NATIONAL REPORT

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

AT THE

THIRD REGIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE ON AGEING IN COSTA RICA

MAY 8-11, 2012

Ministry of the People and Social Development

Division of Ageing

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CARICOM        Caribbean Community and Common Market
CBOs                  Community-Based Organizations
CDAP        Chronic Disease Assistance Programme
CEDAW        Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
EMTs                  Emergency Mobile Teams
FBOs                  Faith-Based Organizations
FITUN        Federation of Industrial Trade Unions and NGOs
GAD                  Gender Affairs Division
GAPP        Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme
HDI                  Human Development Index
MEG                   Micro Enterprise and Training Development Grant
MEL                  Micro Enterprise Loan Facility
MIPAA       Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing
MPSD          Ministry of the People and Social Development
NATUC       National Trade Union Council
NGOs                  Non-Governmental Organizations
NOP                   National Oncology Programme
OPIC                   Older Persons Information Centre
PIRC        People’s Issues Resolution Committee
PIRCU       People’s Issues Resolution Coordinating Unit
PRP                  Poverty Reduction Programme
RAPP        Retirees Adolescent Partnership Programme
RHAs                 Regional Health Authorities
RMPF        Regional Micro-Project Fund
SCP                   Senior Citizens Pension
SERVOL          Service Volunteered For All
TTARP        Trinidad and Tobago Association of Retired Persons
<table>
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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>TTRNA</td>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago Registered Nurses Association</td>
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<td>TCCTP</td>
<td>Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNECLAC</td>
<td>United Nations Economic Commission of Latin America and The Caribbean</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

The Trinidad and Tobago National Report gives a comprehensive account of the approaches adopted and activities carried out by the various stakeholders, relevant Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), focusing on their achievements in meeting the international commitments contained in the Brasilia Declaration. The report is compiled by the Ministry of the People and Social Development, Division of Ageing, taking into account submissions made by all Social Sector Ministries and NGOs. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is therefore concerned, like so many other developing and developed countries, about how it will prepare for a “society for all ages,” and how it will address the major issues agreed upon in the Second Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing in Latin America and the Caribbean (Brasilia Declaration).

The Division of Ageing, which was established in 2003, in the former Ministry of Social Development as an umbrella agency, to coordinate ageing initiatives and focus ageing issues in Trinidad and Tobago, is responsible, inter alia, for the coordination of the implementation of the National Ageing Policy. The objectives of the policy are:

- To create an enabling environment for meaningful participation of the elderly
- To ensure the provision of adequate community-based services for seniors
- To promote and preserve the dignity and independence of the elderly
- To encourage and promote education and public awareness on ageing issues
- To encourage and promote greater collaboration among stakeholders for ageing
- To facilitate, encourage and support research on ageing issues
- To promote greater access to more affordable healthcare for older persons
- To facilitate greater access to recreational facilities by older persons
- To improve the availability to housing that is affordable, safe and accessible to seniors
- To improve the availability of reliable, safe and accessible scheduled transportation to seniors
- To create disaster and emergency plans to treat older persons with equal importance during evacuation and recovery operations

The Division of Ageing has also embarked on designing and developing several programmes, projects and policies specifically geared for older persons. By collaborating with other relevant
Ministries, the private sector, NGOs, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), schools, the media, academicians and international agencies, the Division intends to implement these programmes, policies and projects, which form part of the Action Plan of the Policy on Ageing.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An evaluation of the actions aimed at older persons along the Legislative, Institutional, Programmatic and Administrative lines revealed significant progressive and linear improvements in the services and programmes for the elderly, which directly aligns itself to the human rights situation of the elderly. The systems in place which focus on ageing initiatives, have improved since 2007 offering coverage in the range of services available to the elderly.

An identification of best practices revealed that there are initiatives which qualify, some of which are: (i) an inaugural Senior Citizens Parliament; (ii) intergenerational discussions; (iii) Cataract Surgeries Reduction programme; (iv) Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme (GAPP); and (v) Retirees Adolescent Partnership Programme (RAPP). There has been an identification of key actions to be undertaken in order to strengthen the implementation of the Brasilia Declaration as it relates to rights of the elderly. Some of these actions include: advocacy; Older Persons Information Center (OPIC); a Reference Section; public education; a community caravan; media; the economy; Senior Citizens Bureau; Continuum of Health and Social Support Services for Older Persons; and Residential Long-term Care and Assisted Living Facilities.

Notwithstanding such a comprehensive social safety net, together with a non-contributory Pension Scheme, there needs to be greater income security for the elderly and revised fiscal policy for the cash transfers they receive in Trinidad and Tobago. Another key action is the upgrade of primary care and care giving programmes, which to date are inadequate, to ensure care is meted out to those older persons who need it. The Division of Ageing continues with its obligation to create conditions for the elderly to have access to resources and to enjoy their rights, through the creation of mechanisms which ensure that the ageing population faces no discrimination.
3. OVERALL PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE BRASILIA DECLARATION

REVIEWING AND EVALUATING PROGRESS FOR THE PERIOD 2007-2012
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

This section of the report gives the results of an inventory and evaluation of general actions aimed at older persons in the under mentioned format.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Lines of Work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislative</td>
<td>1. Constitutional reforms that explicitly incorporate the rights of older persons.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Develop specific rules for the protection of the rights of older persons.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Reform of the existing legislative bodies to increase the protection of the rights of older persons.</td>
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<td>4. Specific actions aimed at improving access to justice by older persons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>1. Regulation of Laws aimed at older persons.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Decrees or administrative rules to protect the rights of older persons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programmatic</td>
<td>1. Inclusion of older persons in national development plans, including plans for social development, social protection systems and strategies for poverty reduction.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Design of policies aimed at older persons or of national ageing plans.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Design and implementation of specific programmes for older persons in the areas of economic security, health or favorable environments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>1. Creating public institutions designed for older persons.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Strengthening of institutions aimed at older persons (through legislative changes, increase of public budget allocations for the issues of ageing, training of national teams, change of institutional dependence, among others).</td>
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The results of the evaluation of the abovementioned lines of work are contained in this report. The evaluation utilizes methods of output and outcome strategy, and verifications by parent Ministries of the effectiveness of programmes covered.

I. LEGISLATIVE

It is important that this current cycle of review and evaluation be considered in light of new guidelines on human rights issued, principally, by the different United Nations bodies. In the framework of human rights, States bear the primary responsibility for ensuring enforcement. Furthermore, as legitimate holders of rights, individuals and groups can lay claim to them and participate in the decision making processes which shape the programmes and policies relating to them. Thus the Division of Ageing is the primary advocate for human rights of the elderly in Trinidad and Tobago.

1.1 Constitutional Reforms that explicitly incorporate the rights of older persons

During the past five years there have been no constitutional reforms in Trinidad and Tobago that explicitly incorporate the rights of older persons. Under the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago the elderly are not specifically recognised as a group. However, they have the same protection as all other citizens, namely the rights to liberty, due process, protection of their property, protection of the law, together with all rights enshrined in the Constitution. The elderly do not have a specific legal right to healthcare. The availability of healthcare facilities depends on the policy of the government of the day. There is neither a law which prevents the elderly from obtaining legal services, nor is there a law which promotes the services. There is no special provision in the Legal Aid Act\(^1\) allowing free legal services for the elderly.

1.2 Development of specific rules for the protection of the rights of older persons

In 1962, Trinidad and Tobago became a member of the United Nations, thereby officially observing the Charter of the United Nations. Therefore, the twin-island State abides by the principles set forth in the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Trinidad and Tobago has also signed and ratified five other Human Rights Conventions: (i) International

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\(^1\) The purpose of the Act is to make Legal Aid and Advice in Trinidad and Tobago readily available to persons of small or moderate means and to enable the cost of Legal Aid or Advice granted to persons to be defrayed wholly or partly out of monies provided by Parliament.
Convention on Civil and Political Rights; (ii) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; (iii) International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination; (iv) Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; and (v) the Convention on Rights of the Child. Yet only the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) makes a veiled reference to social safety net provisions, which can be interpreted as a call for the provision of social pensions for elderly persons in the society.

The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, (CEDAW), which was signed on June 27, 1985 and ratified on January 12, 1990 addresses:

• Maintenance of homes for battered and abused women
• The eradication of violence against women
• Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women
• Gender equality and the empowerment of women
• Access to employment for women
• Access to education for women
• Ensuring maternal health

Trinidad and Tobago’s legislative agenda is in alignment with the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which ratifies the General Comment No. 19 of 2008 on the right to social security. This focuses on the normative content of the right while General Comment No. 20 of 2009 focuses on non-discrimination and economic, social and cultural rights.

Trinidad and Tobago has been a participant in the thematic study on the Realization of the Right to Health of Older Persons by the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health which focused on older persons, in accordance with resolution 15/22 of the Human Rights Council. The Division of Ageing has collaborated with the United Nations and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) on technical documents and briefs pertaining to ageing. One of the issues arising out of research is that there might be a lack of enforcement of the Rights of the Elderly.
1.3 Reform of the existing legislative bodies to increase protection of the rights of older persons

One of the priority areas of the National Policy on Ageing addresses *Legislation*, which generated the Homes for Older Persons Act No. 20 of 2007 to control, regulate and monitor Homes for the Aged and care facilities for older persons in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The Act introduced elder abuse as an offence which is punishable by a fine and imprisonment. The Homes for Older Persons Regulations, which outlined/defined, *inter alia*, the standards of care for Homes and care facilities for older persons, were assented to by Parliament in 2009. However, the legislation on Homes awaits proclamation while the requisite administrative structures are being developed. These include the establishment of an Inspectorate in the Division of Ageing, to provide oversight for the operations of Residential Homes for Older Persons. In the interim, Homes for the Aged are governed by the Ministry of Health’s Private Hospitals Act.

The Regional Health Authorities (RHA) Act of 1994 devolved control to five existing RHAs from the Ministry of Health. The RHAs are independent statutory authorities that are accountable to the Minister of Health and in turn to the Parliament. The geographic RHA territories coincide with those of local government bodies, which enhance efforts to effectively deliver to their constituents a range of health services and crucial social amenities. The Act also transferred ownership of publicly financed health facilities to the RHAs from the State. However, control still resides in the Ministries of Health and Planning and the Economy, which retain power of the purse and central responsibility for setting the national agenda and national priorities, and monitoring outcomes. To date, the following have been achieved:

- Passing of the RHAs Regulations
- The National Ambulance and Medical Personnel Bill is currently before the Senate
- The Tobacco Control Bill is to be reintroduced into Parliament
- The RHAs (Amendment) Act of 2008 to provide for collective procurement has been completed
- A White Paper on the Health Services Accreditation Bill has been forwarded to Cabinet
The Emergency Ambulance Act of 2008 ensures quality mobile pre-hospital healthcare, and that Emergency Mobile Teams (EMTs) are adequately trained to render emergency services as needed. The other provisions under this Act are: i) hospital-based healthcare; and ii) healthcare delivered in the community.

The Medical Board Amendment Act, which allows for the increase in the physician complement, ensures that an adequate number of doctors is catered for to improve the overall service. This Act has opened and improved primary healthcare and other facilities and wards, thereby allowing for an increase in the hours of service and the range of services offered by the public healthcare system.

The above mentioned pieces of legislation serve the elderly in the same way as any other citizen of the country. There have been no reforms of legislation targeting the elderly as a specific group, as mentioned earlier, but the elderly are incorporated.

1.4 Specific actions aimed at improving access to justice by older persons

There have not been many specific actions aimed at improving access to justice by older persons. However, the following agencies could assist the elderly, depending on their move to accessing speedier justice:

- Consumer Affairs Division
- Bureau of Standards
- Police Complaints Authority
- The Ombudsman
- Legal Aid (Ministry of Legal Affairs)
- Community Police

In Trinidad and Tobago the Division of Ageing which also acts as an advocate for the rights of the elderly through the Older Persons Information Center (OPIC), links the elderly person with an agency that would assist in providing justice. The OPIC and National Family Services Division of the Ministry of the People and Social Development provides assistance in this regard.
The Ministry of Justice has a mandate to reform the justice system in Trinidad and Tobago with a goal of improving what currently exists. It is believed that advancements made by this new Ministry would improve access to justice by older persons.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE

The proposed shift in the organizational structure of the Division of Ageing is carefully designed to effect actions directly protecting the rights of older persons, as shown in Fig. 1 below.

Fig. 1

PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE – DIVISION OF AGEING
2.1 Regulation of Laws aimed at older persons

The proposed organizational structure of the Division of Ageing incorporates an Inspectorate and a Facility Review Team, both arms of which would serve to enforce the Homes for Older Persons legislation. Research done by the Division of Ageing (OPIC, 2010)\(^2\) revealed that there is urgent need for the monitoring and regulation of Homes and care facilities for older persons in Trinidad and Tobago. The proposed administrative structure reaffirms the Division’s commitment to mainstream the issue of ageing in all spheres of public policy and social programmes, and to allocate and take steps to secure human, material and financial resources for achieving the appropriate monitoring and evaluation of the measures put into practice. The proposed administrative structure would also enable the Division of Ageing to better distinguish the needs of the rural and urban areas and recognize the intergenerational, gender, race, and ethnic perspectives in policies and programmes that need to be highlighted.

Administratively there have also been a number of proposed changes (as shown in Fig. 1) in an expansion of OPIC to include a social worker and social work supervisor. Also, a Public Education Unit was added and provision was made for the revamping of the Senior Citizens Bureau, which would serve as a placement agency and skills bank to link older persons to employment opportunities. It is believed that this proposed administrative structure would be effective in enabling the Division of Ageing to enforce the laws aimed at older persons.

2.2 Decrees or administrative rules to protect the rights of older persons

A proclamation by the Mayor of the City of Port of Spain on June 15, 2006 for the inaugural Observance of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day has served to highlight the importance of publicizing the issue. It also served to inform that Trinidad and Tobago’s seniors are valued members of society and it is the collective responsibility of the citizenry to ensure that the elderly live safely and with dignity. It was recognized that the abuse of older persons is a tragedy inflicted on vulnerable seniors, and is an ever-increasing concern in today’s society that penetrates all socio-economic boundaries. It was agreed that combating the abuse of older persons would help to improve the quality of life for all seniors throughout the country and allow them to continue to live as independent, important and active members of the society.

\(^2\) Older Persons Information Centre, Division of Ageing, Statistical Report 2010,
III. PROGRAMMATIC

3.1 Inclusion of older persons in national development plans, including plans for social development, social protection systems and strategies for poverty reduction

The National Plan of Action on Ageing is being formulated by the Division of Ageing in collaboration with the relevant Ministries of Health, Housing and the Environment; Works and Infrastructure; Transport; Planning and the Economy; Sport and Youth Affairs; Education; Community Development; Finance; Legal Affairs; Public Utilities; and the Traffic and Licensing Divisions. The Ministry of the People and Social Development, through the Division of Ageing, will highlight the needs of older persons to the policy makers and programme developers of the various Ministries, geared towards sensitizing them to the implementation of the National Ageing Policy.

A means-tested Senior Citizens Pension (SCP) is granted to persons aged 65 years and over by the Ministry of the People and Social Development to provide financial assistance. The quantum of the SCP increased to a minimum of US$ 500 per person per month. As at June 2011, a total of approximately US$ 33.3 million was disbursed under the SCP to 76,473 persons per month. The SCP is a system that seeks to ensure that no elderly person falls below the poverty line in Trinidad and Tobago.

A contributory National Insurance Retirement Benefit of US$ 333 per person per month is paid to retirees aged between 60-65 years. In addition, Grants are available through the Social Welfare Division for Disability, Public Assistance, Medical Equipment, Burial Assistance, Household items, Pharmaceuticals (not on the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme), and Food subsidy through the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP). Home repair grants are also available through the Ministries of the People and Social Development (US$ 1,667); Community Development (US$ 2,500); and Housing and the Environment (US$ 3,333).

Non-contributory pensions were increased in 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007 and 2010. This pension scheme has evolved to become the highest per capita in Latin America and the Caribbean region, and assures that no elderly person should be in hunger or poverty. In the Human Development Report (HDR) 2010, Trinidad and Tobago maintained its position in the category of
high human development with a rank of 59th and a Human Development Index (HDI) score of 0.736. The HDI provides a composite measure of life expectancy, education and standard of living that provides a prism for viewing human progress and the relationship between income and well being. It was statistically proven that the increases in the pension amounts were positively correlated to an increase in the HDI in Trinidad and Tobago.

As part of a National Poverty Reduction Programme, Social Welfare Grants to persons aged 60 years and over provide for: (i) free eye-glasses; (ii) free hearing aids; (iii) free transportation on buses; (iv) house repairs to the value of US$ 5,000; and (v) burial of a pensioner to the value of US$ 500. Additionally, the Socio-Economic Policy Frameworks of 2002-2004; 2005-2007; and 2008-2010 have included population ageing in their comprehensive poverty reduction strategies.

The Poverty Reduction Programme (PRP) supports the Government in formulating the National Poverty Reduction Strategy that is more responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable groups in society, which include the elderly. It serves as a forerunner to the implementation of a decentralized system for the delivery of social services to communities. The following are the initiatives of the National Poverty Reduction Programme which are mainstreamed to include elderly persons:

- Micro Enterprise (and Training Development) Grant (MEG) – this Grant seeks to assist necessitous persons who are capable and willing to undertake a micro business venture or skills training.

- Regional Micro-Project Fund (RMPF) – this Fund provides micro grants to CBOs and NGOs to carry out poverty reduction projects within their communities. These grants can also be used to fund joint projects between civil society organizations and government organizations.

- Micro Enterprise Loan Facility (MEL) – this Facility is a community empowerment and poverty reduction initiative which equips CBOs to engage in micro-credit to small entrepreneurs.

It is estimated that 20% of the elderly accessed the abovementioned facilities.
3.2 Design of policies aimed at older persons

3.2.1. National Policy on Ageing

The National Policy on Ageing (and Action Plan), which was developed by the former Ministry of Social Development, was approved by Cabinet in 2006 and launched in 2007. The Policy outlines (12) priority areas of action that are consistent with those identified in the United Nations Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) (2002). MIPAA, as so outlined in its Article 5, is consistent with other international human rights documents, and places emphasis on Older Persons and Development, Advancing Health and Well Being into Old Age, and Ensuring Enabling and Supportive Environments.

The twelve (12) priority areas the Policy addresses are:

i.) Social Security; ii.) Income Security and Employment; iii.) Participation, Involvement and Social Inclusion; iv.) Dignity and Respect for the Elderly; v.) Healthcare and Standards for hospitals and care facilities; vi.) Housing; vii.) Education and Training; viii.) Recreation; ix.) Legislation; x.) Transportation; xi.) Disaster Preparedness; and xii.) Research.

The Policy seeks to create an environment which would facilitate the meaningful participation and involvement of older persons in society. The information relating to the rights of older persons will be provided within the context of the twelve (12) priority areas of the National Policy on Ageing.

3.2.2. A Draft National Gender Policy is being finalized, which addresses the role of women as de facto caregivers of older persons, and health and economic issues affecting older women.

3.2.3 The National Policy on the Family is being formulated to address the elderly within the context of the family, since 95% of older persons reside in the community and between 3% -5% reside in institutions.
3.3 Design and Implementation of specific programmes for older persons in the areas of economic, security, health or favorable environments

3.3.1 Senior Activity Centres Programme

Given the projections for the growth of the aged population in Trinidad and Tobago, which is expected to reach 195,000 by the year 2020, the Senior Centres Programme was conceptualized as one component of the Continuum of Health and Social Support Services for Older Persons, which was approved by the Cabinet in September 2004. The Senior Centres Programme was subsequently awarded the Prime Minister’s Innovating for Service Excellence Award in 2006 in the category “Making a Difference to People - Social Inclusion.” The programme, which targets older persons aged 55 years and over who are in good health and physically active, is designed to provide the necessary physical, social, and mental stimulation and support mechanisms to enable older persons to optimize their later years.

The Centres are managed by NGOs and/or CBOs, with financial support from the Government. Presently there are eight (8) Senior Activity Centres in Trinidad and three (3) operating in Tobago. Each Centre is unique due to the cultural environment where the centre operates. It has been statistically proven that the activities offered significantly impact the physical and emotional wellbeing of the seniors who attend the Centres. There is still need to establish more Senior Activity Centres in other zones as the demand for the services increases with the growing numbers of early retirees. The variety of activities offered at the Centres include Aerobics, Yoga, Tai Chi, Home Gardening, Field Trips, Art & Craft, Computer Literacy (as shown below), Swimming, Dance and Reading/Adult Literacy.
Seniors Engaging in Yoga Exercise at the Chaguanas Centre
Fig. 2

Senior Centre Coverage by Regional Corporation (DOA)

- Port of Spain
- San Juan/ Laventille
- Tunapuna/Piarco
- Chaguanas
- Mayaro/Rio Claro
- Princes Town
- Pointe-a-Pierre
The Senior Activity Centre programme is established in seven electoral districts in Trinidad (as shown in Fig. 2) and two in Tobago.

3.3.2 Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (CDAP)

Universal access to free health services at the nation’s health clinics and hospitals, and selected drugs at no cost are guaranteed under the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (CDAP). Friday is designated Chronic Disease Treatment Day at the nation’s Health Centers.

CDAP which was established by the Ministry of Health provides citizens with free prescription drugs and other pharmaceutical items to combat the following health conditions, which adversely affect older persons in particular:

- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Cardiac Diseases
- Arthritis
- Glaucoma
- Mental Depression
- High Blood Pressure
- Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (Enlarged Prostate)
- Epilepsy
- Hypercholesterolemia
- Parkinson’s disease
- Thyroid diseases

3.3.3 Free Transportation

Older persons aged 60 years and over enjoy free bus rides; free Ferry trips to Tobago; and free trips on Water taxis during non-peak hours on one of the most modern and efficient transport systems in Latin America and the Caribbean.
3.3.4 Caregiving Services

Home caregiving services are provided through the Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme (GAPP), which falls under the purview of the Ministry of Community Development. The programme sensitizes young adults to the ageing process and trains them in practical skills in basic geriatric care. Graduates are utilized to provide caregiving services, which are means-tested through the GAPP initiative. Caregiving services can also be accessed from the Trinidad and Tobago Registered Nurses Association and the Women in Harmony Programme (Ministry of Gender Youth and Child Development).

3.3.5 Reduced annual water and electricity rates by the Ministry of Public Utilities

The Ministry of Public Utilities established a Public Assistance Programme for Older Persons, which granted them discounts on their annual water and electricity rates.

3.3.6 Public Education

- A Public Forum for Older Persons is held in four (4) different communities annually for seniors to communicate and share their issues and ideas with the government officials present. A Report on the frequently asked questions and stated concerns/recommendations together with Government’s actions/responses is used to guide future ageing initiatives.

- As mentioned earlier, the Senior Citizens Bureau Programme, which was established in 1996 in collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Retired Persons (TTARP), to serve as a skills bank and placement agency for retirees to secure jobs in the community, is currently being revised to allow for effective operation and management of the Bureau.

- Retirement Programme for Public Officers, where public officers of the Government are provided with the necessary information and psychosocial skills which would enable them to better transition into retirement.
• World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is commemorated annually on June 15 by the Division of Ageing, which over the years has hosted several sensitization programmes and published newspaper centerfolds, highlighting various forms of elder abuse and effective ways and agencies to treat with the issue.

• International Day of Older Persons is commemorated annually on October 1 by the Division of Ageing, which has hosted cultural and recreational/sporting events. In 2011, the occasion was marked with the first biennial Senior Citizens Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

• The Government is in the process of converting its manual administrative systems to technologically-driven ones, thus advancing easier access to and dissemination of information on healthy ageing at the national and community levels through a government website with links to all Ministries.

• The University of the West Indies in Trinidad introduced in August 2004 Social Gerontology as an elective course in its Social Work, Sociology, Psychology and Social Policy degree programmes.

• The Division of Ageing, in collaboration with the Government Information Services Limited directs much of its media broadcasts on promoting positive images of ageing, highlighting the cultural diversity of seniors, and any areas of competence among older persons in Trinidad and Tobago.

• The Older Persons Information Centre (OPIC) was established by the Division of Ageing in 2005 as a component of its Public Education on Ageing campaign, to serve as a referral facility for information on resources, services and products for older persons in Trinidad and Tobago. OPIC is accessible to the public through telephone, mail, facsimile, internet and walk-in visits. The functions of OPIC are as follows:
Provides information to inquiries about Homes for the Aged
Refers users to providers of medical equipment and services in Trinidad and Tobago
Facilitates access to caregivers
Offers information on legislation related to older persons, and supplies contact information for services related to older persons
Provides statistics and data on population ageing
Provides information on programmes, projects, activities for older persons and ageing issues
Refers cases of elder abuse to the relevant agencies

Research studies have shown that vulnerable groups in society are sometimes faced with negative social circumstances that can be alleviated, providing they are linked to the appropriate agency. The issue of a need for information has been highlighted each year in the Public Forum on Ageing and in requests made directly to OPIC, since it is believed that the effective storage and dissemination of information in an efficient manner could at times be appropriate support for older persons.

It is important to note that OPIC is a dynamic facility, the scope of which was broadened beyond the purview of just a referral agency to effect changes in the lives of older persons. During the period 2009 to 2011, OPIC recorded 600 referrals with positive outcomes.

3.3.7 Home Improvement Grant

The Home Improvement Grant Programme is provided by the Ministry of Housing and the Environment and is geared towards providing assistance for needy citizens whose houses were substandard, dilapidated, or in need of repair. A maximum of US$ 3,300 is available to eligible participants. It is reported that the programme is over-subscribed by the elderly with as much as 70% of applicants comprising of persons aged 60 years and over. For the period October 2010 to June 2011 a total of 688 housing subsidies were granted.
IV. INSTITUTIONAL

4.1 Creating public institutions aimed at older persons

The Ministry of Health awaits Cabinet’s approval for Residential Long-term Care facilities to be established in the North, Central and South-West Regional Health Authorities. The facilities are proposed to provide care for Level 4 patients (those with complex healthcare needs) in the community setting. The establishment of these facilities will have the dual effect of increasing the availability of acute bed space at hospitals and serving to alleviate problems of hospital overcrowding. Design briefs for these facilities are to be developed (Ministry of Health, 2010).

The Continuum of Health and Social Support Services for Older Persons, which was developed by the former Ministry of Social Development through the Division of Ageing, was approved by Cabinet in 2004, to provide a range of services on a phased basis for the least dependent to the most dependent older persons. One of the components of the Continuum is Assisted Living Facilities, where seniors are provided with the opportunity to live in a communal environment that enables independent living. These Facilities are best operated and managed by NGOs, which would be monitored by the Division of Ageing, which is also responsible for marketing the model among the private sector and returning migrants.

The promotion of primary healthcare is the Ministry of Health’s main strategy to deal with the proliferation of chronic disease in Trinidad and Tobago. Particular emphasis has been placed on wellness and health promotion to advocate healthier lifestyles and self-empowerment among citizens. The Health Promotion and Health Education Units in the Ministry conduct Wellness programmes in schools and community outreach programmes to promote healthy lifestyles. Also, the Ministry of the People and Social Development, through the Division of Ageing, conducts annual Public Fora for Older Persons to promote healthy and active ageing.

The Ministry of Health conducts a Memory Clinic at the Mt. Hope Medical Hospital to screen persons in general and older persons in particular, for memory loss. This service is free of charge, once the beneficiaries are referred to the Clinic by the public hospitals or health centres. Also, the Alzheimer’s Association of Trinidad and Tobago partnered with the Alzheimer’s Disease International (ADI) in 2008, to promote awareness of the disease and provide support to the caregivers of persons afflicted with the disease. Alzheimer’s month is commemorated
annually in September by the local Association. A research project is proposed by a team of (3) psychiatrists, through the Ministry of Health, to detect the prevalence rate among persons with dementia.

4. BEST PRACTICES IN HUMAN RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS

A. BACKGROUND

1. Country: Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
2. Issue: Social Security
3. Implementing institutions: Ministry of Community Development
4. Experience name: Inaugural Senior Citizens Parliament
5. Start year: 2011
6. Place of development: Division of Ageing, Trinidad

EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Retired members of the National Protective and Military Services (persons aged 45 years and over)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| General Objectives| i. To provide older persons with a forum to express their views and concerns relating to the governance of Trinidad and Tobago.  
ii. To influence legislation that could positively or negatively impact the lives of senior citizens. |
| Main Results      | **Main Achievements reached:** Sensitization and education relating to ageing issues, job security and social security.  
**Compliance of Objectives:** 60% met. Existing legislation for older persons is directed to those institutionalized who account for 3% of the elderly population. As a result omnibus legislation is required.  
**Coverage reached:** National audience achieved through live television and radio coverage, and event was taped for re-broadcast on television.  
**Participation and user satisfaction:** Participant and public feedback for the program was positive. The Division of Ageing experienced an increased volume of emails, calls and walk-in visits from individuals and groups who expressed their satisfaction with the quality of the program and hoped to participate in the future.  
**Specific impact of the exercise of rights:**  
i. Public educated about shortcomings in social security coverage for persons in the protective services.  
ii. Highlighted the need to re-vise the outdated age limits in the protective services that could be considered age discrimination.  
iii. The elderly activated to lobby for greater rights, participation and inclusion as evidenced by calls to the Division of Ageing through its Help Desk.  
iv. Commitment by the Ministry to continue to use the program to ascertain the concerns of the elderly to effectively address their needs.  
v. Facilitated the association of retired members of the protective services for the first time. |
### Description of Activities

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Etiquette training for the senior citizen parliamentarians.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Research on age-limits in the public service and the protective services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Training and mock Parliament sessions with Commonwealth Parliament staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv.</td>
<td>Interviews on weekday television talk shows and radio programs by participants to publicize the event and elderly concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>Advertising campaign in the daily newspapers and on radio.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Funding

Funding was provided through the Ministry’s Division of Ageing.

### Conclusions

**Noteworthy characteristics related to the innovation:** The Minister instructed that the program be held annually and observed in a manner commensurate with that of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament.

**Main Strengths:** Platform for older persons to take a central role in advocating for their rights.

**Aspects to improve:** More aggressive marketing campaign for members of the general public.

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The Inaugural Senior Citizens Parliament held in September 2011

![Image of the Inaugural Senior Citizens Parliament held in September 2011]
B. BACKGROUND

1. **Country:** Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
2. **Issue:** Education and Culture
3. **Implementing institution:** Ministry of the People and Social Development
4. **Experience name:** “Intergenerational Discussions: Engaging the Youth and the Elderly to Bring about Change”
5. **Start year:** 2011
6. **Place of development:** Division of Ageing, Trinidad

### EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Elderly persons (aged 60 yrs and over) and the secondary school youth (aged 13-19 yrs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **General Objective(s)** | i. To bridge the generation gap and enhance intergenerational solidarity  
ii. To sensitize youth on issues related to ageing  
iii. To inform and educate the society on issues related to ageing  
iv. To develop/rekindle the art of conversation between youth and seniors  
v. To nurture a society for all ages |
| **Main Results** | **Main achievements reached:** Sensitization and education on issues associated with population ageing.  
**Compliance of objectives:** 90%. More emphasis has to be placed creating avenues for the youth and the elderly to come together.  
**Coverage reached:** A national audience was reached as the program was broadcast and televised live and taped for re-broadcast on the television station with the highest viewership.  
**Participant and user satisfaction:** Participant and public feedback was gleaned from telephone calls and emails to the offices of the Division of Ageing which were all positive.  
**Specific impact of the exercise of rights:**  
i. Youth educated about population ageing and its impact on sustainable development.  
ii. The discussions encouraged communication and contact between different age groups.  
iii. Encourage mutual learning from both youth and elderly perspectives. |
| **Description of activities** | i. Selecting a topic that was important to both the elderly participants and the students selected to participate.  
ii. Choosing elderly participants notable for their contributions to public life in Trinidad and Tobago.  
iii. Finding an intimate setting to host the discussions. |
| **Funding** | Funding was provided through the Ministry of People and Social Development. |
| **Conclusions** | **Noteworthy characteristics related to the innovation:** Youths treated with a space to interact with notable members of the society to discuss issues of importance to them.  
**Main Strengths:** Youths and the elderly were able to bridge the generation gap by finding meanings in the actions of the respective cohort.  
**Aspects to improve:** Expand the live audience to include more school children and elderly civic groups to be a part of the participatory audience. |
C. BACKGROUND

1. Country: Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
2. Issue: Health
3. Implementing institution: Ministry of Health
4. Experience name: Cataract Surgeries Reduction Program
5. Start year: 2011
6. Place of development: Port of Spain and San Fernando, Trinidad

EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Elderly persons (aged 60 years and over) and other persons needing cataract surgery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| General Objective(s) | i. To reduce the number of patients on existing cataract surgery waiting list.  
ii. To increase the number of surgeries being performed to meet the demand for cataract surgery.  
iii. To complete 300 cataract surgeries before Jan 1. 2012. |
| Main Results | Main achievements reached: Elderly persons are able to access timely healthcare.  
Compliance of objectives: 100% (The surgery target of 300 was met).  
Coverage reached: All persons on the existing waiting list under the jurisdiction of the North West Regional Health Authority (NWRHA) and the Eastern Regional Health Authority (ERHA).  
Participant and user satisfaction: Persons on the list who had benefitted from the program expressed satisfaction that measures were taken to improve their access to timely healthcare.  
Specific impact of the exercise of rights:  
i. Timely and accessible healthcare for elderly patients.  
ii. Improved facilities and more doctors to serve visually impaired patients.  
iii. The introduction of a public program to benefit elderly patients. |
| Description of activities | Persons on the existing cataract surgery list at the health centers of the North West Regional Health Authority and the Eastern Regional Health Authority were shortlisted according to those who had the worst sight and no other existing medical conditions. This was to eliminate the need for persons to be warded. Knowledge and capacity building has been a key aspect of this program. The purchase of new operating equipment and refurbishment of eye theatres and clinics were done to complement cataract surgery and corneal transplant training provided through a technical agreement signed between the Ministry of Health and the United States. Support for this program was also given by the Ophthalmological Society of Trinidad and Tobago. |
| Funding | Funding was undertaken by the Ministry of Health. They were assisted in this venture by the Ophthalmological Society of Trinidad and Tobago which provided six doctors who worked free of charge. |
| Conclusions | Noteworthy characteristics related to the innovation: Program beneficial to both patients and young doctors who were the beneficiaries of foreign training in ophthalmological surgery.  
Main strengths: Ministry of Health utilized capacity building efforts between governments as well as civic associations to deliver specialized care to the elderly in a shorter timeframe.  
Aspects to improve: Expanding the program to include the other hospitals in the national health network. |
D. BACKGROUND

1. **Country:** Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
2. **Issue:** Education and Health
3. **Implementing institution:** Ministry of Community Development
4. **Experience name:** Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme (G.A.P.P.)
5. **Start year:** 2010
6. **Place(s) of development:** Mayaro, St. Madeline, Barrackpore, St. Joseph, Chaguanas

EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Elderly persons aged 60 years and over and persons aged 17-30 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| General Objective(s) | i. Bridge the gap between young persons and the elderly.  
                                  ii. Develop caring skills in young people.  
                                  iii. Enable trainees to discuss the psychological and physiological changes in the ageing process.  
                                  iv. Identify the needs of the elderly and demonstrate the expertise in monitoring their common disorders. |
| Main Results | **Main achievements:** Elderly persons have been able to access standardized care-giving services while young adults have been trained in geriatric care. 300 persons trained at Level I and 109 persons trained at Level II.  
                                  **Compliance of objectives:** 100%. All persons in the program have been educated on the myriad needs of the infirm elderly and how best to care for them.  
                                  **Coverage reached:** National scope  
                                  **Participant and user satisfaction:** Research conducted by the Planning and Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Community Development in 2011 has shown that users have found the service reliable and cost effective and that participants have gained marketable skills.  
                                  **Specific impact of the exercise of rights:**  
                                  i. Specialized care services for the elderly.  
                                  ii. Expansion of jobs and education in the geriatric field beneficial to the elderly.  
                                  iii. Increased interaction between the age groups. |
| Description of activities | Persons meeting the age requirements apply to the two-part program and submit to the 14week program known as Level I.  
                                  Level I consists of basic elder care theory and practical training and field visits.  
                                  **Level II** is optional and also lasts for 14weeks-however only if participants complete this level which involves more training in Occupational Therapy, Drug Administration, Alzheimer’s Treatment and Caregiver readiness to qualify as caregivers before they are placed to serve necessitous elders. A minimum of 300 persons are trained yearly (that is, 60 persons at 5 centers throughout the country). However if more centers are available more persons will benefit from training. |
| Funding | The GAPP is a Unit within the Ministry of Community Development and receives its funding from their budget allocations. |
| Conclusions | **Noteworthy characteristics related to the innovation:** Provided training and access to jobs for the youth while providing a much needed service for elderly caregivers.  
                                  **Main strengths:** Elderly citizens are able to access trained caregivers for little to no cost.  
                                  **Aspects to improve:**  
                                  i. Program has to be further expanded to improve service delivery to the elderly nationwide as }
there is still a shortage of elderly caregivers.
ii. System for allocating stipends needs to be revised to ensure that stipends are delivered on time.

### E. BACKGROUND

1. **Country:** Republic of Trinidad and Tobago  
2. **Issue:** Education and Culture  
3. **Implementing institution:** Ministry of Community Development  
4. **Experience name:** Retired Adolescent Partnership Program (R.A.P.P.)  
5. **Start year:** 2010  
6. **Place(s) of development:** Couva, Valencia, La Horquetta, Belmont, Laventille

### EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Target population</strong></th>
<th>Retirees and young persons between the ages of 12-16 in difficult circumstances identified by schools, community groups and community.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **General Objective(s)** | i. To provide assistance and supervision at the community level to young ‘at risk’ persons.  
ii. To provide a platform geared towards improving esteem, social and learning skills.  
iii. To provide common ground for purposeful and productive living.  
iv. To provide retired experts with an opportunity to partner with youth. |
| **Main Results** | **Main achievements:**  
i. Eighty-one percent (81%) of the participants exhibited improvement in behaviour and attitudes towards school work and to members of their communities.  
ii. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of participants displayed enthusiasm, creativity and initiative.  
iii. Eighty-nine percent (89%) fostered good and positive relationships with the retirees.  
**Compliance of objectives:** 100%.  
**Coverage reached:** 312 participants from the participating districts.  
**Participant and user satisfaction:** Evaluation of the program done by the Planning and Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Community Development noted that both participants and users were satisfied with the program and thought it a success.  
**Specific impact of the exercise of rights:**  
i. Increased communication between the age cohorts.  
ii. Increased elderly participation in the community.  
iii. Transference of knowledge and values from the elders to the young. |
| **Description of activities** | i. Secondary schools identify ‘at-risk’ students for specialized attention in the areas of academics and social skills.  
ii. Retirees are identified by their expertise and dispatched to youths with whom they would partner.  
iii. Classes or one-on-one sessions are conducted at community centers or selected secondary schools. |
Funding
Funding for this program was provided through the Ministry of Community Development

Conclusions
Noteworthy characteristics related to the innovation: A duality of learning was achieved as academic skills were taught in conjunction with social skills.
Main strengths: Creation of a community-serving bond as the youth and the elderly established a network of communication that has transcended tutoring and evolved into mentoring.
Aspects to improve: Measures need to be taken to increase community-based recommendations which lag behind those coming from the school system.

5. KEY STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BRASILIA DECLARATION

➢ INTRODUCTION
Trinidad and Tobago is confronted with the challenges of population ageing, which requires the expansion of a more enabling environment through the adoption of specific measures and programs to protect the rights of older persons. The frameworks of the Brasilia Declaration and its predecessor the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing highlight the existence of areas that require international standards and measures more specific than those currently in place at a national level. The Division of Ageing serves as the main umbrella body coordinating ageing initiatives and ageing issues in Trinidad and Tobago since its establishment in 2003. It has strategized that to improve the quality of life of elderly persons in the society, popular attitudes that are the basis for the prevalence of negative stereotypes, abuse, exclusion and discrimination of the elderly would have to be addressed. New and innovative organizational structures would also have to be created within the Division [of Ageing] to promote healthy and active ageing among the older persons in particular, and the society in general.

➢ ADVOCACY
Pursuant to its establishment, the Division of Ageing has embarked on advocacy campaigns/programmes that have included the elderly, the youth, young professionals and persons who are preparing to retire. One such programme, the annual Public Forum for Older Persons was launched in 2006, and to date has been conducted in thirty (30) different communities in Trinidad and Tobago. Seniors are able to interface and share their views with
representatives from various agencies and government Ministries. The Forum is also used to educate persons on issues relating to their health, social security, legal rights and responsibilities. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the Fora have been oversubscribed and have met with much success and support from the elderly community. Live coverage of key aspects of the Forum was broadcast on popular radio stations.

Another programme, the Retirement Programme for Public Officers, which was introduced in 2008 to provide public officers with the necessary information to transition into retirement in sound health with financial stability and security, was also successful as evidenced by the evaluation of the participants. There are plans to involve other Ministries and the private sector companies to administer similar programmes with their staff members.

Pilot projects such as the Senior Citizens Parliament and Intergenerational Discussions which were launched in 2011 by the Division of Ageing help to promote positive imaging of ageing and elderly persons. Based on public feedback, both initiatives were sanctioned by the Ministry to be made annual programmes with effect from 2013. Additionally, the Division embarked on the annual commemoration of international days of observance such as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15th and International Day of Older Persons on October 1st since 2006 and 2003 respectively.

In pursuing its mission of public advocacy, the Division of Ageing continues to explore new and innovative approaches to promote ageing issues. As noted in the introductory paragraph, the Division is continually guided by the existing international frameworks and the demand to keep programmes citizen-focused and responsive to the dynamism of the demographic transition. Among the proposed changes within the Division are the redesign of some units, the creation of others, and greater opportunities for certain skills sets to be recruited. The addition of a Public Education Unit is envisaged to focus on expanding the Division’s reach with the public through the media, formalized educational initiatives, and the re-engineering of existing programmes.

➤ OPIC

The Older Persons Information Center (OPIC) serves as a referral facility to provide information on products, services and resources for older persons in Trinidad and Tobago. The Center is a programme of the Division of Ageing and acknowledges/responds to requests from the public through mail, telephone, facsimile and walk-in visits, on situations affecting older persons. OPIC
was established in 2005 as a Help Desk for older persons. However, it has evolved into an entity that also deals with welfare and social work cases. In some instances, officers facilitate visits to private and public Homes for the Aged by social workers where there are cases of abuse and neglect. Specific cases also benefit from follow-ups in the form of visits and calls to other government offices, businesses and private institutions. It is proposed that during fiscal year 2013, the services of OPIC should be enhanced with additional staff, more telephone lines, increased Information Technology capabilities, a trained social worker, a social work supervisor and two part-time retiree volunteers who would receive stipends. These changes have been recommended as a result of an evaluative report done in 2010 by the Division of Ageing, and OPIC will continue to be monitored on a consistent basis to improve its performance with the proposed changes.

➤ REFERENCE SECTION

A reference section of literature, DVDs and CDs on ageing issues and older persons is also proposed in the new range of services to be offered by OPIC. The need for this is shown in the increasing requests for information on Trinidad and Tobago’s ageing from international bodies such as UNECLAC, HelpAge International, private citizens, local ‘think-tanks,’ other State agencies, Divisions within the Ministry, and from tertiary-level students at local and foreign universities. At present, the requests are actioned by providing pamphlets, DVDs, newspaper clippings and in-house research. The proposed Reference Section is intended to boost the existing collection of books, journals and periodicals on ageing and related topics with an electronically-based newspaper archives, more contemporary literature on ageing and related concepts, a wider cross-section of internationally renowned journals and publications, and local public lecture series in DVD format.

➤ PUBLIC EDUCATION

As previously stated, the existing environment should be modified to accommodate the changing needs of the elderly population. One aspect of change must be specialized businesses, services and professionals to serve the elderly. To remedy this, the Brasilia Declaration calls for the creation of degree programs in Gerontology and Geriatric Care at baccalaureate and master’s level study at the local universities. The Division of Ageing recognizes that there is a dearth in professional and semi-professional courses associated with social gerontology and management of geriatric care services. At present there is one gerontology 3-credit course, which is offered at
one of the nation’s pre-eminent tertiary institutions. It must be noted however that this course is not a full course of study, but serves as an elective for other degree programs such as Sociology, Social Work, Social Policy, and Psychology. There is significant evidence to attest that when it comes to the provision of gerontological/geriatric services, demand exceeds supply. Also, there seems to be structural lag at a programmatic level in educational options to serve emergent non-traditional policy issues. The market is therefore in need of diversification, especially since the ‘new’ elderly who are more vocal and expressive are demanding better standards of treatment and healthcare. The Division of Ageing proposes to strategically lobby stakeholders such as the Ministries of Education, and Science Technology and Tertiary Education, the University of the Southern Caribbean and The University of the West Indies for more courses and degree programs that would directly benefit and enhance the quality of life of the nation’s senior citizens who are in need of primary and secondary care.

➢ COMMUNITY CARAVAN

The Division of Ageing is keenly aware that a significant percentage of its most attentive public is located in rural and remote areas, and is often constrained by mobility due to irregular transport, financial and physical constraints. The Division is not decentralized and is therefore stymied in offering satellite services through offices in various parts of the country and Tobago. So to remedy this shortcoming, the Division proposes through its recommended Public Education Unit, to establish a ‘Community Caravan.’ The Caravan would take the services of the Division out to rural communities via a mobile unit. A feasibility study with officials of the Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC) has shown an interest by the Ministry of Transport in collaborating with the Division of Ageing to facilitate one of its projects. At present, the Corporation plans to relieve some of its fleet, and the Division proposes to convert one of the buses to house the mobile unit.

➢ MEDIA

The local telecommunication market has expanded exponentially with the addition of new radio and television stations since the Division was established. Some of the stations broadcast higher volumes of local content, and the Division of Ageing proposes to utilize this medium more than it did in the past. The Government Information Services Limited (GISL) is entrusted to publicize issues of national importance, and as such, the Division proposes to explore a closer collaboration with the agency to showcase more of its programmes to a national audience. The
same strategy could be used with other print, radio and television media in conjunction with the Communications and Education Unit of the Ministry of the People and Social Development, through which all public interface of the Ministry is done.

In achieving the aforementioned initiatives to improve the level of advocacy for older persons in Trinidad and Tobago, it is also proposed that the Division develops strategic partnerships with stakeholders such as the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Retired Persons (TTARP) which is comprised of approximately 29,000 members, and the various retirees associations, NGOs, CBOs and FBOs.

➢ ECONOMY

Strategic planning of the Division of Ageing must take into account the present and future states of the economy. As previously stated in this report, Trinidad and Tobago’s economy is based on the revenues of oil and natural gas production and exports. Historically, the economy has waxed and waned according to its market value, which is derived from a mono-crop system, of which oil and natural gas earnings account for approximately forty percent (40%) of the nation’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The “graying” of the population will also exacerbate the level of expenditure needed to offset income and social security costs, since the rapid growth of the nation’s older adult population will have a significant impact on the social welfare system and other fiscal spending. Since 2001, the country’s non-contributory public assistance pension was increased six times. The initiative of the government must be noted as Trinidad and Tobago’s public assistance pension has evolved to become the highest per capita in Latin America and the Caribbean region. The government is also the largest employer and is therefore obligated to pay non-contributory pensions to all the public sector workers who are retiring. In 2002, it was projected by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that the impact of non-contributory pension payments by the government to retiring public officers between the years 2012-2015 is expected to consume 4% to 8% of the country’s annual GDP.

The Ryder-Scott Report, which was commissioned by the government, noted that the oil and natural gas reserves are severely depleted, and in 2010 proved gas reserves fell for a fourth consecutive year. Alternative technologies such as corn-based ethanol and hybrid engines that use hydro-electric technology, have been gaining market share due to increased investment as countries such as the United States (which is Trinidad and Tobago’s largest importer of natural gas) aim to reduce their dependency on oil and natural gas sourced from the Middle East and
elsewhere. The effect on the GDP is twofold: namely since 2006, members of the ‘baby-boomer’
generation have been retiring (at early and normal retirement age) and will continue to do so
until 2030. Also, those members of the baby-boomer generation who are retiring from large
sectors of the labor-force will generate a significant loss in institutional memory. Recent data
from the country’s Central Statistical Office have indicated that persons over the age of sixty
(60) years are the fastest growing cohort. It is therefore important to harness the energy and
experience of this group of citizens in such a way that would facilitate sustainable development.

➢ SENIOR CITIZENS BUREAU

The Division of Ageing proposes to revise and upgrade the Senior Citizens Bureau. In
accordance with one of the priority areas of action of the National Policy on Ageing,
“Participation, Involvement and Social Inclusion,” the Division aims to promote the well-being
of older persons in a sustainable manner, by providing them with opportunities to be integrated
into mainstream society. At present, the elderly could be considered an untapped human capital
resource. As part of its mandate to encourage participation, involvement and social inclusion of
elderly persons in the society, the Division proposes to treat with all aspects of elderly
employment, such as continuing education and training, income security, ageism in the
workplace, redundancy and volunteerism. It is envisaged that a modernized Senior Citizens
Bureau, which would comprise a ‘Skills Bank’ and a Placement Agency, would utilize the
talents, skills and expertise of older persons for their continued personal growth and the benefit
of their communities and the nation by extension.

In order to facilitate the operations of the Skills Bank, it is proposed that a website/online
database be established to allow interested elderly persons, volunteer groups and companies to
register. In addition, the database would allow persons to be placed in categories according to
their interests, skills and expertise. Companies and interest groups would also be encouraged to
register and advertise vacancies. The Division proposes to invite selected NGOs such as TTARP
to manage the Skills Bank. A new feature of the program would be facilitating access to the rest
of the Caribbean region. As of 2009, the Caribbean Community Free Movement of Persons Act
allows foreign nationals to work in different territories in the Caribbean without work permits.
The Division of Ageing will work towards spreading the movement of elderly workers
throughout the Caribbean, to improve the quality of life of the elderly not only in Trinidad and
Tobago, but also in the other CARICOM territories. The success of this program will also be
dependent on attitudes within the workplace, as elements of ageism (that is, discrimination of the elderly) are practiced by some employers. As such, it would be beneficial to sensitize and engage other stakeholders such as the National Trade Union Center (NATUC), the Federation of Industrial Trade Unions and NGOs (FITUN), the National Training Agency (NTA) and the Ministry of Labour in focus groups and workshops geared to improve employee/employer relations.

A return to the labour market would suit some older persons however there are others who would prefer a variety of ways to spend their retirement time. The ageing process does not occur in a homogenous fashion, and older persons age with varying degrees of emotional, physical and psychological needs. Therefore, as the population of elderly persons increases, specific attention must be paid to the strength of support networks. Various research studies have shown that elderly persons fare better when they have regular contact with other persons and are in vibrant environments that stave off the effects of loneliness, which is correlated to depression in old age.

➢ CONTINUUM OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

The Continuum of Health and Social Support Services for Older Persons was approved by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in 2004 to provide a range of services for the elderly. One of the components is the Senior Activity Centers Programme, which received the Prime Minister’s Innovative for Service Excellence Award in 2006, for its role in improving the lives of the elderly. At present, there are eight (8) Centers operating in Trinidad and three (3) in Tobago. Another component, the Adult Daycare Services Programme, is proposed to be established in 2013. Other components, which have to be developed and implemented on a phased basis, include the Meals-on-Wheels Programme, Transport Escort (similar to Dial-a-Ride), Companion Care, and Assisted Living Facilities.

Recent trends have shown that there will be a greater need for support services for the elderly in the near future, especially since the “oldest old” cohort (that is, persons aged 85 years and over) is the fastest growing and tend to be more infirm. Similar to other developing countries, Trinidad and Tobago’s potential support ratio is diminishing. Due to low birth rates, migration and more women in the workplace, informal support networks that have historically been the de facto support system for the elderly have diminished. Unlike States with developed nation status, where there is a proliferation of state and private agencies to support the elderly, the familial care networks have been (and continue to be) the main source of support for seniors in Trinidad and
Tobago. According to UN World Population Ageing 2009, Trinidad and Tobago’s Parent Support Ratio will increase to 19.3 persons (85 yrs+) per every one hundred persons (50-64yrs). The current ratio is 4.8. The increase in the Parent Support Ratio suggests that more has to be done to boost elderly independence.

➤ RESIDENTIAL LONG TERM CARE AND ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES

The Division of Ageing proposes to establish a model of an Assisted Living Facility, which would allow older persons to retain their autonomy while living in a communal setting that supports independence and dignity. The Facility would provide persons with access to medical care and general assistance services if they are needed. Persons would be outfitted with their own rooms or living space and central dining spaces and communal areas for interaction. Other services such as a mini-mart and laundry services would also be available. It is hoped that these communities would also serve returning migrants who would prefer to return to their homeland after living abroad for many years. Residential Long Term Care Facilities would provide institutional support to the declining social support systems in the country and treat with the fallout from the Ministry of Health’s proposed deinstitutionalization of long-term care patients.

The programmes would also be linked to developing land use policies which would increase the universal accessibility of public spaces for the elderly and by extension all vulnerable groups. Three (3) Assisted Living Facilities are proposed for introduction between 2015 and 2017 in the North, Central and South of Trinidad. The Division of Ageing strategizes that these facilities are best operated and managed by NGOs, and proposes to strengthen existing arrangements with NGOs, CBOs and FBOs in helping the projects come to fruition. Some of these civic associations invite the Division of Ageing to address their boards and membership at seminars, workshops, retiree functions, and private meetings which can serve as a gateway for the Division of Ageing to promote the involvement of these groups in making a more sustained impact in communities.

Monitoring and evaluation is an important aspect of any project to ascertain its viability and if it is meeting its intended targets. The proposed administrative structure of the Division of Ageing would establish an Inspectorate which will include a Facility Review Team, to enforce the Homes for Older Persons legislation. In addition to making elderly abuse punishable by law, the Act will control, regulate and monitor elder care facilities. The Inspectorate will undertake a range of safety and health functions at Homes and care facilities for older persons. These would
include reviewing operational procedures, investigating complaints, reviewing reports, providing advice and support to stakeholders and ensuring compliance with Regulations specific to the Act and internationally respected standards of care.

The Division of Ageing hopes that these initiatives will contribute to the achievement of the objectives as set forth in the Brasilia Declaration.

6. FORMALITIES

Coming out of the evaluation it can be seen that the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has invested in initiatives that would positively impact an ageing population. Many of these initiatives can be replicated and serve as models for other countries. There is a focus both on the economic and social needs of the ageing population. The Division of Ageing will continue with its obligation to create conditions for holders of rights to have access and enjoy their rights, through the creation of mechanisms such as accountability, active, free and meaningful participation by the elderly, in an enabling and supportive environment.