

Government of Mauritius

National Policy Paper

&

Action Plan On Disability

“Valuing People with Disabilities”



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SECURITY
NATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND SENIOR CITIZENS WELFARE
& REFORM INSTITUTIONS**

National Policy Paper

&

Action Plan On Disability

“Valuing People with Disabilities”

Prime Minister's

Message

Mauritius is proud to be a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The National Policy Paper and Action Plan on Disability aims to express to Mauritians as well as to the international community, our commitment to serve vulnerable people in our society.

My Government is putting in place appropriate structures and mechanism to enable persons with disabilities to take full advantage of opportunities available in a fast developing economy. Our aim is to build a society where each and every citizen enjoys his or her rights fully while respecting those of others.

Throughout history, persons with disabilities have, through their commendable efforts, risen to their highest standard in many areas be it cultural, educational, artistic or sports and politics amongst others. At the Indian Ocean Islands Games held in Madagascar in August 2007 and the Special Olympics World Summer Games held in Shanghai in October 2007, our disabled athletes have, for instance, demonstrated their prowess and determination to achieve success.

With this policy paper, Government wishes to create a national momentum and to achieve its objective of valuing the disabled as full-fledged citizens.

Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam

Prime Minister

Message from the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions.

Disability is no more a taboo in Mauritius and Rodrigues. This first National Policy Paper and Action Plan on Disability is opening new horizons for persons with disabilities to be an integral part of mainstream society and live meaningful and fulfilling lives. It is an undeniable fact that persons with disabilities are often marginalized, discriminated against and suffer prejudices. This has been very damaging and impacted negatively on their lives over the years. The cause for concern here is about the reason at the root of this tragedy: society.

Furthermore, persons with disabilities, not being on an equal footing with others, find it difficult to fight for their rights in almost every aspect of life – education, health, employment, sports and so on. As a result, they coil upon themselves, withdraw from wider society and feel that barriers are being put in their way to prevent them from progressing in life. ***Simply put, they are being abandoned by the very people who are supposed to understand, support and assist them.***

It is incumbent upon us, the change agents of the new world, to turn around this situation with the view to have a more just, equitable and inclusive society where persons with disabilities will feel valued and fully integrated. Needless to say that there has been some progress made by the families, NGOs and persons with disabilities themselves over the years since Mauritius acceded to independence. However, more significant actions need to be taken in favour of persons with disabilities.

This National Policy Paper and Action Plan on Disability reiterates the commitment of my Ministry towards improving the lives of persons with disabilities in Mauritius and Rodrigues. It outlines how it will work with all stakeholders in making the vision of ***Valuing People with Disabilities*** a reality. But more importantly, it has already set the scene for persons with disabilities to take a lead role in the sector as it is ***their lives, aspirations and future.***

I am fully aware that the National Policy Paper and Action Plan on Disability in itself will not bring solutions to all the problems. But I am confident that the groundwork for creating national momentum between Government, the private sector, DPOs and NGOs has already been gathered to take on the challenges in building an inclusive society - a society where persons with disabilities will lead much brighter and fulfilling lives.

Hon. Mrs Sheilabai Bappoo

Minister

Mr Coomara Pyaneandee

Disability Activist

Our rights shall now triumph

Disabled People Organisations (DPOs) and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and civil society are proud today in being part and parcel in the building of an inclusive society. It is indeed an immense pleasure that we have come to the day when a Policy Paper and its Action Plan on Disability is being unveiled. We as DPOs and NGOs are equally excited about Mauritius being signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its optional protocol.

This in itself is a quantum leap for the disability sector. There are numerous aspects of this Policy Paper that DPO's and NGO's would like to highlight. Firstly, it is about us. This is why the Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity has rightly decided to consult us throughout the entire process. Our voices have been heard loud and clear and our views analysed in detail. Furthermore, themes discussed ranging from accessibility, education, empowerment and health formed the very basis of this Policy Paper. This is a positive way forward.

We also fully embrace the idea that Government has acknowledged the fact that the system has not fully served persons with disabilities to their full satisfaction and that it will radically review the current structure and service providers.

At a time, when human rights are high on our agenda we are relieved that government has recognised the need to sensitise the whole nation on disability issues. We are confident that we can now channel our differences into progressive work with the view to enhance, our rights and dignity. We are also fully conscious of our responsibilities to our country and will be mindful of the rights of others as well

The moral principle that has guided our soul in doing what we are for the disability sector will undoubtedly change the lives of many of us. History will bear testimony to our commitment, vision and above all our patriotism in ensuring that our rights will triumph over utilitarian goals.

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INTRODUCTION

*“Nothing about us without us”*¹ is the theme that has greatly inspired persons with disabilities worldwide. It connotes a strong message that persons with disabilities are bestowed with Rights and Dignity. But it is imperative that they are also able to effectively participate in the socio-economic development of their countries, and more importantly, live meaningful lives.

Much can be said about rights, dignity and the intrinsic moral obligation which a society owes to its citizens, in particular to persons with disabilities. However, without a commitment from Government, civil society and Disabled People Organisations, (DPOs), the rights of persons with disabilities can never triumph over prejudice and discrimination.

Our mission to enable persons with disabilities to compete on “an equal basis with others”² should be embedded in the consciousness of the whole nation in that it is already enshrined as a matter of principle in the Government Programme 2005- 2010.

Since Mauritius acceded to Independence in 1968 many policies and programmes have been developed in the field of social welfare and human development. However, it is the first time that a fundamental review of the sector is undertaken. The Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions (the Ministry), under the leadership of Honourable Minister Sheilabai Bappoo has mandated a team with strong disability representation to prepare the present National Policy Paper and Action Plan on Disability.

The number of persons with disabilities in Mauritius and Rodrigues amounts to approximately 45,000, representing 3.75% of the total population and the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Security is to ensure that this population has accessible and adequate services to live fulfilling lives.

¹ : *Disabled People International:*

² *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2007*

Our mission has very specific purposes, which are translated in the present Policy Paper. It includes:

1. Stating clearly Government commitment to the disability sector
2. Assessing and reviewing the present system
3. Above all, formulating an action plan and elaborating on its implementation strategies.

The Ministry has the privilege to be instrumental in the transformation of the disability sector into a modern and first class service with the view to valuing people with disabilities.

This is the challenge that this Ministry is willing to take.

CHAPTER 1

1.0 GOVERNMENT POLICY STATEMENT

This National Policy Paper together with its Action Plan has been formulated in the context of key Government policy decision – building an inclusive society 2005-2010³,

“My Government wishes to promote the concept of an inclusive society and thus physically – challenged people will need to be better integrated in mainstream society. Government will implement a host of measures to this effect”.

1.1 Building an Inclusive Society – A Broad Government Policy

In July 2005, the Mauritian Government in its five-year programme provides for a broad vision and framework for priority actions needed to be put in place to achieve its objectives.

1.1.1 Government Policy

The Government vision for Mauritius and Rodrigues is that by 2015, it will achieve the following objectives:

- Innovation and creativity in industries to develop quality jobs
- Developing and attracting foreign investment
- Protecting and sustaining the environment for future generations
- Instilling peace and the concept of caring and sharing amongst communities
- Providing and making accessible first class health and education services

³ Government Programme 2005 - 2010

1.2 Strategic Issues

To translate this vision into reality, Government has identified strategic issues with priority actions needed to address them. The strategic issues are:

- *Putting people first*
- *Investing in lifelong education*
- *Good and accessible health care*
- *Creating safe environment for communities*
- *Promoting sustainable development*
- *Building inclusive communities*
- *Promoting and protecting Human Rights*
- *Creating and developing innovative jobs*
- *Good corporate governance*
- *Participative decision making*

The Ministry has a much important role to play in the above-mentioned strategic issues. The National Policy Paper and its Action Plan outlines a ten-year outlook for the disability sector. This plan will change the way persons with disabilities live their lives for the better. It will primarily and directly benefit persons with disabilities and their families. Its main focus is on persons with physical, sensory, intellectual disabilities, acquired brain injury and neurological impairments.

Its vision is revolutionary in that it adopts a wider definition of the “disabled persons”. Its main focus is on as per Disabled People International (DPI) persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

1.3 Policy Justification

There is at the moment a consensus that we should question the basic and fundamental ingredients of an inclusive society. Government believes that this concept does not exist in a vacuum. Unless the social structure in terms of service delivery is brought in line with the specific needs of persons with disabilities, the concept of an inclusive society will remain a misnomer. Government therefore believes that, forty years after the country acceded to the status of an independent and sovereign nation, it is good to stop the clock, reflect on the past, radically assess the present structure and prepare for a brighter future.

The present National Policy Paper also looks at the manner taxpayers' money has been spent over the past years and at ways to substantially improve on service delivery and reduce bureaucracy to a minimum level.

The third aspect relates to the issue of socio-economic empowerment of persons with disabilities. Unless the social structure is itself redefined, empowered and consolidated, persons with disabilities will not have a better and fairer deal. The present National Policy Paper thoroughly analyses Government social policy in relation to persons with disabilities. The Ministry has deemed it necessary to invite the widest participation of persons with disabilities and their representatives in the discussions.

The three reasons mentioned above are glossed upon by a fourth aspect which remains the highest source of inspiration for the nation as a whole. Mauritius has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on September 25, 2007. The implications of this gesture in favour of the disabled community are enormous. Our legislations, regulations and decisions will have to be brought in line with international norms.

Moreover, as Mauritius is now signatory to the UN Convention and its Optional Protocol, disability issues should be viewed from an international perspective. A National Policy Paper with a long-term vision together with its Action Plan for the implementation of provisions of the UN Convention has come at the right time. The time has come where the Human Rights for disabled persons must be respected and promoted. To this end, Government remains committed to ensure that the provisions of the UN Convention are enhanced and respected with maximum rigour.

In doing so, Government is sending the strongest signal that it is not only valuing the rights of persons with disabilities but is also prepared to honour its international obligations vis-à-vis persons with disabilities in Mauritius and Rodrigues. Government presence and participation in the formulation of the UN Convention bear evidence to its seriousness and its vision of building an inclusive society.

In particular, Mauritius advocated for inalienable Rights of Women and Children with Disabilities. In a similar vein, inasmuch as the world is evolving towards globalisation, supranationalistic and socio-economic development, new infrastructure must be created so that persons with disabilities can take the same advantages and opportunities that are available to their non disabled counterparts. We accordingly need to prepare ourselves as ***“in the new world, you not only have the right to have rights but also have the right to be different”***⁴.

⁴ *Prime Minister of Israel at the Doha World Debate May 2007*

1.4 **Methodology & Process**

1. **Brainstorming**

A brainstorming session was carried out at the level of the Ministry of Social Security to better understand the disability sector and ensure what the Committee was set out to do.

2. **Synopsis Paper**

Following the collection of data emanating from both primary and secondary research, a synopsis paper was submitted to the Steering Committee outlining detailed steps from inception to the delivery of the final Policy Paper. This was agreed by the Steering Committee.

3. **Workshop**

In view of having full participation in the formulation of the National Policy Paper, two workshops (May and September 2007) were organized where discussion led to key decisions and recommendations. Eight themes were discussed. The recommendations emanating from the eight themes were validated by all the stakeholders.

4. **Analyses**

An analysis of the structure of the disability sector at the Ministry of Social Security level was carried out by the Sub-Committee and its findings was presented to the Steering Committee

5. **Presentation of findings**

The findings of the workshop were presented to the sub-committee and to the Steering Committee.

6. **Drafting**

Following discussion within the sub committees, a first draft was presented on the different chapters that were to be integral part of the Policy Paper. Lengthy discussions were also carried out by the Steering Committee and guidance was given on the editing of the text.

7. **Review Mechanism**

To ensure that the National Policy Paper included all views emanating from different stakeholders, meetings were held at the level of sub committees to fine-tune the draft Policy Paper.

8. **Final Policy paper document**

The Steering Committee validated the policy recommendations together with its implementation schedule.

9. **Proposal for Implementation framework**

It is proposed that the implementation proposed plan be in line with the UN Convention proposed framework. It will create a value chain and gather momentum and support from all stakeholders. It will adopt a result based management approach whilst building on existing capacity.

CHAPTER 2

2.0 THE DISABILITY SECTOR AND ITS CURRENT STRUCTURE IN MAURITIUS AND RODRIGUES.

2.1 Historical Perspective

In Mauritius, the history of disabled persons has followed more or less the same pattern as in the rest of the world. In the early days, while some disabled persons spent their time begging on the streets to survive, the majority of them remained with their families, cut off from society and hidden from public view. Disability was a matter of “shame” and social stigma⁵. Persons with disabilities were not really part of society and as such did not really live their lives as citizens having rights and dignity.

In the early forties there was an epidemic of poliomyelitis, which awakened the consciousness of civil society towards persons with disabilities. Hundreds of children were affected and those who survived became disabled for life. Members of civil society took the initiative to bring some solace in the lives of these various categories of disabled persons by forming voluntary associations. That was the charitable approach. In 1946, a landmark decision was taken by late Lois Lagesse together with late Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam to set up the “Society for the Welfare of the Blind”. It was already enshrined in the mind of our visionaries that visually impaired people could be educated, trained and eventually earn their living in a decent, honest and professional manner.

(Dr Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam served Mauritius as Prime Minister from 1968 to 1982)

⁵ Normalization by Prof. Wolfsenberger

Gradually, social workers started to take an active participation in improving the living conditions of other types of disabled persons including the hearing impaired, physically disabled and those suffering from intellectual disabilities. In the seventies, it was the parents themselves who took the lead to group themselves into Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). This was done with the support of the first Labour Government (post independence 1968 -1982). Parastatal bodies and NGOs started to provide specialized care, education and training to disabled children, adolescents and adults. Association Des Parents D'Enfants Inadaptés de L'Ile Maurice, Society for the Welfare of the Blind and Society for the Welfare of the Deaf were parallel organizations providing the same services to the intellectually disabled, visually and hearing impaired persons respectively.

In 1981, Mauritius celebrated the International Year for Disabled Persons. Government took the initiative to provoke reactions from civil society. The programmes in favour of rehabilitating persons with disabilities for their integration in society began at the level of the Ministry and hence gradually continued to reach out through NGOs. Throughout the eighties and the nineties Government has been active in bringing in legislative measures to accelerate this process of social integration of persons with disabilities into mainstream society. However, as mentioned earlier, there has never been a National Policy Paper and Action Plan with a clear vision for the disability sector. As we are approaching towards the 40th Anniversary of our independence, it is pertinent to recall the achievements of the disability sector.

2.2 Current Structure

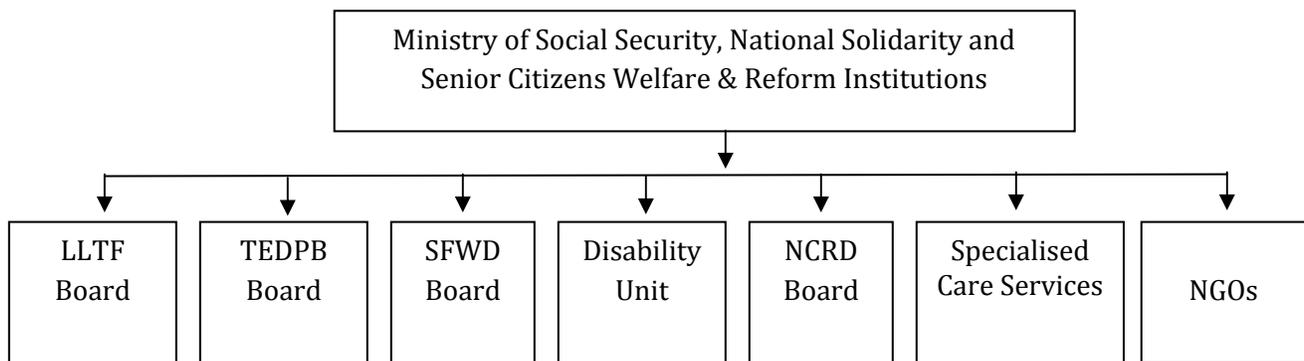
In its concern for providing effective services, Government has been operating both at a macro and micro level. From a vertical and horizontal point of view, persons with disabilities should have been able to benefit from the said services (be it specialized) alongside their non-disabled counterparts from the said institutions and or Government bodies. For instance, the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment should have had the responsibility for the placement of persons

with disabilities in employment, or the IVTB having responsibility to cater for the special needs of disabled persons as a main provider of industrial and vocational training services. However, we are a very long way from this ideal type model.

Moreover, the concept of one-stop-shop as a main provider of specialised social services to persons with disabilities is probably an important feature given the small size of the island. It is not in any way intended to mean that other Ministries are completely absolved from their responsibilities to act as service providers to the disability sector. On the contrary, other Ministries' ambit of activities will substantially increase with the adoption of this National Policy Paper and Action Plan. At present, the Ministry initiates the policy guidelines for all the Parastatal bodies and the Disability Unit, which fall under its umbrella. The NCRD acts in an advisory capacity to the Ministry on disability issues.

Furthermore, there are NGOs that are very much present in the field. In the case of Rodrigues Island, the services for the disability sector are provided by the Commission of Social Security of Rodrigues. The agencies falling under the aegis of the Ministry are under the statutory obligations to provide the same services to Rodriguans.

Organisation Structure



1. LLTF- Lois Lagesse Trust Fund
2. TEDPB – Trianing and Employment of Disabled Persons Board
3. SFWD – Society for the Welfare of the Deaf
4. NCRD – National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons
5. NGOs – Non-Governmental Organisations

2.3 **Disability Unit**

The Disability Unit is a department of the Ministry. It has been in existence since 1987 as the Rehabilitation Unit. It is staffed by 5 officers and an officer-in-charge. It provides a customer care service for persons with disabilities (training, employment, sports and other social aspects).

The Disability Unit has initiated and implemented a series of measures over the years. It also has the responsibility to implement the proposals and functions of the National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (NCRD) which is an advisory body to the parent Ministry. The activities of the Disability Unit are broad based and are funded by the Ministry. The implementation of disability policies of the Ministry rests mainly with the officers of the unit. The latter also provides a series of direct services to parents, children and adults with disabilities. These range from advocacy, counselling and guidance to provision of assistive devices, parking coupons, bus passes, concessionary airfares, liaising with NGOs, refunding of transport costs to disabled children (accompanying parents) attending schools, promoting integration of disabled persons, removing barriers and organizing activities, seminars and workshops on disability issues.

2.3.1 The National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (NCRD)

The National Council for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled Persons was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1986⁶.

The objectives of the Council are clearly set out in Section 4 of the NCRD Act 1986:

The objects of the Council are:

- (a) to co-ordinate the activities of voluntary organizations catering for disabled persons;
- (b) to promote the development and expansion of rehabilitative services;
- (c) to advise the Minister on all aspects of the rehabilitation of disabled persons;
- (d) to co-ordinate with private international and national agencies engaged in the rehabilitation of disabled persons and to disseminate technical information received from these sources; and
- (e) generally to promote the welfare of disabled persons.

It benefits from an annual grant of Rs 1 M and over the years it has broadened its base of activities. It provides bursaries and scholarships for disabled students at secondary and tertiary level, which is known as the Francois Sockalingum Award⁷. Although its prime role is to advise the Ministry on policy matters, it has funded numerous projects ranging from education, sports and leisure to accessibility which have been directly beneficial to the disabled community.

⁶ Act No. 37 of 1986

⁷ Disability Activist from

2.3.2 The Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board (TEDPB)

The Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board (TEDPB) was set up by an Act of Parliament⁸. The former Trust Fund for Disabled Persons 1988⁹ and the Employment of Disabled Persons Board 1988¹⁰ were operating parallel to each other. The TEDPB came into existence after the merger of these two administratively distinct but operationally complementary Boards as part of a rationalised strategy to unify the new Board. The TEDPB is allocated Rs 5 million an annual grant from Government.

The objectives of the TEDPB Board are set out in Section (4) – Functions of the Board:

- (a) prevent, as provided under section 16, discrimination against disabled persons resulting from or arising out of their disability;
- (b) encourage the establishment of appropriate vocational centres and other institutions for the training of disabled persons;
- (c) operate and encourage schemes and projects for the training and employment of disabled persons;
- (d) improve generally the social and economic status and condition of disabled persons; and
- (e) perform such other functions, not inconsistent with this Act, as the Minister may, in writing, specify or approve.

⁸ Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board Act No. 9 - 1996

⁹ Trust Fund for Disabled Persons Act 1988

¹⁰ Employment of Disabled Persons Board Act 1988

The TEDPB Act also stipulates in Section 10 that the Board must establish and maintain the following registers:

- (1) a register of disabled persons
- (2) a register of employers

The TEDPB has been instrumental in the training and employment of persons with disabilities. It has forged strategic alliances with training organisations such as IVTB and SEHDA to better serve the disabled community in relation to training, employment and entrepreneurship. It is also geared towards ongoing sensitisation campaigns with a view to enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workforce.

Over the years, the Board has redefined its strategy and operates more as a facilitator as opposed to a direct provider of service to the disabled community.

2.3.3 Society for the Welfare of the Deaf

The Society for the Welfare of the Deaf was established by an Act of Parliament¹¹. It operates as a private entity. The Act sets up for the management of the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf and its objectives are:

- (a) to train and educate all deaf persons in Mauritius;
- (b) to assist them in obtaining medical treatment and suitable employment;
- (c) to grant them material relief of which they may be in need; and
- (d) to erect, open and manage such training centres, schools and hostels as may be deemed necessary.

¹¹ Society for the Welfare of the Deaf Act N. 37 1968

This organization is funded by way of a grant of Rs 1M from the parent Ministry, approximately RS 300, 000 from the Ministry of Education and Human Resources and by sponsorship from the private sector. The expenses regarding salaries for both administrative and specialized staff are in excess of the allocated grant money. It also has a lack of technical staff and transport facilities. It is located in Beau Bassin and is very much centralised. It has only 17 teaching and non-teaching staff to cater for the whole island.

However, notwithstanding the above-mentioned constraints, the members of the Society are volunteers who have been instrumental in the rehabilitation, training and employment of hearing impaired persons.

The Society for the Welfare of the Deaf has a unit at Goodlands in the Doorgachurn Hurry Government School and another unit at Riambel in the premise of Southern Handicapped Association. At Beau Bassin, there is a laboratory and a workshop producing and repairing ear moulds servicing the hearing impaired community in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

2.3.4 Lois Lagesse Trust Fund – the former Society for the Welfare of the Blind

In 1983, The Government set up the Loïs Lagesse Trust Fund (LLTF) by the Loïs Lagesse Trust Fund Act¹². The Government wanted to rationalize the activities of the centre and set out its objectives on a statutory footing. The objectives may be summarized as follows:

- (a) to train and educate all blind persons in Mauritius;
- (b) to assist blind persons in obtaining medical treatment and suitable employment;
- (c) to set up and manage training centres, schools and hostels for the blind; and
- (d) to cater for the general welfare of the blind.

¹² Act No. 19 of 1983

The LLTF has an annual budget of Rs. 3.6 M. It receives around Rs. 2 M from the parent Ministry as grant-in-aid. Unfortunately, a significant amount of the grant is used for administrative purposes. It has a total of 22 staff members, including 6 visually impaired Rattan Workers, to cater for the needs of visually impaired persons island-wide. It is responsible for the initiation of Braille to visually impaired persons. It also provides primary education to children aged between 5 and 15 years through the School for the Blind. To those aged above 15 years, it provides training in handicraft.

In spite of its financial constraints, the LLTF provides the following services free-of-charge:

- Specialized primary education
- Specialized training in handicraft
- Training in music, dance and in orientation and mobility
- Braille and large print services to secondary and tertiary students
- Residential facilities to abandoned inmates
- Free meals to inmates, trainees, students and visually impaired staff members
- Outreach services for detection and further referral to other services
- Liaise with TEDPB for employment referral
- Distribution of assistive devices
- Supply of adaptable software and other related materials to students

2.3.5 Mauritius Mental Health Association

An association founded in 1959 by British Expatriates together with local volunteers to create public awareness on mental illness and disability. It became known as the Mauritius Mental Health Association in 1974, as a result of an Act of Parliament. It runs a school in Stanley Rose-Hill for the mentally and intellectually disabled children. It also provides other services such as sheltered workshops, occupational

therapy, day-care services, training in activities of daily living, vocational training and support from psychologists.

The Association receives an annual grant from the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and a per capita grant for its school children from Ministry of Education and Human Resources. It also taps into different private funding sources.

Its objectives are as follows:

1. to promote education for children with intellectual disabilities;
2. to assess and develop the children's intellectual capacity in functional academic and technical work;
3. to develop the children's potential for further integration in the Mauritian Society; and
4. to give support to families of people with intellectual disabilities

This Association is managed professionally but its services are too centralized.

2.3.6 Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs)/ Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs)

It is undeniable and undisputed that both NGO's and DPOs have contributed enormously in the promotion and development of the welfare of persons with disabilities. These organizations have often initiated changes and are recognized as a significant voice in civil society fighting for the rights of persons with disabilities. There are 50 NGO's operating in the Disability Sector.

As in many countries, NGOs have initiated specialised care services to disabled people. They have also developed training programs to upgrade professionalism. NGOs have worked in close collaboration with international agencies to promote activities in favour of disabled persons. Many of their projects have been funded by Government, the Corporate Sector and International Organisations. Non Governmental Organisation Trust Fund Regulations 1999 was created under the

Financial and Audit Act¹³ . The NGO Trust Fund has very much contributed in relieving the financial burdens on NGOs and has also helped in the coordination and training of NGOs.

2.4 Milestones of the Disability Sector

As we can see from the above, as a society we have not remained insensitive to the community of disabled persons. Both government and civil society have enormously contributed to reduce the gap between the life styles of persons with disabilities and that of their non-disabled counterparts.

2.4.1. Income Maintenance

One of the first measures taken in favour of persons with disabilities was to provide them with a source of income. In 1976, government came up with a National Pension Scheme and enacted the National Pension Act¹⁴. This law constitutes a landmark for workers in Mauritius and Rodrigues but more importantly provides for the payment of a non-contributory Basic Invalidity Pension (BIP). To benefit from the BIP, disabled persons must be above 15 and medically incapacitated to 60%. In the course of time, the number of beneficiaries has increased and additional types of benefits have been recognised and included in the list.

2.4.2 Support to NGOs

In the context of the International Year of Disabled Persons (1981), Government gave due recognition to the pioneering and praiseworthy voluntary work that was being done by NGOs in the field of disability.

As a result, it took the decision to give, for the first time, an annual grant-in-aid to all registered and genuine voluntary organizations providing services to disabled

¹³ The Finance and Audit Act No. 50 of 1999

¹⁴ National Pension Act

persons. The areas targeted are specialised education, vocational training and sheltered employment, home-visits, including counselling and recreational activities. Most of the NGOs operating in the disability sector are receiving a grant-in-aid from the Ministry through the NGO Trust Fund.

2.4.3 Training and Employment

With the declaration of the UN Decade of Disabled Persons (1981-1991)¹⁵, Government felt that apart from the praiseworthy work being done by NGOs, it had to come up with its own institutions to empower persons with disabilities to become independent and participate in the developmental process. This was an important paradigm shift. Instead of passive recipients of benefits, the aim now is to empower disabled persons to be productive citizens. To achieve this goal, affirmative actions were taken.

Government enacted two important pieces of legislation in 1988: the Trust Fund for Disabled Persons Act and the Employment of Disabled Persons Act respectively. They made provision for the vocational training and employment of disabled persons in different sectors of the economy. In 1996, the two legislations were merged to become the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board Act. The trend is that the TEDPB provides traditional training in its centres and then seek employment for its trainees in different sectors of the economy. This has worked to a certain extent and over the last ten years many disabled people have been put in employment.

¹⁵ International Year of the Disabled declared by UN

Statistics on the number of disabled persons placed in employment and training:

The number of disabled persons placed in employment, Skill Development Program and training from the year 2005 as at date is as follows:

Table 1:

SN	Details	No. of Disabled Persons
1	Employment	92
2	Skill Development Program	19
3	Training	57

2.4.4 Promotion of Education

In relation to the promotion of education for children with disabilities, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources in collaboration with other Ministries have taken the following measures:

- ❖ refund of transport costs for children with disabilities (now including accompanying parents) attending schools;
- ❖ launching of a scholarship scheme to encourage students with disabilities to pursue higher studies;
- ❖ payment of a per capita grant to special schools; and
- ❖ a Policy on “Inclusive Education” is being implemented by the Ministry of Education since 2006. This policy challenges segregated education from pre-primary to tertiary level and promote inclusive education in favour of disabled children.

2.4.5 Accessibility

With the adoption of the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, Government began to pay much attention to the issue of accessibility. It was no longer a matter of welfare alone but also a matter of rights (a Rights-Based Approach). Therefore, with a view to protect and promote the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, Government set up a High-Powered Steering Committee in 1993 which recommended the amendment of the Building Act. This amendment was made in 1999 but the regulations were promulgated in August 2005. The law now provides for the mandatory inclusion of access features to all new public buildings. In the same context, the Road Traffic Act was amended to make provision for free and reserved parking for persons with disabilities.

2.5 Landmark Institutions in the Disability Sector:

- Society for the Welfare of the Blind 1946 changed to Lois Lagesse Trust Fund Board 1983
- Society for the Welfare of the Deaf – 1968
- Mauritius Mental Health Association 1974
- National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act 1986
- Trust Fund for the Disabled Persons Act - 1988 & Employment of Disabled Persons Board Act - 1988 merged to Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board Act – 1996

2.5.1. Non Governmental Organisations

- Association des Parents D'Enfants Inadaptés de L'Ile Maurice - 1970 (NGO)
- Physically Handicapped Welfare Association 1960
- Fraternité Mauricienne des Malades et Des Handicappés (FMMH) 1976

CHAPTER 3

3.0 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

Before attempting to suggest what should be improved upon and/or what should be done, the Government, DPOs, and NGOs deemed it necessary to analyse both the structure within which they operate and the specific services they provide. A good premise to start this work is from the analysis of its structure and functioning. It sets the scene for a deeper understanding of our achievements, vision, and mission, and puts us on a firm footing to prepare for the future.

The issues addressed below are not intended to be an exhaustive list but merely serve as guiding principles. The same analogy based on a Human Rights perspective can be drawn in relation to themes which are not included in the present analysis. The rationale of the above is based on the principle that ***we do it for them and for ourselves as both we and others have the same rights, but different responsibilities and obligations.***

3.2 Structure and strategy

The current structure at the level of the Ministry and its parastatal bodies has been in place for a long time. It has served its own time and has been able to provide services to the disability sector which meet the basic needs of persons with disabilities.

The extent to which it has been successful in meeting the expectations and aspirations of its service users is itself a justification for the present policy document with its action plan. In the absence of such a policy and action plan a clear-cut strategy could not be devised to lead the sector. Each institution falling under the aegis of the Ministry has been working from very generic guidelines emanating from the Ministry as opposed to a more focused and specific ones.

This is why pertinent Human Rights questions have been raised in the preparation process of this policy document:

1. To what extent are the services provided user friendly?
2. Is there consistency between expenditure and service delivery?
3. Is there a synergy between the different institutions catering for the special needs of our service users?
4. Has the system sufficiently evolved in line with socio economic and technological exigencies?

The above questions call upon an objective analysis which is sober and futuristic. In the absence of detailed statistical data to support the issues raised above by DPOs, it is thought right to identify strategic issues. Not only should they serve as guiding principles, but they must also assist in the foundation of our analysis of the current structure and its service providers.

3.3 **Strategic Issues**

- Services too centralised
- Lack of financial and human resources
- Lack of technical/ professional personnel
- Some services are not fully accessible to persons with disabilities
- Under-representation of disabled people in decision making process
- Lack of day care services
- Absence of specialised rehabilitation centres for the severely disabled
- Not much support to carers and their families
- No provision for specific health care needs
- No coherent policy to housing options
- Lack of training and employment opportunities both in disability/ non-disability sector for persons with disabilities
- Major attitudinal problem from civil society
- Lack of advocacy for persons with disabilities

3.4 **Definitional difficulty**

For a long time due to the absence of an appropriate terminology, persons with disabilities were referred to as '*autrement capable*'. This term in fact refers to a disabled person as '*otherwise abled*'. The second difficulty with the definition of a disabled person lies with its narrow medical description. As a result of the above, persons with disabilities are perceived as being **limited** and **restricted** in their participation in society. For example visually impaired person can work only as receptionist, the hearing impaired as cabinet makers. This perception has been gradually changing but society's awareness has not been sufficiently sharpened to meet the degree of inclusion as aspired by persons with disabilities.

3.5 **Financial & Human Resources**

A high percentage of the Ministry's annual budget goes towards the payment of the following benefits and pensions:

- Basic Invalidity Pension
- Carer's allowance to beneficiaries of Basic Invalidity Pension who need constant care and attention
- Carer's Allowance to disabled children of low-income groups who need constant care and attention
- Special allowance in respect of a disabled child belonging to the low-income groups who is either severely disabled, incontinent or bed-ridden
- Refund of bus fare to parents accompanying disabled children to school
- Provision of assistive devices.

Both government and NGOs personnel have been instrumental in the development and achievements of various services within the disability sector. Unfortunately, most of these personnel who work exceptionally hard in promoting the welfare of persons with disabilities had very little professional training opportunities. Accordingly, a lot of human and financial resources are wasted in the system.

At the level of the Ministry and its parastatal bodies much effort, time and funds are spent in the decision making process. The cumbersome procedures result in unnecessary delay and end up costing more money whilst the problems of persons with disabilities are not fully addressed. Whilst money is disbursed to all those institutions, a rigorous control mechanism is not in place to monitor their activities.

3.6. **Statistics and Assessment**

It is anomalous that we do not have a database system which is constantly updated in relation to the different categories of persons with disabilities. The reasons are:

1. Assessment for the purpose of disability allowances is divorced from the consideration of the other services provided which include rehabilitation, training and employment. While the rehabilitation, training and employment needs assessment should rest on the abilities of persons with disabilities, the evaluation of the disabled persons for financial benefits is limitative to one's disability from an exclusively medical standpoint.
2. The register of persons with disabilities does not therefore provide Rehabilitation Officers or Social Workers with sufficient information on the social dimension of problems faced by persons with disabilities.
3. As a result of (1) and (2) above it has not been possible to address the specific socio-economic needs of our clients.
4. It is incumbent upon the Training Employment of Disabled Persons Board to keep a register of persons with disabilities "who are willing and able to work" - TEDPB Act 1996. This entails that after persons with disabilities are assessed by the Medical Board for disability benefits, they are again reassessed by TEDPB, NCRD and the Disability Unit for training and employment or for other services. This results in duplication of work and a mere waste of financial resources.

5. The National Steering Committee voiced its concern that in the absence of a national comprehensive register of persons with disabilities, it is impossible to address their specific needs. Moreover, the absence of defined criteria and guidelines based on a multi-dimensional social model makes it equally difficult to provide services to persons with disabilities.

3.7 **Workshop themes**

Additional themes were discussed at the different consultative workshops. The community of persons with disabilities present strongly felt that these themes are priority areas and must be dealt with in a practical manner with the support of DPOs and NGOs in collaboration with the Ministry.

3.7.1 **Accessibility**

The committee noted with concern that most public and private buildings where the public should have access are not accessible to persons with disabilities. It is only recently that the regulations relating to accessibility in the Building Act 1999 were promulgated by imposing the legal responsibility on Local Authorities not to issue development and building permits in case such provisions are not complied with.

Regarding access to information, the committee noted that some progress has been made. There is now a dictionary in Mauritian Sign Language¹⁶ and sign language interpretation services are being developed. The Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation has taken the initiative to broadcast some of its bulletins in Mauritian sign language. Information in Braille format and large print is equally in wider circulation. However, as the majority of persons with disabilities are not computer literate, they are not able to take advantage of updated technology and have access to e-information.

¹⁶ Mauritian sign Language Dictionary 2006

In relation to accessibility to public transport this is an area which is problematic regardless of the fact that persons with disabilities are legally entitled to travel free of charge on public buses. For those who can make an effort to travel on public transport, they are still vulnerable to the prejudice of mainstream society. Numerous cases of verbal abuse and harassment have been reported to the National Transport Authority.

3.7.2 Human Rights

Section 16 of the Constitution of Mauritius does not expressly **prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability**. There is no mechanism to adjudicate upon discriminatory practices in relation to mainstream education, training and employment, or human rights and fundamental freedom enshrined in Chapter two of our Constitution. On the other hand, the Supreme Court of Mauritius has so far declared all legislations which are discriminatory either in its application or in its effect, null and void. However, legislations relating to disability issues have so far not been subject to adjudication.

Persons with disabilities have so far been serviced by Government, community and to a larger extent by NGO's. Their socio economic integration in society is perceived as favours towards them. However, disability activists have made it clear time and again that "**charities are not rights**".

DPOs and their representatives rejected the Medical Model Approach and suggested that future legislations must adopt a Human Rights Approach to disability issues.

3.7.3 Education and Training

The education and training of persons with disabilities have been mainly carried out in a segregative environment by specialised schools. It should be noted that in 2006 the Ministry of Education and Human Resources came up with a Policy Paper on Inclusive Education which is currently being implemented.

The Committee noted there has been no formulation of a clear strategy to rehabilitate persons with disabilities within mainstream society. There is equally a lack of trained social workers who can clearly monitor the progress. The lack of monitoring and counselling support to persons with disabilities within their family set up and education system is a serious cause for concern. Equally parents do not have the necessary support and are vulnerable to the prejudice and negative attitudes prevailing. This has been a hindrance for them to take an active role in the social integration of their disabled children. The committee also noted that the education and training of disabled children need to go through a system whereby their parents are themselves sensitised about disability issues. It has also been voiced out that the Pre-vocational and Vocational training being provided do not match the exigencies of the labour market.

3.7.4 Health

In Mauritius, unlike the UK, the responsibility of the welfare of persons with disabilities lies with the Ministry of Social Security, but the treatment and health care needs are met by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. Even though the welfare system from a health perspective has worked well for the nation over the years, it does not make enough provisions for persons with specific disability needs. Whilst the Action Plan for the Health sector (2005 – 2010) refers to equality of access and care in proportion to health needs are essential conditions to equity, it does not stress the disabled persons' needs. Most people with disabilities have greater health care needs than the rest of the population. Shortcomings have been highlighted in hospital in the provision of services to persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, the follow up of disabled people is not being carried out by a multidisciplinary team involving all the stakeholders. Furthermore, the service is not readily accessible to persons with disabilities.

In relation to the rehabilitation of severely disabled persons more specifically the totally dependent elderly persons, a Centre has already been set up at Petit Verger. It has been financed by the Lux-Development with the view to providing necessary and adapted structure for the care of this client group. It is not operational as yet.

3.7.5 Work and Employment

There is a mismatch between education, training and employment opportunities. The merger between the former Trust Fund for Disabled Persons and the Employment of Disabled Persons Board was supposed to address this issue. However, it is noted that much work needs to be carried out to prepare disabled children at pre primary and primary level before envisaging training and employment. Vocational training starts at the age of 15 and more often than not, at that age the disabled trainee is not even equipped with basic education and skills to embark on a specialized training course.

Given the state of things it is even more difficult to integrate our disabled trainees in mainstream vocational courses. Attitudinal problems in the world of work vis-a-vis persons with disabilities are another major hindrance. Furthermore, the training provided to persons with disabilities is inadequate and does not meet the needs of the labour market. Most training institutions' physical infrastructures are not accessible to persons with disabilities. They are not equipped to handle the special needs of persons with disabilities nor are their staff trained to do so.

3.7.6 Recreation, Sports, Leisure and Cultural Activities

Recreation, Sports, Leisure and Cultural Activities are natural ingredients for a healthy lifestyle. However, not much attention is given to persons with disabilities from this perspective. The general thought is that disabled people cannot practice any sport and be part of mainstream society. Of course this belief is completely erroneous.

It was also noted that there is a lack of trained instructors, adaptable and accessible sports venues and sports equipment. However, notwithstanding the above, considerable progress at national and international level has been achieved by disabled athletes.

3.7.7 Negative attitudes and prejudice

The Committee after a detailed analysis came to the conclusion that as persons with disabilities have not fully integrated into the socio economic structure of society, there is a staggering degree of ignorance about the abilities of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, there has been no coherent policy or long term strategy to educate the population at large on disability issues. The role of the press has been limited to highlighting the success stories of a few elites who have climbed up the social ladder or sensational cases regarding persons with disabilities who have been subject to abuse and/ or ill treatment. The numerous sensitisation campaigns organized by the Ministry and the achievements of persons with disabilities in numerous sectors have prompted society to start portraying a more favourable image of the disabled persons. But, there is still a long way to go.

3.7.8 Non Governmental Organisations/ Disabled People Organisations

The committee fully acknowledges the fact that NGOs and DPOs have contributed enormously in the disability sector. However, important observations were made regarding the reassessment for the future and the modern role of NGOs/ DPOs which are interalia:

- NGOs have grown up in numbers but the quality of their services have not been evaluated systematically;
- the NGOs have been complementary in the provision of services to government institutions;
- Disabled persons are not in control of their own organization as they have not been empowered and trained to do so. Moreover, there is poor quality training or sometimes no training at all to those involved in the advocacy of human rights;

- there is a serious lack of financial and human resources for NGOs/ DPOs to carry out their work properly in the disability sector; and
- the network between Government/ Parastatal Bodies/ NGOs and DPOs is poor.

CHAPTER 4

4.0 THE NEW VISION

The New Vision: Valuing People with Disabilities has emerged both from Government vision of building an Inclusive Society in tandem with the advent of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This New Vision is set out to improve the lives of persons with disabilities, their families and carers. It is based on the full recognition of their rights and social inclusion as an integral part in their local communities.

4.1 The Guiding Principles

The New Vision is underpinned by four main Principles of: Rights, Choice, Independence and Inclusion which will sustain better life chances for people with disabilities in terms of:

- Better choices and more control over their lives
- Structured support to families and carers
- Improved health and housing for the disabled
- Education, training and employment opportunities
- Better quality services to the disabled community.
- Non-discriminatory practices/ positive discrimination
- Advocacy

4.2 Policy Goals

Given that the set of principles on which the new vision is based, these goals have been identified to realize this vision in consultation with the disabled community and its representatives.

1. **Enhancing individual choice for meaningful lives**

To support people with disabilities so as to enhance their self-esteem with the view that they can pursue their own individual choice to meaningful lives and by strengthening support systems.

2. **Building an inclusive society**

Encouraging civil society to be responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities, whilst ensuring the protection and promotion of their rights and their integration in mainstream society.

3. **Leading the way forward**

To develop inclusive local communities for people with disabilities by providing inclusive, accessible and first class services with non-discriminatory practices.

4.3 Policy Objectives

1. To empower persons with disabilities to advocate Human Rights issues pertaining to their daily lives by strengthening and consolidating Disabled Peoples Organisation.
2. To set up a structure that is disabled friendly, result-oriented coupled with the effective use of both human and financial resources. More importantly, the adoption of a Legal framework that will easily embrace the provisions of the UN Convention.
3. To protect and promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by setting an appropriate mechanism to ensure that persons with disabilities are not subject to discriminatory practices
4. To create a synergy between Government, NGOs, Parastatal Bodies, the Corporate Sector, Regional and International Organisations so as to deliver first class services to persons with disabilities.
5. To ascertain the non-vulnerability of persons with disabilities in their effective participation in the labour market and as full fledged entrepreneurs.
6. To undertake appropriate actions and measures to enable persons with disabilities to be educated, trained and empowered in an environment conducive to socio economic integration in line with their aspirations talents and abilities.
7. To support disabled people achieve their full potential and be representative in all spheres of life.

8. Encourage DPOs to advocate and support disabled people and assist them in doing so.
9. Implement the recommendations emanating from the present Action Plan through appropriate Ministries, Local Authorities and other stakeholders.
10. Embark on a perpetual sensitization campaign as an integral and holistic approach to promote the disability sector.

CHAPTER 5

5.0 THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The analysis so far carried out warrants a summary at this juncture before we move on to the recommendations and the implementation strategy. We have sufficiently dealt with strategic issues which directly, indirectly or coincidentally affect the lives of persons with disabilities. We have also identified our strengths and weaknesses and focus on our opportunities and potential threats both at a macro and micro level. The recommendations made clear that inequalities faced by persons with disabilities cannot be tackled without dealing with fundamental causes - including poverty, low education attainment, unemployment, discrimination and social exclusion.

In the formulation of the recommendations of the National Action Plan together with its implementation schedule, our priority is to set up a Monitoring Mechanism to ascertain that the recommendations are effectively implemented. As mentioned earlier, the Government mandated the Honourable Minister to chair a **National Steering Committee** and the end product is the present National Policy Paper and Action Plan on Disability. The Honourable Minister will now chair an **Implementation and Monitoring Committee** to effectively devise ways and means so as to ensure proper implementation of the recommendations of this National Policy Paper.

5.1.1 RECOMMENDATION 1: STRUCTURE AND STRATEGY

As a long term and perpetual vision to combat prejudice and discrimination experienced by persons with disabilities the Steering Committee recommended interalia:

- (a) a constant review of existing legislations ranging from accessibility, education, training, rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities;
- (b) the elaboration and creation of a new structure with strong disability representation at the level of the Ministry which would avoid duplication or multiplicity of services and more importantly provide cost effective services;
- (c) pending the setting up of a new structure, the Implementation and Monitoring Committee will implement as a matter of urgency all recommendations voiced out by DPOs and NGOs in the Consultative process in the preparation of the current Action Plan through existing current agencies; and
- (d) the strategy for implementation should harness the collaboration of all stakeholders and embrace new organisations willing to give a helping hand to the disability sector.

5.1.2 **RECOMMENDATION 2: DEFINITION, STATISTICS, ASSESSMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

The first step relating to the definitional deficit of a disabled person has already been addressed. On 25th September 2007, Mauritius has signed the UN Convention together with its Optional Protocol. The next step will be the incorporation of same into our domestic legislative framework. In relation to recommendation 1, the following legislative measures will be initiated:

1. A new method of assessment of the status and needs of persons with disabilities will be devised which is in line with the UN definition of “disabled persons”.
2. Establish a fully computerized system that will rationalise and formalise the collection and dissemination of data. Experts should be recruited for this exercise to assist in its implementation.
3. The adoption of a new social model which enhances the rights and dignity of a disabled person is the only route for the success of the National Action Plan parallel to the new structure: Disability Assessment Commission will be set up for this purpose. The criteria for Disability Benefits will be brought in line with the exigencies of the provisions of the UN Convention.
4. The new system will provide for the right of representation and appellate procedures whenever they feel aggrieved by decision of the Disability Assessment Commission.
5. To ascertain that there is a rigorous control system in place, a Disability Services Inspectorate will be set up to permanently audit the quality of services and formulate recommendations.

In relation to human resources, appropriate training programs will be embarked upon for persons who are already in the system and for those who wish to work in the disability sector. New criteria will be devised for recruitment based on the character, attitude, personality and professional qualifications. Training programs for carers catering for severely disabled people is one of the priorities and will be addressed by the Ministry. To avoid duplication of services and the waste of financial resources, the new structure together with the parallel institutions will adopt new organigrams with a hierarchy of personnel which is more disabled friendly and customer oriented.

5.1.3 RECOMMENDATION 3: ACCESSIBILITY

5.1.3.1 Accessibility to public and private buildings

Legislative measures would be adopted to empower local authorities to ascertain that:

1. all new public construction projects include features like ramps, handrails, wide entrance, wide lifts, adapted toilets and parking facilities for disabled persons;
2. sufficient time and incentive will be afforded to owners of existing building infrastructures which are inaccessible to persons with disabilities to bring them in line with the exigencies of the law;
3. a list of buildings should be compiled for appropriate measures to be taken and monitored;
4. accessibility should be a prominent feature of ongoing training programs for architects, engineers and builders; and
5. the physical environment including road pavements and/ or other public places where a non-disabled person has the right to access.

5.1.3.2 Transport

The National Transport Authority Act will be amended to make new provisions for all types of public transport, including public buses and taxis to be accessible. The appropriate framework will be worked out by the Monitoring Committee together with specific recommendations emanating from the workshop themes. In the meantime, as a priority the fiscal incentives which persons with disabilities are already eligible will be broadened to allow a wider number of beneficiaries.

Training programs designed for bus drivers, ticket examiners, conductors and taxi drivers will include modules on specific disability issues.

5.1.3.3 Information

1. To meet the special needs of persons with disabilities public bodies will forthwith be under the obligation to provide information in an accessible format. The principle will apply across the board provided there is a request of same.
2. E-accessibility should be an integral part of the day to day life of persons with disabilities
3. The media to be more disabled friendly in its attempt to serve the segment of disabled population.

5.1.4 RECOMMENDATION 4 : HUMAN RIGHTS

1. Section 16 of the Constitution should be amended to prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability.
2. Legislative provisions which are discriminatory against disabled persons will be repealed.

3. The Equal Opportunity Act should include a chapter on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities or alternatively there will a need to adopt a Disability Discrimination Act.
4. The National Human Rights Commission's terms of reference will be extended to cover disability issues. This includes adjudicating on Discriminatory practices, sensitisation on disability Human Rights issues and the formulation of appropriate recommendations.

5.1.5 **RECOMMENDATION 5 : EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Our policy is to challenge segregated education from pre-primary to tertiary level with the view to foster inclusive education and to this end it is recommended:

1. The Ministry of Social Security will act as a facilitator and work in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Together the two Ministries will identify children with disabilities who can be integrated from pre-primary to primary, from primary to secondary and on to tertiary level and a program of placement will be embarked upon.
2. Disabled students who cannot join the mainstream system will be channelled to special schools or to appropriate day care centres.
3. The Teacher's Training Program will include a comprehensive module on children with special needs in its curriculum.
4. The Ministry of Social Security will closely collaborate for the promotion and effective implementation of the Policy on Inclusive Education which is currently being implemented by the Ministry of Education.

5.1.6 RECOMMENDATION 6: HEALTH

1. The Medical Unit will be reengineered and be empowered to compile a database on the state of health of persons with disabilities. It should liaise and have access to information from appropriate Health institutions, Hospitals and Area Health Centres to ensure that the health of person with disabilities is monitored.
2. Persons suffering from chronic mental illnesses and intellectual disabilities should be provided with special support and health assistance.
3. The Ministry of Social Security, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life, shall set up a joint committee comprising medical personnel and representatives of DPOs to:
 - (a) formulate and implement specific strategies for preventive measures,
 - (b) review and empower the Community Based Rehabilitation Unit to effectively manage persons with disabilities.
4. Special training for Doctors, Paramedics, CBR workers and Social Workers on disability issues and rehabilitation.
5. Maternal and Child Health Programmes need to be revisited and reinforced to give proper support and counselling.
6. School Health Programme (Screening and Health Education) must be extended to all Pre Primary and Secondary Schools.
7. Upgrading of all Health Infrastructures to provide easier accessibility to the disabled.

8. New technology and upgraded assistive devices to be provided for the treatment and rehabilitation of the disabled persons.
9. The Overseas Treatment Unit to give more attention to cases with a disability for overseas treatment that are not treatable in Mauritius.
10. A National Register of all babies born with a disability needs to be compiled.
11. The new centre for severely disabled persons at Petit verger will be operational as from early 2008.

5.1.7 RECOMMENDATION 7: WORK & EMPLOYMENT

To be in line with Article 27 of the UN Convention, it is recommended that:

1. The review of the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Act in order to adopt a wider definition of work and employment.
2. The new structure will have a new unit to deal with work and employment which will act as a facilitator to ascertain the employability of persons with disabilities.
3. Encourage entrepreneurship among persons with disabilities by creating appropriate incentives, including loans and guaranteeing a market for their products.
4. To create a better network between public and private sector for employment of persons with disabilities.
5. To accentuate on Corporate Social Responsibility so as to capitalise on the networking and job market represented by the corporate sector.

6. To encourage employers to recruit a percentage of disabled employees or alternatively to pay a levy to subsidise training programs.
7. In order to promote the recruitment of persons with disabilities in both public and private sector existing rules and regulations will be reviewed.

5.1.8 RECOMMENDATION 8 : RECREATION, SPORT, LEISURE & CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

1. As part of equal opportunity policy, local authorities will have the responsibility to extend their activities to persons with disabilities.
2. The Ministry of Arts and Culture will ascertain that all activities organised at regional and national level are fully accessible to persons with disabilities and also include their participation.
3. The Sports Act will be amended to cater for the needs of persons with disabilities by providing specialised equipment and training.

5.1.9 RECOMMENDATION 9: SENSITISATION CAMPAIGN

1. The new structure will have a unit which will be specifically responsible for public relations and communications strategy.
2. A more focused national campaign will be launched prior to the implementation of the Action Plan by the Ministry and major stake holders in the country including the University of Mauritius, colleges, pre-primary and primary schools and the private sector.
3. International organisations will be contacted for both guidance in and funding of specific projects that will enhance promotion of Disability awareness issues.

4. The Media to work together with the Ministry and stakeholders to enhance disability awareness and educate the nation on same.

5.1.10 RECOMMENDATION 10 : NGOS/ DPOS

1. The Disability Services Inspectorate will be responsible to:
 - (a) set criteria and guidelines for the setting up of NGOs/ DPOs;
 - (b) create greater transparency in the allocation of grants to NGOs; and
 - (c) monitor the activities and projects of DPOs and NGOs
2. Encourage their participation in the implementation of the National Action Plan.
3. Appropriate training programmes on Project management for NGOs together with MACOSS.
4. Empower NGOs to adopt a Human Rights Approach to disability issues.
5. To create a synergy between Government, NGOs and DPOs.

CHAPTER 6

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE:

The National Action Plan on disability has a short, medium and long-term vision on disability. It makes provision for the implementation of Government policy via different mechanisms. An Implementation and Monitoring Committee will accordingly be set up and chaired by the Honourable Minister of the Ministry of Social Security to monitor at different intervals the progress of the Action Plan. This Committee will comprise representatives of all relevant Ministries and its term of reference will be multi-dimensional. Apart from being an inter-ministerial entity, the Implementation and Monitoring Committee will have strong disability representation from DPOs and NGOs. It will also break into sub committees as and when required on specific and technical matters and may even co-opt experts in the disability sector for advice.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

	Implementation Agency	Timescales
Launch of Policy Paper	Min of Social Security	3 December 2007
Setting up of Implementation and Monitoring Committee chaired by the Hon. Minister of Social Security	Min of Social Security	Jan 2008
Setting up of Implementation Committee chaired by the PS of the Ministry	Min of Social Security	Jan 2008

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS/IMPLEMENTATION AGENCY/TIMESCALE

Recommendations	Implementation Agency	Timescale		
		Short-term 6 mths – 2 yrs	Medium Term 3 yrs – 6 yrs	Long-term 7 yrs – 10 yrs
<p>1. <u>Structure and strategy</u></p> <p>To prepare the appropriate amendments to existing legislations and structure</p>	Ministry of Social Security and other relevant Ministries	Jan 2008	„	„
<p>2. <u>Definition, statistics and Human Resources</u></p> <p>Setting of database of persons with disabilities in Mauritius and Rodrigues</p> <p>Training courses for the Ministry’s and Parastatal bodies and NGOs</p>	Ministry of Social Security, N.S, S.C.W & R.I and Ministry of Education and Human Resources	Jan 2008 As from September 2008		
<p>3. <u>Accessibility</u></p>	Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Ministry of Social Security & Relevant Ministries	Jan 2008	„	„
<p>4. <u>Human Rights</u></p>	Attorney’s General Office in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Security, N.S, S.C.W & R.I and National Human Rights Commission DPOs and NGOs		„	„
<p>5. <u>Education & Training</u></p> <p>Inclusive education</p>	Ministry of Education & Human Resources Ministry of Social Security NGOs and DPOs	Ongoing	To be in line with UN Convention Jan 2008 – Dec 2012	„

Recommendations	Implementation Agency	Timescale		
		Short-term 6 mths – 2 yrs	Medium Term 3 yrs – 6 yrs	Long-term 7 yrs – 10 yrs
6. <u>Health</u>	Min of Health & Quality of Life Min of Social Security, N.S & S.C.W & R.I NGOs and DPOs	Jan 2008	„	
7. <u>Work and Employment</u>	Min of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment, Ministry Social Security, Ministry of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms	„	„	
8. <u>Sports, Leisure and Cultural activities</u>	Min of Social Security Min of Youth & Sports Min of Arts & Culture	Jan 2008	„	„
9. <u>Sensitisation campaign</u>	Min of Social Security in collaboration with all other Ministries NGOs, DPOs and the media	Ongoing	„	„
10. <u>NGOs / DPOs</u>	Min of Social Security, MACOSS	Jan 2008	„	

7.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

7.1 Existing Statistics & Data

In 1990 regulations were made under section 13 of the Statistics Act to provide for the collection of data on disability. For the first time, a question on disability was included in the questionnaire utilized for the National Population Census Exercise. This has enabled the gathering of appropriate information on the nature, type, age, sex and geographical distribution of disability in Mauritius every ten years. The latest available figures are of the Population Census carried out in the year 2000. They reveal the following:

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- 40790 persons with disabilities
- 20576 males and 20214 females
- 3.5% of the population were reported to have disabilities
- Increased from 27852 in 1990 to 40790 in 2000
- Increased from 2.6% of the total population to 3.5%

Source: Central Statistics Office

CONCLUSION

As we write the concluding words of this paper, we are fully conscious of the responsibilities that persons with disabilities have placed on our shoulders. We reflect back on the past few months to remind ourselves of the enthusiasm and hard work that we have devoted to the cause that it stands for. It is with the same rigour that we intend to pursue the way forward to do justice to the community of persons with disabilities.

“Valuing people with disabilities” will continue to inspire us in our future actions and shall be the eternal light that will lead us in years to come.

This ambitious endeavour requires the participation of the whole nation.

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