

Squeaky Wheels

Submission to the United Nations
Universal Periodic Review

For the 2nd Universal Periodic Review of Trinidad and Tobago

21/09/2015



Squeaky Wheels is a disability advocacy program designed to enhance your lives of citizens of TT by bringing awareness on every day disability issues and providing possible solutions with the hope of effecting change. It's about narrowing the huge gap that exists in opportunities available to average citizens and that of our counterparts with disabilities all in a TT context.

Einstein once said..... 'If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at will change'. **SQUEAKY WHEELS** will focus on these misconceptions and give logic and reason to disability issues offering lens that looks at disability issues from differently. It hopes to explain and have the public better understand what all the fuss is about.

www.squeakywheelstt.com

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Persons with Disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago (TT) remain one of the most marginalized, voiceless groups whose fundamental inalienable rights are often infringed by the absence of appropriated systems that facilitate their inclusion in society. This marginalization by the wider society has lead persons with disability to being treated as second class citizens in TT.

Charity based approach: Historically a regressive charity based approach lead to the disabled being treated as objects of charity. The charity based model excluded the disabled form mainstream education, transportation, employment, recreational activities etc.

Complex: The complexity of the disabled contributes to the problem in no short measure. The average person in our society possess little knowledge of best-practices and standards in systems development that will include the PwD's. Basic disability etiquette is absent from the wider community at all levels. This un-sensitization often leads to insensitivity and neglect.

Implied not Express: Leaders and decision makers in our society are yet to accept the fact that for disability to be included in any system or project, it must be expressly stated. It cannot be left to be implied as this often ensures marginalization of this under-educated, voiceless group.

Although current state programs are available to the disabled, many of them are not accessible by the disabled. The gap in accessibility often infringes on a person with disability achieving his/her fullest potential and contributing to national development.

Also there exists a large gap in the quality of life experienced by Persons with Disabilities (pwd's) in T&T and that of their counter parts in developed countries. If left unaddressed, the demand for welfare and state handouts will increase.

I. BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

The information in this report has been obtained by Disability Self Advocate Sharda Ramlakhan a.k.a. Squeaky Wheels and reflects her experiences of daily life as a person with disability in general and as a wheelchair user in particular. It also reflects perspectives of the community that have been gathered by her as a former president of the umbrella body for disability in TT and various other portfolios held over the years. She has developed many rights based programs designed towards achieving disability mainstreaming and inclusion in TT.

II. PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE GROUND

A. Normative and Institutional Framework

UNCRPD has been ratified in 2015 and a committee set up to implement same. The composition of the committee goes against the grain of inclusion and is in direct contradiction with the 'nothing about us without us' credo of the disability rights community worldwide.

B. Implementation of International Human Rights Obligations

All human rights are impacted by disability

1. Equality and non-discrimination
2. Right to life, liberty, and security of the person
3. Right to privacy
4. Right to freedom of thought, opinion and expression; right to association
5. Administration of justice and the rule of law
6. Right to work and to just and favorable conditions of work
7. Right to social security and to an adequate standard of living
8. Right to education and to participate in the cultural life of the community
9. Minorities and indigenous peoples
10. Migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers

III. ACHIEVEMENTS, BEST PRACTICES, CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

This includes information about:

- The community of PwD's was able to get the government to Ratify UNCRPD in 2015.
- A multi-sectorial committee has been set up to implement the UNCRPD, unfortunately this committee contains only one PwD and as such goes against the grain of participatory rights based approach to UNCRPD implementation.
- The multi-sectorial committee established above lacks a budget and timeline for delivery.
- The state fails to recognise that a rights based approach to disability requires much consultation and that Disability Studies is an academic discipline that should be relied upon heavily in implementing the UNCRPD.
- The state will do well in realizing that that a disability sector can be sustainable, inclusive and provide socio-economic growth. There are also severable viable clusters that can create much employment away from the energy sector and lead to diversity. Such clusters are: Retrofit, Education and Therapies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Promote mainstreaming of disability issues by including a disability clause in each cabinet minute approved by the government. This clause will detail the impact on that cabinet minute on the disability community.**
- 2) Implement UNCRPD Article 8 - Awareness at a level where it impacts all social classes, ages and geographic spaces in TT. This exercise should be view as a soft tangible investment necessary to take TT over the hurdle of understanding this marginalized minority.**
- 3) Implement the International Classification of Functioning as recommended by World Bank, World Health Organisation and UNCRPD.**
- 4) Develop and implement a strategy to ensure each public building has disability access either by original design or by retro-fit in ten years time in accordance with National Accessible Building Standard of the TT Bureau of Standards.**
- 5) Develop a National Sidewalk Standard for TT.**
- 6) Design and implement a strategy to have all sidewalks in TT accessible according to National Standard developed in five (5) above.**
- 7) Review the Mental Health Act in accordance with international best practice.**
- 8) After appropriate consultations enact Disability Legislation.**
- 9) Development an action plan to implement the UNCRPD based on the recommendations of the World Report on Disability.- World Bank, World Health Organisation.**