

# **Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association**

Submission to the United Nations  
Universal Periodic Review

For the 2<sup>nd</sup> Universal Periodic Review of Trinidad and Tobago

[Monday 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2015]

## **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO BLIND WELFARE ASSOCIATION**

**Founded May 18, 1914**

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The Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association has a commitment to assist persons who are blind and visually impaired in coping with the problems that result from limited vision, failing vision and total blindness. We are a non-profit, voluntary rehabilitation organization that receives funding from private contributions, deeds of covenant, annual financial campaigns and from the Government.

The objectives of the TTBWA are:

- To prevent blindness
- To promote public awareness in the community
- To promote independence and inclusion
- To act as a Resource Centre

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report is being submitted by the Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association. It focuses on the human rights violations in Trinidad and Tobago, in regards to accessibility – education, transportation, housing, employment, mobility, legislations and most of all empowerment.

Right to inclusion, equal opportunities and freedom from all forms of discrimination based on their disability of visual impairment or blindness.

1. Trinidad and Tobago Constitution
2. Equal Opportunity Act (2000)

Right to participation of all persons with disabilities (visual impairment or blindness) in all national spheres.

The general stigma is that persons who are visually impaired or blind are incapable of only producing baskets or receiving welfare from the Government.

## **I. BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK**

The organization has been providing resources for the blind and visually impaired for more than one hundred years.

Some of the major issues the organization has been facing in recent times include housing, education, transportation, legislations, mobility and employment.

In regards to housing, the Housing Development Corporation has allocated 5% to the elderly and disabled in Trinidad and Tobago. Furthermore, there has been a trend to segregate persons who are blind as oppose to disperse persons into the various communities.

Education: Persons who are blind are unable to participate fully as a result of a lack of accessible printed materials in addition to trained teachers who are equipped to deal with persons with disabilities.

Transportation and trained drivers: sensitization of drivers to deal appropriately with persons who are blind or visually impaired.

Legislations: The implementation of laws is also necessary to assist in the empowerment of blind persons. The Equal Opportunity Act is limited in its scope and neither does it compel or suggest reasonable accommodation.

Mobility: there has been a need for tactile sidewalks, zebra crossing and enlarged doorways and corridors. The appropriate lighting and colour codes for doors are also needed for persons who have low vision.

Employment: A greater need for the employment of persons who are blind or visually impaired.

## **II. PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE GROUND**

### **A. Normative and Institutional Framework**

Recently the government of Trinidad and Tobago ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, local laws would now have to be drafted and implemented.

The Equal Opportunities Act does not provide adequately for disabled persons

### **B. Implementation of International Human Rights Obligations**

This provides information on the implementation of human rights obligations in Trinidad and Tobago. Organisations may select the most relevant rights from the list below or the core international human rights treaties. For example:

- 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:

- Achievements made in the past four years by the Government
  1. The removal of the quarantine for service animals.
  2. The ratification of the CRPD.
  3. The acceptance of standard building codes.
- Challenges and constraints faced by the State

1. The resources to implement the relevant decisions.
2. The willingness to do it.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Below is a list of all our recommendations.

- 1. Equality and non-discrimination**
- 2. Right to privacy**
- 3. Administration of justice and the rule of law**
- 4. Right to work and to just and favorable conditions of work**
- 5. Right to social security and to an adequate standard of living**
- 6. Right to education and to participate in the cultural life of the community**
- 7. Minorities and indigenous peoples**

## **APPENDIX/ANNEXES**

**(No page limit)**

- Annexes to the submission should not include pictures, maps, organisations' annual reports or reports from other organisations
- Include detailed citation information and web links for all documents suggested for further reference.
- Identify those references included as attachments/exhibits to the submission.
- If numerous documents/suggested resources are listed, organise documents by sub-issue and list under separate headings.