

Ministry of Planning and Development

Ministerial Response to Recommendations contained in the Fifteenth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on the Current Provisions for the Education of Children who require Special Education Programmes and Services in Public Primary and Secondary Schools

Recommendation 4.29

The Committee recommends that the Central Statistical Office, MOE and MSDFS collaborate to develop a definition for 'disability' as soon as possible. The use of a consistent definition for 'disability' would contribute to the accurate collection of data by CSO, MOE and MSDFS for the formulation and implementation of policies in accordance with Article 31(1) of the UNCRPD.

Response to Recommendation 4.29

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) has adopted in its National Policy on Persons with Disabilities, the definition for disability taken from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRD) which states, "Disability is any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal". The Policy goes further to state that "persons with disabilities include those 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". The Ministry of Education (MOE), in its Special Education Draft Policy uses the following definition for disability which states "Any restriction or lack of ability (resulting from an impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being (World Health Organization, 1980 in The International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps, p.143).

In relation to disability statistics, the Central Statistical Office (CSO) is bound to concepts and definitions as put forward by the United Nation's Washington Group on Disability Statistics as are all CARICOM National Statistical Offices (NSOs). These concepts and definitions are encapsulated in section three (3) of the CSO's 2011 Population and Housing Census Enumerator's Manual, which defines persons with disabilities as "Those persons who are at greater risk than the

general population for experiencing restrictions in performing specific tasks or participating in role activities”. Additionally, the Manual states a disability is defined as “any restriction or lack of ability (resulting from an impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered to be normal for a human being”. In light of the foregoing, the CSO is of the view that collaboration between the CSO, MOE and MSDFS to develop a definition for disability is not required as it will contravene the standard laid out by the United Nations Washington Group, and further any nationally developed definition cannot be associated with the CSO.

NSOs such as the CSO provide Official Statistics to national planners and policy makers so as to empower them to monitor the implementation of the respective socioeconomic public policies, to evaluate their impact and to generally make evidence led decisions. Official Statistics are described as such because they exhibit certain attributes, chief among which is that they accord with International Statistical Standards. Therefore it is critical for the CSO to adhere to these standards to ensure that the Institution as well as all national statistics produced are aligned with the international standard.

International Statistical Standards are typically prescribed by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC). Official Statistics that are collected, processed and disseminated in alignment with the requisite international standards tend to be accurate, internationally comparable and robust in their quality. Further, at the thirty-eighth Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM, the Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS) was endorsed. A central theme of the RSDS is the adherence to International Statistical Standards.

It is important to note that the CSO is required to adhere to these concepts and definitions so as to maintain international and regional relevance. Internationally comparable Official Statistics are necessary to attract Foreign Direct Investment and lower costs of international borrowing.

The CSO compiles data on the prevalence of certain types of disabilities among the population, the level of disability and the extent to which the disability affects the individual’s ability to function on a daily basis. Examples of data collected include data on **impairments** (problems at the level of organs and anatomical structures), data on **activity limitations** (limitations on the capacity of a person to act or behave in a desired manner, because of a health condition), and data

about **participation restrictions** (limitations in what a person does that result from an interaction between impairments or activity limitations and barriers created by the person's environment).

Short-term disabilities due to temporary conditions such as broken legs and illness are excluded. Only disabilities lasting for at least six months or expected to last for more than six (6) months are to be included.

