



CCB/ EYE CARE CARIBBEAN
CARIBBEAN COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND
&
THE FOUNDATION FOR EYE CARE IN THE CARIBBEAN

IN CELEBRATION OF
WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY
June 5th, 2012.

World Environment Day is an annual event aimed at celebrating positive environmental actions globally. World Environment Day activities take place throughout the year, but climax on June 5th every year.

Through the observance of World Environment Day, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) seeks to “personalise environmental issues and mobilise everyone to realise not only their responsibility, but also their power to become agents for change in support of sustainable and equitable development”.

The theme for World Environment Day 2012 is Green Economy: Does it include you? For us at Caribbean Council for the Blind and the Foundation for Eye Care in the Caribbean (CCB-Eye Care Caribbean), however, our major focus is not on eco-systems and issues of bio-diversity, but simply to ensure an environment that is: safe and secure for persons who are blind and for those faced with other physical challenges.

Overview of Disability:

- 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 - December 2011].

Estimated Prevalence of Blindness and other Disabilities in the Caribbean:

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 the Table below.

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 (Commonwealt	72,000	12,960 [18% UN	720	2,160

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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 [10% est.]	45	135
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

CCB-Eye Care Caribbean Advocacy Themes:

In July 2003, in tandem with its Biennial General Meeting in Trinidad and Tobago, CCB facilitated an Advocacy Workshop for delegates from Member Agencies. Arising out of the Workshop was the articulation of four (4) key themes on which the CCB Membership have agreed to advocate and which have formed the basis of their Advocacy Policy:

- the “Right” to sight - (to quality eye health services that are available, accessible, affordable and equitable and universal Health Services);
- the “Right” to equal and inclusive services – including universal access to inclusive education and 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 the UNCRPD;

- 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.

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 13th, 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Convention was opened for signature on March 30th, 2007 and entered into force on May 3rd, 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.

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.

Summary of status:

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

CCB-Eye Care Caribbean and the Right to a Safe and Secure Environment:

CCB-Eye Care Caribbean is therefore determined to work with Governments, Civil Society and kindred Organisations to ensure that persons who are blind or visually impaired or who have physical challenges are assured access to a safe and secure environment, including:

- an environment that is clean, pleasing to the sight, well-maintained and protected, so that it can be enjoyed and left for future generations;
- an environment that is accessible to all persons, regardless of their status - (public buildings and public spaces – schools, offices, churches, shopping malls, parks, streets, highways, etc);
- that in the development of the environment the particular needs of persons who are differently-able are taken into consideration and their views and recommendations solicited and implemented;

- that the safety of all persons, including those who are differently-able, blind or visually impaired and those faced with other challenges are given the highest consideration.
- that the United Nations Conventions on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which many countries in the Caribbean have signed and ratified, be implemented and the relevant legislative framework drafted and enacted into Law.

For CCB-Eye Care Caribbean, Members and Partners, the realisation of the “Right” to a safe and secure environment would be a lasting legacy of World Environment Day.

For us, an appropriate theme would be: “The Right to a safe and secure environment - includes everyone!”

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