



THE JOURNAL OF CARIBBEAN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES AND RENEWABLE ENERGY presents

# the OPEN ISSUE

## 2020

July, Volume 3: Issue 1

[doi.org/10.33277/cesare/003.001](https://doi.org/10.33277/cesare/003.001)

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THE OPEN ISSUE **2020**  
Volume 3, Issue 1

Online Resource: [www.cesarejournal.org/publications-v3i1](http://www.cesarejournal.org/publications-v3i1)

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Journal of Caribbean Environmental  
Sciences and Renewable Energy

# The Regional Disability Index and Strengthening Resilience of Persons with Disabilities in the Anglophone Caribbean

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The Journal of Caribbean Environmental Sciences and Renewable Energy  
Vol. 3, Issue 1, 2020 [doi.org/10.33277/cesare/003.001/04](https://doi.org/10.33277/cesare/003.001/04)

## ABSTRACT

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In 2019, the University of the West Indies Centre for Disability Studies (UWICDS) released the results of the first Regional Disability Index (RDI). The RDI was developed with the primary aim to track and rank countries within the Caribbean in terms of their efforts to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and by extension, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The RDI used a quantitative methodological framework employing a survey among government and non-governmental organizations catering to persons with disabilities in the Anglophone Caribbean to capture the data. In this paper, this researcher conducts an assessment of the major findings of the RDI in the context of building resilience among persons with disabilities in certain fundamental areas of Caribbean life. Findings relating to legislative protection, education, employment, public transportation, health care, and access to information are highlighted. The RDI, among other things, revealed that St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the top country in the Anglophone Caribbean in terms of their efforts to implement programmes and policies for persons with disabilities. We compare and contrast the findings regionally to that which is taking place in the global landscape for persons with disabilities.

**Keywords:** persons with disabilities, Regional Disability Index, Resilience, Anglophone Caribbean

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Persons with disabilities are among the most vulnerable in any society [34]. Their vulnerability exposes them to diverse risk such as those being attributed to climate change across the world [28]. Efforts must be made to strengthen the resilience of these vulnerable individuals, thus bolstering their capacity to withstand the rigors of climate change.

Countries across the world have recognized these challenges impacting persons with disabilities and have put in place mechanisms to deal with them. In 2006, States Parties through the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [30]. This is a legally binding global instrument to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. In 2015, countries also agreed to the Sustainable Development Goals at the United Nations [29]. All of these instruments have expressed provisions for persons with disabilities to be brought in the mainstream of society, thus bulwarking their capacity to deal with challenges such as climate change.

Countries within the Anglophone Caribbean have signed and ratified these global treaties. They, therefore, are obliged to implement the provisions contained within these legally binding international instruments. For example, countries that have signed and ratified the CRPD in the Anglophone Caribbean must put in place legislation to protect the rights and dignity of members of this vulnerable community.



Recognizing the existential threats to persons with disabilities in the Anglophone Caribbean, the University of the West Indies Centre for Disability Studies (UWICDS) established a Regional Disability Index to track and rank countries within the region in accordance to their effort to implement programmes and policies for persons with disabilities. The following constitute the aim and objectives of the RDI from the perspective of the UWICDS:

The main aim of this project is to establish a special measurement index to track and rank countries that have signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities from the Caribbean in accordance with the progress they have made to improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities. The aim is supported by the following objectives:

1. To develop a regional measurement instrument that will be able to track the progress made by countries on improving the quality of life for persons with disabilities residing in the Caribbean.
2. To use the UWI Centre for Disability Studies office as the hub for coordinating and implementing the measurement index.
3. To ensure that State Parties that have signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities within the Caribbean are making meaningful progress in improving the quality of life for persons with disabilities.
4. To use the various articles of the CRPD to develop a model questionnaire for testing the progress made by countries within the region

5. To publish the findings in a biennial publication and use it as a means of encouraging countries to implement programmes and policies for persons with disabilities [32].

The research has conducted a qualitative assessment of the findings of the RDI in the context of strengthening the resilience of persons with disabilities, with particular focus on legislative protection, education, employment, awareness-raising and access to information. Cumulatively, these factors have the potential of reinforcing the potential of persons with disabilities and capacitating them to withstand the vagaries of climate change. This researcher benchmark these results with that of what is taking place internationally to push the global disability agenda.

## 2.0 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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In conducting this qualitative assessment of the results from the RDI, three theoretical frameworks are interrogated.

1. **Social constructionism Theory** - Social constructionism concerns the meaning, notion or connotation placed on an object or event by society and adopted by the members of that society based on how they relate or deal with the object or event [15]. People tend to formulate meaning based on their social construct and relate to things/individuals based on their lived reality.

Social constructionism has its origins in symbolic interactionism and phenomenology. It gained its foothold in academia through a publication from



Berger and Luckmann entitled “The Social Construction of Reality” in 1966. In this book, Berger and Luckmann postulated that society is created by humans and human interaction, which they treat as habitualization. Habitualization is the process by which any frequently repeated action becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be performed again in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort [4]. Berger and Luckmann further opined that not only do we build our society but we accept it as it is because previous generations had created it. Society, therefore, according to Berger and Luckman is a habit [4]. The work of Berger and Luckmann was critical to the paradigmatic shift that took place in the disability landscape and this contributed to the social model of disability [21].

The social perspective of disability posited the view that it was social factors that contributed to the disability that individuals experienced [21]. Scholars such as McGinley and Cooper have made this view pellucidly. They have stated: “society creates [identity] categories and imbues them with meanings, which often change across place and time”; society makes people’s attributes into materially consequential “disabilities” by labelling them as such [14]. In this paper, for the resilience of persons with disabilities to be strengthened, there have to be some fundamental changes in Caribbean societies. There are plethora of barriers that have been created in Caribbean societies by non-disabled individuals that restrict persons with disabilities in maximizing their full potential and these have to be eradicated if the resilience of members of this vulnerable community is to be strengthened.

2. **Resilience Theory** - The concept of resilience refers to an innate quality of hardiness, including the capacity to recover from difficulties over time. From the natural science perspective, it is the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape [24]. From a social science panorama, Unger (2008) postulates that resilience is a theory that can inform action. It is a concept that changes our focus from the breakdown and disorder attributed to exposure to stressful environments, to the individual characteristics and social processes associated with either normal or unexpectedly positive psychosocial development [26]. Persons with disabilities are human beings and therefore have the capacity to overcome challenges. They can spring back from whatsoever adversities that confront them. What is required is for the barriers created in society to be removed and with the appropriate support, such as the use of modern technologies, they will be able to maximize their full potential and live productive lives.
3. **Human Rights Theory** - This is a theory that postulates the view that all human beings are endowed with certain fundamental human rights and these rights must be protected [31]. These rights include but are not limited to: the right to life, the right to education; the right to work, and the right to information. All of these rights have been reaffirmed in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [30].



If these rights are enforced, the resilience of persons with disabilities will be strengthened and therefore be able to deal with the diverse challenges of life.

This researcher thus conflates these theories to capture the quintessence of the argument being adumbrated from the findings of the RDI. Countries within the Anglophone Caribbean came out of a particular social construct and this determined the way persons with disabilities are perceived and treated [12]. Individuals within the society fail to understand the bodily functions in that, if one loses a particular sense, the individual can function in society with the requisite support. Human beings by nature are naturally resilient (resilience theory) and are therefore able to spring back from the loss of any body part. Persons with disabilities are human beings and irrespective of losing any body part must be allowed to exercise their rights in society on an equal basis with others [30].

To buttress the resilience of persons with disabilities, various global treaties have been formulated. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are two such instruments. If the provisions of the CRPD and the goals of the SDGs are efficaciously implemented and attained, the quality of life of persons with disabilities will be significantly improved. It is within this context that the UWICDS established the RDI to track and rank the progress of countries within the Caribbean to assess their efforts to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities.

## The Methodological Framework for the RDI

1. In order to develop the regional index, a systematically designed methodology was prepared by the UWICDS. This was done to ensure the capturing of credible data. Consequently, the main instrument for collecting data was a questionnaire.
2. In developing the questionnaire, the distinctive articles as spelt out in the UN CRPD; was used to format the questions. The questions were coded and the answers were given a score. The scores were tallied to determine the ranking.
3. There was a pre-testing of the questionnaire in one of the Anglophone Caribbean countries.
4. Two (2) sets of institutions were targeted in each country: A government institution with responsibility for persons with disabilities and the other being a non-governmental institution with independence from the governmental structure. The scores from both of these institutions were added and the average used as the final figure to give the ranking on the index for each country. In some instances, only one response came from particular countries and this has impacted the final score since the average from each country was used to determine the ranking.
5. In collating and analysing the data, consideration was given to the general principles expressed in the CRPD. These included: Legislation, Discrimination, Gender Discrimination, Child Discrimination & Justice, Awareness, Accessibility, and Access to Information, Justice, Education, Health, Employment, Social Protection, Political Participation,



Data Collection, International Cooperation and Monitoring. These are the categories that capture the essential elements of the CRPD.

6. An arithmetic operation was done to create an ordinal performance strength scale which is represented by Excellent (192-225), Very Good (154-191), Good (116-153), Average (78-115) Poor (39-77) and Very Poor (0-38).

The table below shows the ranking based on the average score that each country gained with effort. The highest possible score on the completion of the list of questions was 225. An arithmetic operation was done to create an ordinal performance strength scale which is represented by Excellent (192-225), Very Good (154-191), Good (116-153), Average (78-115) Poor (39-77) and Very Poor (0-38).

### 3.0 FINDINGS

The following constitutes a snapshot of some of the findings of the survey conducted among countries in the Anglophone Caribbean. Ten countries responded to the questionnaire and these are: Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Montserrat

**Table 1:** *Regional Inclusiveness Ranking Standings, and Ratification*

Countries	Average Score	Regional Inclusive Ranking	Standings	UNCRPD
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	134.5	1	Good	Not ratified
Jamaica	124.5	2	Good	Ratified
Barbados	113	3	Average	Ratified
Guyana	104	4	Average	Ratified
St. Lucia	104	4	Average	Not Ratified
Grenada	104	4	Poor	Ratified
Montserrat	104	4	Very Poor	Ratified
Dominica	104	4	Very Poor	Not Ratified
Trinidad and Tobago	18	9	Very Poor	Not Ratified
St. Kitts and Nevis	17	10	Very Poor	Ratified

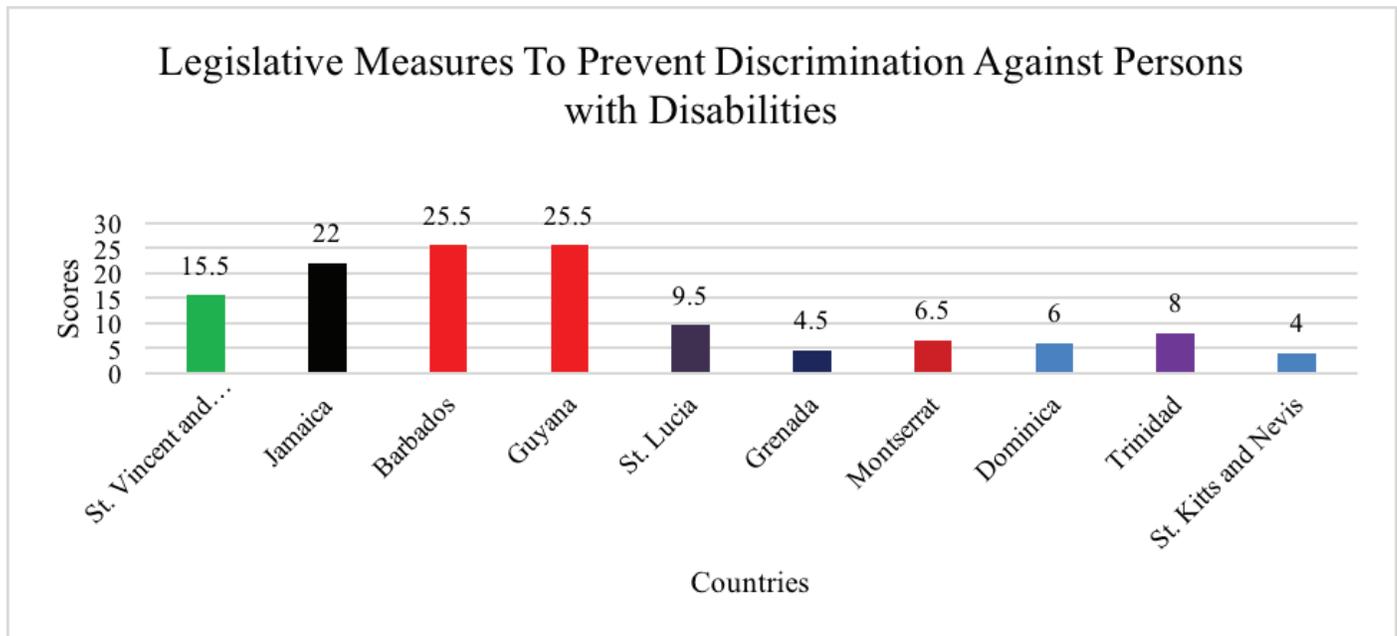


Figure 1: Legislative Measures to Prevent Discrimination

#### Article 4

Article 4.1.b indicates: “States Parties undertake: To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices that constitute discrimination against persons with disabilities”.

TOTAL SCORE 40

Graph 1 above displays the score the countries received for legislative measures that were implemented to improve the lives of persons living with a disability. Barbados and Guyana recorded the highest score of 25.5. Jamaica scored the second-highest of 22, followed by St. Vincent & the Grenadines with 15.5, St. Lucia 9.5, Trinidad & Tobago 8, Montserrat 6.5, Dominica 6, Grenada 4.5 and St.

Kitts & Nevis 4. An arithmetic operation was done to create an ordinal performance strength scale which is represented by Excellent (33.5-40), very good (26.9-33.5), good (20.2-26.8), average (13.5-20.1), poor (6.8-13.4) and very poor (0-6.7).

#### AWARENESS RAISING

Article 8 Article 8, 1a indicates that: “States Parties undertake to adopt immediate, effective and appropriate measures: To raise awareness throughout society, including at the family level, regarding persons with disabilities, and to foster respect for the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities”.

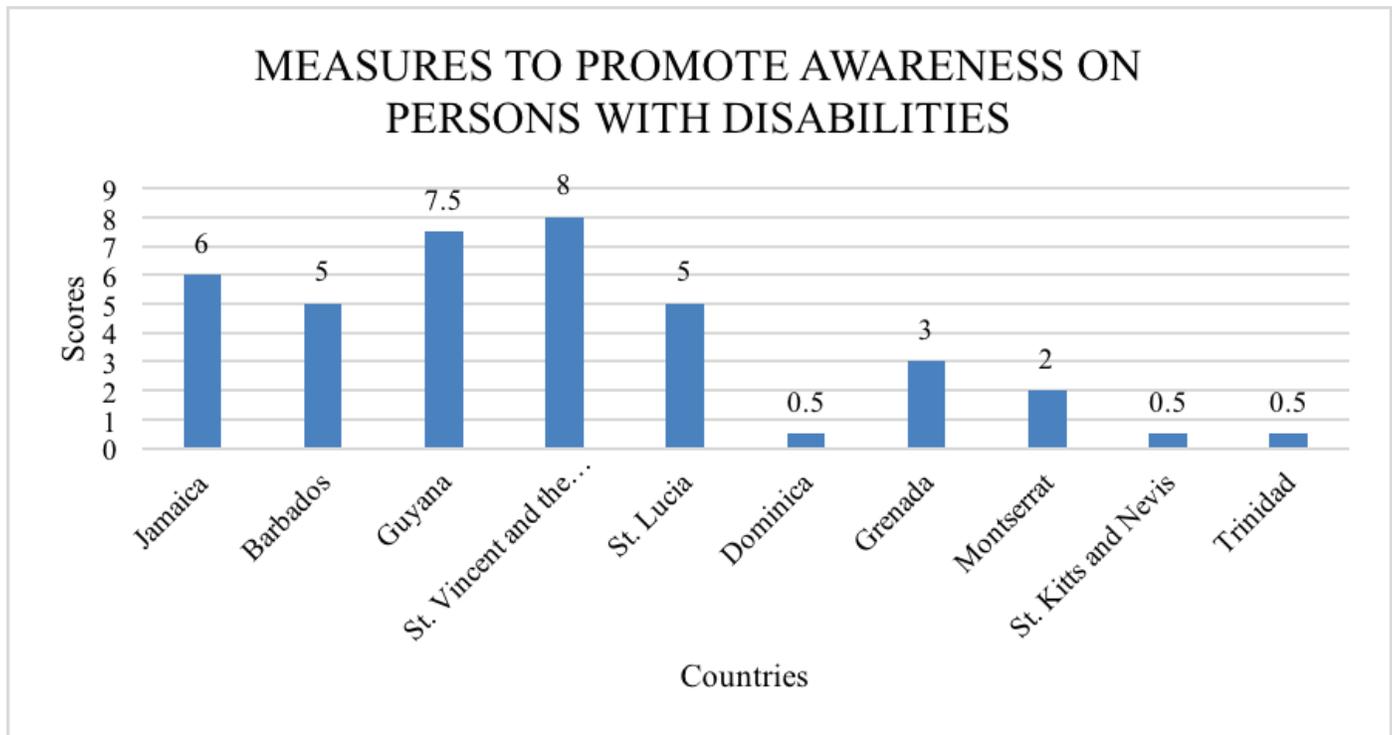


Figure 2: Measure to Promote Awareness

## TOTAL SCORE 10

Figure 2 above displays the score the countries received for measures to promote awareness about persons living with a disability. The highest score recorded was 8 by St. Vincent & the Grenadines. Guyana had the second-highest score of 7.5, followed by Jamaica with 6, Barbados and St Lucia 5, Grenada 3 and Montserrat 2. Dominica, St Kitts & Nevis, and Trinidad & Tobago had the lowest score of 0.5.

An arithmetic operation was done to create an ordinal performance strength scale which is represented by Excellent (8.5-10), very good (6.9-8.5), good (5.1-6.8), average (3.5-5.1), poor (1.8-3.4) and very poor (0-1.7).

## ACCESSIBILITY TO INFORMATION

### Article 9

Article 9.2.f states: “Promote other appropriate forms of assistance and support to persons with disabilities to ensure their access to information”.

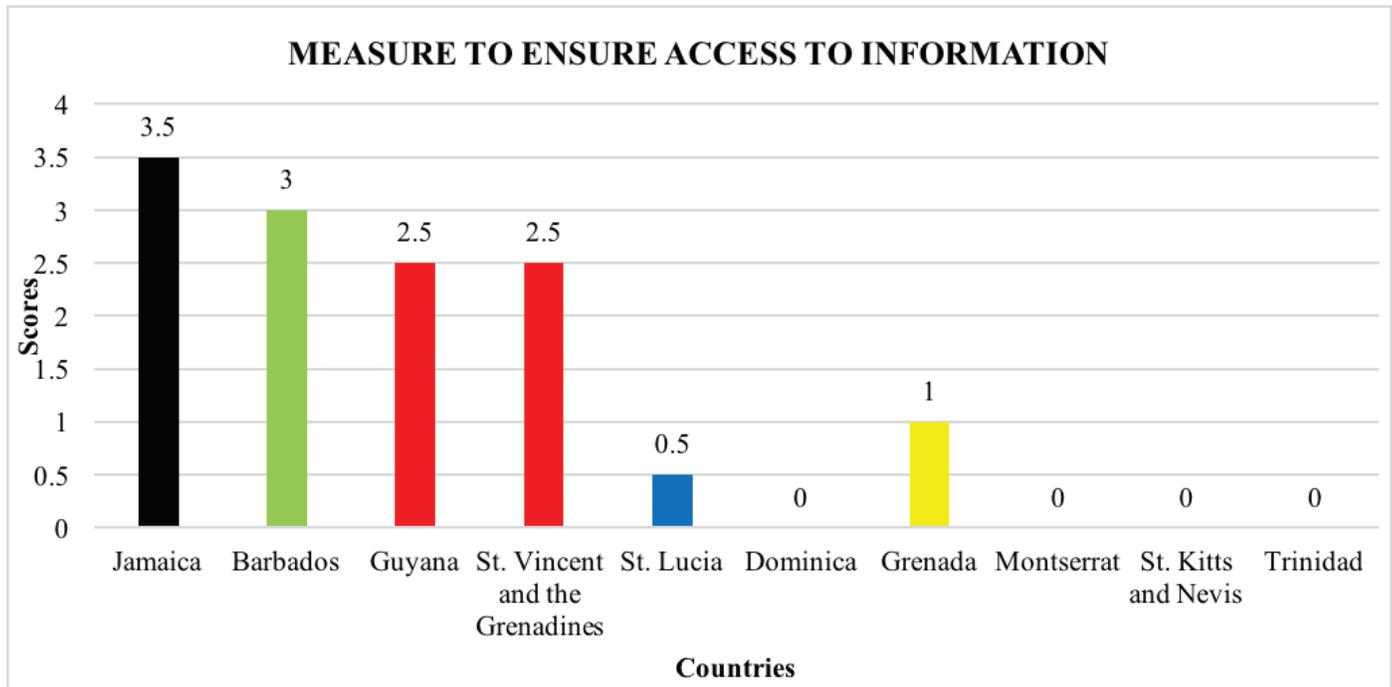


Figure 3: Measure to Ensure Access to Information

## TOTAL SCORE 5

Figure 3 above shows the score the countries received for the measure to ensure access to information for persons living with a disability. Jamaica recorded the highest score of 3.5. The second highest was by Barbados with a score of 3, followed by St. Vincent & Grenadines and Guyana at 2.5, Grenada 1 and St. Lucia 0.5. Montserrat, St Kitts & Nevis, Dominica and Trinidad & Tobago from the data collected seem to have zero measure in place to ensure information accessibility for persons with disabilities.

An arithmetic operation was done to create an ordinal performance strength scale which is represented by Excellent (4.1-5), Very Good (3.3-4.0), Good (2.5-3.2), Average (1.7-2.4), Poor (0.9-1.6) and Very Poor (0-0.8).

## EDUCATION

### Article 24

Article 24.2a opines: “States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system based on disability and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or secondary education, based on disability.”

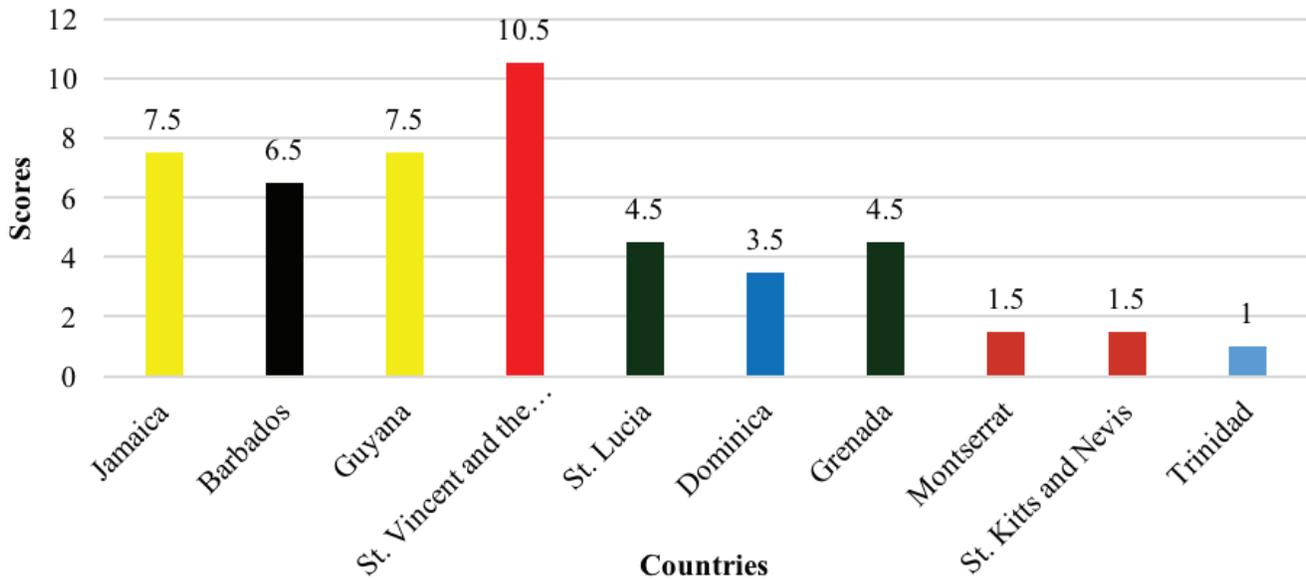


Figure. 4 Measure to Ensure Accessible Education

#### TOTAL SCORE 12

Figure 4 above shows the scores that countries received for efforts to ensure education is accessible to persons living with a disability. St. Vincent & Grenadines had the highest score of 10.5, followed by Jamaica and Guyana with a score of 7.5. Barbados had a score of 6.5, St. Lucia and Grenada 4.5, Dominica 3.5, Montserrat and St Kitts & Nevis 1.5 and Trinidad & Tobago 1. An arithmetic operation was done to create an ordinal performance strength scale which is represented by Excellent (10.5-12.0), Very Good (8.5-10.4), Good (6.5-8.4), Average (4.5-6.4), Poor (2.5-4.4) and Very Poor (0-2.4).

#### HEALTH

##### Article 25

Article 25.a. states that: “Provide persons with disabilities with the same range, quality and standard of free or affordable health care and programmes as provided to other persons, including in the area of sexual and reproductive health and population-based public health programmes”.

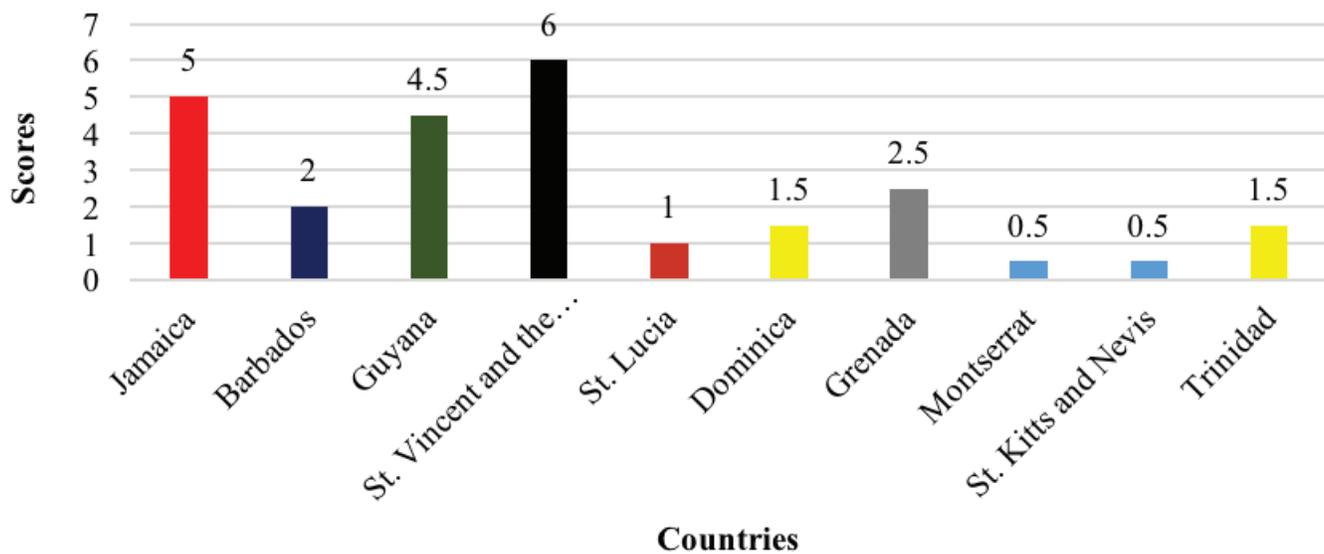


Figure. 5 Measure to Ensure Accessible Health Care System

#### TOTAL SCORE 7

Figure 5 above illustrates the score the countries received for efforts to ensure health care system is accessible to persons living with a disability. A high score of 6 was recorded by St. Vincent & Grenadines. Jamaica was second with a score of 5, followed by Guyana 4.5, Grenada 2.5, Barbados 2, Dominica and Trinidad & Tobago 1.5 and St. Lucia 1. Montserrat and St Kitts & Nevis had the lowest score of 0.5. An arithmetic operation was done to create an ordinal performance strength scale which is represented by Excellent (6.1-7.0), Very Good (4.9-6.0), Good (3.7-4.8), Average (2.5-3.6), Poor (1.3-2.4) and Very Poor (0-1.2).

#### WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

##### Article 27

Article 27.1.e states that: “Promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment”.

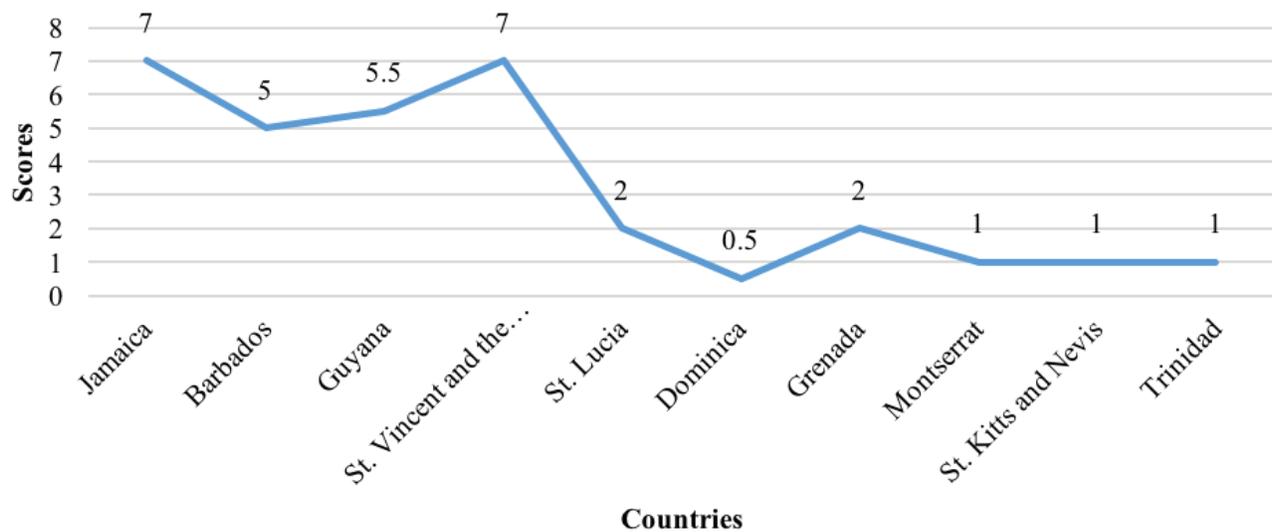


Figure. 6 Equal Opportunity for Employment for Persons with Disabilities

TOTAL SCORE 12

Figure 6 above displays the score the countries received for measures to provide equal employment opportunities for persons living with a disability. The highest score of 7 was recorded by St. Vincent & Grenadines and Jamaica. Guyana was second with a score of 5.5, followed by Barbados 5, St. Lucia and Grenada 2, while Montserrat, St Kitts & Nevis and Trinidad & Tobago had a score of 1. Dominica had the lowest score of 0.5. An arithmetic operation was done to create an ordinal performance strength scale which is represented by Excellent (10.5-12.0), Very Good (8.5-10.4), Good (6.5-8.4), Average (4.5-6.4), Poor (2.5-4.4) and Very Poor (0-2.4).

#### 4.0 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

In Graph 1, it shows how countries are doing in the region where legislation is concerned. The maximum score that could have been attained by each country on the implementation of legislative measures to improve the lives of people living with disabilities is 40. On this basis, Barbados, Guyana, and Jamaica have done good work implementing this measure, while St. Vincent and the Grenadines seems to have done an average job. In contrast, the data collected suggest that St. Lucia and Trinidad & Tobago have made a poor effort while Montserrat, Dominica, Grenada, and St. Kitts & Nevis have demonstrated very poor performance in implementing legislative measures to improve the



lives of people living with disabilities is 40. On this basis, Barbados, Guyana, and Jamaica have done good work implementing this measure, while St. Vincent and the Grenadines seems to have done an average job. In contrast, the data collected suggest that St. Lucia and Trinidad & Tobago have made a poor effort while Montserrat, Dominica, Grenada, and St. Kitts & Nevis have demonstrated very poor performance in implementing legislative measures to improve the lives of persons with disabilities. It must be noted that of the countries that have responded to the questionnaire, only Guyana and Jamaica have enacted legislation to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Four other Caribbean countries have enacted legislation to specifically protect persons with disabilities and these are The Bahamas, Antigua, Haiti, and the Cayman Islands [6]. Trinidad and Tobago has an Equal Opportunities Act that includes some protection of persons with disabilities but this is not disability-specific legislation. Barbados has drafted legislation to protect persons with disabilities however; this has not been enacted by their Parliament.

All the countries in the Caribbean need to establish legislation to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities as stipulated by the CRPD and amplified in the Declaration of Petion Ville [1]. Data from the United Nations is pointing to over 150 countries/areas with some form of legislation to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities [27]. Some of these legislations have mushroomed since the formation of the CRPD in 2006. Legislation is imperative in the transformation and social inclusion process because it sets a legal framework that protects these vulnerable individuals against discrimination and makes it mandatory for

individuals to act appropriately when dealing with these citizens in society [3]. If persons with disabilities are to be brought in the mainstream of Anglophone Caribbean society and the barriers eradicated so that persons with disabilities can withstand the challenges of climate change, then based on the human rights perspective [30] and that of the social model [21], legislative action is quintessential.

Graph 2 shows the maximum score that could have been attained by each country on measures to promote awareness about persons living with a disability which is 10. On this premise, the data suggest that St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Guyana have displayed a very good performance in the enactment of this measure, while Jamaica, Barbados, and St. Lucia have thus far presented a good performance. In Contrast, Grenada and Montserrat have done a poor job, while Dominica, St Kitts & Nevis, and Trinidad & Tobago seem to have performed very poorly.

There are profound negative myths, stigmata, and perceptions of persons with disabilities in the Caribbean [1]. For these myths, stigmata, and perceptions to be eradicated and persons with disabilities included in Caribbean society, there must be a consistent public awareness campaign to sensitize the varying publics on issues relating to this vulnerable group [2]. Governments and non-governmental organizations catering to the needs of persons with disabilities must design and implement public awareness campaigns that are directed at changing these negative attitudes and perceptions [25]. The public awareness campaigns should be directed at the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their society, the participation of these individuals in all aspects of life and non-discrimination against these individuals as articulated in the CRPD and supported by the social model of disability.



This must take place with a degree of urgency if the provisions of the CRPD, SDG and the Declaration of Petion Ville are to be realized and the resilience of persons with disabilities be strengthened to deal with the rigours of climate change.

In Graph 3, the maximum score that could have been acquired by each country on measures to ensure access to information for persons living with a disability is 5. On these measures, a very good performance was reported by Jamaica, while Barbados, St. Vincent & Grenadines and Guyana demonstrated a good outcome. In contrast, the data suggest that Grenada has done a poor job while St. Lucia, Montserrat, St Kitts & Nevis, Dominica, and Trinidad & Tobago have performed very poorly in implementing these measures.

Again, the top five countries are indicating some progress in their efforts to make persons with disabilities have greater access to information. The results corroborate with that of the Global Initiative for Inclusive ICT [10]. On that Index, Jamaica is the top country in the region in terms of access and inclusion of ICT for persons with disabilities: a similar status that the country enjoys on the RDI. Barbados and Guyana also have positive ratings on the G3ICT from the region.

We are living in the information age and those citizens with access to information are the ones who are going to have the greatest opportunities to prosper and progress [16]. There have been significant improvements in modern technologies to aid in access to and the processing of information from the vista of persons with disabilities [13, 6]. These technologies are bolstering the resilience of persons with disabilities by making it easier for them to communicate with

non-disabled individuals and function more effectively in society. However, the issue of cost for these technologies has impacted on the ability of persons with disabilities to purchase such technologies in order to access information [19]. Governments within the region must play a lead role in correcting this situation in order to realize the provisions and targets of the CRPD, the SDGs and the Declaration of Petion Ville and bolster the resilience of these vulnerable individuals so that they can deal with the vagaries of climate change. One way of doing so is to ensure that funds from Universal Service Funds (USFs) are used to assist persons with disabilities in securing modern technologies for education and employment as in the case in Jamaica [16, 19].

In Figure 4, the maximum score that could have been attained by each country for efforts to ensure that education is accessible to persons living with a disability is 12. On this basis, the data shows St. Vincent & Grenadines with an excellent performance. Jamaica, Guyana and Barbados demonstrated a good performance, while St. Lucia and Grenada have done an average job. However, the data is suggesting that Dominica has displayed a poor performance and Montserrat, St Kitts & Nevis, and Trinidad & Tobago have performed very poorly in employing these measures.

Education is an extremely important tool in the transformation and empowerment of persons with disabilities [11]. This is what is going to prepare the person with a disability for the world of work and to ensure that he or she can be fully integrated into society. This is why it is listed as one of the fundamental rights under the CRPD [30] and seen as an empowerment tool under the social model of disability [21].



From the data provided, St. Vincent and the Grenadines ought to be commended for receiving an excellent score for their effort to provide education for persons with disabilities. Similarly, data from Jamaica, Barbados and Guyana have suggested that progress is being made. There is a definite need however, for most of the countries to significantly improve their education systems for the members of this vulnerable community. In this context and where practicable, countries should move towards the establishment of an inclusive education system where persons with disabilities are taught in the same settings as their non-disabled counterparts [20]. This is important to assist in changing the negative stigmata and myths associated with persons with disabilities. It will demonstrate to other students that persons with disabilities have the capacity to learn and function effectively in a normal environment. We are fully conscious of the fact that there are individuals with profound disabling conditions that would not be possible for a regular school environment. In these circumstances, special education facilities would be appropriate. However, persons with disabilities must be given a quality education wherever they are placed [28].

In Graph 5, the maximum score that could have been acquired by each country for efforts to ensure health care systems are accessible to persons living with a disability is 7. On this basis, St. Vincent & Grenadines and Jamaica have a very good performance, while Guyana has done a good job and Grenada average. However, Barbados, Dominica, Trinidad & Tobago from the data, seems to have performed poorly, while St. Lucia, Montserrat and St Kitts & Nevis have performed very poorly in their efforts.

From the data presented, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica, Guyana and Grenada ought to be commended for their efforts to provide accessible

health care for persons with disabilities. Contrastingly, other Caribbean countries need to significantly improve their health systems to make them more responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are regular users of health care facilities [34]. Good health and well-being are indispensable to strengthening the resilience of any individual and this includes persons with disabilities. Proper health ensures that the person is mentally and physically strong, thus enabling the individual to deal with any challenge that the phenomena of climate change has to offer. It is therefore incumbent for governments across the Caribbean to ensure that all health facilities are accessible and responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities [5, 6].

Figure 6 shows that the maximum score that could have been attained by each country for measures to provide equal employment opportunities for persons living with a disability is 12. On this basis, St. Vincent & Grenadines and Jamaica demonstrated a good job, while, Guyana and Barbados displayed an average performance in the implementation of these measures. In contrast, St. Lucia, Grenada, Montserrat, St Kitts & Nevis, Trinidad & Tobago and Dominica have demonstrated very poor performance in the implementation of equal opportunities concerning employment for persons with disabilities.

In order for persons with disabilities to survive, they must have a sustainable source of income [28]. Employment is one means by which persons with disabilities are able to earn a decent income and standard of living [7]. It is through employment that members of this vulnerable community will best strengthen their resilience and ultimately be capacitated to respond to issues of climate change.



## 5.0 CONCLUSION

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For persons with disabilities to be brought in the mainstream of Caribbean society, greater efforts have to be made to implement the provisions of the CRPD, SDG and the Declaration of Petion Ville. It will require individuals who do not have an impairment to understand that it is a society that creates a disabling environment for these vulnerable citizens through the multifarious barriers that they formulate. These barriers prevent persons with disabilities from being integrated in society on an equal basis with others.

The barriers that are created by human beings can be eradicated. However, these have to be done within the context of legislative action, access to information, education and training, quality health care, and employment. These are unequivocal pre-requisites for strengthening the resilience of persons with disabilities. This is why global treaties such as the CRPD have been developed to entrench the fundamental rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities and the above-mentioned factors are enshrined as rights. But even then, countries within the Anglophone Caribbean have not been moving at the pace that is required to radically transform the landscape for these vulnerable citizens. This is why the UWICDS developed the RDI to track and rank countries in the region as to the progress that they are making in implementing the provisions of the CRPD. The first RDI inter alia, revealed that though some countries have been making progress to improve the lives of persons with disabilities, most of the countries have significant work to do to ensure that these individuals are brought in the mainstream of their society. Legislative action, public awareness, access to information and technology, investment in education, health care and employment are some of the areas that need immediate attention if the lives of persons with

disabilities are to be radically improved and their resilience be strengthened. This must happen if we are going to capacitate these citizens to be more responsive to the vicissitudes of climate change.



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