



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Office of the Permanent Secretary

FROM : Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education

TO : Clerk of the House
Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity

DATE : 31st October 2016

SUBJECT : **Second Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on the Challenges faced by Persons with Disabilities with Specific Focus on Access to Services and Employment**

I refer to your letter Ref. No. Parl: 14/3/52 Vol. II at caption dated 21st September 2016.

The attached written submissions are hereby made by the Ministry of Education in respect of the recommendations / comments contained in the *Second Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on the Challenges faced by Persons with Disabilities with Specific Focus on Access to Services and Employment*.

Chief Education Officer
/f/ Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Ministry of Education

Written Responses

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS – Objective 1

To understand the challenges to access services faced by persons with disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago included but not limited to Transport, Education (primary, secondary and tertiary), Facilities, Health and Licensing Office.

| Joint Select Committee (JSC)'s Recommendations | Ministry of Education (MOE) Response |
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| 4.9. The Committee recommends that Ministry of Works and Transport evaluate the Elderly and Differently Abled Mobile (ELDAMO) Service and seek client feedback in order to improve, create a definition and a policy framework for the service. The Ministry of Works and Transport should review the stakeholder recommendations in Appendix III. | The MOE supports this recommendation to improve, create a definition and a policy framework for the service. Useful client feedback can be obtained from parents and teachers of students who access and/or need to the service. |
| 4.10. The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Works and Transport consider purchasing regular buses that are outfitted for PWDs, since the current demand for the ELDAMO service exceeds the capacity of the current fleet. | The MOE agrees with this recommendation to extend this service to afford greater access to those who need this service, including students with disabilities attending primary and secondary schools as well as the fourteen (14) private and twelve (12) public special schools. |
| 4.11. The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Works and Transport redesign City Gate, bus stops and bus terminals to improve the level of access to PWDs. | The MOE supports this recommendation. |
| 4.12. The Committee proposes that a Disability Affairs Unit be established within each tertiary institution to assist students and the administration in resolving key issues at the particular school. | The MOE supports this recommendation and will like to further recommend that a minimum standard of service provision and protocols be established to ensure equity of services provided across all tertiary institutions. |

| Joint Select Committee (JSC)'s Recommendations | Ministry of Education (MOE) Response |
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| <p>4.13. The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Education conduct an assessment of the equipment/technology and positions required to strengthen the Inclusive Education Policy and submit a proposal on the need for scholarships and equipment/technology in these areas. The Ministry of Education should note that the current cadre of Special Education Teacher I, Teacher Aides, Student Aides and Sign Language Interpreters are inadequate to serve the needs of PWDs and teachers. The Ministry of Education should review the stakeholder education recommendations in Appendix IV.</p> | <p>Student Support Services Division of the MOE, has begun the process of identifying human resource needs to facilitate the implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy and support for students with special education needs at all levels in the school system.</p> |
| <p>4.14. The Committee recommends training for all teachers (primary, secondary, tertiary) in special education inclusive of autism.</p> | <p>The Student Support Services Division (SSSD) has embarked on training of selected teachers at Primary and Secondary Schools in Special Education including autism. Limitations in staff have impacted the MOE's capacity to provide widespread training across all levels of the education system. The MOE intends to extend its reach through its various initiatives which include teacher training as a significant component.</p> |
| <p>4.15. The Ministry of Planning and Development and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development should review the stakeholder facilities and infrastructural access recommendations in Appendix V.</p> | <p>The MOE agrees with this recommendation.</p> |

| Joint Select Committee (JSC)'s Recommendations | Ministry of Education (MOE) Response |
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| 4.16. The Committee recommends that the National Standard TTS/ICC/ANSI A117.1, Accessible and Useable Buildings and Facilities is adopted by the Ministry of Planning and Development as an enforceable regulatory document. This would Mitigate against building access challenges faces by PWDs. | The MOE recognizes the need to enforce a National Standard with respect to the construction of buildings to ensure accessibility to persons with disabilities. The MOE would like to further recommend that such a policy/regulation should address the upgrading of existing buildings to meet the required standard for accessibility. |
| 4.17. The Ministry of Health should review the stakeholder health recommendations in Appendix VI. | NA |
| 4.18. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services should review the stakeholder education recommendations in Appendix I to VII. | NA |

FINDINGS - Objective 2

To understand the challenges to access employment faced by persons with disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago.

| Joint Select Committee (JSC)'s Recommendations | Ministry of Education (MOE) Response |
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| 4.23. The Committee Recommends that MSDFS in collaboration with the MOLED conduct research on PWDs and employment. | NA |
| 4.24. The Committee recommends that the DAU, MOLED and MPA collaborate to establish a disabilities register/database of PWDs to allow for ease of access by employers and to provide for data collection and monitoring of the number of PWDs employed in the private and public sector between national census dates. | NA |
| 4.25. The Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development collaborate with the MSDFS to provide employer training related to PWDs with specific focus on accommodation adjustments, job coaching and areas itemized in 3.27. This would alleviate the number of complaints submitted to Equal Opportunity Commission by PWDs. | The MOE agrees with this recommendation. This will also provide valuable information to be used with students as they prepare to transition into the world of work. The MOE further recommends that there be collaboration with the MOE so that input re: accommodation required for persons with disabilities can be provided based on our knowledge of students' strengths and challenges. |
| 4.26. The Public Service Commission and the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development should | NA |

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| review the stakeholder employment recommendations in Appendix VIII. | |
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FINDINGS – Objective 3

To examine the current revisions to the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities.

| Joint Select Committee (JSC)'s Recommendations | Ministry of Education (MOE) Response |
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| 4.28. The Committee recommended that the Ministry should urgently consider CODO's proposal and prepare a revised policy document within the next two (2) months for public consultation. | NA |

FINDINGS – Objective 4

To determine the status of stakeholder consultation with respect to the review of the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities.

| Joint Select Committee (JSC)'s Recommendations | Ministry of Education (MOE) Response |
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| 4.30. The Committee recommends the development of a stakeholder consultation plan to include all disability NGOs and ministries over a six month period. | The MOE supports this recommendation which provides an opportunity for MOE's input. |

FINDINGS – Objective 5

To determine the legislative framework required to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities.

| Joint Select Committee (JSC)'s Recommendations | Ministry of Education (MOE) Response |
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| 4.34. The Committee recommends that the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs collaborate with the MSDFS and the Equal Opportunity Commission to ensure the Equal Opportunities (Person with Disabilities) Amendment Bill (listed on the Legislative Agenda ³ during September 2017 to 2019) is tabled. The proposed legislative amendments to the Equal Opportunity Act and motor vehicle legislation in Appendix IX and X should be reviewed. | The Ministry of Education should be invited to collaborate on proposed amendments to the Equal Opportunity Act as there are implications for the rights of students with disabilities to access education at our nation's educational institutions from Early Childhood to Tertiary levels. |
| 4.35. The Committee recommends legislation which mitigates against discriminatory hiring practices by employers and the employment challenges itemized at 3.24. | The MOE supports this recommendation as students with disabilities leaving the school system are further challenged to find employment. |
| 4.36. The Ministry of Works and Transport review proposed legislative amendments to motor vehicle legislation in Appendix X. | NA |

FINDINGS: Objective 6**To Understand The Fiscal Framework And Procedures To Engage Non-Governmental Organizations And The Private Sector To Partner With The Public Sector On Differently Abled Issues.**

| Joint Select Committee (JSC)'s Recommendations | Ministry of Education (MOE) Response |
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| 4.44. The Committee recommends that the Ministry should prioritise the recruitment of staff for the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit and the Disabilities Affairs Unit. One of the first mandates of the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit is the review of the eligibility requirements to receive the Disabilities Assistance Grant in light of stakeholder complaints received by the Committee. | The MOE supports this recommendation. |
| 4.45. The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services conduct regular Sensitisation and Awareness Programmes on PWDs with specific target groups including, teachers and students, Ministry of Health employees, and the Public Service Transportation Corporation, public servants and the general public | The MOE supports this recommendation. |
| 4.46. The Committee recommends that there should be regular meetings amongst the stakeholders mainly the DAU, CODO and other NGOs to improve collaboration on matters affecting PWDs and to provide a platform for increased public-private partnerships. | The MOE supports this recommendation and believes that its inclusion in the collaborative process is critical to moving forward and to the harnessing of limited resources for PWD's. |