



Annex I

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

A dialogue between youth, decision-makers and other stakeholders about education, political participation, health, employment. The participants shared our challenges and proposed youth with disabilities - led solutions to the challenges that we were facing

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EDUCATION

Article 26 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD), clearly outlines the foundation for inclusive education. It states: **“Everyone has the right to education an education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom.”** Contextually, inclusive education seeks to address the diverse learning needs of all children.

The solutions proposed are as follows:

Establishing linkages: It is essential for multi-sectoral partnerships to be made among parents, schools, NGOs, private and public sector institutions in the promotion of inclusion of persons with disabilities in schools.

Data: There is a need to set up a proper system for data collection to identify the number of students (or individuals) who require special accommodation. This will enhance the success of many of our appeals and applications for funding for initiatives.

Inclusion in classes: Training of all teachers is important to the success of inclusion programmes within our school system. Providing teachers with classroom strategies to be

inclusive of diverse learning needs in regular classes. There should be incentives for teachers to undertake training for special needs. Teachers who are champions of the cause should be the ones selected to attend workshops and receive special training opportunities. It is proposed that a 'Train the Trainer' programme amongst teachers and principals is introduced.

It is important to address the special needs of students from the primary level so that there can be a smoother transition of students into secondary school and reduce the number and severity of academic challenges that students in secondary schools encounter on a day-to-day basis.

Inclusivity also extends to special schools and the inclusion of students with complex and profound disabilities. This requires specialist teacher education training to enable leaders, teachers and support workers to work effectively with these learners. Training courses and continuing professional development in specialist leadership, specialist teacher education and specialist support worker programmes are therefore needed.

Schools as safe spaces for persons with disabilities. Initiatives to transform the mindset of students and families with and without disabilities to identify the great possibilities that exist for all through inclusion despite differences. Communication and language are critical so that everyone feels comfortable within the school environment. Child Rights Clubs can provide a safe space for children with and without disabilities to learn about their rights, learn new skills and support each other.

Special Needs Curriculum Development. The need for a special needs curriculum was expressed, however, it was suggested that a set of guidelines should be developed that assist teachers in the proper modification of the curriculum to cater for the needs of students with disabilities. The set of guidelines should always be under review to ensure it is kept up to date.

It is proposed that a 4-8 weeks programme is introduced within the curriculum about people with disabilities, disability rights and values to sensitise and create awareness, which would include role reversal for the promotion of better understanding and tolerance.

Develop information packages on best practices for persons with disabilities in the education system and disseminate to schools.

Schools to ascertain relevant technology to facilitate persons with disabilities, for example, software and testing materials for students with dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and dysgraphia; subtitling for visual teaching and braille for visually impaired students. Training for teachers and support workers to be able to assess learner's needs and effectively use assistive and enabling technology with learners.

Introduction of Living and Mobility skills education. Students who have special needs should be taught living skills and mobility so that we may have an equal opportunity in our future undertakings.

The Ministry of Education has committed to making schools and education more accessible for all students, particularly those that have been diagnosed with a disability.

EMPLOYMENT

"States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the

**course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation.”
(Article 27, CPRD)**

The employment of people with disabilities remains a challenge in Antigua and Barbuda as well as the wider Commonwealth. There are a number of challenges that include access to the employment sites because offices and public transportation are not accessible. There continues to be discrimination during the employment process and whilst there is now the new legislation, employers need to be educated, sensitised and incentivised to ensure people with disabilities have equal opportunities and are included in the workplace. There is an urgent and dire need for a positive change of attitudes of employers and society.

It is proposed that:

Accessible workplaces. There is a great necessity for buildings and parking spaces to be made more accessible for persons with disabilities. It is essential to the lives of persons with disabilities to be able to have equal opportunity for employment; this would be best facilitated by allotting specific parking spaces and better building infrastructures. It is recommended that a campaign is run for accessible transportation.

Collective voice. Establishing partnerships between the union, Ministries and employers to ensure that persons with disabilities are provided with an equal chance to obtain employment. This partnership can act as the advocating voice to different stakeholders such as employers, businesses and self-employed individuals.

Internship and mentorship. It is proposed that a way of obtaining work experience and introduce job carving is by creating a structured internship programme for PWDs to be given an opportunity to carry different tasks within the workplace, gain experience and demonstrate our ability and build our professional resume. If we are successful, then we should be retained. Furthermore, a mentorship scheme for young people with disabilities paired with persons with or without disabilities from different workplaces.

Educate Employers. A campaign that sensitises and educates employers about employing PWDs in term of the benefits that we bring to the company and the reasonable adjustments the employers can implement. Introduce specialist support roles such as Job Mentoring and Job Coaching in order to support Employers and develop learner’s skills in the workplace.

Incentivise Employers. This is a request to consider incentives for employers who practice an inclusive policy such as reputational recognition or tax breaks.

HEALTH

Pursuant to Article 25 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) states “Parties recognize that persons with disabilities have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination on the basis of disability. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure access for persons with disabilities to health services that are gender-sensitive, including health-related rehabilitation.”

Challenges continue to exist where many have expressed our concern towards access and discrimination in accessing health services. This is compounded by the fact, that many people with disabilities cannot afford certain services. Additionally, access to information on health issues remains a challenge, especially for the hearing-impaired.

It was proposed that:

Training on special needs for healthcare providers. Adequate training needs to be provided for health workers on the needs of persons with disabilities.

Mental Health. There is a need to increase awareness about mental health in schools by creating a peer to peer support system within schools and review and reform of legislation that addresses mental health.

Early Detection. In order to best address the needs of persons with disabilities, it is key that there is early detection for physical disabilities such as hearing-impairment and invisible disabilities such as autism so that support can be provided at the earliest possible point.

Rehabilitation Programme. The Minister responsible for health in consultation commission, should ensure that the special requirements of persons with disabilities addressed in the formulation and implementation of rehabilitation and other health policies and programmes.

Data and Record-keeping. A digitalised registration and health data recording system for persons with disabilities that facilitates ease of access to information and can easily be transferred and communicated if there is a change of medical facilities or moving to another country for purposes of education.

The public should also be educated about the disability health so it improves the understanding of others.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

There is existing research that assesses whether people with disabilities can fully exercise our political rights based on article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

“States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others...”

The findings are one that people with disabilities in Antigua and Barbuda do not enjoy effective full political participation. Article 29 of the CPRD focuses on different aspects of political participation that includes voting, as the staff of the Electoral Commission, and running as candidates.

The challenges that currently exist for persons with disabilities include the inaccessibility of polling stations and the procedure adopted for people with visual impairment is not secret and on occasion not free if accompanied by a family member.

Solutions were proposed to address each form of participation in the political process:

Voting on ballot day. It is recommended that buildings are accessible should be used for polling stations; it was suggested that there is a centralised place for people with disabilities to accommodate people who use wheelchairs. For people with visual impairment, it is suggested that if an electronic voting system is not in place then using braille or embossed codes for each party but if there is a move towards the electronic voting system (EVM) then the use of EVM enables people with disabilities to vote and an auditory system also confirms the vote has been registered.

Training is required for staff of the Electoral Commission to be able to identify people with disabilities, especially more difficult with invisible disabilities and to ensure that we are afforded the privileges that ease the voting process.

The staff of the Electoral Commission. Employment for people with disabilities continues to be a challenge and political participation provides an opportunity for people with disabilities to

be a member of the staff of the electoral commission during election time such as clerking agents, counting agents and polling agents. We can be trained to carry out specific tasks (i.e. job carving) in the polling day process. Additionally, to have sign language clerks as staff for assistance to people with hearing-impairment.

There should also be opportunities for PWDs to be members of staff of the Electoral Commission. This can be advanced with overall policies about how to increase PWDs in the working force.

Participation as political candidates. It is recommended that consideration is given for the introduction of a quota allocation system for members of parliament (this is currently the practice exists in Uganda and Kenya and is currently a proposition in Malawi). It is therefore urged for research to be undertaken as to whether such a model can be undertaken in Antigua and Barbuda.

To encourage parliamentary visits, provision must be made for parliament to be made accessible and comfortable to engage with the entire process.

Moreover, it is very encouraging to have role models in the political arena. It is inspirational and motivating to have Ambassador Webson as the permanent representative to the UN for Antigua and Barbuda but there should be greater representation at different decision-making levels. This includes as part of the executive branch and campaigning team of political parties. This can be enhanced with representation on the media, especially in local media productions.

Strengthen existing mechanisms. There was a call to strengthen the youth parliament to engage with this cause and enable the proposition of policy recommendations to governments.

In general,

There is an urgent need to create greater awareness and sensitisation in schools, among employers and the community. With the ratification of the Convention and the Disabilities Equal Opportunities Act, there is a need to organise for the monitoring of implementation, there should be greater efforts to showcase the abilities of persons with disabilities by increasing us in activities and decision-making.

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