratic Labour Party & the Alliance Party for Progress;
- n) Sports Organisations & Cultural Entities;
- o) United Nation agencies in Barbados, namely UNESCO & UNDP;
- p) The Social Justice Committee;
- q) The Telecommunications Companies, namely FLOW and Digicel;
- r) Faith-based and interest groups; and
- s) The Grantley Adams International Airport & its contracted personnel.

The Barbados Credit Union League as well as major Credit Unions were also invited to meet with the NACPWD.

Consultations with these organisations provided the Advisory Committee with the opportunity to inform on its mandate and *raison d'être*. It also allowed representatives from these organisations with the opportunity to inform the Advisory Committee on the adversities which PWDs encounter and to recommend policy initiatives and legislative proposals.

Meetings of the NACPWD were held bi-monthly during each of the ten months of its tenure with occasional additional meetings of its Public Relation/Communications sub-committee.

Overall, stakeholder meetings were undertaken to:

- a) Provide information to senior policy makers and management on the vulnerabilities of PWDs in all aspects of life;
- b) Obtain information on existing policies, programmes and strategies, if any, that cater to the respective needs of PWDs in accordance with the given service / product of the given entity/organisation;
- c) Discuss prospective policies, programmes and strategies with an aim to positively impact the lives of PWDs;



- d) Apprise senior policy makers and management of the issues affecting PWDs and militating against the advancement and progress of the community of PWDs; and
- e) Propose policy, programmes and strategies for the advancement of PWDs in the social, economic and political life of Barbados.

### Public Outreach Initiatives

The National Advisory Committee also held three (3) hybrid Town Hall Meetings in St. Michael, Christ Church and St. Peter. Members of the public were invited to attend in September, 2022 as well as to participate in and give their comments and recommendations for policy and legislative proposals.

Additionally, the Advisory Committee directly wrote a plethora of organisations and interests groups such as the Lion's Club, the Rotary Club, the Kiwani's Club, the Salvation Army, the Barbados Alliance to End Homelessness, the Cecil Albert Graham Centre, the Barbados Bar Association, the Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners and the special needs schools inviting them to submit their proposals for policy and legislation. Also, an email address ([inclusion@barbados.gov.bb](mailto:inclusion@barbados.gov.bb)) was created inviting the general public to do the same.

Finally, the Advisory Committee engaged the public on media programmes such as Brasstacks, the People's Business, Mornin Barbados, Speak Up Face to Face, One on One and Voice of Barbados.

### Situation Analysis, Findings & Proposals

Extensive contributions received from various stakeholders and members of the public all presented evidence of systematic marginalisation, discrimination and exclusion of PWDs from many aspects of socio-economic, legal and civil society in Barbados. The extent of this marginalisation and social exclusion is discussed herein. There is evidence to suggest that marginalisation of PWDs was caused by inaccessibility to services and resources as well as the lack of enabling institutional structures to deliver the required services and assistance. Also, some legal and institutional requirements inadvertently placed PWDs at a disadvantage.

This resulted in the lack of participation and inclusion of PWDs on an equitable and just basis as citizens of Barbados and members of society. The following are the major areas of life in which PWDs are disadvantaged as individuals and as a community. Based on these areas, the NACPWD asserts that there is significant lack of awareness, empathy

and understanding by public and private sector institutions as well as private citizens concerning the daily challenges which PWDs face in their lives.

### Healthcare

PWDs informed of the following challenges in healthcare:

- a) Poor delivery of medical treatment and patient care at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital;
- b) Poor access to regular and quality dental health care, particularly for adults. Some dentists denied oral care due to behavioural concerns;
- c) Communication challenges experienced by those who are deaf; and
- d) Having to incur the cost of expensive medication that is not listed on the Barbados Drug Service. Depending on the nature / categorisation of the disability, this was a recurring and burdensome expense.

Poor delivery of healthcare services and sub-par patient care are indicators that health care and service providers require more training on appropriate ways to administer treatment to PWDs. It is recommended that:

- a) Healthcare providers undergo more specialised training in detection of disabilities;
- b) The provision of additional free healthcare services such as dental care should be extended to adult PWDs as many persons can least afford these services;
- c) the State should allocate a budget to finance public dental care for adults and explore the feasibility of establishing a Central Dental Department;
- d) Certified interpreters should be assigned to public health spaces to lessen the communication barrier for those who are deaf;
- e) A fast-track system or a designated space ought to be provided to quickly facilitate children and adult PWDs in health care facilities;
- f) Early detection programmes should be medically streamlined throughout the healthcare sector. Pregnant women should be closely monitored for gestation anomalies and medical confirmation of anomalies should trigger early intervention mechanisms and commensurate support services. Further, the operationalisation of non-routine testing for pregnant women should be referred to the Chief Medical Officer of Health;
- g) Consideration should be afforded to including some medication used by PWDs on the Barbados Drug Service;
- h) Institutional support be extended to pregnant women who are disabled and girls who conceive as a result of sexual abuse; and

- i) Persons with comorbidities should be closely monitored as they are more susceptible to becoming a PWD.

## Education

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), approximately 90% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school (United Nations 2022). In Barbados, many children with disabilities do not have access to free, quality education because of the nature or severity of their disability. Furthermore, public schools cannot accommodate these children and so, they are compelled to attend private special needs schools which are costly. Some parents opt not to send their children to school for a variety of reasons. Additional challenges include:

- a) High levels of absenteeism due to expensive transportation costs to attend school;
- b) Exorbitant fees to conduct disability assessments and indefinite time in which parents can anticipate receipt of these assessments;
- c) Denying admission into schools based on incontinence;
- d) Limited, outdated and / unsuitable teaching aids and assistive learning devices; and
- e) Outdated assessment modalities.

Neither public nor private schools have adequate instructional resources such as assistive learning devices, institutional capacity in terms of space and enabling structures, nor sufficient quantities of technical expertise to cater to children with various categories of disabilities. While special needs schools exert concerted effort towards catering to children with disabilities, these institutions still require support in procuring assistive devices, learning materials, retrofitting and so on. These challenges adversely impact upon children's quality of education and ultimately their ability to secure employment later in life.

To redress these problems, it is recommended that consideration is afforded to:

- a) Ensuring that State funds intended for children with disabilities are allocated for the said purpose;
- b) Assigning additional teaching aids and teacher assistants throughout schools;
- c) Re-considering the current policy on denying admission into public schools due to incontinence of children with disabilities;
- d) Increased training and professional development of teachers in special needs education;

- e) Deploying varied and appropriate assistive devices for teachers and children with disabilities inclusive of visual and tactile aids;
- f) Modifying and diversifying assessment modalities beyond the existing one type model;
- g) Subsidising the cost of disability assessments and implementing early intervention strategies in aid of managing the disability;
- h) Implementing State funded assistance for institutions and private persons involved in special needs education. It is suggested that the State should also finance the education of individuals pursuing training / studying in special needs education;
- i) Increasing the institutional capacity of the Children's Development Centre by providing additional resources;
- j) Children with disabilities who do not have a physical impairment or major mental incapacity should be admitted into mainstream schools and educated about the nature of their disability;
- k) Procuring and promoting the use of audio books and computer programmes such as JAWS screen reader. Where suitable, examinations should be colour-coded and the duration of exams should be extended beyond present standard of fifteen minutes of extra time. Online courses should include captions and provide interpreting services;
- l) Certified interpreters should be assigned to all schools to redress communication barriers;
- m) Outfitting schools with sensory rooms to assist in calming autistic students;
- n) Assigning trained personnel to schools to assist those children who do not have fine motor skills;
- o) Focusing greater attention on functional curricula to aid in the transition from school to work;
- p) Instituting Individual Development Plans (IDPs), within the Education Reform Programme. Lesson plans should be personalised to ensure that students can navigate and complete curricula;
- q) Providing occupational therapists assigned to schools catering to children with disabilities; and
- r) Providing increased scholarships and grants for worthy PWDs to pursue studies and vocational training, both locally and overseas.

The Advisory Committee met with senior officials of the Ministry of Education, Technological & Vocational Training, tertiary institutions and private special needs

schools, which cater to children with disabilities both at the primary and secondary level. Discussions pertained to Part IV of the draft RPWDB and the obstacles facing PWDs to obtain a meaningful /quality education which is free at point of delivery. The Advisory Committee further suggests that a family-centred, wholistic and transformative approach ought to inform educational policies on special needs. This is rationalised by the fact that the complexities involved in educating special needs students impact upon their families who are typically poor. It is also recommended that:

- a) Consideration be afforded to providing greater accommodation for special needs students in public schools;
- b) Preparation programmes should be developed to help parents, teachers and school administrators support these students and to facilitate greater sensitisation;
- a) Strong consideration be afforded to soliciting funding from international donors to promote education for children with disabilities;
- b) Tertiary institutions deepen collaboration among themselves and organisations representing PWDs in support of students with disabilities;
- c) The curricula of the Samuel Jackman Prescod Institute of Technology be revised (where applicable), to place a greater emphasis on competency in order to better facilitate students with learning disabilities and variabilities;
- d) After-school programmes be implemented instead of extending school hours for PWDs. Extending school hours is complex and will implicate institutional and labour structures;
- e) A National Funding Model be developed to finance learning resources such as braille, occupational and physical therapy;
- f) More diagnostic testing be administered at the primary school level;
- g) A special needs curriculum be developed by the Ministry of Education Technological & Vocational Training;
- h) The current practice of allocating 15 minutes' additional time to sit examinations be extended to qualifying students as is reasonable in the circumstances;
- i) The State should increase the existing bursary of BDS\$125.00 per term per special needs child given to schools catering for special needs students; and
- j) No distinction should be made between public and private special needs schools as it pertains to accessing learning resources from the State such as the National Reading Service.

## Transportation

Transportation is a major and concurrent problem for PWDs. Traversing to and from various places across Barbados is extremely costly and often results in their inability to attend school regularly, participate in recreational activities and having to reschedule medical appointments and other engagements.

The transportation needs of PWDs are under-serviced even though this amenity is provided by the NDU free of cost. Under-servicing occurs because the NDU does not offer transportation services outside of regular working hours. This is compounded by the high demand for transportation coupled with the limited resources of the NDU. Private transportation is very expensive and therefore some persons cannot afford this expense. In turn, this negatively impacts PWDs' access to medical care, education and other social services.

To address the problem, it is suggested that consideration is afforded to:

- a) Extending the hours in which the NDU provides transportation services;
- b) Providing a less bureaucratic system for PWDs to obtain tax exemptions, concessions and other incentives to purchase their own transportation vehicles or to modify them to effect greater accessibility in accord with their needs; and
- c) Providing free or subsidised public transportation to all PWDs.

In the interest of safety, it is further proposed that:

- a) Buses are outfitted with alert system features in the event of an emergency while in route;
- b) Stop lights are outfitted with gradients, spinning apparatus, beeping systems and other alert systems to indicate when it is safe to cross; and
- c) There is more effective enforcement of penalties against persons who breach the parking arrangements for PWDs in public spaces.

## Housing

Housing was found to be a persistent need and securing permanent housing proved to be problematic. Landlords are hesitant to rent to clients of the Welfare Department due to late monthly payments from that Department, perceived notions of increased possibility of damage to their property and the expense of retrofitting the premises to accommodate tenants with disabilities. In addition, PWDs are not typically approved for mortgages or credit and loan facilities.

The NACPWD acknowledges that preliminary structures are in place to facilitate the government's petition to financial institutions for access to credit on behalf of PWDs. The Advisory Committee also acknowledges that the GOB has agreed to allocate 10% of state-funded housing to PWDs subject to their registration with the NDU and satisfying necessary financial criteria.

Government housing for some PWDs does occur as exemplified in the provisions of ramps from the NDU and outfitting of bathrooms from the Urban Development Commission. This practice should continue and persons allowed to give input on the design of the home based on their specific physical needs. It is recommended that, where applicable, homes should also incorporate appropriate technologies for PWDs.

It is further recommended that housing which is constructed in the future to accommodate PWDs, whether by the State or by private entities, needs to be readily accessible to and useable by PWDs and should be built in accordance with the tenets and principles of the yet to be legislated National Building Code, with common areas also being accessible to PWDs.

There is also recognition by the NACPWD that there needs to be a planned and structured approach by the State to retrofit the homes of financially vulnerable PWDs in order to facilitate greater accessible and reasonable accommodation for them.

Pointedly, deliberations with the building and civil engineering industries illustrated that it is important to conduct building assessments in aid of efficient construction planning and engineering practices leading to the built environment for the benefit of PWDs. These assessments should be used as evaluative tools to determine the type of renovations needed to meet applicable building standards. Further, building assessments and retrofitting planning must consider differing variables of accessibility within the interior of the buildings. This includes space, functionality and safety. Additionally, distinctions should be drawn between public and private buildings and consideration afforded to developing a housing registry specifically for PWDs.

### Communications

Communication barriers limit deaf persons' access to all types of services in the public and private sectors. Proposals to lessen this barrier include:

- a) Training and providing more certified sign language interpreters;
- b) Procuring and providing sign language inserts, special landline telephone devices for the deaf and other audio-visual technologies, at no additional costs than that charged to persons without disabilities;

- c) Nationally televised programmes should feature closed captions or subtitles; and
- d) Implementing programmes and services to reduce communication barriers and to achieve wider participation in information technology training.

Notably, the NACPWD's consultation with telecommunication companies focused on sections 78 and 79 of the draft RPWDB as detailed in Part XII. Telecommunication companies asserted that full compliance with the draft RPWDB requires efficient planning and allocation of multiple resources which will have financial implications in respect of their procurement, operational costs, timelines, technology and hardware. The relevant State agency should liaise with and provide guidance to the telecommunication companies to ensure compliance with the draft RPWDB and the draft NDP. Additionally, the State should monitor their progress of compliance as this has the potential to slightly increase the cost of services and products to Barbadian consumers.

### Formal Employment & Entrepreneurship

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), unemployment among PWDs are as high as 80% in some countries (United Nations 2022). Barbados mirrors these figures as the NACPWD cites national statistical data based on Barbados' 2010 Census which found that 90% of employable PWDs are unemployed. Identical to the ILO's findings, local employers in the public and private sectors either assumed that PWDs are unable to work (United Nations 2022) or reportedly, do not typically receive applications from PWDs. However, anecdotal information from PWDs contend that they are discriminated upon disclosure of their disability and consequently excluded from employment. In addition to high unemployment rates, other areas of concern relating to formal employment include:

- a) Limited observation of health and safety protocols suitable to PWDs within the workplace;
- b) Limited use or application of flexible and remote work options in various places of employment so as to accommodate PWDs;
- c) Limited physical accessibility in workplaces to reasonably accommodate PWDs within various employment settings;
- d) Indications of reluctance to reassign medically boarded persons within the public service even though they are capable of working albeit in a different capacity; and
- e) Specifically, teachers with disabilities are not accommodated to the same degree as children with disabilities because their limitations are perceived as underperformance and a reluctance to work. Accommodating these educators is



subject to the discretion of the Ministry of Education in the public sector and the Board of Management and Principal at the private educational institutions.

In response, it is proposed that consideration should be afforded to:

- a) Creating a 'temporary disability' category for social security purposes. This serves the dual purpose of catering to the immediate needs of PWDs and will aid in their reintegration into the workplace upon recovery;
- b) Facilitating hybrid and remote work in addition to flexible work schedules where practical;
- c) Prioritise reassignment over medical boarding. This helps to ensure greater financial security of the individual, given that sustainable income is invariably higher than disability benefits. Notably, this measure is also financially advantageous to the National Insurance Fund;
- d) Creating state-funded incentives in the form of tax relief and grants as a means of encouraging employers to hire PWDs and assist with retrofitting costs. Incentive-driven policies may be tied to specified terms and conditions and employers who fail to comply maybe liable to incur penalties;
- e) Provision of adequate training of and support for PWDs within the workforce in order to assist their development, self-confidence, dignity, potential promotion and career advancement;
- f) Encouraging recruitment of PWDs in the workplace by implementing a quota system informed by ratio-based criteria. Application of the system should feature set parameters to guard against tokenism and consider organisational size, the nature of business or enterprise and other appropriate particulars;
- g) Establishing an accepted code outlining modifications to the employment interview process of PWDs where practicable to allow greater and more equal opportunities for their employment;
- h) Public relations initiatives should be conducted to inform of the competencies and skill set of PWDs with the intent of helping them to secure employment. Sensitivity training is also needed within organisations;
- i) Establishing a national register that details the skills, qualifications and the classification of PWDs;
- j) Establishing job placement programmes serving the dual purpose of giving candidates work experience and employers the opportunity to assess competencies for themselves;
- k) Increase disability awareness and sensitivity training programmes in workplaces;

- l) Establishing a PWDs committee within the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and the Third Sector;
- m) Promoting wider skills training of PWDs with a view to preparing them for self-employment;
- n) More active and strategic support in conjunction with incentivizing PWDs to be able to embark on self-employment and entrepreneurship and to advance their existing businesses;
- o) Assigning vocational officers to the National Disabilities Commission. It is envisioned that the officers will address issues in the workplace, assist with behaviour modification, offer career guidance and advise employers on how to give clear instructions to PWDs. These officers should be either PWDs with training in this area or be individuals experienced in disability sensitivity awareness;
- p) Establishing an accepted code requiring reasonable adjustments on the job site or workplace where practicable so that an employee with a disability would not be at a disadvantage in their employment setting;
- q) There should be greater collaboration between corporate Barbados, the designated State agency responsible for the PWDs and the Barbados National Council for the Disabled to address and reduce the high unemployment levels among PWDs; and
- r) Employers should liaise with the University of the West Indies, the Barbados Community College and the Samuel Jackman Prescod Institute of Technology to source graduates from these institutions with disabilities.

Moreover, in aid of promoting the quota system and reducing untenable unemployment levels among PWDs, it is further suggested that:

- a) The relevant Ministry / government department partner with employers to discuss the particulars of corporate adjustments and the precise methodology for the operationalisation of draft RPWDB;
- b) Support be provided to employers in aid of recruitment of PWDs. This support must be reasonable and commensurate to the availability of State resources;
- c) Employers and employees be provided with support mechanisms in the event of an emergency / crisis which involves PWDs;
- d) PWDs be provided with enabling environments to create their own opportunities in the manufacturing and commercial sectors;
- e) The National Disabilities Unit (NDU) and other relevant organisations offer continuous courses in sign language; and

- f) Cost analyses and risk-assessments are conducted and used to inform decision-making.

Importantly, consideration should be afforded to these measures within the context of a comprehensive employment programme. The particulars of such a programme are specified on page 39 herein.

### Accessibility

Significant challenges remain for blind persons and mobility-challenged persons to access much of the physical infrastructure across the country. This includes many government and state owned buildings, public buildings, outdoor and indoor facilities and roads. This clearly forms a barrier and an obstacle to the conduct of many PWD's personal business as well as to their participation in many wholesome activities which would otherwise assist in their self-development and positive self-image.

It is recommended that:

- a) Infrastructural planners, both in the public service and in the private sector, collaborate with PWDs and their stakeholder organisations to develop and/or adopt best practice accessibility standards and supporting regulations and conditions informing the design, construction and/or reconstruction of buildings, facilities and other physical infrastructure to which the public are invited;
- b) Include PWDs on Committees of the State's Planning Department;
- c) Provision of ramps and bathroom facilities for PWDs be a condition of permission granted for the construction and/or reconstruction of buildings, facilities and other physical infrastructure to which the public are invited;
- d) Wider provision be made for visual and auditory systems/prompts on public crossroads for blind and for deaf persons;
- e) Aspects of the National Building Code pertaining to greater accommodation for PWDs be legislated and enforced; and
- f) All existing buildings to which the public are invited reasonably be given a timeframe within which they are to be retrofitted to accommodate the entry and presence in them of PWDS.

## Legal Rights & Access to Justice

Overall, there appears to be limited legal and judicial institutional structures that cater to PWDs. Specifically, major challenges pertain to:

- a) The hesitancy of some law enforcement officers to take statements from blind persons based on their alleged inability to sign;
- b) Instances where PWDs are prohibited from having a next of kin present when giving statements;
- c) In cases where cognitively disabled persons are victims of crimes, police officers record the statements of the victim's next of kin. While social workers are also present to assist with facilitating investigations, these cases are not typically pursued to judicial completion due to the victim's inability to speak for him / herself;
- d) Poor sensitivity and inconsideration meted out by some police officers towards PWDs;
- e) Perceived lack of standardised protocols governing some officers' treatment of suspects and victims who are cognitively disabled;
- f) Fear of engaging with law enforcement should minors and those with intellectual disabilities be accused of / charged with a crime; and
- g) Alleged unresponsiveness / hesitancy by some police officers to allegations of physical assault precipitated by bullying.

The NACPWD found that law enforcement lacked necessary enabling institutional structures to deliver the required assistance. To circumvent this limitation, it was suggested that:

- a) In the interest of affording added protection to blind and deaf persons, a senior officer should be present while police officers record statements from these persons. Alternatively, PWDs may invoke the 'Next Friend' concept in law which allows a friend of the witness to read the recorded statement in addition to the police officer;
- b) Electronic versions of recorded statements should be provided. Additionally, consideration should be afforded to employing relevant technological applications that allow PWDs to read statements for themselves;
- c) Police officers be trained in basic sign language so they can engage and reassure deaf persons until certified interpreters arrive;
- d) Sensitivity training should be conducted throughout the judicial branch - inclusive of judicial officers. Re-training should occur on a systematic basis;

- e) PWDs should be eligible for legal aid subject to qualification criterion inclusive of financial assessments;
- f) More comprehensive and inclusive legal aid services be provided to PWDs; and
- g) A clear policy directive which speaks to the treatment of cognitively disabled persons in their interaction with the Police should be developed and implemented.

### Social Security & the Provision of Social Services

PWDs require additional social protection and support in light of their concurrent and peculiar vulnerabilities. Currently, the provision of social protection mechanisms for PWDs is inadequate as a result of physical and institutional deficiencies in all facets of society. Consequently, PWDs encounter the following challenges:

- a) Lack of access to information to help PWDs who require varied forms of government support;
- b) Most PWDs are ineligible to receive social security benefits as a direct consequence of their disability in itself. Only blind persons and deaf persons without speech are eligible to receive these benefits; and
- c) The lack of State support for caregivers. Some caregivers are forced to relinquish formal employment to care for their wards and yet are not eligible for social security / NIS support inclusive of non-contributory pension.

To repair these gaps, it is suggested that:

- a) Social Security / NIS reform should consider “bracketing” benefits in accord with respective categories of disabilities. The validity of the ‘bracketed’ system should be informed by financial assessments to determine eligibility based on need. However, to ensure that a PWD receives assistance as needed it is proposed that financial assessments are not predicated on the family’s financial standing;
- b) The monthly BD\$400.00 welfare benefit for PWDs should be raised to BD\$600.00. Pension and welfare benefits should be standardised; and
- c) It is suggested that the policy of automatic discontinuation of invalidity benefits to PWDs once they find some form of employment, no matter how limited and irrespective of the category and extent of their disability, should be ceased and replaced by an assessment criterion on a case by case basis.

## Insurance Coverage

Generally, PWDs are unable to qualify for or access personal medical and life insurance. Specifically, major challenges pertain to:

- a) Onerous application processes;
- b) Denial of coverage despite the submission of medicals confirming good health;
- c) recurrent threats of discontinuance of coverage if persons fail to submit yearly medicals on the particulars of their disability along with any other corresponding requirement(s) even in cases where their disability is such that there would be no alteration of the same;
- d) Expensive premiums such that it may suggest that all PWDs are categorised as high-risk clients; and
- e) Perceived inconsistencies in companies' eligibility criteria, request for medicals, honouring claims and other related terms and conditions which inform coverage.

Insurance companies informed that eligibility and approval for coverage are assessed on a case by case basis in accordance with the respective company's underwriting protocols, the dictates of their re-insurers and risk management regulations which are mandated by international parent companies. Given that these regulations differ from company to company, insurers' eligibility criteria and commensurate terms and conditions likewise varies.

Therefore, prospective clients with disabilities must submit detailed facts prior to determining whether they will be insured and the type of coverage (level of cover) afforded. Consequently, insurance companies cannot definitively speak to coverage of PWDs in the absence of documented specific facts in any given case. Insurers reiterated that policy frameworks governing coverage is dictated by underwriting protocols outside of themselves and Barbados.

## Banking & Access to Financial Services

PWDs face impaired access to financial services. Specifically, major challenges pertain to:

- a) Affixing signatures on documentation required by banks and credit unions;
- b) Poor physical access to ATM machines due to the absence of and/or inadequate retrofitting and inability to access all financial services provided by ATM SMART machines. Some transactions such as 'transfers' cannot be executed despite the use of a headset. Further, human assistance is still required to complete transactions at SMART ATM machines. This increases the risk of fraudulent

- activity. Also, many automated teller machines (ATMs) are inaccessible to multiple categories of disabilities such as wheelchair users and those with poor motor skills;
- c) Structural, physical and institutional discrepancies that invariably enable dependency of PWDs on others to access funds and/or financial services. This increases the risk of financial abuse and fraud;
  - d) Incurring unnecessary over-the-counter fees due to structural, physical and/or institutional discrepancies that inhibit ATM access;
  - e) Difficulty navigating web pages for online banking;
  - f) Breach of financial confidentiality where PWDs are denied access to their money without the consent and/or presence of a next of kin. It was alleged that some tellers threatened to notify the next of kin of the person's attempt to withdraw monies;
  - g) Communication challenges experienced by deaf persons;
  - h) The requirement to provide proof of address. Culturally, this is complicated and can implicate the applicant's financial privacy if they reside in the family home;
  - i) The absence of a standardised policy on accommodating PWDs in the banking sector and the issuance of ATM cards. Some banks facilitate ATM applications while others deny such requests; and
  - j) Discriminatory practices as evidenced in systematic refusal for loans, the two-point verification in digital banking and inaccessibility to banking services by those who are cognitively disabled.

These problems are the result of poor institutional awareness of the peculiar needs of PWDs coupled with banks' attempts to minimise opportunities for fraud. Financial institutions advised that documentation requirements are mandated in compliance with local and international financial laws. Discussions on the feasibility for amending these requirements must be held with their regulator and may require an amendment to existing anti-money laundering (AML) and 'Know your Client' (KYC) legislation.

These institutions emphasised that access to credit is informed by income and one's ability to repay debt based on predefined parameters and not on disability. In this respect, failure to qualify for loans was more common among PWDs since these persons are typically underemployed in comparison to able-bodied persons. Referring to other challenges experienced, commercial banks advised that they are actively working towards retrofitting, improving amenities and quality delivery of services.

## Natural Disasters

PWDs are more susceptible to increase harm, injury and death during a natural disaster owing, firstly, to poor communication and dissemination of information. They require tailored communication advising them of adverse weather conditions, shelter information and other available resources through which they can access help. All public information, particularly that which pertains to meteorological reports; should be disseminated in a manner that is accessible to blind and deaf persons and other PWDs. In the event of an emergency in a public building, multiple alert strategies should be utilised such as alarms and flashing lights to accommodate both deaf and blind persons.

The Department of Emergency Management (DEM) utilises the Comprehensive National Emergency Management Plan which speaks to high risks groups. The Department also focuses on removing barriers which affect PWDs to increase their resilience in a natural disaster by employing an application called CAP (Common Alerting Protocol) to issue hurricane alerts to blind and deaf persons. To further advance effective communication, it is proposed that a WhatsApp number is created for national emergency purposes and consideration afforded to using a Teletypewriter (TTY) application.

## Sports, Culture & Recreation

Similar to other facets of daily life, PWDs are largely excluded from participating in sports, cultural and other recreational activities because specific accommodations are rarely provided to them. To remedy this, consideration should be afforded to:

- a) The erection of an in-door sports facility specifically designed for PWD to engage in exercise and sporting activities;
- b) PWDs sports teams should be formed in schools and sports programmes should include PWDs;
- c) Opportunities should be created to facilitate the participation of PWDs alongside their able-bodied colleagues;
- d) Public play parks should be retrofitted to accommodate older and bigger children with disabilities;
- e) Assigning trainee coaches in schools. Also, instructors should be appropriately trained to coach PWDs including those who are autistic;
- f) Fostering stronger links between education, culture and sports;
- g) The Ministry of Education should provide input into the National Sports Policy;
- h) The Government of Barbados should review apt multi-functional stadiums in other countries to gain insight into to retrofitting the national stadium accordingly;



- i) Attracting Special Olympic events to Barbados as a potential contributor to earning revenue;
- j) Using sports as a possible rehabilitator for some PWDs;
- k) The Special Olympics Association should be afforded the same courtesies as the National Olympic Association;
- l) The National Sports Council should carry out outreach programmes in sports and fitness island-wide. In this respect, fitness instructors trained in working with PWDs should be hired and children with disabilities should be included in these activities as well as able-bodied children;
- m) Appropriately reward and recognise PWDs for their sporting and cultural achievements;
- n) More coaches be trained in suitable methodologies and inclusive strategies to facilitate PWDs participation in sports;
- o) More courses be offered in sporting training;
- p) Deeper partnerships be developed between sports clubs and the National Sports Council in order to advance sports involving PWDs;
- q) PWDs should be afforded opportunities to coach others;
- r) State recognition and marketing endeavours be afforded to PWDs who compete nationally;
- s) Exhibits at the Barbados Museum & Historical Society should accommodate other forms of displaying information such as tactile and audio descriptions; and
- t) Sports clubs and cultural organisations should increase their marketing campaigns to purposefully target and encourage greater participation from PWDs.

#### Participation in Public Affairs

Although there is no legislative prohibition against PWDs in participating in the political life and government affairs of Barbados, there has traditionally been a perception among many persons that PWDs are not fully suitable to be political representatives.

Both political parties which have held office in recent times have commendably appointed PWDs to the unelected House of Parliament.

It is recommended that greater effort should be made to include PWDs in all aspects in this country's political life and public affairs. A concerted effort should be made to appoint worthy PWDs to be directors of Statutory Corporations, members of Educational Boards and of Government-established Committees.

Additionally, progress must be made to ensure that PWDs, as far as is practicable, are able to vote independently in parliamentary elections if they wish to do so without being assisted by a person of their choice.

Furthermore, all polling stations must be accessible to all PWDs during parliamentary elections. Reasonable accommodation and assistive and adaptive devices and services must be available to facilitate their exercise of the right to vote.

### Civil Society Organisations

Based on the NACPWD's deliberations with civil society organisations, it is recommended that every encouragement should be given to PWDs to participate in various civil society organisations, not only those specifically serving the cause of PWDs but also in public life.

### Institutionalised Discrimination, Social Exclusion & Lack of Public Awareness

PWDs frequently recounted many instances of bullying, exclusion, being ignored and general insensitivity meted out to them and children with disabilities. In some cases, PWDs are taunted to the point of tears or are forced to involve the Police having become victims of assault. Regrettably, it is alleged that some representatives of state institutions and private sector entities also discriminated against and verbally assaulted PWDs. Aggressive and continuous public awareness initiatives and sensitisation programmes are necessary to combat discrimination and facilitate meaningful inclusivity.

### Succession Planning

PWDs and their caregivers in particular expressed grave concern about the wellbeing of their children and adult PWDs after the death of the parent or caregiver. Presently, there are cases of PWDs being institutionalised at the Psychiatric Hospital where they will probably reside until their own death. This is not fitting nor humane. Furthermore, it raises questions about succession planning. Therefore, it is recommended that the Government of Barbados:

- a) Re-evaluate post-parental care to craft suitable living arrangements for PWDs upon the death of their parents / caregivers;
- b) Develop and implement assisted living programmes and facilities commensurate to the needs of PWDs;
- c) Establish a "transition house" or other suitable accommodations as opposed to institutionalisation at the Psychiatric Hospital; and
- d) Provide legal counsel to educate parents and caregivers on setting up trusts for their wards in the event of their death.

## 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 should be implemented:*

- a) Expand and enhance the existing mechanisms for information sharing and advocacy at regional and international forums;*
- b) Collaboration with other regional nations to further advance the cause of persons with disabilities;*
- c) Encourage and support the exchange of knowledge and expertise among non-governmental organizations, research institutions, professionals and national organisation concerned with persons with disabilities;*
- d) Provision of support for regional and international initiatives to address disability issues;*
- e) Facilitation of capacity-building for organisations of persons with disabilities, including the exchange and sharing of information, experiences, and best practices;*
- f) Exploration of partnerships with, and assistance from international development partners in the implementation of the policy; and*
- g) Ensuring that priority is given to attendance and participation in discussions and forums related to persons with disabilities." (The Government of Trinidad & Tobago 2018, 39-40).*

## Achievement of the National Advisory Committee's Mandate

The NACPWD successfully met its objectives in fulfillment of its mandate.

## Lack of Disabilities Legislation

Besides the Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Act, 2020, there are no pieces of legislation which contain provisions for or redress on issues specific to the needs of PWDs. The Constitution of Barbados confers on all citizens the right to enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It however does not specifically address disability issues.

## The Barbados Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill (RPWDB)

The Law Reform Commission (LRC), headed by Sir David Simmons, former Member of Parliament, Attorney General and Chief Justice, retained Legal Consultant, Dr. Jason Haynes, Associate Professor of Law, University of Birmingham, (UK) to draft the RPWDB for the benefit of the Advisory Committee. Final deliberations on the draft Bill were vented at the LRC/NACPWD Stakeholders' Meeting on November 16, 2022 and the final draft was submitted to the MPEA on December 05, 2023.

## Review of the Draft National Disabilities Policy

The MPEA engaged the services of Professor Dwayne Devonish, Professor of Management & Organisational Behaviour, University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus) to conduct empirical research and prepare the National Disabilities Policy as a regulatory framework in compliance with the RPWDB. The draft NDP was submitted by Professor Dwayne Devonish on January 23, 2023. The NACPWD reviewed the draft NDP to ensure that all thematic areas were suitably addressed and aligned with the draft RPWDB.

The NDP policy initiatives and recommendations were discussed at the stakeholder meeting with all organisations representing PWDs and other key stakeholders on February 18, 2023. The Advisory Committee is of the view that the draft NDP, now buttressed by comments made and amendments suggested by the NACPWD is comprehensive and consistent with the draft RPWDB. Accordingly, the NACPWD strongly advises that the draft NDP be implemented as soon as is reasonably possible subject to the Cabinet's consideration and approval. It is proposed that this should occur after public consultations through a series of hybrid town hall meetings.

## Institutional Alignment of the proposed Disabilities Commission & the Family Services Department

It is purported that Section 6 of the draft RPWDB which informs the proposed framework for the Disabilities Commission may require further review in light of the proposed establishment of the Family Services Department. This review is necessary to ensure there is no conflict nor overlap of responsibilities between the Disabilities Commission and the Family Services Department. However, the NACPWD is of the view that the MPEA should make the decision on this distinction as the matter falls within the Ministry's purview.

## The Institutional Framework for the Establishment of a Disabilities Commission

The proposed institutional framework for the establishment of a Disabilities Commission was prepared in compliance with the RPWDB. Its contents are detailed in Section 'B' of this Report for the attention of the Minister of MPEA prior to onward submission to Cabinet for consideration along with the Policy Document and draft legislation.

## Limitations & Challenges of the NACPWD

During the course of its tenure, the NACPWD encountered two major challenges that impeded its work.

### Financial Constraints

The National Advisory Committee was not assigned a financial budget as it was established after the approval of the financial year 2022/2023 Estimates. Therefore, the NACPWD relied on the National Disabilities Unit (NDU) as its Secretariat to finance its expenses. This added financial commitment on the NDU significantly implicated the Advisory Committee's ability to honour its financial commitments in a timely manner. It also resulted in annulment of some its work, as exemplified in the cancellation of the NACPWD Hybrid Public Panel Discussion involving regional and international experts on disabilities matters.

### Length of Tenure of the NACPWD

While the NACPWD met its objectives, an extension was required from December 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 to finalise its work. This was needed as the submissions of the RPWDB and the NDP were outstanding at that time and were undergoing final revision and compilation.

## The Financial Report

Particulars of monies spent by the NACPWD during the course of its tenure are detailed in **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** below. **Figure 1** itemizes the Committee's expenditure for the period June 01, 2022 to November 30, 2022 while **Figure 2** specifies expenditure from December 01, 2022 to March 31, 2023.

**Figure 1:** Expenditure of the NACPWD – June 01, 2022 to November 30, 2022.

Supplier	Description	Cost	
Corbin's Catering Service	Refreshments - June (7th; 16th; 30th)	\$ 2,388.19	
Committee Members	Remuneration - June	\$ 11,000.00	
Zaeema Motara	Remuneration July (8th - 31st)	\$ 2,709.68	
Committee Members	Remuneration - July	\$ 12,000.00	
Corbin's Catering Service	Refreshments - August 4th	\$ 423.00	
Heather Grazette-Corbin	Interpreting - August 10th	\$ 200.00	
Tony Husbands	Interpreting August (10th; 17th; 24th)	\$ 520.00	
Carmelita Alleyne	Interpreting - August 17th	\$ 300.00	
Bonnie Leonce	Interpreting - August 24th	\$ 187.50	
Zaeema Motara	Remuneration - August (1st - 19th)	\$ 2,145.16	
Laura Burnett	Remuneration - August (22nd - 31st)	\$ 1,129.03	
Committee Members	Remuneration - August	\$ 12,000.00	
Nation Publishing	Town Hall Meetings	\$ 2,263.17	
Sunrise Entertainment	Streaming Services (Sept. 15th; 21st; 29th)	\$ 6,300.00	
Bonnie Leonce	Interpreting (Sept. 15th; 21st; 29th)	\$ 675.00	
Shop Smart	Water	\$ 73.92	
Carmelita Alleyne	Interpreting - Ivan Harewood Centre	\$ 150.00	
Ivan Harewood Centre	Venue	\$ 600.00	
Samuel Knight	Streaming Services	\$ 2,425.00	
Laura Burnett	Remuneration - September	\$ 3,500.00	
Committee Members	Remuneration - September	\$ 12,000.00	
Alexandra School	Venue	\$ 300.00	
Sunrise Entertainment	Streaming Services - Queens College (24 August)	\$ 1,900.00	
Laura Burnett	Remuneration - October	\$ 3,500.00	
Committee Members	Remuneration - October	\$ 12,000.00	
Lunch	18, 21, 25 November	\$ 270.00	
Review Legislation	Interpreters - 16 November	\$ 925.00	
Laura Burnett	Remuneration - November	\$ 3,500.00	
Committee Members	Remuneration - November	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 107,384.65

Particulars of monies spent by the NACPWD for the period December 01, 2022 to March 31, 2023 are detailed in **Figure 2** below.

**Figure 2:** Expenditure of the NACPWD – December 01, 2022 to March 31, 2023.

Supplier	Description	Cost
Committee Members	Remuneration - Nov. 2022 - March 2023	\$ 48,000.00
Secretary	Nov 2022 - March 2023	\$ 14,000.00
Interpreters	Stakeholders Meeting - 18 Feb.	\$ 1,050.00
Caterer	Tomatoes - Stakeholders Meeting - 18 Feb. (NDU)	\$ 525.00
Caterer	Corbins - Stakeholders Meeting - 18 Feb. (Warrens)	\$ 2,350.00
Streaming - St. Michael School	Sunrise Entertainment - Stakeholders Meeting - 12 Feb.	\$ 800.00
Streaming - Warrens	Sunrise Entertainment - Stakeholders Meeting - 18 Feb.	\$ 2,375.00
		\$ 69,100.00

## Next Steps for Consideration

### The Usefulness of a Development Programme for PWDs

The consequent of the enactment of the draft RPWDB and the implementation of the draft NDP will yield enhanced and sustainable results under a development programme. This is premised on the fact that development programmes use resources to reduce poverty and improve standards of living (McEwan 2019). In this respect such programmes are more apt to transforming the plight of PWDs in meaningful ways because of their capacity to extend beyond social protection measures. Further, development programmes are designed to be sustainable and therefore results are maintained over time (Elliott 2013).

It is proposed that the Government of Barbados (GOB) consider soliciting the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) should it wish to treat the draft NDP and the draft RPWDB within the context of a development programme. This proposal is rationalised by the fact that a development programme would require:

- a) Research;
- b) Skills Analysis;
- c) Capacity Analysis;
- d) Needs Assessment in each thematic area of the draft NDP;

- e) Institutional Capacity Development;
- f) Redress of Imbalances;
- g) Cost Analysis;
- h) Financing Strategy;
- i) Resource Mobilisation;
- j) Implementation Strategy;
- k) Sustainability Components; and
- l) Monitoring & Evaluation Systems.

### The Importance of an Employment Programme for PWDs

Strategic intervention to devise programmes tailored to advance formal employment and self-employment among PWDs is one of the ideal responses to tackle the excessively high unemployment levels among PWDs. Such employment programmes will support and increase the effectiveness of affirmative-action principles contained within the draft NDP and the draft RPWDB. It is suggested that the GOB craft an employment programme and partner with international donors as these agencies have the cadre of technical expertise and resources to undertake these programmes. Financial and technical aid from such organisations will assist with project funding and consequently relieve the GOB of some financial burden. Such a programme requires:

- a) Research;
- b) Skills Analysis;
- c) Financing Strategy;
- d) Skills Development Analysis and an assessment of the extent to which PWDs can operate in specific work environs;
- e) Criteria for developing non-formable employable skills;
- f) Cost Analysis;
- g) Resource Mobilisation;
- h) Implementation Strategy;
- i) Sustainability Components;
- j) Promotion of decent employment opportunities; and
- k) Monitoring & Evaluation Systems.



## Recommendations: The Way Forward

Premised on the challenges faced by PWDs in certain aspects of daily life, the NACPWD recommends that strong consideration be afforded to specified areas herein.

### Social Proposals

The Government of Barbados should expand and increase social protection services and support mechanisms for PWDs and their caregivers in accordance with the proposals detailed in the situation analysis of the NACPWD Report. Social protection programmes should consider the varied categories of disabilities as informed by the World Health Organization and draw clear distinctions between mental and cognitive disabilities in accordance with internationally accepted medical standards. Given that Barbados has an ageing population the GOB may wish to consider differentiating a disability unrelated to age from a disability incurred as a result of old age and the metric for such a distinction and classification.

In addition to those proposals outlined in the situation analysis of the Report, other social protective recommendations include:

- a) Creating clear distinctions between 'disability' and 'invalidity' social security benefits;
- b) Issuing food vouchers, a gas allowance and paid days off for caregivers in order to help with the execution of their responsibilities;
- c) Establish an institution with the mandate of caring for PWDs while caregivers work and rest, or alternatively, deploy specially trained personnel to homes to assist in this regard;
- d) Install cameras and automated bars in public spaces to ensure compliance with disability parking signage. Access to disability parking should be exclusive to PWDs who have the necessary swipe card;
- e) Children with disabilities who have severe behavioural challenges should receive institutional support other than the services provided by the Psychiatric Hospital;
- f) Develop public awareness programmes to sensitise members of the public to the needs of PWDs. PWDs should be involved in these campaigns and paid for their participation as a source of income;
- g) Parents of children with disabilities should receive parenting assistance and support from the Barbados Family Planning Association;

- h) Capital infrastructure such as roads and sidewalks should be constructed to facilitate access and safe use by those who are colour-blind and other PWDs. More signage should be erected for PWDs; and
- i) The State and the Church should pool resources to create facilities such as the St. Barnabas Senior Citizens Day Care where the objective is to provide varied support as opposed to institutionalising persons.

Social protection services and supporting mechanisms should incorporate relevant technologies as far as it is reasonable to promote greater participation in civil society, increased mobility and independent living.

### Economic Proposals

Dependent upon the category of disability, servicing the needs of PWDs is very costly and particularly overwhelming for poor families. To assuage costs, offer greater support to PWDs and their families, as well as aid in the effective delivery of social services and support, the NACPWD recommends that:

- a) The cost of PWDs' personal care items such as eco-pads and adult diapers should be subsidised;
- b) The creation of a PWDs' line item in all Ministries throughout the Public Service, similar to what was previously done in respect of HIV/AIDS;
- c) The State should consider partnering with the Barbados Lottery to allocate funds to servicing the needs of PWDs;
- d) Caregivers who cannot work a forty-hour week be provided with a stipend from the State;
- e) The cost of equipment, devices and items specifically used for / by PWDs be subsidised by the State;
- f) Parents of minor children with disabilities should be afforded a tax allowance;
- g) There should be tax reform relating to PWDs to the extent to which the state can afford. Extend tax concessions to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and self-employment initiatives involving PWDs;
- h) PWDs should be afforded the same review process for exemption from payment of land tax as is presently afforded to senior citizens;
- i) Imported equipment, devices and other related products for PWDs should be speedily processed to effect timely release from the ports of entry. Further, these processes should be streamlined and duty-free concessions applied to these goods; and

- j) PWDs should be facilitated in national endeavours to earn foreign exchange by including them in tourism programmes and activities. As an illustration, organisations representing PWDs should host select regional and international workshops for their community members.

### Legislative Proposals

To effect seamless coordination, efficient servicing of the needs of PWDs and to mitigate possibilities of contravening existing legislation, the NACPWD recommends that amendments are made to the:

- a) Barbados Education Act (Cap.41);
- b) Barbados Road Traffic Act (Cap. 295)<sup>1</sup>;
- c) Representation of the People's Act (Cap.12);
- d) Health Services Act (Cap. 44);
- e) Safety and Health at Work Act (Cap. 356);
- f) Mental Health Act (Cap. 45)<sup>2</sup>;
- g) Community Legal Services Act (Cap. 112A);
- h) National Insurance and Social Security Act (Cap. 47)<sup>3</sup>; and
- i) The Constitution of Barbados<sup>4</sup>.

### Administrative Proposals

Implementing ambitious policies demand the availability of multiple resources to ensure sustainability and the achievement of specified objectives. In light of the heavy demand placed on limited resources it is necessary to conduct empirical research to correctly assess the needs of PWDs, vis-à-vis institutional and technical capacities, with a view to developing appropriate policies and programmes in response to those needs. Accordingly, data collection on PWDs must capture variables other than the classification of the disabilities and demographics. In addition, cost-benefit analysis, capacity analysis and feasibility studies are required to ensure the efficient allocation of funds, as well as technical and human resources.

Policy and institutional support for PWDs should aim to meet clearly defined targets and include measurable indicators in order to effect practical deliverables.

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<sup>1</sup> Harsher penalties are needed for persons who park in designated parking bays reserved for transporting PWDs.

<sup>2</sup> There is a need for a modern Act to accommodate the increasing prevalence of mental health issues among the population.

<sup>3</sup> There is a need to eliminate patent discrepancies in the delivery of social security and disabilities benefits among differing categories of PWDs. Also, PWDs who undertake some form of employment should still be entitled to these benefits if their economic circumstances merit such.

<sup>4</sup> The new Republic Constitution ought to prohibit discrimination of PWDs in its fundamental rights section.

Therefore, the NACPWD recommends that the GOB develop and implement a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System (RBM&E) for all proposals to which the Cabinet agrees.

The RBM&E system will suitably enable ongoing assessment of programmes and projects from the inception until the end of their life cycle (Gorgens and Kusek 2009). It also hones in on outcomes and impacts (Kusek and Rist 2004) and is therefore a stronger rubric for measuring deliverables. Considering that the collection of data and hence feedback is continuous, it equips the GOB to better respond to potential challenges before they morph into a crisis. In this regard, valuable and scarce resources such as capital, and personnel are not wasted.

In addition, RBM&E systems can better handle the complexities of inclusive development thereby ensuring alignment with Barbados' commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the CRPD. However, it is cautioned that the functionality of the RBM&E may be compromised by administrators who may perceive themselves to be under unwarranted scrutiny, weak institutional capacities and poor inter-ministerial coordination (Kusek and Rist 2004). Additionally, implementation consumes significant time and effort.

The Advisory Committee recommends that strong consideration be afforded to all proposals detailed in this Report. It is further respectfully proposed that the policy and legislative frameworks be adopted by the GOB as specified in the draft NDP and the draft RPWDB respectively.

Finally, it is highly suggested that a person be employed on a full-time basis, either in the NDU or in the MPEA, to continue to drive the greater public awareness on and sensitivity towards issues relating to PWDs which have clearly been propelled during the tenure of the Advisory Committee. This person would also be given the responsibility, *inter alia*, for increasing registration of PWDs within the NDU as well as promoting wider registration for their national identification cards.

## SWOT Analysis of the NACPWD Proposals

A SWOT analysis of the NACPWD Proposals are detailed in **Figure 3** below.

**Figure 3** – SWOT Analysis of the NACPWD Proposals

<p><b>S</b>TRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Implementation of proposals will effectively domesticate the CRPD in fulfillment of Barbados' international obligations</li><li>▪ Promote the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda</li><li>▪ Expand social protection &amp; socio-economic support for PWDs and increase their access to social protection mechanisms</li><li>▪ Convey concrete deliverables to PWDs in need</li></ul>	<p><b>W</b>EAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Proposals of this depth and magnitude require substantial amounts of public financial and non-pecuniary resources</li><li>▪ Weak liaison and communication among government departments will delay programme / project activities and negatively impact deliverables</li><li>▪ Implementation is very time-consuming and will take years before benefits are derived</li></ul>
<p><b>O</b>PPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Multiple opportunities to facilitate inclusivity</li><li>▪ Opportunity to create jobs in the formal economy &amp; entrepreneurship</li><li>▪ Improved quality of life for PWDs</li></ul>	<p><b>T</b>HREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Poor / delayed coordination among government agencies and non-governmental stakeholders</li><li>▪ Government bureaucracy</li><li>▪ Heavy national debt</li></ul>

Implementation of the recommendations will effectively domesticate the CRPD in fulfillment of Barbados' international obligations, promote SDGs of the 2030 Agenda, and expand the depth and quality of social protection and socio-economic support for PWDs while simultaneously increasing their access to these mechanisms. Deliverables will serve to enhance the capabilities of PWDs and therefore will contribute to greater independence of these persons. Conversely, ambitious proposals require heavy public financing along with technical, human resource, technological and other resources to effect implementation. Consideration of proposals must also be assessed within the context of prospective opportunities and potential threats.

## Action Plan and Implementation Schedule

The Roadmap for the implementation of the Disabilities Policy is outlined in the Policy Document. It is suggested that a Schedule be developed categorising the implementation of the Policies which will be accepted by the Cabinet over a span of three months to two years in the short-term, three to five years in the medium term and six to ten years in the long term.

Imperatively, the provision of adequate technical, financial, human resources and institutional capacity commensurate to the Report's recommendations, are key factors that will determine the quantity, timeframe and quality of deliverables.

## Conclusion

The NACPWD is of the view that PWDs in Barbados are not privy to the same standard of living as able-bodied Barbadians. This pertains to all aspects of their lives. Pervasive discrimination, weak institutional structures, poor communication and inaccessibility to requisite services and resources all contribute to compromised quality of life. The improvement of the lives of PWDs is presented as a priority within the context of the government's commitment to serving the needs of all citizens, especially its most vulnerable people.

Towards this achievement, the NACPWD detailed a plethora of social, economic, legal and administrative initiatives designed to improve the lives of PWDs, tackle discrimination and support inclusivity. Finally, the NACPWD contends that the peculiar vulnerabilities of PWDs dictate that equality of treatment is not sufficient to improve the lives of PWDs, instead, apt responses must be grounded in principles of equity.

It is hoped that this Report along with the National Disabilities Policy Document and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities legislation will provide the framework through which PWDs can become full participants in society who are able to enjoy higher quality and improved lives, devoid of institutional discrimination and having access to all natural, physical, built and man-made environs as is reasonably possible.

There has to be a continuing effort to promote an improved culture among all persons as to how PWDs ought to be perceived and valued as people with equal human and constitutional rights and opportunities who should be included in every facet of life and not discriminated against in any manner or form.

Furthermore, there must be consistent programmes to promote the level of awareness in Barbados about issues relating to disabilities and inclusion of PWDs in all aspects of life.

The NACPWD is of the view that the applicable legislative (draft RPWDB), policy (draft NDP) and institutional (proposed Disabilities Commission) frameworks, when established, will significantly improve the lives of PWDs. Therefore, the GOB should endeavour to adopt all these frameworks as a matter of priority for the benefit of the community of PWDs.

