



**UNPRPD** MPTF  
Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



**UNITED NATIONS**  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
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# SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**TRINIDAD  
and TOBAGO**



**COUNTRY BRIEF**



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COUNTRY BRIEF

November 2022

## Disclaimer

This brief was prepared by the Technical Secretariat. It summarizes the key findings from the situational analysis report and does not necessarily reflect the position of the UNPRPD MPTF.

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CCA</b>	Common Country Assessment
<b>CODO</b>	Consortium of Disability Organisations
<b>CRPD</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>DAU</b>	Disability Affairs Unit
<b>DRR</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>DDR</b>	Document Discovery Report
<b>MOH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>MSDFS</b>	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>ODPM</b>	Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management
<b>OPDs</b>	Organizations of Persons with Disabilities
<b>OPM</b>	Office of the Prime Minister
<b>PAHO</b>	Pan American Health Organization
<b>RCO</b>	Resident Coordinator's Office
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SPO</b>	Service Provider Organization
<b>T&amp;T</b>	Trinidad & Tobago
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNPRPD</b>	United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary National Review
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# 1 BACKGROUND

The United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UNPRPD MPTF) is a unique partnership that brings together United Nations (UN) entities, governments, organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and broader civil society to advance the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and disability-inclusive Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the country level around the world.

The UN entities participating in UNPRPD are ILO, OHCHR, UNDESA, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women and WHO. Other UNPRPD members include the International Disability Alliance and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC). The main contributors to the UNPRPD MPTF are Australia, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

In 2020, with the Strategic and Operational Framework 2020-2025, UNPRPD adopted a new programme design approach. The Framework moves towards proactive, results-oriented joint programming to drive implementation of the CRPD and disability-inclusive SDGs.

In the same year, the UNPRPD launched its fourth funding call and invited UN Country Teams (UNCTs) to submit proposals for joint country-level programmes. The 26 selected country teams (see Annex 1) were then allocated an initial budget to deliver an induction training for the key stakeholders, conduct a country situational analysis and complete a full joint programme proposal based on the findings of the situational analysis.

The 26 countries conducted a comprehensive multistakeholder situational analyses with the purpose to identify gaps and opportunities around preconditions to CRPD implementation and agree on a set of recommendations to address them.

From March to October 2021, the Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) UNCT conducted the comprehensive situational analysis. The methodology included a desk review of relevant literature, key informant interviews and focus groups, stakeholder mapping exercises, and consultative workshops with key stakeholders.

The full situational analysis report can be found [here](#).

# 2

## WHY A COUNTRY ANALYSIS?

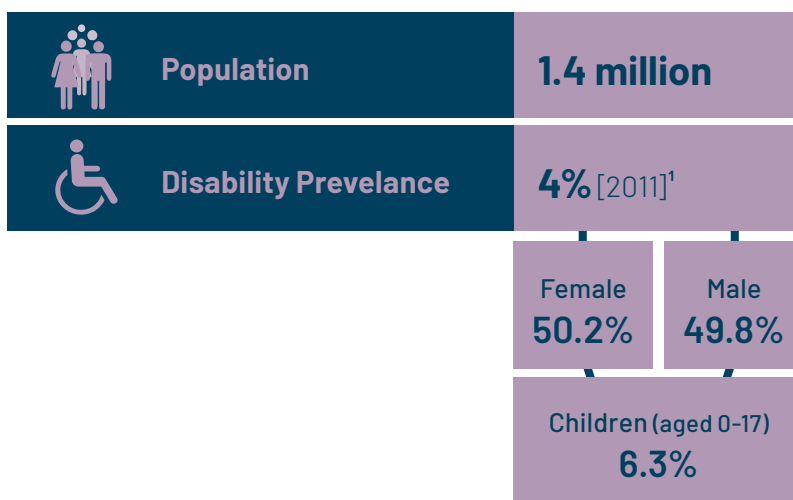
Many countries still struggle to transform the CRPD into concrete policies, systems, programmes and services that uphold the rights of persons with disabilities. It is urgent that governments and their implementation partners deliver on their SDG commitments through CRPD-compliant interventions. To support countries in the most catalytic way requires understanding the main bottlenecks and priorities in each country in relation to the fulfilment of the CRPD. We needed to know who the key stakeholders are, how implementation/monitoring mechanisms are functioning (or not), which capacities stakeholders may need to improve, and which ongoing development processes could be leveraged to become more disability inclusive.

The situational analyses were designed to:

- Inform the design of future PRPD funded programmes in the country and serve as a baseline for these programmes;
- Inform UNCTs of gaps in terms of disability inclusion in ongoing national processes and programmes and recommend further, in-depth analysis where needed;
- Build a base of mutual understanding and working relationships among UN entities, government, OPDs and other civil society organizations, as well as the private sector and academia, as the basis for future co-design of joint programmes;
- Strengthen the capacity of those stakeholders to more effectively include and address the rights of persons with disabilities as outlined in the CRPD; and,
- Serve as an advocacy tool for OPDs and other civil society partners, both national and international.

# 3

## INTRODUCTION TO DISABILITY CONTEXT IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO



T&T was classified as a high-income country in 2011 and remains one of the Caribbean’s wealthiest nations. It ratified the CRPD in 2015 but has not adopted any national disability legislation. There is however a National Policy on Persons with disabilities which was updated in 2019. Notably, T&T’s disability sector is growing due to an aging population and the high prevalence of chronic diseases. With the lack of in-depth research, the true extent of disability within T&T remains unknown. The unavailability of comprehensive statistical data presents a challenge in adequately assessing disability and disability-related issues and presents additional challenges for evaluation, reporting, planning and development.

# 4 FINDINGS

## 4.1 Stakeholder coordination mechanisms

The key stakeholders responsible for implementing and monitoring the CRPD are highlighted below. A full list of stakeholders is included in the full report.

### Government

The **Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS)** has the primary responsibility for disability in T&T. Its Disability Affairs Unit (DAU) is tasked with raising public awareness; coordinating, implementing, and monitoring the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities; and providing financial assistance to a small number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The MSDFS also has connections to other government entities, OPDs and professional organizations. Other ministries involved in addressing the needs of persons with disabilities are included in the full report.

### Organizations of Persons with Disabilities

Sixty-two organizations in T&T were identified as either **OPDs or service-providing organizations (SPOs)**. SPOs are mainly established by parents of persons with disabilities or advocates of equal opportunity for those persons within schools and support organizations. SPOs have remained the key organizations in both the public and the private sector in advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities, shaping the direction of the disability community and attracting the majority of funding. OPDs are smaller, less networked and less recognized than the SPOs. Leadership of OPDs are challenged by lack of capacity and little to no funding. Also, fragmentation of the disability sector is prevalent and is compounded by the presence of an umbrella organization not fully endorsed by all OPDs.

Persons with disabilities have unique insights about their disability and situation. In formulating and implementing policies, laws, and services, OPDs require capacity building and support to empower persons with disabilities to advocate for their own rights. When suitably developed and funded, OPDs can also play a role in service delivery – for example, in information provision, peer support, independent living, and economic independence.



**Consortium of Disability Organisations (CODO)** serves as an umbrella organization for disability organizations in T&T. CODO's membership comprises both OPDs and disability service providers, including schools. It has initiated several programmes over the years, including public awareness campaigns and a national survey on the quality of life of persons with disabilities in T&T.

The **Trinidad and Tobago Occupational Therapy Association (TTOTA)** is the most widely networked professional organization working in the disability sector. It has links to other professional organizations, ministries, and several disability SPOs based on its involvement in occupational therapy practice.

## UN System

UN organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme, PAHO/WHO, UNFPA and the International Labour Organization have been the key international entities involved in projects with a disability component throughout T&T. However, even within the UN, even with the existence of the United Nations Disability Inclusive Strategy (UNDIS), the level of disability inclusion in the development activities is unknown.

## Summary of stakeholder coordination analysis

Overall, persons with disabilities are not consulted or involved adequately due to:

- 1 Limited capacity of persons with disabilities to advocate for themselves effectively;
- 2 fragmentation of the disability community;
- 3 OPDs' lack of resources to be effective;
- 4 policy makers' lack of awareness of the competencies and value of including the views of persons with disabilities; and
- 5 lack of accountability to ensure that feedback from OPDs is integrated/considered.

### Disparities in the institutional landscape

Most OPDs are concentrated in the central region of the country, thus excluding rural people with disabilities. No plans exist to develop OPDs in rural and indigenous areas, nor are there any plans to establish umbrella organizations representing the interests of persons with disabilities, including of persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities. Not all OPDs are included in CONADI, consultation mechanisms in subsectors and subnational commissions. At the territorial level, CONADI relies on departmental disability councils as a consultation mechanism. However, government institutions are the leading participants, which means that persons with disabilities are underrepresented.

- A lack of coordination exists among organizations to ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities, including those with multiple disabilities (such as psychosocial disabilities) who are typically underrepresented. In addition, there is no coordinating body to oversee publication and awareness campaigns in the field of mental health.

- While an umbrella organization - CODO - does exist, most OPDs do not recognize it as such and believe that CODO has limited capacity to carry out the functions required of an umbrella organization.
- Persons with disabilities, who are typically underrepresented, need to be empowered to make informed decisions and advocate for their needs. In instances where they cannot self-advocate, care providers must be well trained to advocate on their behalf.
- Fragmentation exists in the disability sector due to competition for funding. This has led to duplication of programmes and services and isolated attempts to promote public awareness and advocacy for disability legislation.
- There is a need to increase awareness of UN staff of the essential pre-conditions for disability inclusion. This will support disability inclusion in planning, implementation, and monitoring of UN development activities and influence systemic changes through the technical cooperation with the government using a cohesive and inter-sectoral approach.

## 4.2 Preconditions for disability inclusion

A critical new element of the UNPRPD strategy is its focus on the essential preconditions for disability inclusion to advance the CRPD. These preconditions must be met to address the requirements of persons with disabilities across all sectors. The following findings focus on the preconditions.

- 1 Equality and non-discrimination
- 2 Accessibility
- 3 Inclusive service delivery
- 4 CRPD-compliant budgeting and financial management
- 5 Accountability and governance

### Equality and non-discrimination

T&T ratified the CRPD in 2015 but does not have specific disability legislation. However, an initial National Policy on Persons with Disabilities was developed in 2005 and was updated in April 2019. This updated policy had not yet been officially launched by the end of 2021. The National Policy (2019) provides a comprehensive framework for achieving social inclusion and equality of opportunity for all persons with disabilities in T&T.

There is also an Equal Opportunity Act which prohibits discrimination based on status in employment, education, the provision of goods and services, and the provision of accommodation. The term 'status' includes disability. Other laws do not contain provisions for issues specific to the needs of persons with disabilities, and there are no systems for redress. Existing legislation even contains discriminatory provisions that require revision. The National Policy is expected to provide a foundation for the development of appropriate legislation.

The situation of persons with disabilities in T&T continues to be characterised by issues of inequality, a general lack of access to services and poor socio-economic outcomes largely due to the lack of public awareness of the capabilities of persons with disabilities, limited sensitization of persons with disabilities on their rights as citizens, and limited knowledge and competencies among key service providers. While there has been an increased awareness, there are still pervasive negative attitudes that hamper equality and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities.

Children with disabilities are disproportionately vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse. The greatest barriers to inclusion are stigma, prejudice and lack of knowledge. As a result of cultural, legal and institutional barriers, girls and young women with disabilities are victims of dual discrimination based on gender and disability.

## Key findings

- While there is no specific disability legislation, the Equal Opportunity Act provides an opportunity to tackle some of the inequality and discrimination issues that persons with disabilities face. However, the Act needs to be amended to include an expanded definition of disability and establish a duty of reasonable accommodation.
- The current legislative framework lacks provisions for redress of issues specific to persons with disabilities. There is thus no point in filing legal challenges against any party claiming discrimination on the grounds of disability.
- Greater focus and effort are required to address the needs of children with disabilities in areas such as protection from all forms of abuse and provision of adequate education, health and therapeutic services.
- No registered NGO or state agency exists to empower and properly represent women and girls (particularly those with intellectual disabilities) to make decisions about their sexual health, including family planning, and how to deal with situations of violence. There is a general lack of knowledge about how women with disabilities can seek assistance in response to gender-based violence.

## Inclusive service delivery

### Disability assessment and referral services

The National Policy commits to reviewing the current disability assessment system (though this is still placed within the context of ‘health’). The Ministry of Health (MOH) oversees the only type of disability assessment currently available in T&T. The system follows a narrow medical model approach, by which a paediatrician or other medical practitioner assesses impairments. Disability assessment reports are stored at the institution where the assessment is conducted and the information for each person with disabilities is kept in the institution’s files. There is no disability card or centralised registration process. The assessment documentation is used to apply for the social services grant, concessions for examinations and other benefits. To date, no proactive systems exist for early detection of disabilities in the population. There is no referral system between sectors to ensure that persons with disabilities receive the multi-sectoral services they may need. Generally, they are expected to navigate themselves across sectors to obtain services.

### Disability support services

The National Policy outlines a series of national commitments to strengthen disability support services, in addition to strengthening mainstream services. Older persons with disabilities are eligible to receive personal assistance at home for support with daily activities through the MSDFS Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme. No equivalent programme exists for younger adults or children/families. Adults with disabilities who have been assessed and granted disability certification as described in the previous section are eligible to receive a disability assistance grant. A person who is employed and earns more than a specified amount is not eligible to receive the grant.

## Mainstream services

Government experts and politicians do not yet recognize the concept of disability as a cross-cutting issue in planning and budgeting. Instead, focus is on specialised interventions, mainly in the health sector. In addition, the main development stakeholders do not yet acknowledge and apply a mainstreaming and inclusion processes in their programming.

## Health

The MOH is the national authority charged with oversight of the entire health system in T&T and continues to provide services to citizens, including persons with disabilities. Overall, limited disability services are attached to the public health care system. Access to disability health services is low as the services are not properly structured, with lengthy delays for assessment and diagnosis. There is a lack of coordination within the health sector resulting in limited access to rehabilitation services at the community level. Community-Based Rehabilitation and Community-Based Inclusive Development efforts are piloted, but not yet effectively implemented across T&T. Persons with disabilities require access to rehabilitation, support services, and training - including assistive technologies, wheelchairs, and hearing aids, improves functioning and independence. A range of well-regulated assistance and support services in the community can meet needs for care, enabling people to live independently and to participate in the economic, social, and cultural lives of their communities.

## Education

Special schools continue to be an integral and significant part of the education system for persons with disabilities. Respondents shared the view that policy makers are not yet providing the means and ways to effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

## Employment

Persons with disabilities experience significant labour market disadvantages, have less economic participation and are disproportionately poorer than persons without disabilities. In order to have decent work, access to education and training is necessary. As a first step to this recognition, an audit of participatory needs assessment among PWDs, families, employers, vocational institutions, communities and NGOs to assess the limitation of participation of PWDs in work activities is required.

## Key findings

- Persons with disabilities experience significant barriers to accessing appropriate services. These barriers affect early detection, assessment, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, specialized care, and the access to assistive devices. Health services are not properly structured, with lengthy delays for assessment and diagnosis.
- The disability grant is inadequate in both coverage and size. It fails to cover the substantial extra costs that persons with disabilities face, including assistive/supportive devices, health care and transport.

- Many barriers exist to inclusive education, including limited teacher training and preparation, limited human and material resources, and limited government support. These limitations are reinforced by discriminatory legislation, which is inconsistent with international standards and mandates.
- Creating economic opportunities for PWDs who can and want to work will require a more accommodating labour market that capitalize on the entrepreneurial and creative capabilities of PWDs. In order to have decent work, access to education and training is necessary.
- No evidence was found of measures taken to respond to the special needs of persons with severe disabilities who contracts COVID-19 and requires 24-hour support., While the COVID-19 hotline was a good idea, it did not consider people who are deaf and require sign language interpretation.
- The report highlights fragmentation of the disability sector, lack of disability data and ineffective disability legislation as overarching systemic barriers to implementing disability inclusive services

## Accessibility

In T&T, accessibility of communication methods, the built environment, transportation, assistive aids/technologies, and professional support services all require considerable attention. The government has sought to address accessibility through amending legislation to include accessibility principles in building code requirements and through a range of other initiatives (see full report for details). However, the enforcement of these regulations and initiatives remains a challenge. Some key gaps remain in terms of limited accessibility to buildings, infrastructure, transportation and information.

## Key findings

- Accessibility to buildings and other physical infrastructure remains a challenge. Legislation and enforcement mechanisms are needed to ensure the use of accessibility-friendly national building codes and standards in new buildings and provide standards to guide retrofitting of existing ones.
- Limited accessible transportation is available, with few buses specifically provided for persons with disabilities. In the short-term, the Public Transport Service Corporation needs to acquire additional buses to increase services. In the long term, the Ministry of Works and Transport should develop standards for new public transport that mandate accessibility to mainstream transportation.
- While efforts are underway to improve the accessibility of information and communication technology, a large portion of the population with disabilities is disenfranchised in this regard. Implementation of the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago roadmap for the successful implementation of the universal service initiative for persons with disabilities must be supported with clear targets, timelines and planned budgetary allocations.

## CRPD compliant budgeting & financial management

### Financial planning and monitoring

The Public Sector Investment Programme is the non-recurring capital component of T&T's annual national budget and the government's budgeting and strategic planning tool for translating the themes and priorities in the National Development Strategy into tangible programmes and projects. Disability-related spending is specified in the annual Social Sector Investment Programme, which totals about US\$7 million per annum, on average, and focuses on social protections for persons with disabilities. Education received the largest allocation in the 2021 budget. While it is traditionally one of the largest budget areas, it is also the one where inequities are most visible. The share of this substantial budgetary allocation targeted to special needs education and inclusive education respectively is not clear.

There is growing awareness of the role of the public budget in supporting the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Such disability inclusion budgets need to be mainstreamed in all sectors and programmes. Legislators and policy makers cited the lack of data and insufficient sensitization to issues related to persons with disabilities as an obstacle to proper planning of, allocation of resources to, and advancement of public disabilities-related projects and programmes. Further details on funding allocations are included in the full report.

Although there is a substantial budget allocation for social protection for persons with disabilities, this is not nearly enough to meet the needs. The disability grant is inadequate in both coverage and size. It fails to cover the substantial extra costs that persons with disabilities face, including assistive/supportive devices, health care and transport.

### Key findings

- Lack of data impedes effective budgeting, compliance and management.
- Competition among NGOs for MSDFS funding is fierce and has been the primary catalyst for fragmentation and duplication in the sector.
- Maximum available resources are not mobilized across sectors
- At the central and local government level there are insufficient efforts to coordinate and reduce programme duplications and address the frustration that persons with disabilities often experience when trying to access services.

## Accountability and governance

### Inclusive evidence and data gathering systems

The efforts of the government and the civil society are consistently hampered by the lack of relevant up-to-date and accurate comparable disaggregated data at the national level. This lack of data impedes effective budgeting, compliance and management. Data reports are also often in inaccessible formats and difficult to find. There are efforts to collect

data. For example, plans for the inclusion of the Washington Group short questions in the 2022 T&T National Census, the Annual Statistical Report for Special Schools created by the MOE), the GIS database on special schools created by the private sector not for profit Digicel Foundation and NGOs such as DSFN that collects information on the majority of families with children with down syndrome. However, there is a great lack of comprehensive, disaggregated up to date data on PWDs in T&T.

The lack of data in T&T reflects the low priority assigned to disability. Feedback from respondents points to a lack of political will to acknowledge and address the real situation of persons with disabilities and the resulting implications for resources. Consequently, the number and composition of persons with disabilities in many contexts is unknown (for example, in terms of age and gender). Their voices are not heard in consultations and planning processes. As a result, policy makers lack knowledge about the barriers that these persons face and how to address them.

### **National accountability mechanisms**

In 2020, the MSDFS established an inter-agency committee to promote and monitor the CRPD and the National Policy (2019) on persons with disabilities. The committee includes representatives from at least three OPDs. Its role is advisory, and it has limited legal and budgetary powers to enforce the policy. There exists no independent non-governmental Monitoring Body to monitor transformation of policy into practice, and no legislation to provide redress. Several organizations that played a major role in the advocacy for the Convention's ratification, continue to engage in monitoring and implementation of the same. However, in the absence of an efficient public consultation process involving the appropriate persons with disabilities and OPDs, there is no way to ensure that the community's needs are heard and addressed. Additionally, ongoing monitoring efforts, including surveys and censuses, have been severely affected as a result of strategies to contain the spread of COVID-19.

### **Key findings**

- Although an inter-agency committee was established to promote and monitor the CRPD and the National Policy, there is no national legislation to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and no independent monitoring body. Apart from the lack of coordination among ministries, the lack of political will at the highest level is a major barrier to putting disability legislation in place.
- Disability disaggregated objectives, targets and monitoring indicators are key to eliminating discrimination based on disability and to accelerating efforts towards inclusive programming. The production of such data requires the involvement of persons with disabilities in all data collection processes and in programme design. This will help ensure that their experiences and needs are adequately reflected in the objectives set and the evidence being generated.
- Policy makers, planners, and all other key decision makers also require awareness and sensitization training. Some of the skills/knowledge required include communicating with persons with disabilities; gaining knowledge on the CRPD and SDGs; and understanding the capabilities of and issues and challenges faced by persons with disabilities.



### 4.3 Cross-cutting approaches: Participation, inequalities, gender

The UNPRPD has adopted three cross-cutting approaches to be intrinsically applied across all of UNPRPD MPTF's work, including its structures, programmes, and processes to ensure full and meaningful participation of all persons with disabilities.



#### **Participation:**

Enabling full and effective participation of persons with disabilities



#### **Inequalities:**

Ensuring the inclusion of marginalized and underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities



#### **Gender:**

Addressing gender inequality and advancing the rights of women and girls with disabilities

## Participation

Fragmentation of the disability sector is prevalent and is compounded by the presence of an umbrella organization not fully endorsed by all OPDs. The disconnect leads to a more challenging environment for the disability community which does not auger well for advancing a national disability agenda.

Currently, most of the gains made by PWDs have been achieved mainly through the assistance of NGOs that advocate on their behalf. Leadership of OPDs are further challenged by lack of capacity and little to no funding. PWDs have unique insights about their disability and situation. In formulating and implementing policies, laws, and services, OPDs require capacity building and support to empower PWDs to advocate for their own needs. When suitably developed and funded, OPDs can also play a role in service delivery – for example, in information provision, peer support, independent living, and economic independence.

## Gender

In T&T, information on violence against women and girls with disabilities is scarce. Stigma and misconceptions about disability often prevent young women with disabilities from experiencing and engaging in healthy sexual lives. While women with disabilities are exposed to the same forms of violence experienced by women in general, the intersection with disability puts them at further risk of violence that is both unique to persons with disabilities and less detectable. The forms of violence include a lack of respect for personhood, which leads to an increased sense of powerlessness and dependency. Women with disabilities also often lack access to justice, due to their disability. Efforts to assist women with disabilities generally occur through NGOs and some government interventions, but more concentrated efforts are required to adequately address the needs of women with disabilities.

In April 2011, the Trinidad and Tobago Chapter of Disabled Peoples' International established the Trinidad and Tobago Women with Disabilities Network, an NGO. However, no further information could be found regarding the status of its operations or about any other organization that specifically represents women with disabilities in T&T.

## **Inequalities**

Disability is not homogenous. Some persons with disabilities are more marginalized due to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that are influenced by factors such as history and culture. In T&T, this includes persons with invisible disabilities such as learning disabilities, persons who are deaf-blind, low vision (particularly those with fluctuating vision) and those who are deaf/hard of hearing; women and girls with intellectual disabilities; persons who are poor, uneducated, and living in rural areas; and persons with mental/ psychosocial disabilities. Unfortunately, the disability community, policy makers and media continue to highlight mainly physical disabilities, disregarding mental and psychosocial disabilities. In general, the intersectionality of disability with other marginalized groups receives limited attention.

## **4.4 Disability inclusion in broader development, humanitarian and emergency contexts**

### **National Development Plans**

In July 2020, the government presented its first VNR to the UN on its implementation and achievement of the SDGs. The Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) facilitated the participation of persons with disabilities and OPDs in preparing the VNR. It identified disability-related challenges, including those related to SDG3 and the health system's shortage of resources and expertise to serve persons with disabilities. The VNR outlined the government's plan to create a Rehabilitation Centre at the National Enrichment Centre. It is now available for meetings, training, workshops and other events arranged by OPDs and persons with disabilities on a scheduled basis. The next phase of the Centre's operations will involve delivering therapies to the community of persons with disabilities. The UNCT developed the first Common Country Assessment (CCA) in 2020, which is an internal UN evaluation of progress, opportunities and gaps related to T&T's pursuit of the 2030 Agenda and adherence to UN norms and standards. The RCO facilitated inputs from OPDs in the CCA, which will be updated annually to reflect contextual changes. OPDs and persons with disabilities will be consulted again. Further, T&T is part of the United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework for 2022-2026 (along with 17 other Caribbean countries<sup>2</sup>) which aims to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and ensure no one is left behind in national development efforts.

## **Climate change, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action**

In 2015, the Digicel Foundation developed a disaster risk reduction (DRR) programme for persons with disabilities. The key project stakeholders were children with intellectual difficulties. A strategic public-private partnership was forged with the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM), to implement its pioneering DRR project in an initial eight special schools for children with disabilities. Further, a national register for persons with disabilities was proposed to assist in efforts to ensure their safety and well-being in the event of emergencies.

As the key partner and lead agency in implementing the DRR programme, the ODPM was able to expand its classification of persons with disabilities to include a wider range of intellectual and developmental disabilities and has revised its existing programmes to include a more diverse community of such persons. The National Disaster Emergency Handbook and policy documents were revised significantly to include persons with disabilities in disaster planning templates and checklists. Through the partnership established, the ODPM was able to revise and update its national database to include a geographical information system database, which provides geographical locations and specific demographics of 32 special needs schools across T&T.

## **COVID-19**

While the COVID-19 pandemic threatens all members of society, persons with disabilities are reportedly disproportionately impacted due to attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers reproduced in the COVID-19 response. These persons were already among the most excluded in our societies before the pandemic. This health crisis, along with its devastating social and economic impacts, has at times deepened the exclusion and marginalization that they experience.

# 5

## CONCLUSIONS

The situational analysis revealed several barriers to disability inclusion and identified areas for future programming efforts. System-level barriers such as absent or weak legislations; structural barriers such as inaccessible information and buildings; social barriers such as stereotyping and discrimination, and programmatic barriers such as fragmented services were seen as major areas for improvement. Multi-stakeholder partnership with the active involvement of persons with disabilities and OPDs is key to transform the CRPD into concrete policies, systems, programmes, and services that uphold the rights of persons with disabilities.

The key priority recommendations to the UNCT are as follows:

- Support the strengthening and improving disability data collection
- Support a scoping review of existing laws and policies, to inform the amendment, drafting and enactment of legislation that is CRPD compliant.
- Support OPDs to develop organizational capacities in order for them to serve as trusted, proactive and competent representatives to lead meaningful participation in the national agenda
- Support the OPDs to strengthen CODO as the existing umbrella organization or established one with the required competencies and capacity to perform effectively.
- Support the creation and running of social change campaigns, and digital outreach campaigns that increase awareness and change attitudes on disabilities including stigmatized issues such as mental illness.
- Support the MOH in consultation with the MSDFS, MOE, NCPD to restructure the National Enrichment Centre to implement adequate and effective habilitative and rehabilitative services that are cross-sectoral, community-based and provide assessment, therapy and training at the community levels.
- Support the Ministry of Labour in collaboration with the OPDs and Digicel Foundation to develop a strategic plan for entrepreneurship skill development and improved participation in the productive sector and access to services for employment.
- Finally, UNCT should conduct an assessment of the 1st MSDF to determine the level of disability inclusion, establish a baseline and use the information to inform the 2nd MSDF. Training of UN staff should be conducted. In addition, an interagency coordinating mechanism should be established to leverage strengths of the different agencies.

# ANNEX 1: 26 SELECTED COUNTRIES

Argentina  
Colombia  
Guatemala  
Panama  
Trinidad & Tobago

## AMERICAS

Cameroon  
DRC  
Eswatini  
Ghana  
Rwanda  
Sierra Leone  
Tanzania  
The Gambia  
Tunisia  
Zimbabwe

## AFRICA

Montenegro  
North Macedonia  
Republic of Moldova

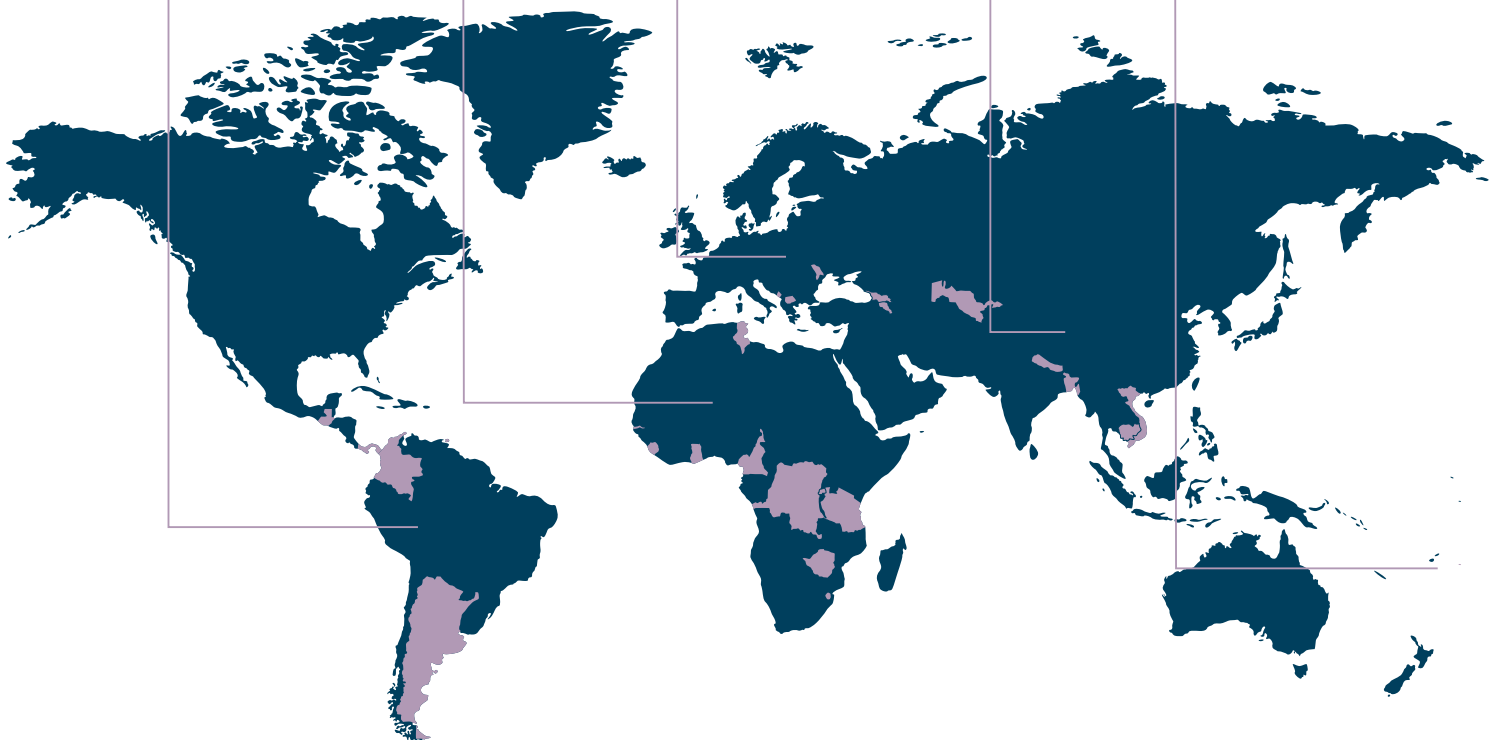
## EUROPE

Armenia  
Bangladesh  
Cambodia  
Georgia  
Nepal  
Uzbekistan  
Vietnam

## ASIA

Cook Islands

## OCEANIA



# ENDNOTES

- 1 2011 T&T Population and Housing Census
- 2 Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Curaçao, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Maarten, Suriname

