



**CARIBBEAN COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND  
&  
THE FOUNDATION FOR EYE CARE IN THE CARIBBEAN**

**CARIBBEAN COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND  
AND  
SOCIAL INCLUSION**

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**Context:**

Within his remit as Project Development and Advocacy Services Manager, for CCB, Frank, Bowen, developed this article, to help define the Council's programmes and focus, in the advancement of social inclusion and related activities and services. In 2003, at the conclusion of a Workshop on Advocacy, Members of CCB articulated a number of "rights" to define their advocacy initiatives, over the ensuing years.

These "Rights" include:

- The Right to Sight - including quality, accessible and affordable Eye Health (and universal Health) Services;
- The Right to Inclusive Services - including universal access to Inclusive Education for all Children with Visual Impairment – (EFA-VI); universal access to counselling and adjustment to blindness services for all persons who are blind and requiring such services; and access to inclusive recreational activities;
- The Right to a Livelihood – including vocational and tertiary-level training, gainful employment opportunities, and Unemployment, Pension, Social Security and other Statutory Benefits, re: implementation of UNCRPD; and,
- The Right to a Safe and Secure Environment – including the provision of Ramps to facilitate easy access to Public Buildings for wheel-chair and other users; accessible Restrooms; Pedestrian Crossings with appropriate signals, etc.

Read more – [www.eyecarecaribbean.com/](http://www.eyecarecaribbean.com/)

**2. Overview:**

- Around 10 per cent of the world's population, or 650 million people, live with a disability. They are the world's largest minority.
- This figure is increasing through population growth, medical advances and the ageing process, says World Health Organisation (WHO).
- In countries with life expectancies over 70 years, individuals spend on average about 8 years, or 11.5 per cent of their life span, living with disabilities.
- Eighty per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries, according to the UN Development Programme.
- Disability rates are significantly higher among groups with lower educational attainment in the countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), says the OECD Secretariat. On average, 19 per cent of less educated people have disabilities, compared to 11 per cent among better educated.
- In most OECD countries, women report higher incidents of disability than men.
- The World Bank estimates that 20 per cent of the world's poorest people have some kind of disability, and tend to be regarded in their own communities as the most disadvantaged.
- Women with disabilities are recognised to be multiply disadvantaged, experiencing exclusion on account of their gender and their disability.
- Women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse. A small survey in Orissa, India, found that virtually all of the women and girls with disabilities were beaten at home, 25 per cent of women with intellectual disabilities had been raped, and 6 per cent of women with disabilities had been forcibly sterilised.
- According to UNICEF, 30 per cent of street youths have some kind of disability.
- Mortality for children with disabilities may be as high as 80 per cent in countries where under-five mortality as a whole has decreased below 20 per cent, says the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, adding that in some cases it seems as if children are being "weeded out".
- Comparative studies on disability legislation shows that only 45 countries have anti-discrimination and other disability-specific laws.

[Extract from: United Nations Enable – Fact Sheet on Persons with Disabilities – [www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=18](http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=18) - December 2011].

### 3. Estimated Prevalence of Blindness and other Disabilities in the areas of focus:

In the countries of the Member Agencies of the Caribbean Council for the Blind (CCB), Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean (English-speaking and French-speaking Caribbean), plus Suriname, a full member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), with a combined population of about 17,758,854, the estimated percentage rate and number of persons with disabilities, including blindness and low vision, are shown in Table at 3.1, below.

3.1 Table: Population, Prevalence Rate (%) and Number of Persons with Disabilities (est.):

Countries	Population (estimated)	Extract of Disability Data from Census/Other Report	Blindness (est. 1%)	Low Vision (est. 3%)
1. Anguilla	13,477	714 [5.3% UN ECLAC]	135	405
2. Antigua and Barbuda	87,506	4,463 [5.1% UN ECLAC]	875	2,625
3. Bahamas (The)	303,611	16,181 [5% -2000 Census]	3,036	9,108
4. Barbados	293,000	13,478 [4.6% UN ECLAC]	2,930	8,790
5. Belize	321,115	32,112 [10% est.]	3,211	9,633
6. Bermuda	64,000	6,400 [10% est.]	640	1,920
7. British Virgin Islands (BVI)	22,016	881 [4% UN ECLAC Report]	220	660
8. Cayman Islands	51,900	5,190 [10% est.]	519	1,557
9. Dominica (Commonwealth of)	72,000	12,960 [18% UN ECLAC]	720	2,160
10. French Guiana	229,000	22,900 [10% est.]	2,290	6,970
11. Grenada	108,000	10,800 [10% est.]	1,080	3,240
12. Guadeloupe	452,776	45,278 [10% est.]	4,528	13,584
13. Guyana (Republic)	739,000	48,419 [6.4% - 2002 Census]	7,390	22,170
14. Haiti (Republic)	9,719,987	971,999 [10% est.]	97,200	291,600
15. Jamaica	2,667,000	165,354 [6.2% UN ECLAC]	26,677	80,031
16. Martinique	402,000	40,200 [10% est.]	4,020	12,060
17. Montserrat	4,488	449	45	135

		[10% est.]		
18. St. Kitts/Nevis	48,000	4,800 [10% est.]	480	1,440
19. St. Lucia	166,000	8,466 [5.1% UN LAC]	1,660	4,980
20. St. Vincent & The Grenadines	120,000	5,280 [4.4% UN ECLAC]	1,200	3,600
21. Suriname	491,989	49,199 [10% est.]	4,920	14,760
22. Trinidad & Tobago	1,328,000	59,760 [4.5% UN ECLAC]	13,280	39,840
23. Turks & Caicos Islands	30,600	3,060 [10% est.]	306	918
TOTAL:	17,735,465	1,527,343	177,362	532,186

#### **4. The Triangle of: Disability, Poverty and Social Inclusion:**

People with disabilities are usually the poorest and the most vulnerable in societies, particularly in developing countries. In most instances, they are often completely excluded from the mainstream activities due to misunderstandings and misconceptions about their disabilities, including blindness.

Thus, provision of access to education, and vocational and adjustment to blindness training can enhance the independence of persons with disabilities, including those who are blind or visually impaired, and help to remove misconceptions about disabilities.

With reference to disability, ‘social inclusion’ means “experiencing a sense of belonging; feeling that persons other than family and professionals care for, value, and desire to spend time with us; knowing that support will be available if it is needed; and having regular access to the community and those within it with whom we desire to associate. It is the feeling of being a contributing part of a network of persons whom we know, who know us, and who know each other. A sense of social inclusion is most likely to be achieved when we are able to develop and maintain reciprocal social relationships based upon trust and mutual caring that transcend specific settings or contexts. These associations have an impact on how we view ourselves, and our world, and meet a myriad of personal needs. They are crucial for the successful community adjustment of persons with as well as without disabilities”.

(Article: “What is Social Inclusion all about?” – originally published in IMPACT, Vol. 10 No. 3- 1997 – feature issue on Social Inclusion of Adults with Developmental Disabilities, written by Brian Abery, Ph.D.- IMPACT is a Quarterly Newsletter of the Institute on Community Integration) – [<http://ici.umn.edu/products/newsletters.html>.]

#### **5. The United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and Social Inclusion:**

The UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol were adopted on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Convention was opened for signature on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007 and entered into force on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008. By achieving eighty-two (82) signatories to the Convention, forty-four (44) to the Optional Protocol and one (1) ratification of the Convention, history was created for the highest number of signatories to a UN Convention on its opening day.

“The Convention is the first comprehensive Human Rights Treaty of the twenty-first century, and is the first Human Rights Convention to be opened for signature by regional integration organisations”.

The UNCRPD sets out a framework for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development; and together with the Optional Protocol, outlines the legal obligations of the Parties to the Convention. For CCB/Eye Care Caribbean, Member Agencies and Partners, the UNCRPD and its Optional Protocol encompasses the “Rights” and provides scope for their full realisation.

#### **6. The status of Caribbean Countries re: UNCRPD:**

In relation to the UNCRPD and Optional Protocol, achieving signatory and ratification of the Instruments have been slow. Only a few countries in the region have signed on and/or ratified the Convention and Optional Protocol, as of February 2011.

The table, at 6.1 below, outlines the status of countries in the region.

6.1 Table: Status of Caribbean Countries re: The UNCRPD:

<b>CCB Member /CARICOM Countries</b>	<b>Date – Signatory to Convention</b>	<b>Date - Signatory to Optional Protocol</b>	<b>Date - Ratification of Convention</b>	<b>Date - Ratification of Optional Protocol</b>	<b>Political Status</b>
1. Anguilla	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	British Overseas Territory
2. Antigua and Barbuda	30-03-2007	30-03-2007			Independent
3. Bahamas (The)	-	-	-	-	Independent
4. Barbados	19-07-2007	-	-	-	Independent
5. Belize	9-05-2011	-	2-06-2011	-	Independent
6. Bermuda	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	British Overseas Territory
7. British Virgin Islands	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	British Overseas Territory
8. Cayman Islands	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	British Overseas Territory
9. Dominica (Commonwealth of)	30-03-2007	-	-	-	Independent
10. French Guiana	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Overseas Department of France
11. Grenada	12-07-2010	-	-	-	Independent
12. Guadeloupe	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Overseas Department of France
13. Guyana	11-04-2007	-	-	-	Independent
14. Haiti (Republic of)	-	-	23-07-2009	23-07-2009	Independent
15. Jamaica	30-03-2007	30-03-2007	30-03-2007		Independent

16. Martinique	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Overseas Department of France
17. Montserrat	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	British Overseas Territory
18. St. Kitts/Nevis	-	-	-	-	Independent
19. St. Lucia	22-09-2011	-	-	-	Independent
20. St. Vincent and The Grenadines	-	-	29-10-2010	29-10-2010	Independent
21. Suriname	30-03-2007	-	-	-	Independent (formerly Dutch Colony)
22. Trinidad & Tobago	27-09-2007	-	-	-	Independent
23. Turks and Caicos Islands	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	British Overseas Territory

## 6.2 Summary:

Signatories to Convention:	10
Signatories to Optional Protocol:	2
Ratifications of Convention:	4
Ratifications of Optional Protocol:	2

## 7. The following links may be used to access relevant documents:

1. Guiding Principles (UNCPRD): <http://www.un.org/disabilities/sitemap.asp>
2. Convention (UNCPRD): <http://www.un.org/disabilities/sitemap.asp>
3. Optional Protocol: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/sitemap.asp>
4. Handbook for Parliamentarians on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol:  
<http://www.un.org/disabilities/toolsaction/ipuhb.pdf>
5. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women:  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw>

## 8. References:

- CIA World Factbook  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> - [2009]
- Bahamas: Census of Population and Housing 2000: Department of Statistics of The Bahamas – <http://statistics.bahamas.gov.bs/archives>
- “Disability in the Caribbean. A study of four countries: a socio-demographic analysis of the disabled” – Karoline Schmid, Samuel Vezina and Louise Ebbeson. [UN ECLAC Series, Studies and Perspectives - Statistics and Social Development Unit, Port of Spain, June 2008].
- Population and Housing Census 2002 – Guyana National Report: Chapter 8 – Disability and Health – <http://statisticsguyana.gov.gy/census>
- United Nations –Enable  
<http://www.un.org/disabilities> – [February 2011]
- Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caribbean> – [February 2011]