



The Office of the Prime Minister (Gender & Child Affairs)

GREEN PAPER NATIONAL CHILD POLICY



Our Children... Our Treasure

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

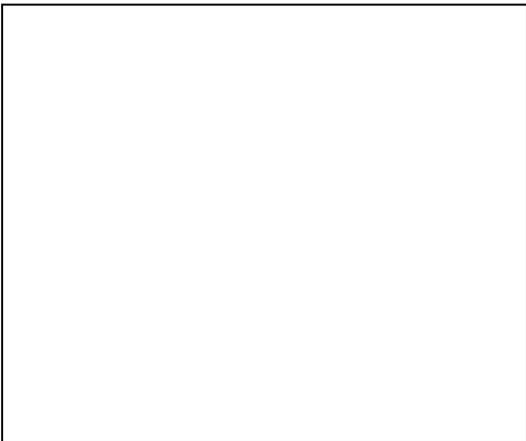
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List of Acronyms

CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CA	Children’s Authority of Trinidad and Tobago
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCAA	Civil Child Abduction Authority
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPU	Child Protection Unit
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CTU	Counter Trafficking Unit
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
GoRTT	Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
HFLE	Health and Family Life Education
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MCD	Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MGYCD	Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development
MLA	Ministry of Legal Affairs
MNS	Ministry of National Security
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOLSED	Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development
MoAGLA	Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs
MOPD	Ministry of Planning and Development
MSDFS	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
MSYA	Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs
MTCT	Mother-to-child transmission
NCD	Non-communicable diseases
NCR	National Children’s Registry
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPA	National Plan of Action
NSPCD	National Strategic Plan for Child Development
OCC	Office of the Children’s Commissioner
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Secondary Entrance Assessment
SSSD	Student Support Services Division
THA	Tobago House of Assembly
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VWSU	Victim and Witness Support Unit

For the purpose of this Policy, the following terms will be used to refer to:

Child	A person under the age of 18 years in accordance with the Children Act (2012) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, the Policy recognizes that for children with disabilities and children in alternative care, chronological years may not constitute the most accurate representation of children. In these situations, a more practical application may be dependent on the circumstance or developmental stage of the child.
Adolescent	A person between the ages of 10 and 19 years. The Policy acknowledges the overlap of the definitions of ‘child’ and ‘adolescent’.
Youth	A person between the ages of 12 and 29 years as defined in the Youth Policy 2012-2017. The Policy acknowledges the overlap of definitions of ‘child’ and ‘youth’.
Children in Need of Care and Protection	As specified in Section 22 of the Children’s Authority Act.
Children with Disabilities	A child who has long-term physical, mental, developmental or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
Children in Contact with the Law	A child who is required to interact with the Court either as a witness or victim of a crime, or subject matter of family court proceedings.
Children in Conflict with the Law	A child who comes into contact with the justice system as a result of being suspected or accused of committing an offence.
Children in Need of Supervision (CHINS)	Reflective of a scenario where a parent, guardian or person with responsibility for a child proves to the Court that he/she is unable to control the child and therefore desires alternative placement for the child.
Alternative Care	The formal care provided for children who are not in the care of their biological parents or family members. It may be foster care or residential care in small or large settings; supervised independent living arrangements; temporary shelters and other forms of care provision.
Child Rights	Human rights of children which include the right to health, education, family life, play and recreation, an adequate standard of living and to be protected from abuse and harm. The four general principles that underpin all children’s rights, namely non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, survival and development, and participation.
Family	A person or group of persons who are linked to the child either by blood, kinship and/or responsibility for care and upbringing.
Caregiver	A person or entity that is appointed by the State as being responsible for the care and upbringing of the child. This is distinguished from ‘family’.
Community Residence	A Children’s Home or Rehabilitation Centre.
Children’s Home	A Community Residence for the care and nurturing of children;
Rehabilitation Centre	A Community Residence for the rehabilitation of; (a) child offenders who (i) have been convicted and committed to serve a custodial sentence; or (ii) are remanded in custody pending sentence; or (b) children who have been charged with an offence and are in custody pending a hearing.;
Nursery	Includes day care and means any premises used for the care of children under the age of 6 years for material reward and for periods which exceed one hour, provided however that ordinary arrangements for the care of children within a family shall not be included as defined in the <i>Community Residences, Foster Care and Nurseries Act, 2000</i>



“What we sow into the lives of our children as a nation today we will reap as a nation tomorrow. Sow good seeds so that when it is time to harvest, the harvest will be good. Sow good seeds so when our children grow up and write our history they will be good to us.”

The Hon. Minister Ayanna Webster-Roy

Children should be able to live in an environment that is nurturing, enabling and supportive, and promotes their positive physical, cognitive, emotional, social and spiritual well-being. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to ensuring that the best interests of all children is a primary consideration in all decisions or actions that affect their lives and hinders their developmental trajectory. As active agents with evolving capacities and particular vulnerabilities, children remain any nation’s most valuable treasure. Their unique perspectives and insights, once given the opportunity to be heard and acknowledged, provide a gateway to shared learning, strengthen intergenerational relationships and foster the development of collective and relevant solutions.

A focus on children and their families’/caregivers’ well-being is essential to improving the quality of our society now and in the future. Unless the appropriate investment is made in early childhood, there is less chance of reaping prosperity in adulthood. This Policy draws on the collective duty of different sectors with a key stake in children’s development as an essential part of our economic and social sustainability.

This Policy is intended to guide and support a national commitment to ensuring the achievement of positive outcomes for all our children through SMART¹ strategies, dedicated resources and collaborative efforts that place children as a top priority in national planning, budgeting and programming. The Policy provides an overall framework for the care, protection and development of children in Trinidad and Tobago, and serves to reaffirm the Government’s drive to Vision 2030, while fulfilling its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is my vision that all actors at family, community, private and public levels will work collectively to implement this Policy and that its principles will be exemplified in everyday practice to contribute to the positive well-being of children in Trinidad and Tobago.

***The Hon. Minister Ayanna Webster- Roy
Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister
Gender and Child Affairs***

¹ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound

Children's status and well-being speak volumes about the values and quality of life within any society. Focus is therefore needed on the specific interests of children as a distinct social group, recognising their innate capacities, interdependency, developmental needs and current and future roles as active social agents. The enhancement of children's well-being as a global ideal has been affirmed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Trinidad and Tobago in 1991, and continues to be a focus in the Sustainable Development Goals. The importance of the rights of children and their well-being on a national level can be observed through: the general tenets of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago which guarantees to all citizens the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined therein; the strategic objectives outlined in *Vision 2030*; advancements in children's legislation; and the establishment of child-centred services.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT) renews its commitment to advancing children's rights and ensuring their well-being. As such, this National Child Policy marks a critical milestone, being the first national policy for children developed in Trinidad and Tobago. The Policy is vital in providing long-term guidance and sets the framework to support suitable legislation, interventions and infrastructure that would further ensure the well-being of each child.

The GoRTT's vision is that:

All children are happy, healthy and confident; and their rights are respected, protected and promoted to facilitate their holistic development towards achieving their fullest potential as constructive members of society now and in the future.

Our mission is to work collectively to promote and ensure the positive development and well-being, best-interests and empowerment of all children. This will be done through the recognition of their importance, prioritisation of their needs, respect for and protection of their rights, and through the encouragement of their active participation. This will be ensured through strengthening of their family and community environments, and provision of quality, efficient and specialised support. The Policy is grounded in **EIGHT guiding philosophies** and sets out **SIX outcomes** for children, i.e. Children are i) **loved** ii) **valued**; iii) **nurtured**; iv) **protected**; v) **empowered**; and vi) **supported**. The achievement of these outcomes are contingent on the attainment of 25 strategic objectives and corresponding strategies linked to each outcome set out within the Policy. Given the multifaceted nature of children's issues, it is essential for the Policy to be streamlined and complemented by auxiliary policies and strategies in various sectors requiring added attention such as health, education, social development, national security and justice.

While the policy focuses on achieving outcomes for all children equally, it acknowledges that some children require additional support, namely teenaged mothers and fathers, children who exhibit hypersexual behaviour, victims of sexual and other abuse and domestic violence, child offenders, children in need of supervision, homeless and orphaned children, children in gangs, children who live in poverty/disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances and children with disabilities. As such, the Policy highlights **SIX key areas of priority** which require focused attention, added investment and the development of specialised strategies/plans to support the realization of positive outcomes for these children. These are: - **Early Childhood Development; Social Protection; Health; Special Needs; Education; and Child Protection**. These specialised strategies/plans will

further inform programmes, and legal and administrative actions that facilitate preventative and responsive measures that ensure the safety, well-being and optimal progression of all children.

The Policy mandates the establishment and strengthening of mechanisms to give effect to the successful mainstreaming of children’s unique needs, the overall coordination and integration of children services, and the cementing of cross-sectoral commitment towards the achievement of policy outcomes and objectives. These mechanisms include outlining the governance structure under the auspices of the Child Affairs Division, Office of the Prime Minister; strengthening legal and policy frameworks across sectors; cross-sectoral planning and integrated implementation facilitated through the establishment of a Cabinet appointed Cross-Sectoral Committee; children’s active participation through the Child Ambassador Sub-Committee; ensuring adequate human and financial resources informed by costed national implementation plans; research, data collection, monitoring and evaluation; the establishment of the National Children’s Registry; ensuring accountability through the establishment of a Children’s Commissioner; and ensuring continuity and sustainability to withstand changes in government administrations.

The development of the Policy was guided by the Committee for the Development of the National Child Policy, under the direction of the Office of the Prime Minister (Child Affairs Division) in collaboration with UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Area. The process of developing the Policy was consultative and participatory, involving all stakeholders. The approach brought major benefits by harnessing the cross-fertilisation of ideas and sectoral wisdom on issues. Consultations were held with children, parents, guardians and all stakeholders involved in the area of children, including government stakeholders, and civil society organisations. Information gathered from the consultations were instrumental in the development of the Policy. The GoRTT takes this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the valuable contribution of all involved in the development of the Policy and to advocate for the continued support in its implementation.

The Policy is driven by the **Vision 2030** National Sustainable Development Strategy 2016-2030 and is tied to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A detailed development framework showing the linkages to the SDGs (allowing for the tracking of progress towards policy goals) and a comprehensive list of SDG child-related indicators are provided in Annex II and III respectively.



An Implementation Plan complements this Policy in order to guide national efforts, maintain relevance, ensure adequate resourcing, facilitate coordination and joint planning and ensure implementation. The Policy will be supported by a Communications Strategy and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Public annual reports will be generated showing progress towards attainment of the targets set out within it. A comprehensive review of the Policy will be undertaken every five years commencing in 2025 with consultation among all stakeholders.

The Office of the Prime Minister, (Child Affairs Division) is responsible for coordinating the implementation and monitoring of this Policy. All Government Ministries, statutory bodies and other state agencies are responsible

for delivery and reporting on the implementation of strategies within the Policy. The implementation of this Policy demands commitment, coordination and partnership among all relevant stakeholders.

I.1 Introduction

The National Child Policy is an opportunity to enhance the status and further improve the quality of life of Trinidad and Tobago's children. Given the multi-faceted nature of children's issues and complexity of children's developmental needs, the Policy provides for: -

- A holistic view of children's needs as a basis for more effective policy development and service delivery.
- An increased opportunity for children to participate in matters that will affect their lives.
- An effective, coordinated and targeted approach to dealing with the issues affecting the children of Trinidad and Tobago.
- Improved maximisation of resources towards addressing children issues.
- Improved monitoring and evaluation of child services to ensure that such services have the desired impact.

The Policy is not to be viewed in isolation, as it acknowledges that children's issues and needs are interrelated, crossing many sectors and that a symbiotic relationship must exist between sectors to ensure positive outcomes for children. As such, the Policy adopts a 'whole child perspective', recognizing the multidimensional nature of all aspects of children's lives. The recognition that all parts of children's lives are interlinked has, in turn, implications for public policy-making and the integration of services relating to children. The Policy reflects the Government's recognition that in order to effectively address children's needs and interests, a child-centred, family-focused, integrated approach is needed. The Policy therefore seeks to comprehensively address the physical, psychological, emotional and socio-economic well-being of children through quality support and services.

I.2 Scope

The National Child Policy and its mandates, goals and interventions apply to all public, private or civil agencies, bodies, groups and individuals working on behalf of or with children in Trinidad and Tobago. Its requirements must be facilitated and adhered to by **ALL** citizens of the twin- island State.

I.2.1 Policy Statement

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (along with its social partners) has a total commitment to the well – being, optimal development and the Rights of every child in Trinidad and Tobago. For this Policy to be effective, it must be translated into practice and there must be a recognition that all children regardless of age, sex, race, ability, religion or origin, are integral to the well-being and sustainable development of the country. Not only because of their anticipated contributions, as adults of tomorrow, but as active citizens today. This necessitates a cultural shift in how we view and treat children. It requires a commitment that must be embraced by all.

I.3 Purpose

The purpose of the National Child Policy is to:

1. Provide a comprehensive framework to guide all stakeholders towards achieving optimal well-being of children;
2. Provide a framework for the development and coordination of policies, programmes and legislation that promote the rights of all children;
3. Ensure sufficient, effective and sustainable resource allocation for services that would directly impact children;
4. Provide a gauge for stakeholders to position and align their strategies, resources and mobilisation efforts over the long term; and
5. Create the blueprint through which the government could encourage all duty bearers, guardians and the like to shift from viewing and treating children as passive objects or possessions to seeing them as valuable human beings.

I.4 Context

I.4.1 International Framework

Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on December 5th 1991, two years after it was adopted by the UN General Assembly on November 20, 1989. The CRC is the most prominent international legal instrument safeguarding the rights of children. It outlines the responsibilities of Member States in ensuring children's rights are upheld, promoted and protected. The Convention, together with its Optional Protocols, provides a holistic and comprehensive framework that guides Member States in the development and evaluation of their children policies and legislative agendas.

The Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, world leaders gathered at the United Nations to adopt 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that seek to achieve several developmental targets by 2030. The global leaders highlighted a course to achieve these objectives – for people everywhere – by building upon the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) .

The SDGs came into effect in January 2016 and establish 169 targets to be achieved. The Goals cover social and economic development issues such as poverty, hunger, health, education, global warming, gender equality, water, sanitation, energy, urbanization, environment and social justice. The SDGs are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 global goals are broad and interdependent, yet each has a separate list of targets to achieve. Specific to this Policy's focus, the SDGs contain 50 indicators that are directly related to children (*see Annex III*).

International Conventions/Protocols

To date Trinidad and Tobago has signed, ratified or acceded to the following international conventions/protocols:

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	<i>Accession: 5 December 1991</i>
United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	<i>Ratified 12 January 1990</i>
International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination	<i>Ratified 4 October 1973</i>
Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction	<i>Accession 7 June 2000</i>
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	<i>Ratified 25 June 2015</i>
ILO Convention 138 on the Minimum Age of Employment	<i>Ratified 3 September 2004</i>
ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour	<i>Ratified 23 April 2003</i>
Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol)	<i>Ratified 6 November 2007</i>
United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees	<i>Accession 10 November 2000</i>
Protocol to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees	<i>Accession 10 November 2000</i>
Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women	<i>Ratified 4 January 1996</i>
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	<i>Accession 8 December 1978</i>
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	<i>Ratified 21 December 1978</i>

The Lima Accord

In terms of the regional context, the Lima Accord emerged out of the Fourth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in 1998 and sought to formulate a context for the rights that should be accorded to children, women and families in the Region, within the context of CRC and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Accord clearly articulated the updating of the World Summit for Children Goals and specified the actions to be implemented in order to attain these goals.

The Kingston Consensus

In 2000 the Fifth Ministerial meeting saw the emergence of the Kingston Consensus which contained 23 determinants for future action for children. This Consensus recognised the issues and challenges that were impacting children since the 1990 Summit. Despite challenges in data collection and monitoring mechanisms, an end-of-decade review presented at the UN General Assembly Special Session for Children in 2002, showed there were some measurable progress towards the attainment of the goals.

1.4.2 National Framework

Vision 2030: National Development Strategy 2016-2030

Trinidad and Tobago's National Development Strategy (i.e. Vision 2030) establishes a broad socio-economic development framework for Trinidad and Tobago for the period 2016-2030. The Strategy includes a strong focus on completing the areas of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that to date, were not attained by the country. Included among the outstanding targets were issues of maternal mortality, containment of HIV/AIDS and reducing the incidence of non-communicable diseases. Additionally, the Strategy intends to provide for an orderly, long-term development process that presses forward with a simultaneous focus on the SDGs.

Two of the five thematic areas highlighted by Vision 2030, are most relevant to the issues of children, child development and well – being . These are;

- *Theme I* - Putting People First: Nurturing Our Greatest Asset; and
- *Theme II* – Delivering Good Governance and Service Excellence.

Theme I – Putting People First: Nurturing Our Greatest Asset

This thematic area recognises that people are the greatest assets of Trinidad and Tobago and that they are crucial to its development. The emphasis of this theme thus aims to create a community in which all the essential needs of citizens are met; where each individual is valued and given the opportunity to contribute; where citizens can self-actualise.

Theme II – Delivering Good Governance and Service Excellence

This thematic area aims to ensure good governance and service excellence. These characteristics are recognised as critical to ensuring a high standard of living and a good quality of life for citizens in Trinidad and Tobago. The priorities under this theme focus on building public trust in Government and promoting strong and independent public institutions. A professional civil service that meets the developmental needs of citizens and inculcates a culture in which citizens respect authority and the rule of law is a fundamental goal under this theme.

National Plans for Children

Trinidad and Tobago's signing of The United Nations' 1990 World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children led to the formulation of the first National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children in 1993. The responsibility for the development and implementation of the NPA was vested in an inter-ministerial committee under the aegis of the then Ministry of Social Development. The Cabinet-approved, plan of action contained recommendations for the attainment of the goals of the World Summit for Children. Since then, revisions have been made to Trinidad and Tobago's original NPA.

The revised NPA identifies four main priority areas for action over the period 2006-2010. These were to promote healthy lives; provide quality education; protect against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combat HIV/AIDS.

After the expiration of the NPA, a National Strategic Plan for Child Development (NSPCD) 2012-2016, was developed and approved by Cabinet under the aegis of the then Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development. The NSPCD highlighted key actions under five priority areas. These were: to provide a secure and nurturing environment for all children; to provide opportunities beyond academics for all children; promote healthy lives; provide specialised services for the well-being of each child; and develop comprehensive, coherent and harmonised initiatives to promote, protect and respect child rights. A Cabinet approved Advisory Committee, comprising multi-sectoral stakeholders, was established to monitor the implementation of the NSPCD. In line with the NSPCD, the Government, in collaboration with UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area, developed the Trinidad and Tobago Strategic Actions for Children 2013-2016. The strategy outlined a joint work plan between GoRTT and UNICEF and highlighted five focus areas. These were securing data for evidence-based policy making for girls and boys; Child Rights, policies and budgets for girls and boys; Child Protection; Communication for Development (that is, addressing social norms and supporting child protection programming); and Education and Early Childhood Development.

Legislative Framework

During the period 2000 - 2018, Trinidad and Tobago made great strides in strengthening the legislative framework for children. The following statutes and regulations were enacted:

- The Children's Authority Act, 2000
- The Adoption of Children Act, 2000
- The Children's Community Residences, Foster Care and Nurseries Act, 2000
- The Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act, 2000
- The Miscellaneous Provisions (Children) Act, 2000
- The Miscellaneous Provisions (Minimum Age for Admission to Employment) Act, 2007
- The International Child Abduction Act, 2008
- The Children's Community Residences, Foster Care and Nurseries (Amendment) Act, 2008
- The Children's Authority (Amendment) Act, 2008
- The Children's Life Fund Act, 2010
- The Trafficking in Persons Act, 2011
- Anti-Gang Act, 2018
- The Children Act, 2012
- The Births and Deaths Registration (Amendment) Act, 2013
- The Children's Authority Regulations, 2014
- The Foster Care Regulations, 2014
- The Children's Community Residences Regulations, 2014
- The Adoption of Children (Amendment) Act, 2015
- The Adoption of Children Regulations, 2015

Other Key Legislation:

- *Births and Deaths Registration Act 1847*
- *Public Health (Nursery Schools and Primary Schools Immunization) Act 1973*
- *Widow's and Orphans' Pensions Extension Act 1974*
- *Education Act, 1996*
- *Education (Amendment) Acts 2000 & 2005*
- *Family Law (Guardianship of Minors, Domicile and Maintenance) Act*
- *Legal Aid and Advice (Amendment) Act, 2012*
- *Family Proceedings Act, 2004*

- The Family and Children Division Act, 2016. Schedule 5 of this Act amends, *inter alia*, the Children Act, 2000, the Children’s Community Residences, Foster Care and Nurseries Act, 2000, the Children’s Authority Act, 2000 , the Adoption of Children Act, 2000 and the Status of Children Act, 1981
- The Child Rehabilitation Centres Act, 2016
- The Child Rehabilitation Centres Regulations, 2017
- The Miscellaneous Provisions (Marriage) Act, 2017
- The Children's Community Residences (Children’s Homes) Regulations, 2018 (replaced the Children’s Community Residences Regulations, 2014)
- The Children’s Community Residences (Rehabilitation Centres) Regulations, 2018
- The Miscellaneous Provisions (Supreme Court of Judicature and Children) Act, 2018 which amends, *inter alia*, the Children Act, 2000, the Children’s Community Residences, Foster Care and Nurseries Act, 2000 and the Children’s Authority Act, 2000, the Child Rehabilitation Centres Act, Chap. 13.05 and the Family and Children Division Act, 2016

Institutional Framework

The Government's drive towards enhancing outcomes for children was also supported by the development and introduction of national institutions and units addressing children's issues.

2004

The **Family Court of Trinidad and Tobago (Pilot)** deals with specific family matters at the High and Magistrates' Court levels, in a less adversarial and more conciliatory way.

The **Student Support Services Division (SSSD)**, of the Ministry of Education, delivers an array of psycho-social, educational and behavioural services for students and so provides support for their healthy development, enabling them to become responsible, productive citizens.

2008

The **Victim and Witness Support Unit (VWSU)** develops and implements policies, programmes and initiatives that support the victims and witnesses of crime, including children, by providing emotional support along with appropriate referrals to external support agencies.

The **Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development (MGYCD)**, was established to give national priority and recognition to child development.

2011

The **Civil Child Abduction Authority (CCAA)** deals with all matters relating to the civil aspect of international parental child abduction that may occur between Trinidad and Tobago and contracting territories. The Authority provides legal representation to affected parents, protects the abducted child and ensures expeditious proceedings and enforcement of decisions.

2013

The **Counter-Trafficking Unit (CTU)** investigates matters pertaining to trafficking; interviewing/screening individuals associated with trafficking; operates a hotline for the reporting of cases; conducts research pertaining to human trafficking; and liaising and coordinating with other agencies/NGOs to provide all necessary support to victims of trafficking (and the families).

2015

The **Child Protection Unit (CPU)**, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service was established to investigate matters of sexual offences/abuse, physical abuse, abandonment/neglect and ill treatment of children and to engage with stakeholders.

The **Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (CATT)** became fully operational, with the responsibility to promoting the welfare, care and protection of all children, support children in need of care and protection, licence and monitor community residences and nurseries, manage the foster care system and adoption process, provide support for children in conflict with the law and promote child rights.

In November 2015, primary responsibility for child development was placed under the **Office of the Prime Minister (Gender and Child Affairs)**

The **Children Court** deals with children matters (excluding family matters) using a rehabilitative and less punitive approach.

2018

The **Family Court** has jurisdiction over specific family matters at the High Court and Magistrates' Court levels.

Given the multi-sectoral nature of children's services, several Government and non-governmental agencies contribute to child development and well-being initiatives in Trinidad and Tobago. Key public sector actors include the Office of the Prime Minister, the Judiciary, the Children's Authority, Tobago House of Assembly and the Ministries of Health, Education, Social Development and Family Services, National Security, the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, Labour, and Sport and Youth Affairs. Key stakeholders include Non-Governmental and Faith-Based Organisations, Youth Groups and Councils, International Agencies, Community Residences,

Charities, Media, the Private Sector, Community Residences, Private individuals, Communities, Families and Children.

1.4.3 Situation of Children in Trinidad and Tobago

The total population of Trinidad and Tobago based on the 2011 Population and Housing Census was 1,328,019. **330,102** of whom were children (167,812 boys | 162,290 girls). The life expectancy on average is 73 years, with males having a lower life expectancy of 69.9 years as compared to 75.9 years for females.

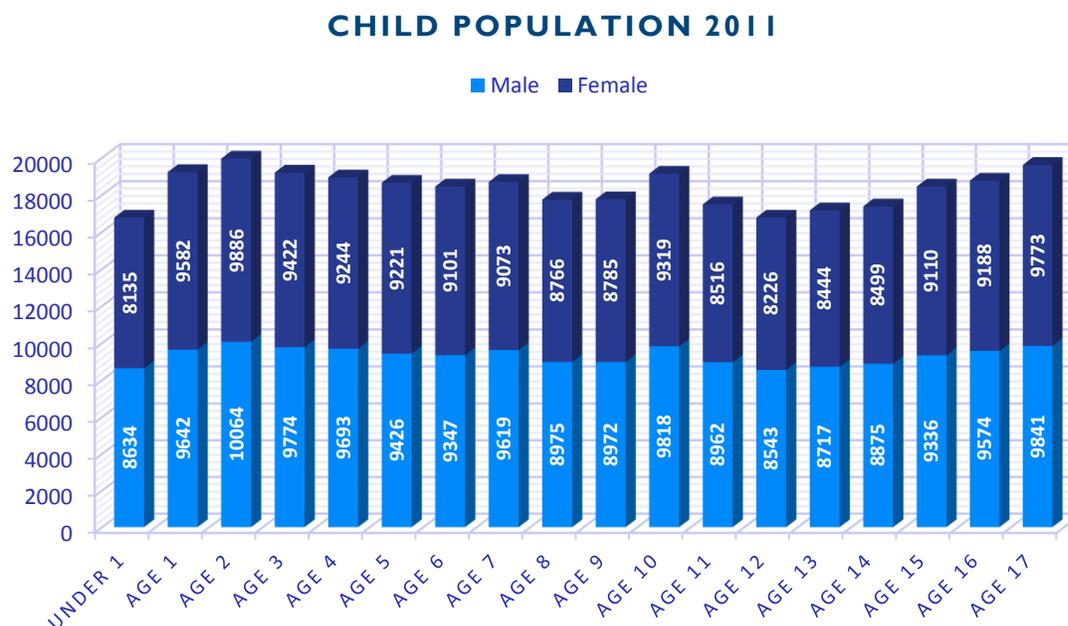


Figure 1: Breakdown of child population by age and sex.

Source: Central Statistical Office Population and Housing Census 2011, Trinidad and Tobago

The following sections provide a summary of the current situation of children, identifies barriers and bottlenecks in advancing children's rights in health, standard of living, education and child protection.

1.4.3.1 Health

The GoRTT provides standards of free health care systems (including pre-natal care) with the population having access to free prescription drugs and other pharmaceutical items for treatment of many chronic conditions (MOH, 2017). According to the Situation Analysis of Children, 2017, the **infant mortality rate** (18 per 1,000 live births) and the **under 5 mortality rate** (20 per 1,000 live births) have consistently declined since the 1990s, but more effort is required. In 2010, the three most common causes of death for children under 5 years were congenital anomalies (24%), prematurity (16%) and birth asphyxia (12%) followed by pneumonia (7%), injuries (6%), and neonatal sepsis and HIV/AIDS (both 3%) (Ministry of Health). In 2008, communicable diseases coupled with maternal, prenatal and nutritional conditions accounted for an estimated 12% of all mortality. The official declaration of the elimination of measles, rubella and congenital rubella syndrome was achieved in July 2015 and immunization rates are nearly 100% coverage. Over 95% of women attend antenatal clinic at least once during their pregnancy and are attended by skilled health professionals at delivery. In 2010, the Government established the Children's Life Fund through the Children's Life Fund Act, 2010, with a target capitalization of

TT\$100 million which facilitates the treatment to children suffering from life threatening illnesses for which the required treatment is unavailable at a local medical institution.

Trinidad and Tobago is on track to eliminate **mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) of HIV and AIDS**. From 2010 to 2015 the rate of MTCT has been 2% or lower, treatment coverage has gone up from 81% to 85% and testing among prenatal attendees has risen 50% (SitAn, 2017). Two good practices established to provide multi-disciplinary treatment and care are (i) Cyril Ross Home – a residential centre for children living with HIV and AIDS; and (ii) the Health Promotion Clinic in Tobago which integrates HIV services with sexual and reproductive health. **Sexual and reproductive health** issues including the prevalence of HIV and AIDS remain a concern. Risk factors are associated with early unions, child sexual abuse,

Key policies relating the children:

- ▶ *Policy on Nursery School and Primary School Immunisation, as enshrined in the Public Health Act Chap 28:03*
- ▶ *National School Health Policy and in the context of HIV/AIDS*
- ▶ *Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) HIV Policy*
- ▶ *Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) Policy*

engagement in early and unprotected sexual activities, and participation in transactional or commercial sex. Risky sexual behaviour remains a concern. Approximately 68% of young women between the ages of 15-24 years who had sex in the last 12 months reported having sex with a non-regular partner and 51. 2% reported that they used a condom in their last sexual encounter with the high-risk partner (SitAn, 2017). Existing laws also restrict children's access to health services and procedures without parental consent, which is particularly important in matters pertaining to the testing of adolescents for HIV and STIs, and accessing antenatal clinics. The national life skills curriculum includes sexual health modules and is taught in forms 4 and 5 of secondary schools as part of the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum. **Teenage pregnancies** continue to be a significant social and health concern. Adolescent fertility rate stood at 40.8 in 2012 compared to 18.7 among similar countries ranked in the very high Human Development Index category (SitAn, 2017). Current reports show a decline with the adolescent fertility rate at 34.8 (PAHO *et. al.*, 2017). The number of teenage pregnancies reported in primary and secondary schools between 2012 and 2016 totaled 139 of whom 11 were primary school children (SitAn, 2017). Some teenage mothers do exercise the option to return to school after giving birth, however many opt not to return based on the stigma attached or the burden of young parenthood.

The increasing rates of **childhood obesity** is of major concern. From 1999 to 2009, the nutritional situation of school children revealed a 400% increase in obesity rates among the 5 – 18 year old cohort (SitAn, 2017). The growing concern for childhood obesity has prompted the government to target this age group with initiatives such as 'Fight-the-Fat' camps organized in 2014 for children aged 7 – 12 years. Efforts to treat, prevent and control NCDs include, *inter alia*, a Childhood Obesity Plan; revised guidelines on healthy and nutritious foods in schools for canteen operators; and advocacy programmes that promote a family approach to eating healthy and staying active.

Children and adolescents in Trinidad and Tobago are confronted with **mental health** issues which can sometimes lead to self-destructive behaviour, including suicide or suicide attempts and cutting. In 2006, 11.7% of admissions to community-based psychiatric inpatients units and 8% of users in day treatment facilities were children/adolescents (WHO, 2007). The Government covers expenses for treatment and care and has developed a mental health policy/plan (MOH, 2000) and an emergency/disaster preparedness plan for mental health. ...

There is, however, a lack of human, financial and material resources for the efficient and effective running of the mental health system and provision of child mental health services in particular. There are four facilities which provide out-patient mental health services to children, namely: Child Guidance Clinic, Port of Spain, Child Guidance Clinic, Pleasantville, Child and Adolescent Clinic Tobago and CALM Clinic, Chaguanas. At present there is a dedicated children's ward at the St Ann's Psychiatric Hospital. There are two community-based psychiatric inpatients units. It should be noted that none of the beds at these units are reserved for children or adolescents. There are limited child mental health professionals (i.e. psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, occupational therapists, school psychologists, etc.) and an absence of research to inform improvement in the area. The development of a National Mental Health Policy for Children and an expansion of mental health services for children is required.

1.4.3.2 Adequate living

The lives of children are overwhelmingly more affected than those of adults by the discrimination and marginalization they endure as a result of deprivation and poverty. In 2005 the poverty rate was recorded at 16.7%, a significant decline compared to the previous level of 24% in 1997-1998 (*Survey of Living Conditions, 2005*). However, Trinidad and Tobago continues to struggle with the lingering weaknesses in the financial, labour and housing markets as the repercussions from the 2008 global financial and economic crisis persist. Unemployment and level of employment are significant factors. Women are over-represented in lower income brackets and among the population that is economically inactive. Female heads of households were more likely to be poor than male heads of households, with 21.4% of female-headed households being poor compared to 17.1% of their male counterparts (*SitAn, 2017*). Women generally support larger households than men and carry greater responsibilities for care for and the maintenance of the family. The locations of poor populations correspond with areas with limited access to pipe-borne water as well as more likelihood of outside versus indoor toilets. Children in these households are affected by these conditions in different ways depending on their age and sex, with consequences often leading to exposure to vulnerabilities, many of which have far-reaching negative consequences on their growth, development, survival, protection and capacity to express themselves.

The GoRTT provides some social protection programmes including the Food Support Programme under the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) aimed at promoting nutritional and food security to vulnerable households. The Programme enables families in need to purchase nutritionally sound basic food items, thereby enhancing the health and dignity of those households and reducing the stresses of poverty. Social Assistance Grants are also provided to persons in need, who have little or no means of support. Public assistance, by way of financial transfers, is provided on behalf of children whose parents have died, deserted or abandoned them, are ill or imprisoned. The grant is also paid to a parent or guardian on behalf of a child with a disability and where the household income is deemed inadequate. The GoRTT acknowledges the need to expand these programmes and ensure they adequately address the needs of the population. In 2017 the GoRTT developed its National Social Mitigation Plan 2017-2022 with the overarching goal to mitigate the negative social impacts of the economic downturn in the Trinidad and Tobago economy. It has as its theme: "Building Resilience to Secure our Nation" and is focused on achieving three main objectives, namely: 1. Strengthening the Social Protection System; 2. Promoting Community and Civil Society Action; and 3. Enhancing Productivity and

Innovation. The Plan provides an opportunity for Trinidad and Tobago to proactively respond to the current economic downturn in ways that will strengthen the overall socioeconomic framework in the country.

1.4.3.3 Education

The National Development Strategy 'Vision 2030' has set an agenda for education that calls for a "modern, relevant education and training system" that is inclusive and accessible, including meeting the requirements of special needs students and children with learning disabilities. The Government's approach to education is based on the CARICOM Ideal Caribbean Person (adopted by Heads of State in 1997) and UNESCO's Pillars of Education (1996), and is consistent with key frameworks on educational development and standards in the sub-region.

Education is compulsory from age 5 to 16 years (since 2015) and free in the public system from pre-primary to tertiary level. All school children in uniform can travel by public transport free of charge while university students are issued with passes. Universal access to primary school education was achieved in the 1960s and to secondary education in 2000. In 2013-2014 academic year, 126,000 pupils were attending government/government assisted and private primary schools; and in 2016, 96,000 children were enrolled in secondary schools. The Government owns and operates 37% of all primary and secondary schools. Privately owned schools and those controlled by church/denominational boards represent 63%. Of these, approximately 51% are owned by religious denominations and are government-assisted receiving financial aid from the Government and are jointly administered by the Ministry of Education. The transition rate from primary to secondary school was 90% in 2011, and despite the attainment of universal access at both levels, challenges continue with issues of efficiency especially at the secondary level. The results in terms of student performance have been promising with 80% of primary school students scoring above 60% on the Secondary Entrance Exam (SEA) and 50% of secondary school students obtaining passing grades in five or more subjects, including Math and English A at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations in 2016. However, challenges still remain with moderate participation rates (<80% in 2011), high drop-out rates, school violence and gender disparities in academic achievement. While Trinidad and Tobago has achieved gender parity in education, it is now faced with the converse problem of the lower enrolment and success rate among boys. The Government recognizes this as a cause for concern and acknowledges the need to work with various stakeholders to address this issue.

The GoRTT is committed to achieving universal access to **early childhood care and education** (ECCE) and acknowledges that the skills developed in early childhood represents the foundation for future learning, skills building, labour market success and optimal development in the physical, cognitive, linguistic and socio-emotional areas. In 2014, over 80% of children aged 3-4 years (more than 33,000) had access to ECCE provided by 998 centres. The ECCE programme targets children 3-4 years but is not compulsory. ECCE is delivered through (i) government-assisted centres that are generally either state run or government partnerships with NGOs or denominational groups; (ii) SERVOL centres funded by the Government; and (iii) private centres owned and managed by entrepreneurs or institutions. The Draft Education Policy 2017 -2022, states that presently there are one hundred and fifty - one (151) fully operational Government and Government Assisted ECCE centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago, sixty-one (61) SERVOL managed centres and six hundred and ninety-one (691) Privately run ECCE centres. It should be noted however, that the standardised ECCE curriculum introduced by

the Ministry of Education a decade ago is still not being uniformly utilized by these providers and that the monitoring of the privately operated centres remains a major challenge.

The 2011 Census report identified 3,302 **children living with disabilities**, representing 1% of the child population and 6.3% of people with disabilities. The GoRTT is committed to providing inclusive and quality education to children with disabilities through the provision of the necessary human and physical resources. Over 2,300 children with disabilities received some form of assistance in 2014. Despite ongoing efforts, a major challenge remains the funding of strategic and operational initiatives.

Prospects of children entering, progressing and completing primary education are directly linked to their household and community situations. The GoRTT provides targeted assistance and **social safety net programmes** to students in the school system recognizing that inequalities begin very early, with the children at greatest disadvantage falling behind at the very start of their school experience. The National Schools Dietary Services provides free meals for pre-primary, primary and secondary schools. In 2013-2014, 64,422 breakfasts and 96,448 lunches were distributed. The textbook rental and loan programme distributed over 203,000 books to children in the school system, including learning materials designed for special education centres. The school health programme, free to children under the age of 14, completed 12,231 screening/tests for hearing impairment and 10,721 vision exams. Psychosocial support and counselling is also provided by the Student Support Services Division- however, an adequate staff to student ratio remains a challenge. The Education Policy (Draft), 2018 seeks to address many of the issues highlighted above.

Migration is a vital element in the history of the Caribbean, with Trinidad and Tobago being identified as having the largest migrant and refugee population. In July 2018, UNHCR recorded 6,849 registered persons of concern (including refugees and asylum seekers) in Trinidad and Tobago from 24 different countries. Out of these, 508 (7.4%) are children. Several others remain undocumented. Pending legislative reform, children within this context are unable to access public education unless a student permit is obtained, which is normally contingent on their parents obtaining work permits. In circumstances where they are able to access education, no system is in place to facilitate their participation.

1.4.3.4 Child Protection

The GoRTT is committed to ensuring that all children are protected from abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence. In 2013 a National Child Protection Task Force comprising a team of experts in the area of Child Care and Protection from the education, national security, health and medical, legal, non-governmental and State sectors, was established to carry out an in-depth situation analysis of the factors which cause and increase risks of crimes against children, and to make proposals on how legislation, State agencies, non-governmental organisations and all stakeholders, including parents, can better protect children. The Taskforce made some key recommendations. These included (a) establishing a Children's Ombudsman; (b) reviewing and enhancing the youth justice system, including creating a purpose built centre for female child offenders; (c) resourcing the Family Court; (d) strengthening Student Support Services; (e) ensuring funding for the National Children's Registry (f) introducing of a cost-per-child system for children in Community Residences; (g) establishing a Child Protection and Family Violence Police Unit; (h) reforming legislation to clearly define

'reasonable punishment', raise the age of marriage, and include access to education to immigrant children and children living with HIV/AIDS; and (i) establishing preventative measures for the protection of children through national parenting programmes, public sensitization, positive school disciplinary methods, and expansion of community health services.

Many of these recommendations have been actioned and specifically, great strides have been made in strengthening the child protection system through a host of legislative, policy, administrative and other measures geared towards fulfilling children's rights to protection from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. The establishment of a new and progressive child protection system governed by legislation has been a significant achievement. The Children's Authority Act, 2000 provides the legislative framework for the new child protection system and establishes the Children's Authority as the entity with responsibility for its administration. Its objects are to promote the well-being of all children in Trinidad and Tobago, provide care and protection for vulnerable children and comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The new system became operational in May 2015 by virtue of the proclamation of a package of children's legislation including the Children's Authority Act, 2000, the Children's Community Residences, Foster Care and Nurseries Act, 2000 and the Adoption of Children Act, 2000. Operationalization has entailed, *inter alia*, the establishment of new infrastructure such child assessment centres and child support centres across Trinidad and in Tobago, and the recruitment of hundreds of skilled staff.

Alternative care settings for children requiring out- of- home placements is a crucial aspect of the child protection framework and hence the mandate of the Children's Authority extends to regulation of Children's Homes and management and regulation of a foster care system under the umbrella of the Children's Community Residences, Foster Care and Nurseries Act, 2000. Regulations made pursuant to the Act prescribe the standards, consistent with international guidelines and best practice, that must be met by Children's Homes and foster carers. In December 2016 the Government introduced a pay-per-child system for Children's Homes and the quantum was increased in January 2019. Permanence via family reunification or adoption for children in alternative care settings is one of the principles underpinning the broad mandate of the Children's Authority and hence the Children's Authority also assumed responsibility for adoption arrangements. The Government acknowledges the importance of family settings as a primary placement option for children who require out-of-home placements

The role of the Authority is very specific in respect to the protection of children, especially its role when a child is taken to a place of safety. A child may be taken to a place of safety or seek refuge in a place of safety if specified offences have been or are likely to be committed against the child. Moreover, a child may also be taken to a place of safety -under a different procedure – for harm or the risk of such harm. Importantly, harm includes mental abuse, psychological suffering from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another and any act or omission which impedes or may impede or is detrimental to the physical, psychological, intellectual, social behavioral, mental or emotional development of a child. The Government acknowledges the implementation deficit of these provisions which may be allowing such children to fall through the cracks and is cognizant of the need therefore to develop protocols for implementation of these provisions.

Since its operationalization, the Authority has been able to assess the efficiency of its operations and has identified critical issues that have stymied the processes established by the legislation for the creation of a modern and effective child protection system. The package of legislation proclaimed in May 2015 has been kept under continuous review by the Government and the Children's Authority and has led to the introduction of significant reforms in 2016 (via the Family and Children Division Act, 2016) and in 2018 (via the Miscellaneous Provisions (Supreme Court of Judicature) Act, 2018). The Government is nevertheless cognizant that the new child protection system - in operation for just over four years- is evolving and that infrastructural, legislative and human resources gaps still remain. An area that requires special attention is detection of children at risk of abuse, neglect or harm. Another critical area relates to inter-agency cooperation as regards the power of the Children's Authority to make use of facilities and services available for children that are provided by other agencies or institutions. Many children coming to the attention of the Authority do not qualify to be received into the care of the Authority but nevertheless require support services and continued management of their cases as clearly recognized in the Children's Authority Act. The Authority is specifically empowered to make referrals and to liaise with support services and agencies for counselling, investigations and continued management of these cases but this has proven to be challenging. It is imperative to close the significant gap that exists in this regard to prevent such children from falling through the cracks.

The enabling environment for the protection of children is further shaped by several pieces of legislation which seek to strengthen the protection of children within the criminal justice system. For example, the Children Act, 2012 which came into force in May 2015, provides a framework for a collaborative relationship between the Children's Authority, the Police and the Court in the detection and management of child abuse cases. The Children Act, furthermore prescribes a wider and more comprehensive range of sexual offences against children including new offences such as sexual penetration, sexual touching, sexual grooming, child prostitution (including paying for the sexual services of a child) and child pornography. Other offences include female genital mutilation and cruelty to children. The special procedures introduced by the Act to minimize courtroom trauma are far-reaching and provide significant protection for child victims, especially victims of sexual abuse. The introduction of Children's Attorneys by the Children act, 2012 is also significant and enables the voice of the child to be heard. The Trafficking in Persons Act, 2011 has also sought to strengthen the protection of children from a criminal justice perspective.

These significant advancements were coupled with the establishment of several institutions including the Victim and Witness Support Unit and Child Protection Unit. Aggressive national public education campaigns addressing the issue, establishment of regulations and the introduction of a cost-per-child system for community residences were also introduced. Despite these advancements, child protection remains a challenge.

During October, 2017 to September, 2018, the Children’s Authority received 4451 reports of abuse. More than half (55.2%) of the cases involved girls with 42.9 % being boys. Children were of varied age groups, with almost one quarter (22.3%) of these children being between the ages of 10 and 13 years old. Children between the ages of 14 and 15 years old amounted to 17.3% while 7 to 9 year olds comprised 15%. The highest reported types of abuse were **neglect** (22.6%), **sexual abuse** (23.1%) and **physical abuse** (16.3%).

More than three quarters (78.4%) reported cases of sexual abuse were girls. The reports of the sexual abuse of girls greatly exceeded those for boys, with 21.6 percent of the reported victims of sexual abuse being boys. The

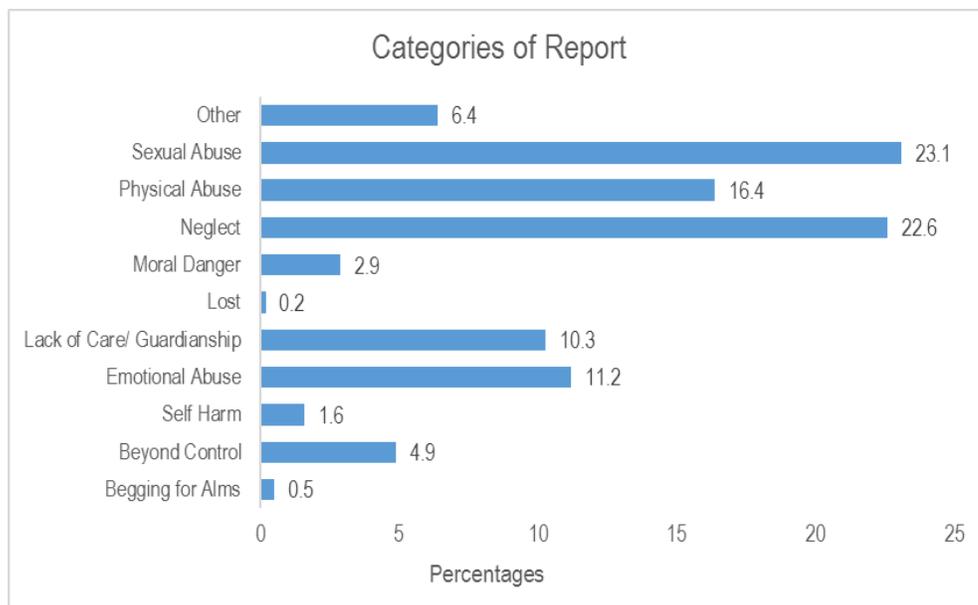


Figure 2 Breakdown of Reports Received by CATT Oct. 2017- Sept. 2018

Source: Children’s Authority of Trinidad and Tobago Annual Report, 2018

Authority’s 2018 Annual Report reveal data that point to almost equal levels of physical abuse and neglect among males and females. In terms of physical abuse, males accounted for 50.2% of reports while females amounted to 49.8%. In cases of neglect, 50.9% were females while 49.1% were males. Although low numbers of **emotional abuse** were reported, this type of abuse is highly practised within various settings and is sometimes seen as a cultural norm e.g. *‘picong’*². The ability to respond effectively to these cases is hindered by limited human and financial resources, lack of professional capacity, limited facility options (Family-based alternative care/ foster care parents remain low; and existing community residences have limited resources) to place children in need of care and protection, limited treatment and follow-up services, and challenges in interagency cooperation.

Corporal punishment in schools and community residences is prohibited. Reasonable’ corporal punishment of children by their parents or guardians is still allowed and there have been media reports of corporal punishment still being practised by some teachers. Peer violence, including **bullying** appears more prevalent especially within the school setting and with the technological advancements, **cyber bullying** among peers is also a growing issue. In one study (Seepersad, 2014) on violence and bullying that involved 1,248 students and 45 teachers, across 10 primary school, findings indicated that 98.4% of students had experienced one or more forms of bullying or victimization. On average, each child had experienced 13.1 different types and 41.3 incidents of bullying or victimization within a single term. The specifics of these encounters included 10.4 incidents of verbal victimization, 10.8 incidents of physical victimization, 14.5 incidents of social victimization, and 5.5 incidents of property theft or damage.

² A term used to describe jokingly insulting or teasing a person. This is culturally acceptable and is less likely to be perceived as emotional abuse.

Several initiatives have been undertaken to strengthen and modernise the **juvenile justice system**, including legislative reform and the implementation of the Juvenile Court Project. A framework for a modern juvenile justice system underpinned by modern principles of assessment, sentencing, rehabilitation, re-integration and independent legal representation was implanted in the Children Act, 2012 (with effect from May 2015). This acted as a catalyst for the Juvenile Court Project (a partnership among the Trinidad and Tobago Judiciary, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)). The JCT focussed on strengthening the capacity of the Judiciary to deal with children matters and adopted a rehabilitative, restorative and less retributive approach, consistent with international guidelines and standards such as the CRC and the provisions of the Children Act, 2012. This resulted in the enactment of the Family and Children Division Act, 2016, and consequently, the establishment two Children Courts in Port of Spain and Fyzabad respectively in February, 2018 to hear “children matters” which include, *inter alia*, children charge matters; children care matters; children drug matters; and children mental health matters. In keeping with these developments, new policy with respect to the detention of children in conflict with the law resulted in significant amendments to the Young Offenders Detention Act, Chap.13:05 which was also renamed the Child Rehabilitation Centres Act, 2016 to reflect a rehabilitative and re-integrative approach. New Regulations, the Child Rehabilitation Centres Regulations, 2017 made pursuant to the Child Rehabilitation Centres Act are also consistent with international standards and the Government’s international commitments on the treatment of children in conflict with the law. Under that Act, the Children’s Authority retains oversight responsibility for Rehabilitation Centres, given effect by virtue of the Children’s Community Residences (Rehabilitation Centres) Regulations, 2018.

The term “**Children in Need of Supervision**” is a new concept that reflects the reclassification of children once deemed “Beyond Control”. Via the Family and Children Division Act, (Schedule 5) amendments were made to Section 61 of the Children’s Act 12 of 2012. The law now states that “where a parent, guardian or person with responsibility for a child proves to the Children Court that he is unable to control the child and he desires alternative placement for the child, the Court shall order that the child be brought to the attention of the Children Authority. And where this applies, the child shall be termed a child in need of supervision.” and there was a reclassification of ‘beyond control’ children to ‘children in need of supervision’ (CHINS). During the period 28 February to 31 July 2018, 392 CHINS matters were filed, there were a total of 401 children appearing in those matters of which 205 (51%) were males and 196 (49%) were females. The majority, 231 (57.6%) were between the 16-18 age group. This is an area of concern for the Government. As such, the Government will focus on enhancing services and initiatives to support prevention, diversion, rehabilitation and reintegration of these children.

The Government reaffirmed its commitment to preventing **child labour** and **child trafficking** by ratification of the ILO Conventions on Minimum Age and Worst Forms of Child Labour, and the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, and by signing the Declaration of Regional Initiative: Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour in October 2014. Legislation is established for the prohibition of forced labour, commercial sexual exploitation, child trafficking, and using children in illicit activities. The minimum age for employment is 16 (with exceptions) and hazardous work recruitment into armed forces is 18 (16 with parental consent). However, a list clearly identifying hazardous occupations and activities for children remains pending. Institutional mechanisms

for the enforcement of related laws include the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (MOLSED), Office of the Director of Public Prosecution, and the Counter-Trafficking Unit. To coordinate efforts a National Steering Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Children Labour (in February 2018) and a National Task Force against Trafficking in Persons (in January 2016) were established.

Although the problem does not appear to be widespread, children are engaged in child labour, including in agriculture, and in the worst forms of child labour, including **in commercial sexual exploitation**, sometimes as a result of human **trafficking**. Historically, children perform simple tasks at home, on family farms and in family businesses and they can be seen on street corners and beaches selling various items, unaccompanied by an adult. The Government acknowledges the need for data on the nature and prevalence of child labour including its worst forms and proposes the development of programmes to address the issue.

Within recent years, the phenomenon of **children returning from conflict zones** represents a new and emerging situation for the country. While it is difficult to specify the exact numbers of children who have been removed from this country and transported to high conflict areas such as Syria, anecdotal evidence points to a number of child citizens having accompanied their parents to such jurisdictions. It is therefore not impractical to recognize that these children are highly likely to suffer, both due to the violence they witness or participate in, but also due to the fact that their 'normal' social, moral, emotional interaction and development have been disrupted by the experience. The literature is clear that exposure to multiple and repeated traumas can impact a child's development and increase their risk of physical and mental disorders in the future. Systems to support and reintegrate such children, upon their return to Trinidad and Tobago, are thus critical. Furthermore the possibility of their indoctrination or radicalization, while abroad, into extremism ideologies must be recognized and addressed.

The Government has partnered with over 50 countries under The Hague Convention and established legislation and systems to provide assistance for children who were **abducted** by a parent from one member nation to another, where the child was a habitual resident. During the period 2014-2017, the Civil Child Abduction Authority (CCAA) has facilitated the return of 21 children abducted to and from Trinidad and Tobago to their rightful place of habitual residence.

In 2010 an electronic birth registration system was introduced to accelerate the process and eliminate common errors of the manual process. In 2011, 98% of children under age 5 births were reported registered. There is no **birth registration** fee in Trinidad and Tobago and the Births and Deaths Registration Act, Chap. 44:01 stipulates that registration should occur within three months of birth. Registration of a child born to a married mother at the time of birth, can be done by the mother in the absence of the father. However, for a child born out of wedlock, the father's details can only be entered in the register if both parents attend together to register the birth. It is also possible for the father's details to be entered at a later date and birth registration can be completed by a legal guardian or person present at the birth.

Child marriage in Trinidad and Tobago was abolished by the Miscellaneous Provisions (Marriage) Act, 2017, which came in to force in October 2017. The Act amended the Marriage Act, Chap. 45:01, the Muslim Marriage

and Divorce Act, Chap. 45:02, the Hindu Marriage Act, Chap. 45:03, the Orisa Marriage Act, Chap. 45:04 to institute a uniform minimum age of marriage of 18 years across all four Marriage Acts.

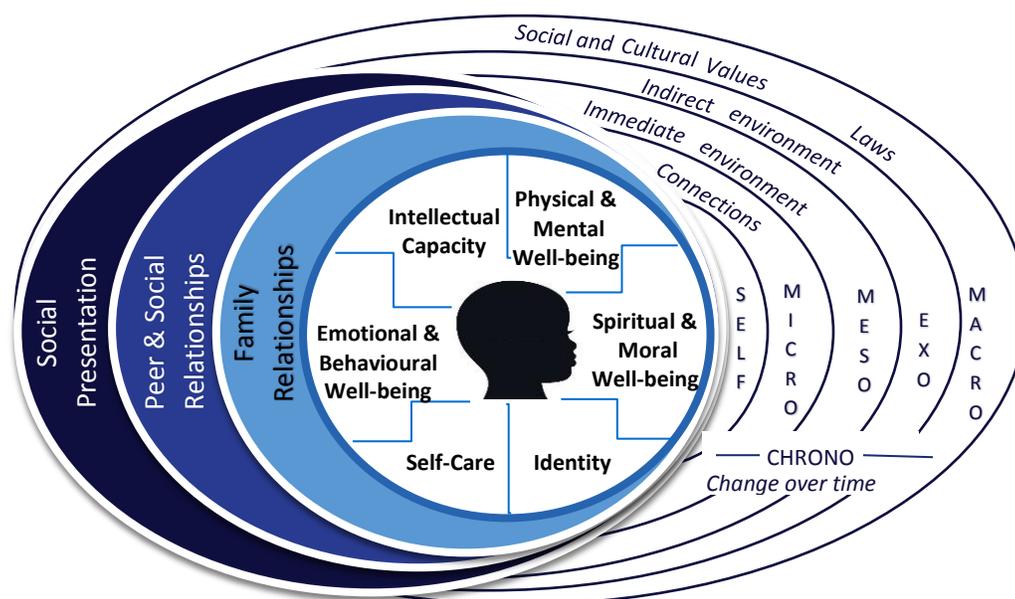
Female genital mutilation and children's participation in **armed conflict** are not customary in Trinidad and Tobago's context. Notwithstanding, legislation is in place to address these issues should they become relevant in the future. Additionally, steps were taken to reduce the impact of violent crimes in Trinidad and Tobago by the introduction of the Anti-Gang Act, 2011 designed to suppress associations for unlawful activities and better preserve public safety.

Conclusion

The development of this National Child Policy is indeed timely and critical as our nation strives towards Vision 2030 and to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The current analysis of the situation of children provides a basis upon which measures can be developed to improve the status of children in Trinidad and Tobago. Acknowledging the many advancements made to date whilst recognizing the several areas for improvement, the Policy crystallizes the government's commitment towards children's well-being and signifies a vital step towards charting the way forward to a better quality of life for all citizens.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this Policy is based on the recognition of the multi-dimensional nature of children’s lives. Adopting a whole child perspective acknowledges that a child’s life and circumstances affect and are affected by individual and external factors linked to individual capacities, relationships with their family, peers and wider society, and their social and cultural environments. These factors are integral to the physical, mental, emotional, behavioural, spiritual and moral well-being of children and impact on their intellectual capacity, sense of identity, ability to care for themselves and avoid risky behaviour. The approach also recognizes the ecological systems theory of human development which highlights the interrelationship between the child and the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chrono- systems in which they interact. As such the Policy takes into account the complexity, different stages and evolving contexts of children’s lives and seeks to capture the interconnected dimensions. A visual depiction of the resulting conceptual framework for the Policy is provided in *Figure 3* below.



Building upon these concepts the Policy adopts a child-centred, family-focused and integrated approach. It therefore requires the active participation and collaboration between families, communities, public and private sectors, and children themselves. Utilising this approach, the vision and outcomes established within the Policy are achievable by the attainment of strategic

Figure 3 National Child Policy Conceptual Framework, Trinidad and Tobago
 Source: Candice T. Wallace (2018), International Development Specialist

objectives through medium-long term strategies, which guide short-medium term actions and are supported by implementation frameworks. All of which are founded upon guiding philosophies and aimed at improving all aspects of children’s lives. The diagram of the Policy Framework is provided in *Figure 4* below:-



Figure 4 National Child Policy Framework, Trinidad and Tobago

2.2 Guiding Philosophies

The 8 guiding philosophies underlining this Policy are:

- 1 All children deserve the best:** All children regardless of their sex, nationality, race, religion, language, ability and socio-economic status should be afforded the best opportunities, equipped with the essential skills and capacities, and provided the necessary support to fulfil their maximum potential. Their rights, as outlined in the CRC, must be upheld, promoted and protected to ensure positive outcomes for our children and our nation. Children should be safeguarded from all risks of exclusion, whether material, social or emotional, and provided with quality, targeted and specialised services to address their vulnerabilities, needs and interests.
- 2 Children are our most valuable treasure:** The best interests of children must be given primary consideration in all matters. This requires expanding the narrow focus on issues relating to children and instead necessitates a recognition that all matters affect children to some extent, either directly or indirectly, now or in the future. Therefore their heterogeneity, interests, needs and views should be considered, and assessments should be systematically conducted to determine the resulting impact of laws, policies, actions, budgetary allocations and practices on children.
- 3 Child-centred, Family Focused:** Positive outcomes for children are best fortified within loving, resilient and well-functioning families and/or family environments. Focusing on creating a positive family environment and ensuring that families and caregivers are equipped with effective parenting skills, nurturing capacities and necessary support systems and assistance is crucial. Family and family environments are most conducive for the all-round development of children and children's placement in alternative settings should be avoided at all means and only be undertaken as a last resort.
- 4 It takes a Village:** The community plays a vital role in the development and well-being of children. Community participation, ownership and social mobilization are key in supporting families in the care, protection and development of our nation's children. The development of safe child-friendly communities, the strengthening of community-based approaches, and the provision of strong social safety nets to support families are sure ways to reinforce the social fabric of our nation.
- 5 Children should be seen and heard:** Childhood is an integral phase of life with a value of its own. Children are active social agents and should be heard and have their voices taken into account in matters that affect their lives. Ensuring opportunities for their active participation renders new perspectives and unique insights, fosters collective solutions, empowers them and encourages them to break the silence about child abuse. It is important to ensure meaningful involvement of children in key decision-making and the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes, policies and budget processes that affect them.
- 6 Together We Achieve:** To achieve positive outcomes for our children true partnership is required. There should be collaboration and coordination within and across government ministries and between the government and civil society, and between development partners, private sector, civil society and government ministries. This would optimize the implementation of the Policy by ensuring joint planning, complementarity between various activities, integration of activities with other interventions and services relating to the care and welfare of children and making sufficient resources available for scaling up of successful interventions.
- 7 Evidence-Informed, Results-Based and SMART:** All national stakeholders must be committed to collecting and sharing data, developing and implementing evidence-informed SMART approaches, and contributing to the generation of evidence of what works, how, where and why. This is critical to effective planning, measuring progress, promoting continuous learning, fueling improvement and achieving desired goals.
- 8 Walking the talk:** Achieving this Policy's objectives requires a fundamental shift in the awareness, norms, attitudes and practices of ALL social actors. The State must ensure the necessary legislative and policy frameworks, physical, human and financial resources, services and capacities are provided. Communities must stand cohesively, families and family environments must embody positive values and practices, and children must enjoy being children.

2.3 Vision and Mission

The Vision and Mission of the National Child Policy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago are as follows:

Vision

All children are happy, healthy and confident that their rights are respected, protected and promoted to facilitate their holistic development towards achieving their fullest potential as constructive members of society now and in the future.

Mission

To work collectively to promote and ensure the positive development, well-being, best-interests and empowerment of all children. This will be done through the recognition of their importance, prioritisation of their needs, respect and protection of their rights, and encouragement of their active participation. It will be ensured through the strengthening of their families and community environments, and provision of quality, efficient and specialized support and services.

2.4 Outcomes

The Policy seeks to ensure **6 outcomes** for all children.



Children are **loved**, fully accepted and appreciated for their unique qualities and being.



Children are valued, their needs are prioritized and their best interests are given paramount consideration



Children are **nurtured** and grow in healthy, safe environments which promote and foster their well-being and optimal development.



Children are **protected** from harm, violence and exploitation and their legal rights are upheld.



Children are **empowered** and given opportunities to play an active role as contributors to the society.



Children are **supported** and provided with quality services and necessary support.

2.5 Strategic Objectives

The realization of these 6 outcomes requires the attainment of strategic objectives tied to each outcome:

OUTCOME 1: Children are loved

Strategic Objectives

- Advocate for and promote Children's Rights and Responsibilities
- Advocate for relationships of care, trust and connection between children and their caregivers/families
- Enhance measures to ensure children are free from racism, discrimination and stigma
- Provide a full range of opportunities for children to develop, express and celebrate their talents

OUTCOME 2: Children are valued

Strategic Objectives

- Design and implement a National, Social and Behaviour Change Communication Campaign
- Create opportunities for children's achievements to be recognised and celebrated.
- Celebrate diversity and foster inclusion

OUTCOME 3: Children are nurtured

Strategic Objectives

- Ensure the provision of quality physical and mental health services for children.
- Enhance access to inclusive, quality education and learning opportunities.
- Provide support to families, family environments and caregivers.
- Provision of safe, child-friendly spaces for children's recreation, play and out-of-school care.

OUTCOME 4: Children are protected

Strategic Objectives

- Strengthen measures to prevent, identify, report and respond to abuse, abduction, exploitation, trafficking and neglect.
- Enhance measures to reduce children's involvement in violence and support their rehabilitation and family re-integration.
- Enhance measures to prevent child labour and children's involvement in hazardous work.
- Strengthen measures to prepare for, mitigate, respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters.

OUTCOME 5: Children are empowered

Strategic Objectives

- Provide opportunities for children to participate in decisions that affect them and the wider society.
- Enhance access to information and services aimed at reducing risky behaviour and facilitating informed decision-making.
- Provide children with opportunities for civic engagement and community service.
- Provide children with equal access to the skills, knowledge and capabilities for success in life, learning and work.

OUTCOME 6: Children are supported**Strategic Objectives**

- Enhance legislative and policy frameworks to support children’s well-being.
- Increase the provision of social protection mechanisms to support children and their families.
- Enhance the provision, development and operationalisation of support systems and specialised services for children.
- Ensure a coordinated approach to planning and provision of effective support systems and services for children.

2.6 Objectives, Strategies and Targets



1
**Children
are loved**

The core driving force in the Nation's desire to protect, support, value, empower and nurture the children of Trinidad and Tobago is LOVE. As social creatures all human beings are instinctively compelled to foster relationships with others. Theorists and research have long recognised that love is not a luxury but rather a core need in human development. Children come into the world with a basic emotional need to feel loved. As they grow, children continue to need love, acceptance and attention.

Through the development of loving relationships children build trust in other people, learn to love themselves and see the world as safe and positive. To this end, the Policy commits to establishing mechanisms through which children are able to develop a strong sense of self-acceptance and love, develop strong, caring, trusting social connections with others and where children are clear on their rights and responsibilities.

Advocate for and promote Children's Rights and Responsibilities

- Provide opportunities for age appropriate advocacy and information dissemination to children on their Rights and Responsibilities
- Implement a public Child Rights education programme, campaigns and outreach activities.
- Develop mechanisms to encourage the voices of children are heard and considered

Advocate for relationships of care, trust and connection between children and their caregivers/ families

- Implement social engagement activities at the community level
- Increase awareness of the necessity for positive social connection in the life of a child.

Enhance measures to ensure children are free from racism, discrimination and stigma

- Strengthen public awareness on the need to prevent discrimination, and on the promotion of the culture of tolerance towards others.
- Provide access to justice and support for children experiencing discrimination
- Improve the quality of service offered and the perception of children living in alternative care..

Provide a full range of opportunities for children to develop, express and celebrate their talents

- Support organizations and programmes designed to develop children's creative expression
- Implement platforms at the national and community levels for children to showcase their talent.



By 2030, children enjoy social connections that allow the full realization of their rights and responsibilities and where they are free from discrimination and are accepted for who they innately are.



Working towards the realization of positive outcomes for children requires society to recognize the importance and value of children and translate the principles set out within this Policy into practice. It also calls for ensuring that children’s best interest is given paramount consideration, their needs are prioritized and any risk is assessed and mitigated. The Policy also recognizes the value of social inclusion and respect for diversity. In a cosmopolitan nation as ours celebrating diversity is common, the Policy seeks to expand this celebration to groups of children who are often marginalized for e.g. children living with disabilities, children with mental health challenges, migrant children, children in care and children with specialised needs. To ensure that no child is left behind the Government acknowledges the need to adequately invest in social support structures for children with disabilities and those with specialised needs.

Design and implement a National, Social and Behaviour Change Communication Campaign

- Implement a Joint National Advocacy and Social Behaviour Change Communication Campaign.
- Conduct periodic review the effectiveness of the Strategy and its impact on knowledge, attitude and behaviour change.
- Review all children’s and child-related programmes to ensure they have a component of advocacy and communication built within them.

Create opportunities for children’s achievements to be recognised and celebrated

- Expand the categories for national achievement awards to children under age 12.
- Develop national publications highlighting the achievements of children and the work done to improve children’s lives.

Celebrate diversity and foster inclusion.

- Create national forums for ‘Celebrating Diversity’ and combating discrimination.
- Strengthen and streamline policies, systems, programmes and services to support the inclusion of children with disabilities and specialised needs.
- Develop a National Strategy for Children with Disabilities and Special Needs



By 2030 children’s survival, protection and development are prioritized and evidenced in the planning and development of policies, programmes and budgets, and in the attitudes and practices of the public at large.



Children thrive in loving, stable and secure environments. Families, communities, and schools have a crucial part to play in nurturing children and promoting their well-being. Their physical and emotional development is critical and quality services that support the achievement of key child development milestones must be ensured in order to secure positive outcomes. The fundamental role played by fathers, mothers and

Provide support to families, family environments and caregivers to care for children.

- Provide and support the implementation of the National Parenting Policy and Programme, and Family Policy.
- Implement family support plans and enhance access to specialised family services as needed. Special focus should be place on single parents and teenage parents.
- Strengthen the provision and quality of out-of-school care and introduce measures to support work-life balance.
- Establish programmes to strengthen community resilience and community-based mechanisms to support children and enhance family functioning.

Ensure the provision of quality physical and mental health services.

- Enhance pre-natal and post-natal care and support to parents.
- Enhance screening, diagnostic, curative and palliative services to children to facilitate early medical and psychological treatment.
- Scale up the provision and access of primary health care services, nutritional advice and support, including infant and young child feeding, in communities.
- Review the Mental Health Policy/Plan and enhance measures to address children's mental health needs.
- Develop mechanisms and guidelines for the coordination and institutionalisation of HFLE, inclusive of age-appropriate sexual health education, in all primary and secondary schools. Enhance strategies to address adolescent sexuality, teenage pregnancy and parenthood.

Enhance access to quality inclusive education services, including ECD, and learning opportunities

- Develop a National Strategy for Inclusive, Quality Education
- Establish an ECD Strategy and regulatory system for ECD including Nurseries.
- Expand and improve access to quality comprehensive early childhood care and education.
- Ensure inclusive, safe, child-friendly schools and quality education that utilises different pedagogies to support each child's active participation, academic achievement and overall readiness for the modern world.
- Improve children's access to extra-curricular activities and out-of-school learning opportunities.



By 2030 the capacity of families and communities has been improved to support children in realizing their full rights and potentials, and provide them with loving, safe and supportive environments.

Provide safe child-friendly spaces for recreation and play.

- Establish and/or provide incentives for the establishment of age-appropriate child-friendly spaces within community, public and private spaces for play and recreation.
- Enhance measures to increase children's access to and participation in recreational, sports and cultural activities.
- Enhance measures to ensure that the natural and built environments support children's safe and healthy physical and social well-being.



Creating a protective environment for children continues to be at the forefront of the national agenda. Children should be free from violence, exploitation, harm and unnecessary separation from their families. As such, laws, services and practices must be collectively strengthened to prevent harm to children, minimize risks, provide specialised treatment, promote their rehabilitation and uphold their legal rights. The Policy acknowledges that the protection of children is everyone's responsibility and preventative measures should be prioritised to ensure every child is protected.

Strengthen measures to prevent, identify, report and respond to abuse, abduction, exploitation, trafficking and neglect.

- Implement a National Child Safeguarding Strategy and mainstream child protection in all child-related programming and training.
- Enhance care, treatment and support services for children who are victims and/or witnesses of violence, unaccompanied by or separated from their parents.
- Establish sufficient family-based alternative care options, including strengthening adoption and foster care systems.
- Enhance the capacity of caregivers to provide adequate treatment and care of children and promote parent's involvement where possible.

Enhance measures to reduce children's involvement in violence and support their rehabilitation and restoration.

- Promote and support the implementation of a National Violence Prevention Strategy.
- Review the age of criminal responsibility and enhance legal representation for children.
- Expand restorative practices, including implementing pre- and post-charge diversionary programmes at community, police and judicial levels.
- Ensure a child-friendly justice system and enhance rehabilitative programmes ensuring parental/family compulsory involvement throughout the programme, where possible, and within a framework of parenting education and support.
- Establish adequate transition homes, follow-up programmes and employment opportunities for children leaving detention and community residences.

Enhance measures to prevent child labour and children's involvement in hazardous work.

- Define hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children.
- Implement strategies to assess and categorise the prevalence of child labour and develop initiatives to address the issue.
- Assess the impact that educational and poverty-reduction initiatives may have on reducing child labour, especially in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation.

Strengthen measures to prepare for, mitigate, respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters.

- Develop a National Plan for Comprehensive Emergency Disaster Management.
- Develop and Implement Disaster Preparedness Plans for all child facilities, i.e. community residences, ECD centres, remand and detention facilities, schools, etc.



By 2030, policy, legislation, leadership and coordination at all levels have been improved to prevent, protect and respond to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of all children.




Children are empowered

Children's active participation is integral to their development, supports a sense of belonging and citizenship, and teaches democratic principles such as tolerance and civil responsibility. Active participation also supports critical thinking, a sense of autonomy, and enhances children's self-esteem and resilience. The Policy acknowledges that listening to and incorporating children's perspectives provide an opportunity to contextualize strategies and policies to effectively address their realities and support their needs. The Policy recognizes that informed persons are better positioned to make better choices. As such, providing quality information to duty bearers as well as to children is critical as it affords them the opportunity to be well-equipped in avoiding risks and being more self-sufficient in generating solutions. .

Provide opportunities for children to participate in decisions that affect them and the wider society .

- Enhance children's engagement in democratic processes, social activities, environmental activism and social entrepreneurship.
- Host national children's fora where children's views can inform and be incorporated in the development of national policies and programmes.
- Create accessible and secure feedback mechanisms for children's view on effectiveness of programmes and services provided within both public and private settings.

Enhance access to information and services aimed at reducing risky behaviour and facilitating informed decision-making.

- Provide access to quality information that promotes healthy lifestyles and skills, provides risk reducing and prevention tips, encourages positive disciplinary practices and addresses the informational needs of children and their families.
- Enhance efforts to improve online safety and limit children's exposure and access to age-inappropriate materials and information.

Provide children with opportunities for civic engagement and community service.

- Provide financial support to initiatives and programmes that motivate, educate, and support children to actively participate in society
- Provide opportunities and support for volunteerism and activism among and by children.

Provide children with equal access to the skills, knowledge and capabilities for success in life, learning and work

- Establish information system for children
- Develop an inclusive, fair, effective and efficient system of formal and non-formal education.
- Increase children's capacity to make improved life choices.



By 2030, children's active participation in policy and programme development, implementation and evaluation has been institutionalized at national and community levels.



Supporting children efficiently is contingent on the policy and legislative frameworks, availability of resources, capacity of systems, quality of services, partnerships and collaborative efforts, and level of commitment of all involved. In a strained economy there is a need to facilitate pooling of resources for interlinked interventions and for examining cost-effective strategies that could utilise ICT and community based mechanisms. The Policy acknowledges that commitment is needed at all levels to ensure all children are adequately and efficiently supported. A holistic approach is needed to avoid fragmented service delivery and to maximise available resources. The Policy encourages multi-disciplinary partnerships working collectively within their respective roles and responsibilities whilst integrating their services around the needs of the child.

Enhance legislative and policy frameworks to support children's well-being

- Harmonise all existing legislation and policies with internationally ratified and/or signed conventions.
- Sign/Ratify international conventions to re-establish the government's commitment to improving the lives of children.
- Amend and fully proclaim sections of the package of children's legislation and develop policies and regulations to address gaps and establish the necessary supporting frameworks.

Increase the provision of social protection mechanisms to support children and their families

- Implement a national strategy aimed at addressing child poverty and breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty by ensuring food security and access to social services.
- Expand social safety net provisions including, grants, supplemented nutrition programmes and cash based interventions to adequately support children faced with socio-economic vulnerabilities and specialised needs.
- Establish a national programme to support the transition children to independent living.

Enhance the provision, development and operationalization of support systems and specialized services for children

- Strengthen the human resource capacity of all national child agencies, divisions and units, namely CATT, CPU, VWSU, SSSD, OPM, CTU, NFS and CCAA.
- Establish operational manuals and standards of conduct for each Ministry/Agency providing children and/or child related services.
- Establish a national training programme for all levels of staff working with children.
- Strengthen the provision of and access to wraparound services to support children's well-being.
- Develop facilities to adequately support the provision of and easy access to integrated and inclusive children's services.
- Develop cost-effective services through greater use of community-based and innovative service delivery models (e.g. ICT).

Ensure a coordinated approach to planning and provision of effective support systems and services for children.

- Implement a National Protocol for Inter-Agency Coordination for Children in need of care and protection.
- Strengthen support to CSOs (NGOs, CBOs & FBOs) to address gaps in service provision and ensure collaboration in programme implementation.
- Establish effective coordination and resource mobilisation mechanisms to ensure public-private and international partnership supporting the integration of services, scale-up and sustainability of interventions.

Establish a National Research Agenda to provide strong, empirical support in child well - being policies and strategies

- Develop and systematically update an online child research repository and shared knowledge management system.
- Establish a National Child – Focus Research Agenda
- Establish a National Children’s Registry

Design and deliver support services to satisfy the diverse needs and priorities of children and their care givers

- Integrate child-centred budget analysis and child-impact risk assessments in the development of legislation, policies, programmes and budgets.
- Review policies, programmes and services that affect children to ensure the protection, participation and provision in the best interest of children.
- Establish the Office of the Children’s Commissioner



By 2030, the technical, institutional and human resource capacity of government and its social protection system have been improved to ensure that all children have access to essential quality services.

2.7 Key Areas of Concern

While this Policy aims to provide an umbrella framework, the GoRTT wishes to highlight 6 key areas of concern which require prioritisation and the development of specialised strategies/plans to fortify and support the realization of positive outcomes for our children. As such, the following policy measures have been identified which are to be implemented within the first two-three years of this Policy. These are:-

1. **Early Childhood Development:** The Government recognises that investing in ECD is essential for ensuring optimal educational achievement, life-long learning, securing children's overall well-being and boosting the long term social and economic growth of a country. The quality of care and education provided is of utmost importance. High quality ECCE yields the highest rate of investment and brings a range of social benefits including better health, reduced likelihood of risky behaviours, and stronger civic and social engagement. Measure to be prioritised:-

Development of a National ECD Strategy and Regulatory Framework for ECCE including Nurseries

2. **Social Protection:** The Government acknowledges that this Policy should be reinforced by broader comprehensive strategies and family-oriented policies aimed at reducing poverty, helping parents balance work and family life, and promote the value of equal parental responsibilities. The Policy should therefore be supported by national strategies that provide adequate income supports, affordable housing, accessible community and social support services, and workplace policies such as flexible hours and on-site childcare. Measure to be prioritised: -

Development of a National Poverty Reduction Strategy with a focus on Child Poverty

Development of a National Parenting Policy

3. **Health:** The Government reinforces the National Maternal and Child Health and School Health Policies and acknowledges the gaps in mental health services integral to address children's psychological well-being. Measure to be prioritised:-

Development of a National Child and Adolescent Mental Health Plan

4. **Children with Special Needs:** The Government acknowledges that specialised services should be established for children with special needs - to include children with physical, developmental, behavioural/emotional and sensory impairments. The Government recognises that children with special needs are often marginalised and require additional support to reach their fullest potential. This requires the scaling-up and development of specialised and/or inclusive services and environments. Measure to be prioritised:-

Development of National Strategy for Children with Special Needs

5. **Education:** The Government acknowledges that all children should have access to quality education that adequately prepares them for the modern world. The Government recognises that inclusive and quality education is one that caters to individual learning styles and abilities, harnesses individual potentiality and provides all learners with capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods and enhance their individual well-being. Measure to be prioritised:-

Development of a National Strategy for Inclusive and Quality Education

6. **Child Protection:** The Government reaffirms its commitment to ensuring that children are protected from all forms of harm and are able to live and thrive in safe environments that support their overall well-being. The high levels of abuse and violence call for targeted efforts focusing primarily on prevention coupled with strengthening response mechanisms. Measure to be prioritised:

Development of a National Child Safeguarding Strategy

The Government recognizes that the successful implementation of this Policy is contingent on the existence of the following key factors. As such, this Policy seeks to establish, strengthen and build mechanisms to give added effect to this Policy.

3.1.1 Governance

The **Child Affairs Division, Office of the Prime Minister** shall be the lead agency responsible for ensuring the implementation of the National Child Policy through: -

- Coordinating the development of the National Implementation Plan, supporting/leading the development of the prioritised measures and implementing strategies identified in this Policy.
- Coordinating the development and implementation of a National Public Advocacy and Social Behaviour Change Strategy.
- Strengthening coordination between stakeholders involved in child programmes and services.
- Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of child strategies towards achieving the outcomes and objectives within the Policy.
- Facilitating spaces for children's participation, stakeholder networking, information sharing, and capacity development of professionals.

3.1.2 Legal and Policy Framework

All Ministries should undertake an immediate review of existing child-related legislation and policies to ensure their alignment with the tenets set out in this Policy. In cases where anomalies are found, revisions will be undertaken.

All Ministries will additionally ensure that the development of new child-related legislation and policies is informed and guided by the principles outlined within this Policy.

All Ministries must ensure congruence between this Policy and other National Policies which may directly or indirectly impact children, for e.g. The National Youth and Parenting Policies.

3.1.3 Cross-Sectoral Planning and Integrative Approach

A **cross-sectoral committee** shall be appointed by Cabinet to oversee the implementation of this Policy. The committee will jointly plan and coordinate the execution of elements outlined in the National Implementation Plan. This committee will provide quarterly reports to the Child Affairs Division, Office of the Prime Minister, on the progress made by their respective Ministry/Agency. The committee in its ongoing review of the Implementation Plan must highlight areas of complementarity and synergies between and across sectors, identify priorities and build on prior achievements as the country moves towards identified targets. The

committee may establish technical working groups to ensure integrative approaches in implementation of the Plan and to ensure that results for children are achieved across all sectors.

A **child ambassador sub-committee** shall be established by the Office of the Prime Minister to ensure children's active participation in monitoring and incorporating children's perspectives during the implementation of this Policy. The sub-committee will be co-chaired by an OPM representative and an appointed child ambassador. The sub-committee will review and provide feedback on, inter alia, quarterly reports submitted by the cross-sectoral committee.

3.1.4 Human and Financial Resources

A **detailed, costed National Implementation Plan** has been developed to accompany this Policy (See Annex I). Each Ministry and Agency will feed into the ongoing refinement of this Plan, indicating planned activities and the required human and financial resources for the period of implementation.

Child Budgeting should be instituted to track allocation and utilization of resources and its impact towards achieving the outcomes for children as outlined in this Policy.

Resource mobilization strategies should be undertaken to attract additional funding sources and guide collaborative opportunities with development partners.

A **national assessment of the human resource and capacity development needs** for an effective child development sector should be undertaken to:-

- Inform the development of a human resource management plan for the child development sector.
- Guide the prioritisation of all child-related professions in the National Human Resource Needs plan, and make available more opportunities for scholarship programmes to address the human resource needs.
- Support the establishment or curriculum review of tertiary education programmes and/or specialised training to ensure the development of core competencies required.
- Inform a capacity development plan for all levels of child-related workers across all sectors.

3.1.5 Research, Data collection, Monitoring and Evaluation

A **National Child-focused Research Strategy** should be developed to guide both quantitative and qualitative data collection, inform policies and programmes, analyse trends, highlight emerging issues and promote knowledge development.

A comprehensive **mapping and assessment** of children's access to national services should be undertaken to identify gaps in service delivery and to inform the development of strategies aimed at addressing those gaps.

U-Report and other virtual and physical platforms for research should be enhanced to strengthen collaboration and information sharing between academia, civil society, public and private sectors.

The **National Children's Registry**, a child focused information management system, should be established to track the progress on key indicators established to measure progress towards the achievement of outcomes for children outlined in the Policy.

3.1.6 Accountability

An **Office of the Children's Commissioner of Trinidad and Tobago (OCC)** should be established. This Office will function as the accountability and regulatory mechanism for all agencies that provide services to children. It will monitor implementation of the CRC and investigate complaints made by or on behalf of children that relate to either the actions of agencies that provide services for children, or decisions that affect them. The key roles of the Office will be to:

- ensure that the system of care, justice and service delivery that exists for children is effective and responsive to their needs; and
- promote the best interests and participation of children in all matters, with the aim of enabling full enjoyment of their rights.

Accountable to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, the Office will perform legal, administrative and regulatory, advisory, and educational/advocacy functions in the pursuit of these roles.

3.1.7 Continuity and Sustainability

This Policy should be viewed as a child-centred, family-focused investment strategy for the well-being of all our children and society at large. To ensure objectives are achieved, the sustainability of this Policy is essential. In identifying outcomes for children this Policy acts as a stepping stone towards the creation of feasible and desirable implementation plans. Reviewing and evaluating the Policy is imperative in order to ensure sustainability in the long term. A comprehensive Review of this Policy will be undertaken in 2025 in consultation with all stakeholders, including children. The review will be led by the Ministry/Agency with national responsibility for child affairs and revised to ensure continued relevance and feasibility. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago commits to ensuring its continuity and sustainability.

The National Child Policy provides an overall framework for the care, protection and development of children in Trinidad and Tobago and offers long-term guidance to support suitable legislation, interventions and infrastructure that would further ensure the rights of each child.

The Policy outlines 80 strategies related to promoting and ensuring the positive development, well-being, best-interests and empowerment of all children. Through its proposed activities, the Policy recognises children's importance, prioritises their needs, respects and protects their Rights and encourages their active participation. These outcomes will be ensured through the strengthening of families and communities and the provision of quality, efficient and specialized services and support.

The implementation of the Policy will be pursued through the establishment of various structures, mechanisms and processes. These include a governance structure under the auspices of the Child Affairs Division, Office of the Prime Minister; strengthened legal and policy frameworks across sectors; cross-sectoral planning and integrated implementation facilitated through the establishment of a Cabinet- appointed Cross-Sectoral Committee; adequate human and financial resources informed by costed national implementation plans; research, data collection, monitoring and evaluation. Policy efforts will be further complemented by the establishment of the National Children's Registry; increased accountability through the establishment of Office of the Children's Commissioner; and ensured continuity and sustainability to withstand political shuffles.

The successful implementation of the Policy requires a fundamental shift in the awareness, norms, attitudes and practices of ALL social actors. The recognition that all children regardless of age, sex, race, ability, religion or origin, are integral to the well-being and economic development of our country is critical. Not only because of their anticipated contributions as adults of tomorrow but as active citizens today. This necessitates a cultural shift in how we view and treat children and it requires a commitment that must be embraced by all. Trinidad and Tobago's success will rely heavily upon the continuous evolution and strengthening of its capacity to drive and deliver on the commitments of the UNCRC.

Critical success factors emanating from this Policy include a better understanding of children's needs and interest, providing them with spaces for their active participation, supporting their family and communities, protecting them from harm and guaranteeing that they have quality services and support. Achieving positive outcomes for our children requires collaboration and coordination across government ministries, between the government and civil society, and between development partners, private sector, civil society and government ministries.

Recognising the value of children, the Government commits to ensuring that children are placed at the forefront of national planning and development. As such, the Government is committed to ensuring the necessary legislative and policy frameworks, physical, human and financial resources, services and capacities are provided to support the implementation of this Policy. Through committed coordinated and strategic partnerships between public, private, and civil sectors, communities, families and children themselves, children will be loved, valued, nurtured, protected, empowered and supported. The fulfilment of these outcomes represents an improvement in the quality of life for our nation as a whole, now and in the future.

Annex I: Costed, National Implementation Plan

CHILDREN ARE LOVED						
Strategic Objective	Strategies/Projects	Major Activities for Strategies/Projects	Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Responsible Agency	Cost
Advocate for and promote Children's Rights and Responsibilities	Provide opportunities for age appropriate advocacy and informational dissemination to children on their Rights and Responsibilities	Produce child-friendly materials. Dissemination of resource material via numerous mediums. Engage/train duty bearers on the tenets of the CRC. Establish peer educators/ child champions for the CRC.	No. of child friendly resources created. No. of child engagements	2020 – 2022	All Agencies	\$750,000
	Implement Child Rights education programmes, campaigns and outreach activities	Design content for mass, public dissemination across varied mediums. Host public, educational outreach activities. Evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the campaign	No. of outreach No. of M&E reports	2020 – 2022	All Agencies	\$750,000
	Develop mechanisms to encourage the voices of children to be heard and considered	Engage stakeholders and website developers to design a child friendly, national website for child engagement. Select website name and design website. Develop criteria and procedures for children's submissions. Disseminate/ communicate the guidelines. Review and select relevant stories, cases and submissions. Upload and update content on the online forum	Design of website completed. Launch of website for child engagement No. of submissions No. of website hits/ visits	2021 – 2025	OPM	\$350,000

Annex I: Costed, National Implementation Plan

Advocate for relationships of care, trust and connection between children and their caregivers/ families	Implement social engagement activities at the community level	Build capacity for trust, care and respect at the community and familial levels. Support organisations and programmes aimed at reducing social isolation of communities, families or individuals	No. of social engagement activities	2022 – 2025	All Agencies	\$500,000
	Increase awareness of the necessity for positive social connection in the life of a child.	Create promotional materials. Conduct public sensitization campaigns. Consult communities, groups and stakeholders on mechanisms to mitigate social disconnection.	No. of promotional resources created No. of outreach events	2020 – 2022	All Agencies	\$400,000
Enhance measures to ensure children are free from racism, discrimination and stigma	Strengthen public awareness on the need to prevent discrimination, and on the promotion of the culture of tolerance towards others.	Create and support the creation of promotional materials, guides and manuals. Conduct public advocacy campaigns. Monitor and evaluation the effects and improvement of reported cases of discrimination and stigmatization.	No. of promotional resources created No. of outreach events	2022 – 2025	All Agencies	\$300,000
	Provide access to justice and support for children experiencing discrimination	Established protocols for duty bearers to report and /or intervene in cases of child discrimination. Support organisations and programmes aimed at providing support to victims of discrimination or advocating of social tolerance.	Finalised protocols No. of reported cases	2022 – 2025	All Agencies	\$0

Annex I: Costed, National Implementation Plan

		Establish hotlines or like mechanisms for the reporting of cases.				
	Improve the quality of service offered and the perception of children living in alternative care.	<p>Conduct a comprehensive review of all residential homes and alternative care facilities. Institute quality standards for residential homes .</p> <p>Establish mechanisms for the ongoing monitoring of, and accountability by residential homes.</p> <p>Provide opportunities to prepare children for transition to independent productive lives.</p> <p>Support the provision of age appropriate training and intervention to strengthen the self – esteem and resilience of children living in alternative care.</p>	<p>Completed report on review.</p> <p>Finalised quality standards.</p> <p>No. of M&E audits and reports.</p> <p>No. transition programmes</p>	2022 – 2025	OPM/ Residential Home	\$2 mil
Provide a full range of opportunities for children to develop, express and celebrate their talents.	Support organizations and programmes designed to develop children’s creative expression	<p>Fund and support organisations and programmes aimed at developing the creative expressions of children.</p> <p>Conduct workshops and seminars reinforcing the benefits and strategies for children to express themselves creatively.</p>	<p>No. of CSO/CBO/FBO supported</p> <p>No. of workshops/ seminars.</p>	2022 – 2025	All Agencies	\$300,000
	Implement platforms at the national and community levels for children to showcase their talent	<p>Fund and support organisations and programmes aimed at showcasing children’s talent.</p> <p>Develop criteria and procedures for selection.</p>	<p>No. of talent showcases</p>	2022 – 2025	All Agencies	\$400,000

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		Disseminate and market developed guidelines. Showcase children's talents.				
CHILDREN ARE VALUED						
Strategic Objective	Strategies/Projects	Major Activities for Strategies/Projects	Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Responsible Agency	Cost
Design and implement a National, Social and Behaviour Change Communication Campaign	Implement a Joint National Advocacy and Social Behaviour Change Communication Campaign addressing areas of concern identified in this Policy.	Constitute a group of relevant experts/ stakeholders. Identify areas/issues of concern. Prioritise and design messages, slogans and information for mass dissemination. Identify appropriate mediums. Engage in public – private partnerships for development of resources. Roll out the campaign.	No. of national advocacy/ communication programmes implemented.	2025 – 2027	All Agencies	\$1.5 mil
	Conduct periodic review on the effectiveness of the Strategy and its impact on knowledge, attitude and behaviour change.	Identify the indicators, goals and objectives to be measured. Conduct data collection Report findings	% targeted audience reached. Stakeholder feedback on campaigns	2025 – 2027	OPM	\$200,000
	Review all children's and child-related programmes to ensure they have a component of advocacy and communication built within it.	Engage stakeholders. Collate a database/ list of all programmes and initiatives related to children. Conduct comprehensive review of each. Report Findings Advocate for improvement where needed.	No. of children's/child-related programmes with advocacy and communication component.	2025 – 2027	All Agencies	\$0
Create opportunities for children's	Expand the categories for national achievement awards	Develop criteria and procedures for child selection.	No. of awardees under age 12.	2020 – 2022	OPM	\$0

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achievements to be recognised and celebrated.	to children under the age of 12.	Disseminate/ communicate the new guidelines. Screen applicants and identify award recipients.				
	Develop national publications highlighting the achievements of children and the work done to improve children's lives.	Engage stakeholders on the design and content of newsletter. Establish mechanisms to collect submissions for newsletter. Launch publication. Publish quarterly/ biannual/ annual issues	No. of publications developed.	2022 – 2025	OPM	\$500,000
Celebrate diversity and foster inclusion	Create national forums for 'Celebrating Diversity' and combating discrimination.	Engage stakeholders on the design and content of events/forums Develop criteria and procedures for content selection. Disseminate/ communicate the guidelines to all stakeholders. Review submissions and select relevant cases/ stories Host national forums.	No. of national forums held. % of attendees with satisfactory feedback.	2025 – 2027	All Agencies	\$1 mil
	Strengthen and streamline policies, systems, programmes and services to support the inclusion of children with disabilities and specialised needs.	Collate a database of all policies, plans, programmes, and initiatives related to children with disabilities and specialised needs. Conduct comprehensive reviews. Report Findings Advocate for improvement, collaboration or streamlining where needed.	No. of inclusive policies, systems, programmes and services. No of programme reviews and revisions.	2022 – 2025	All Agencies	\$300,000
	Develop a National Strategy for Children with Disabilities and Special Needs	Conduct a comprehensive situational analysis on Children	Finalised National Strategy for Children with	2020 – 2023	OPM/MoE/ MoH/MSD/ THA	\$500,000

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		with Disabilities and Special Needs. Review findings and engage stakeholders and partners. Support the development of a national strategy to address gaps and strengthen service provision. Promote and implement the national strategy.	Disabilities and Special Needs			
CHILDREN ARE NURTURED						
Strategic Objective	Strategies/Projects	Major Activities for Strategies/Projects	Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Responsible Agency	Cost
Provide support to families, family environments and caregivers.	Promote and support the implementation of the National Parenting Policy and Programme.	Engage in stakeholder consultations. Draft and implement National Parenting Policy and Programme Monitor policy implementation and impact.	National Parenting Policy and Programme developed. No. of participants in the Programme	2020 – 2023	MSDFS	\$600,000
	Implement family support plans and enhance access to specialised family services as needed.	Engage stakeholders in the evaluation of the needs and gaps of individual communities and families. Develop individualized support plans for communities and families. Implement family/ community support plans.	No. of families benefiting from plans and/or services	2023 – 2026	MSDFS	\$400,000
	Strengthen the provision and quality of out-of-school care and introduce measures to support work-life balance.	Conduct community assessments on availability, capacity and quality of out of school care.	No. of measures developed and implemented.	2023 – 2026	OPM/MSDFS/ MOE/ MCD/ THA	\$300,000

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		Support civil society and community organisation in the provision of out of school care. Establish volunteer programmes for out-of-school care and support groups Establish operational guidelines and mechanisms for ongoing monitoring.				
	Establish programmes to strengthen community resilience and community-based mechanisms to support children and enhance family functioning.	Conduct assessments of community resources, capacity and needs. Implement programmes to address community needs and build internal capacities. Monitor the impact and outcome of training/intervention.	No. of community-based programmes implemented.	2025 – 2030	MSDFS/MCD/THA	\$700,000
Ensure the provision of quality physical and mental health services for children.	Enhance pre-natal and post-natal care and support to parents.	Survey parents and caregivers to determine what additional pre- and post-natal supports or service they need. Source resources to expand or deliver on areas of support identified. Monitor the expansion and deliver of priority services or support.	% target population reached with services.	2025 – 2028	MOH/THA	\$500,000
	Enhance screening, diagnostic, curative and palliative services to children to facilitate early medical and psychological treatment.	Develop and implement training to support health care service providers on screening for mental and medical health issues. Expand the delivery of screening, diagnostic, curative and palliative services at the community level.	% targeted population reached	2023 - 2027	MOH/THA	\$2 mil

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	Scale up the provision and access of primary health care services and nutritional advice and support, including infant and young child feeding, in communities.	Support community based organizations and other civil society groups in the delivery of health care services and nutritional advice and support at the community level. Monitor and evaluate the efficacy and quality of interventions or services.	% targeted population with access to health care services	2025 – 2030	MOH/THA	\$500,000
	Review the Mental Health Policy/Plan and enhance measures to address children’s mental health needs.	Engage stakeholders in the review and strengthening of the Mental Health Policy/Plan. Engage stakeholders in the review and strengthening of School Health Policies. Advocate for child specific considerations and strategies. Expand acute mental health care options for children and adolescents. Establish specialised long term mental health care placement options for children and adolescents. Broaden the scope of specialised mental health therapeutic services for children and adolescents	Child Mental Health Policy/Plan developed. No. of measures implemented.	2020 – 2023	MOH	\$1500,000
	Develop mechanisms and guidelines for the coordination and institutionalisation of HFLE, inclusive of age-appropriate sexual health education, in all	Advocate for ongoing public conversations on mental, physical and sexual health issues. Engage stakeholders and experts in the development of age appropriate messages or content.	No. of schools with HFLE implemented. No. of children benefitting from programme.	2023 - 2026	MOH/MOE	\$0

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	primary and secondary schools.	Develop guidelines for the inclusion of developed messages Sensitize parents and caregivers on the objectives, goals and benefit of proposed content inclusion.				
	Enhance strategies to address adolescent sexuality, teenage pregnancy and parenthood.	Design and deliver youth specific messaging related to sexuality, teenage pregnancy and parenthood. Partner with or support community based organizations and other civil society groups working addressing these issues. Monitor and evaluate the efficacy and quality of interventions or services	% target population reached with services.	2023 – 2026	All Agencies	\$600,000
Enhance access to inclusive, quality education and learning opportunities.	Establish an ECD Strategy and regulatory system for ECD including Nurseries.	Collate a database/ list of all service providers in ECD. Engage stakeholders in the development of regulatory guidelines and procedures for ECD. Draft and implement ECD Strategy and Guidelines Stakeholder sensitization events re: ECD Strategy	ECD Strategy & Regulations established. No. of registered ECD service providers. No. of stakeholder sensitization events	2020 – 2023	MOE/CA	\$750,000
	Develop a National Strategy for Inclusive, Quality Education	Conduct research to identify factors impacting the provision of inclusive, quality education. Engage stakeholders in the development of a National Strategy for Inclusive, Quality Education.	National Strategy for Inclusive, Quality Education developed No. of stakeholder sensitization events	2020 – 2023	MOE	\$400,000

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		Draft said strategy and guidelines. Sensitize stakeholders				
	Expand and improve access to quality comprehensive early childhood care and education.	Develop quality assurance criteria for ECCE providers. Communicate and promote these quality standards among stakeholders Support individuals and groups in the expansion of ECCE across Trinidad and Tobago Monitor the efficacy and quality of ECCE services. Develop in-service workshops and training opportunities for the upskilling of ECCE teachers	% targeted population with access to ECCE No. of professional development/in service training events	2020 – 2024	MOE	\$800,000
	Ensure inclusive, safe, child-friendly schools and quality education that utilises different pedagogies to support each child’s active participation, academic achievement and overall readiness for the modern world.	Conduct research on flexible teaching and assessment methods. Provide resource and research to stakeholders supporting flexible, inclusive education and training. Develop in-service workshops and training opportunities for the upskilling and professional development of teachers Advocate for schools to institute anti bullying campaigns and interventions.	No. of inclusive, child friendly initiatives in schools. No. of professional development/in service training events.	2023 – 2026	MOE/THA	\$500,000
	Improve children’s access to extra-curricular activities and out-of-school learning opportunities	Advocate for school administrators to include extracurricular/recreation and play in the school curricula Develop guidelines and systems for adherence to rostered	% targeted population with access to learning opportunities & extracurricular activities	2025 – 2030	MOE/OPM/MSYA/THA/MCD	\$500,000

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		<p>extracurricular/ recreation and play sessions.</p> <p>Conduct audits of existing extracurricular/recreation and play service providers and initiatives at the community level.</p> <p>Engage community groups and civil society to increase opportunities for play and informal recreation.</p>				
Provide safe child-friendly spaces for children’s recreation, play and out-of-school care.	Establish and/or provide incentives for the establishment of age-appropriate child friendly spaces within community, public and private spaces for play and recreation.	Support, advocate and encourage the increased provision of age-appropriate child friendly spaces within community, public and private spaces.	No. of child-friendly spaces established.	2020 – 2023	All Agencies	\$800,000
	Enhance measures to increase children’s access to and participation in recreational, sports and cultural activities.	Support and encourage the increased provision of cultural and recreational content at the school and community levels. Fund or subsidies sporting and cultural events/ activities within vulnerable communities. Support campaigns promoting children’s participation in recreational, cultural and sporting events.	No. of children participating in sports and cultural activities.	2023 – 2026	All Agencies	\$600,000
	Enhance measures to ensure that the natural and built environments support children’s safe and healthy physical and social well-being.	Refurbish or build new sporting facilities. Engage public and private security providers to ensure safety at facilities.	No. of refurbished or built facilities.	2025 – 2030	OPM/MCD/MSYA/THA	\$2.5 mil

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CHILDREN ARE PROTECTED						
Strategic Objective	Strategies/Projects	Major Activities for Strategies/Projects	Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Responsible Agency	Cost
Strengthen measures to prevent, identify, report and respond to abuse, abduction, exploitation, trafficking and neglect.	Implement a National Child Safeguarding Strategy and mainstream child protection as a component in all child-related programming and training.	Conduct national research and develop a national Child Safeguarding Strategy Expand Child Friendly Initiative in schools Provide opportunities for capacity development of CP workers Roll out positive behaviour management programme for parents and caregivers	National Strategy developed and implemented. No. of capacity development initiatives.	2020 – 2023	OPM/CA/MOE/MSDFS/THA	\$2.8 mil
	Enhance care, treatment and support services for children who are victims, witnesses of violence, unaccompanied or separated from their parents.	Develop National Child Protection Protocol Launch bi-lingual anti child trafficking public education campaign at schools Develop Victim Care Guidelines for Children of Trafficking Develop Re-integration and Social Inclusion Policy on children exposed to armed conflict and terrorism Establish Case Management Systems in all agencies Decentralise and expand Child Guidance Clinic Expand programmes for children who witness violence and armed conflict	Established National Child Protection Protocol. No. of developed guidelines and policies Established Case Management System. No. of targeted population with access to services	2020 – 2022	MNS/MOH/CA/OPM	\$4.5 mil
	Establish sufficient family-based alternative care	Expand and strengthen the national adoption system	No. of children in foster care.	2020 – 2022	CA/AGLA	\$2 mil

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	options, including strengthening adoption and foster care systems.	Expanded Foster Care Programme Revise the Births and Deaths Registration Act to allow anonymous birth	No. of children adopted.			
	Enhance the capacity of alternative care providers to provide adequate treatment, care and after-care of children, and promote parent's involvement where possible.	Conduct assessment of the capacity needs of care provider and prioritise interventions. Conduct capacity development workshops/training for care providers. Establish in-patient and out-patient child mental health services. Expand number of licensed community residences. Establish specialised community residences for children with disabilities and developmental challenges. Establish safe shelter for children who were trafficked and unaccompanied children. Establish Family Stabilisation Fund.	No. of caregivers trained. No. of parent's actively involved.	2020 – 2026	OPM/CA/MNS/MOH/M SDFS	\$8.5 mil
Enhance measures to reduce children's involvement in violence and support their rehabilitation and family re-integration.	Promote and support a National Violence Prevention Strategy.	Develop National Child Violence Prevention Strategy	Strategy developed and implemented.	2022 – 2025	OPM	\$500,000
	Review the age of criminal responsibility and enhance	Revise Children Act to increase age of criminal responsibility to 12.	Age of Criminal Responsibility raised to 12.	2022 – 2027	AGLA	\$2.4 mil

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	the provision of legal representation for children.	Revise Legal Aid Advisory Act to include legal representation for motor vehicle offences Establish Children Public Defender Unit under the Public Defender Unit Develop Duty Counsel Policy for Children	No. of children with legal representation. Established Children Public Defender Unit.			
	Implement restorative practices including pre- and post-charge diversionary programmes at community, police and judicial levels.	Establish Probation Training Centre for pre and post diversionary programming for girls 12-17 Expand Community Mediation Services to include pre and post diversionary programming	Pre and Post Charge diversion programme established. No. of children participating in the programme.	2020 – 2023	MNS/MCD	\$2.5 mil
	Ensure a child-friendly justice system and enhance rehabilitative programmes ensuring parental/family compulsory involvement throughout the programme, where possible, and within a framework of parenting education and support.	Revise Prison Services Act and Regulations to include YTRC. Revise organisational structure of TTPrS to include Youth Training Centre Capacity Development of Justice Sector Workers	No. of children involved in rehabilitative programmes. No. of parents involved. No of capacity development activities.	2022 – 2026	MNS/AGLA	\$800,000
	Establish adequate transition homes, follow-up programmes and employment opportunities for children leaving detention.	Establish transition homes/hostels with after-care programming Roll-out of rehabilitation, reintegration and restoration programmes	No. of programmes established. No. of children accessing the programmes.	2020 – 2024	OPM/MNS/MSDFS	\$1 mil
Enhance measures to prevent child labour and children's	Define hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children.	Create a list of hazardous occupations for children Develop OSH regulations for children	List of defined hazardous occupations developed	2022 – 2025	MOLSED	\$0

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involvement in hazardous work.						
	Implement strategies to assess and categorise the prevalence of child labour and develop initiatives to address the issue.	Conduct national research on prevalence and classification of child labour and its impact on education and poverty reduction strategies. Engage/consult stakeholders in the identification of strategies to mitigate the reported issues	Assessment report completed. No. of stakeholder engagements/ consultations	2022 – 2025	MOLSED	\$700,000
	Assess the impact that educational and poverty-reduction initiatives may have on reducing child labour, especially in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation.	Conduct national research on the impact of educational and poverty reduction initiatives on child labour.	Assessment report completed.	2023 – 2026	MOLSED	\$300,000
Strengthen measures to prepare for, mitigate, respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters.	Develop a National Plan for Comprehensive Emergency Disaster Management.	Develop National Child Protection Plan for Comprehensive Emergency Disaster Management. Build capacity of key actors to provide psychosocial support.	National Plan established. No. of persons trained.	2023 – 2026	OPM/ODPM / THA	\$600,000
	Develop and Implement Disaster Preparedness Plans for all child facilities, i.e. community residences, ECD centres, remand and detention facilities, schools, etc.	Develop Comprehensive Emergency Disaster Plans for Children facilities (schools, community residences, YTC, etc.)	No. of facilities with Plans developed.	2025 – 2030	OPM/ODPM /MOE/MNS/ THA	\$1 mil
CHILDREN ARE EMPOWERED						
Strategic Objective	Strategies/Projects	Major Activities for Strategies/Projects	Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Responsible Agency	Cost

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Provide opportunities for children to participate in decisions that affect them and the wider society	Enhance children's engagement in democratic processes, social activities, environmental activism and social entrepreneurship.	Establish an umbrella child/youth organisation (i.e Child Ambassadors) to ensure young persons are represented in decision making at varied levels. Build the capacity and 'know how' of child representatives and groups to actively participate in national conversations. Establish protocols for a National Child Engagement Model to facilitate child participation	No. of children actively participating in events. No. of events/activities involving children at the decision making level.	2020 – 2024	All Agencies	\$1 mil
	Host national children's fora where children's views can inform and be incorporated in the development of national policies and programmes.	Compile an updated database of children's groups or associations. Mass engagement of children on topics of importance to them and society. Increased marketing, promotion and visibility of child participation.	No. of national forums held. No. of children actively participating in the forums.	2020 – 2024	All Agencies	\$2 mil
	Create accessible and secure feedback mechanisms for children's view on the effectiveness of programmes and services provided within both public and private settings.	Identify the metrics for use in reviewing programmes and services. Consult children on the best strategy to garner their feedback on services and programmes. Design a Child Engagement Model. Involve children in the identification of needs and monitoring of beneficiary satisfaction.	No. of programmes/ services/initiative reviewed with the inclusion of children's feedback.	2023 – 2027	All Agencies	\$500,000
Enhance access to information and services aimed at reducing risky	Provide access to quality information that promotes healthy lifestyles and skills, provides risk reducing and	Produce guidelines and procedures for the establishment of Child Health Clubs in schools.	No. of child friendly resources developed.	2020 – 2025	OPM/MOH/ MOE/CA/ MSDFS/THA	\$600,000

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behaviour and facilitating informed decision-making.	prevention tips, encourages positive disciplinary practices and addresses the informational needs of children and their families.	Collaborate with experts on innovative ways to include content on health lifestyle in national school curricula. Produce child friendly material and resources for dissemination to children. Host STDs and HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns at schools and communities.	No of health/ lifestyle campaigns hosted.			
	Enhance efforts to improve online safety and limit children's exposure and access to age-inappropriate materials and information.	Identify and advocate for appropriate content. Produce child-friendly material to increase children's awareness of risk. Host educational outreach activities/ mass sensitization campaigns with caregivers and children. Evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the campaign/activities.	No. of child-friendly material developed. No. of sensitization events/ activities	2020 – 2025	All Agencies	\$650,000
Provide children with opportunities for civic engagement and community service	Provide financial support to initiatives and programmes that motivate, educate, and support children to actively participate in society	Fund of initiatives and programmes of registered children/ youth organisations/groups. Support the establishment of children/ youth centres, groups and associations at the community levels. Establish programmes and training to strengthen capacities for active child participation at the national and community levels.	No. of child/youth organisations supported. No. capacity building activities. No of child/ youth organisations established.	2025 – 2028	MCD/MOE/ OPM/MSYA/ THA	\$2.5 mil

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	Provide opportunities and support for volunteerism and activism among and by children	Launch community volunteer services through schools and religious bodies. Promote volunteerism among children. Establish age appropriate online platforms for information exchange on opportunities for children/youth volunteer work. Mobilise children to contribute	No. child volunteerism initiatives. No of sensitization activities.	2025 – 2028	All Agencies	\$400,000
Provide children with equal access to the skills, knowledge and capabilities for success in life, learning and work.	Establish an information system for children	Establish age appropriate online platforms to share on topics of interest to children. Produce and disseminate information and material important to children. Establish better networking capacities among child related organisations for timely sharing of information.	Online platform established. No. of child-friendly material developed.	2025 – 2028	All Agencies	\$250,000
	Develop an inclusive, fair, effective and efficient system of formal and non-formal education.	Provide a range of artistic and cultural initiatives to widen children’s exposure to varied competencies. Develop age appropriate life skills training for children. Strengthen the capacity of educational institutions to address the different needs of children. Establish quality standards for non-formal education programmes	No. of non – academic initiatives introduced. Established quality standards. No of capacity building initiatives.	2025 – 2028	MOE/THA	\$1 mil

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		Conduct research into the factors contributing to educational attrition.				
	Increase children's capacity to make improved life choices	Increase the career guidance capacity in schools and youth organisations. Establish career guidance and counselling centres at the community level. Produce and disseminate technical and vocational information	No. of career guidance activities. No of informational material produced.	2023 – 2026	MOE/ MOLSED	\$2.5 mil
CHILDREN ARE SUPPORTED						
Strategic Objective	Strategies/Projects	Major Activities for Strategies/Projects	Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Responsible Agency	Cost
Enhance legislative and policy frameworks to support children's well-being.	Harmonise all existing legislation and policies with internationally ratified and/or signed conventions.	Engage an Inter- Ministerial Policy Council to comprehensively review all existing policies. Conduct comprehensive reviews on all existing laws. Conduct mapping exercise (i.e. laws and policies vs requirements of signed/ratified conventions) Harmonise laws and other enactments.	No. of harmonised legislation and policies	2025 – 2030	All Agencies	\$1 mil
	Sign/Ratify international conventions to re-establish the government's commitment to improving the lives of children.	Conduct comprehensive review of international conventions and protocols. Sign/ ratify conventions that will effectively contribute to national well-being.	No. of signed/ratified Conventions	2023 – 2027	OPM	\$0
	Amend and fully proclaim sections of the package of children's legislation and	Comprehensively review existing children's legislature.	No. of legislations, policies,	2025 – 2030	AGLA	\$0

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	develop policies and regulations to address gaps and establish the necessary supporting frameworks	Support the process of preparation, consultation and adoption of new laws to cover any gaps and better address the needs of children. Lobby for the adoption of amendments/ supplements laws failing to provide adequate protection against discrimination and vulnerability.	regulations developed.			
Increase the provision of social protection mechanisms to support children and their families.	Implement a national strategy aimed at addressing child poverty and breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty by ensuring food security and access to social services.	Support the process of preparation, consultation and adoption of a national poverty reduction strategy.	National Strategy Developed.	2020 – 2023	OPM/MSDFS/THA	\$500,000
	Expand social safety net provisions including, grants, supplemented nutrition programmes and cash-based interventions to adequately support children faced with socio-economic vulnerabilities and specialised needs	Conduct programmatic review of safety net provisions and beneficiary access. Review/ amend guidelines for the grant/support provisions Expand provisions.	No. of social safety net provisions. No. of beneficiaries.	2024 – 2028	All Agencies	\$1.5mil
	Establish a national programme to support the transition children to independent living.	Engage stakeholders and service providers. Support the process of preparation, consultation and identification of mandatory elements of a National Transition Programme.	A National Transition Programme design and piloted.	2024 - 2028	OPM/ CATT/ THA/	\$500,000

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		Design and pilot a transition programme. Expand service.				
Enhance the provision, development and operationalisation of support systems and specialised services for children.	Strengthen the human resource capacity of all national child agencies, divisions and units.	Conduct a manpower/ human resource audit. Identify capacity gaps across all national child divisions/units or agencies. Provide access to training opportunities. Recruit priority staff.	Manpower audit completed. No. of professional development programmes	2023 – 2027	All Agencies	\$600,000
	Establish operational manuals and standards of conduct for each Ministry/Agency providing children and/or child related services.	Define minimum operational standards for services aimed at children. Define minimum standards for nurseries, day care, juvenile justice and residential homes. Introduce robust mechanism for mandatory screening of staff of service providers.	No. of agencies with manuals and standards. Mandatory screening introduced.	2025 – 2030	All Agencies	\$250,000
	Establish a national training programme for all levels of staff working with children.	Conduct a competency analysis of service providers. Identify skill gaps Train relevant workers and stakeholders in skills needed to effectively engage and serve the needs of children.	No. of persons trained.	2025 – 2028	All Agencies	\$600,000
	Strengthen the provision of and access to wraparound services to support children's well-being.	Conduct comprehensive reviews of all services in support of child well being. Establish inter – agency collaboration. Engage in active inter agency partnerships	No. of targeted population with access to services	2025 - 2030	All Agencies	\$0

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	Develop facilities to adequately support the provision of and easy access to integrated and inclusive children's services.	Engage stakeholders and service providers. Support the process of preparation, consultation and adoption of a Social Services Integration Plan. Establish customer contact centres which provide one-stop access to information and advice across a full range of social services.	Social Service Integration Plan developed. No. of integrated and inclusive facilities established	2024 – 2027	All Agencies	\$300,000
	Develop cost-effective services through greater use of community-based and innovative service delivery models (e.g. ICT).	Engage stakeholders, service providers and community based organisations. Identify opportunities for community-based delivery of social services. Support decentralization of services among community based organisations.	No. of community-based delivery models established	2023 – 2027	All Agencies	\$300,000
Ensure a coordinated approach to planning and provision of effective support systems and services for children.	Implement a National Protocol for Inter-Agency Coordination for Children in need of care and protection.	Support the process of preparation, consultation and implementation of a National Protocol for Inter -Agency Coordination.	National protocol developed and finalised.	2020 – 2023	All Agencies	\$1 mil
	Strengthen support to CSOs (NGOs. CBOs & FBOs) to address gaps in service provision and ensure collaboration in programme implementation.	Engage stakeholders, service providers and community based organisations. Identify gaps in CSO operations and functions. Establish systems of accountability and quality assurance.	No. of grants provided to CSOs. No. of impact assessments. No of capacity development initiatives	2020 – 2024	All Agencies	\$3.5 Mil

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		Strengthen CSO capacity and competencies in service provision.				
	Establish effective coordination and resource mobilisation mechanisms to ensure public-private and international partnership supporting the integration of services, scale-up and sustainability of interventions.	Engage stakeholders. Establish mechanisms for effective coordination and resource mobilisation by service providers	No. of coordination meetings held. Resource mobilisation strategy developed.	2024 – 2028	All Agencies	\$500,000
Establish a National Research Agenda to provide strong, empirical support in child well - being policies and strategies.	Develop and systematically update an online child research repository and shared knowledge management system.	Design and launch an online clearing house for research and programmatic evaluations. Establish guidelines and procedure for research submissions to the repository. Promote and encourage use by researchers.	Online research repository established. No. and frequency of uploads	2025 – 2030	All Agencies	\$400,000
	Establish a National Child – Focused Research Agenda	Conduct a comprehensive mapping and assessment of the data sources and needs in the child development sector. Consult stakeholders to determine information/data gaps in policy making and operation. Develop incentives to solicit research support from a range of research partners.	A National Child Focused Research Agenda identified.	2020 – 2024	All Agencies	\$1.5 mil
	Establish a National Children’s Registry	Identify appropriate metrics and indicators for use in the ongoing monitoring, assessment and evaluation of the national child development sector	National Children’s Registry established.	2020 - 2023	OPM	\$2 mil

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		Design database for hosting of Registry Establish guidelines and procedure for collection and uploading of required metrics and indicators. Promote and encourage the collection of needed data from a range of stakeholder.				
Design and deliver support services to satisfy the diverse needs and priorities of children and their care givers	Integrate child-centred budget analysis and child-impact risk assessments in the development of legislation, policies, programmes and budgets.	Identify appropriate content and design material for training in child centred budgeting and risk assessment. Host educational workshops with public sector representatives and civil society organisations. Evaluate and monitor the roll out of child centred budgeting and risk assessments within policies and programmes.	No. of educational workshops. No of agencies with child budgeting instituted	2025 – 2030	OPM	\$500,000
	Review policies, programmes and services that affect children to ensure the protection, participation and provision in the best interest of children.	Collate a database/ list of all policies, plans, programmes, and initiatives related to children. Conduct comprehensive review of each. Report Findings Advocate for improvement, collaboration and streamlining where needed.	No. of policies, programmes and services reviewed.	2024 – 2028	All Agencies	\$0
	Establish the Office of the Children’s Commissioner	Develop the Terms of Reference for the post of Commissioner. Recruit an appropriately qualified and experienced professional	Children’s Commissioner recruited. Office of the Children’s	2023 – 2026	OPM	\$1.5 mil

Annex I: Costed, National Implementation Plan

		Provide the human, financial, administrative and legal resources for the operations of the Office.	Commissioner established.			
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OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN ARE LOVED

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	MEASURABLE INDICATOR	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
1.1 Advocate for and promote Children's Rights and Responsibilities	1.1.1 Provide opportunities for age appropriate advocacy and informational dissemination to children on their Rights and Responsibilities	No. of child friendly resources created. No. of child engagements	Agency reports Publications	All Agencies
	1.1.2 Implement Child Rights education programmes, campaigns and outreach activities	No. of outreach No. of M&E reports .	Programme Document, Agency Reports	All Agencies
	1.1.3 Develop mechanisms to encourage the voices of children to be heard and considered .	Design of website completed. Launch of website for child engagement No. of submissions No. of website hits/ visits	Agency reports	OPM
1.2 Advocate for relationships of care, trust and connection between children and their caregivers/ families	1.2.1 Implement social engagement activities at the community level .	No. of social engagement activities	Agency reports.	All agencies
	1.2.2 Increase awareness of the necessity for positive social connection in the life of a child. .	No. of promotional resources created No. of outreach events	Publications, Agency reports	All agencies
1.3 Enhance measures to ensure children are free from racism, discrimination and stigma	1.3.1 Strengthen public awareness on the need to prevent discrimination, and on the promotion of the culture of tolerance towards others	No. of promotional resources created No. of outreach events	Publications, Agency reports	All agencies
	1.3.2 Provide access to justice and support for children experiencing discrimination	Finalised protocols No. of reported cases	Agency Reports	All agencies
	1.3.3 Improve the quality of service offered and the perception of children living in alternative care	Finalised quality standards. No. of M&E audits and reports. No. transition programmes	Agency reports	OPM/ Residential Home
1.4 Provide a full range of opportunities for children to develop, express and celebrate their talents.	1.4.1.Support organizations and programmes designed to develop children's creative expression	No. of CSO/CBO/FBO supported No. of workshops/ seminars	Agency reports	All agencies
	1.4.2 Implement platforms at the national and community levels for children to showcase their talent	No. of talent showcases	Agency reports	All agencies



OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN ARE VALUED

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	MEASURABLE INDICATOR	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
2.1 Advocacy and Social Behaviour Change Communication	2.1.1 Establish and implement a Joint National Advocacy and Social Behaviour Change Communication Strategy, in participation with all stakeholders, around the philosophies, outcomes and areas of concern identified in this Policy.	No. of national advocacy/ communication programmes implemented. % targeted audience reached.	Cabinet approved Strategy.	All Agencies
	2.1.2 Review all children's and child-related programmes to ensure they have a component of advocacy and communication built within it.	No. of children's/child-related programmes with advocacy and communication component.	Programme Document, Agency Reports	All Agencies
	2.1.3 Conduct periodic review the effectiveness of the Strategy and its impact on knowledge, attitude and behaviour change.	% of targeted audience with improved KAPs	KAPs Survey Results	OPM, OFCC (Lead)
2.2 Prioritise children's issues	2.2.1 Develop and systematically update an online child research depository and shared knowledge management system.	KMS established. No. and frequency of uploads	KMS, Metadata, Data analytics.	OPM, OFCC (Lead) with input from all
	2.2.2 Integrate child-centred budget analysis and child-impact risk assessments in the development of legislation, policies, programmes and budgets.	No. of agencies with child budgeting instituted.	Budget reports, programme documents, Policy	All agencies
	2.2.3 Review policies, programmes and services that affect children to ensure the protection, participation and provision in the best interest of children.	No. of policies, programmes and services reviewed.	Agency Reports	All agencies
2.3 Create spaces to celebrate diversity and foster inclusion	2.3.1 Create national forums for 'Celebrating Diversity' and combating discrimination.	No. of national forums held. % of attendees with satisfactory feedback.	Agency Reports M&E Reports	All agencies
	2.3.2 Strengthen and streamline all policies, systems, programmes and services to support the inclusion of children with disabilities and specialised needs.	No. of inclusive policies, systems, programmes and services. % targeted population with access	Agency Reports Research	All agencies

OUTCOME 3: CHILDREN ARE NURTURED

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	MEASURABLE INDICATOR	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
3.1 Enhance support to families and family	3.1.1 Promote and support the implementation of the National Parenting Policy and Programme.	% target population participated in the Programme	Attendance Register – Agency Report	MSDFS (Lead) OPM, MOE, MOH
	3.1.2 Implement family support plans and enhance access to specialised family services as needed.	No. of families benefiting from plans and/or services	Agency Report	MSDFS (Lead) OPM, MOE, MOH



environments to care for their children.	3.1.3 Strengthen the provision and quality of out-of-school care and introduce measures to support work-life balance.	No. of measures developed and implemented.	Agency Report	OPM (Lead) MCD, MOE, MOH
	3.1.4 Establish programmes to strengthen community resilience and community-based mechanisms to support children and enhance family functioning.	No. of community-based programmes implemented.	Agency Report.	MCD, MLG, OPM, THA
3.2 Ensure the provision of quality physical and mental health services for children.	3.2.1 Enhance pre-natal and post-natal care and support to parents.	% target population reached with services.	Agency Report	MOH
	3.2.2 Enhance screening, diagnostic, curative and palliative services to children to facilitate early medical and psychological treatment.	% targeted population reached	Agency Report. Statistical Reports.	MOH
	3.2.3 Scale up the provision and access of primary health care services and nutritional advice and support, including infant and young child feeding, in communities.	% targeted population with access to health care services	Research, Agency reports on caseload	MOH
	3.2.4 Review the Mental Health Policy/Plan and enhance measures to address children's mental health needs.	Child Mental Health Policy/Plan developed. No. of measures implemented.	Policy Document approved by Cabinet. Agency report.	MOH
	3.2.5 Develop mechanisms and guidelines for the coordination and institutionalisation of HFLE, inclusive of age-appropriate sexual health education, in all primary and secondary schools.	No. of schools with HFLE implemented. No. of children benefitting from programme.	Agency Report. Attendance records.	MOE
3.3 Improve access to quality inclusive education services, including ECD, and learning opportunities.	3.3.1 Establish an ECD Strategy, regulatory and support systems for ECD, including Nurseries.	ECD Strategy & Regulations established. No. of registered ECD service providers.	ECD Strategy & Regulations approved by Cabinet	MOE, CATT, OPM
	3.3.2 Expand and improve access to quality comprehensive early childhood care and education.	% targeted population with access to ECCE	Register	MOE
	3.3.3 Ensure inclusive, safe, child-friendly schools and quality education with different pedagogies to support each child's active participation, academic achievement and overall readiness for the modern world.	No. of inclusive, child friendly schools. No. of schools providing quality education.	Assessment Reports Research	MOE
	3.3.4 Improve children's access to extra-curricular activities and out-of-school learning opportunities.	% targeted population with access to learning opportunities & extracurricular activities	Research	MCD, MLG, MSYA, OPM THA
3.4 Enhance community environments through the provision of safe child-friendly spaces for recreation and play.	3.4.1 Establish and/or provide incentives for the establishment of age-appropriate child friendly spaces within community, public and private spaces for play and recreation.	No. of child-friendly spaces established.	Agency reports	All Agencies
	3.4.2 Enhance measures to increase children's access to and participation in recreational, sports and cultural activities.	No. of children participating in sports and cultural activities.	Agency reports	All agencies
	3.4.3 Enhance measures to ensure that the natural and built environments support children's safe and healthy physical and social well-being.	No. of measures implemented.	Agency reports	All agencies



OUTCOME 4: CHILDREN ARE PROTECTED

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	MEASURABLE INDICATOR	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
4.1 Strengthen measures to prevent abuse, abduction, exploitation, trafficking and neglect of children.	4.1.1 Implement a National Child Safeguarding Strategy and mainstream child protection as a component in all child-related programming and training.	National Strategy developed and implemented.	Strategy approved by Cabinet.	OPM and CATT
	4.1.2 Enhance care, treatment and support services for children who are victims, witnesses of violence, unaccompanied or separated from their parents.	No. of targeted population with access to services	Agency Report	All Agencies
	4.1.3 Establish sufficient family-based alternative care options, including strengthening adoption and foster care systems.	No. of children in foster care. No. of children adopted.	Agency Report	CATT
	4.1.4 Enhance the capacity of alternative care providers to provide adequate treatment, care and after-care of children, and promote parent's involvement where possible.	No. of caregivers trained. No. of parent's actively involved.	Register	OPM
4.2 Enhance measures to reduce children's involvement in violence and strengthen restorative, rehabilitative and reintegration programmes.	4.2.1 Promote and support a National Violence Prevention Strategy.	Strategy developed and implemented. No. of children involved in crime.	Statistical reports	MNS
	4.2.2 Review the age of criminal responsibility and enhance the provision of legal representation for children.	Age of Criminal Responsibility raised to 12. No. of children with legal representation.	Legislation Agency Report	MLA, LAA
	4.2.3 Implement restorative practices including pre- and post-charge diversionary programmes at community, police and judicial levels.	Pre and Post Charge diversion programme established. No. of children participating in the programme.	Agency Report Register	MNS, MCD
	4.2.4 Ensure a child-friendly justice system and enhance rehabilitative programmes ensuring parental/family compulsory involvement throughout the programme, where possible, and within a framework of parenting education and support.	No. of children involved in rehabilitative programmes. No. of parents involved.	Agency Report Register	MNS, Children Court, CATT
	4.2.5 Establish adequate transition homes, follow-up programmes and employment opportunities for children leaving detention.	No. of programmes established. No. of children accessing the programmes.	Agency Report Register	OPM, MSDFS
4.3 Enhance measures to prevent child labour and children's involvement in hazardous work.	4.3.1 Define hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children.	List of defined hazardous occupations developed	List approved by Cabinet	MOLSED, OPM, CATT
	4.3.2 Implement strategies to assess and categorise the prevalence of child labour and develop initiatives to address the issue.	No. of initiatives developed and implemented.	Agency Report	MOLSED, OPM, CATT
	4.3.3 Assess the impact that educational and poverty-reduction initiatives may have on reducing child labour, especially in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation.	Assessment report completed. No. of child labourers.	Agency Report. Statistical report	MOLSED, OPM, CATT



4.4 Strengthen measures to prepare for, mitigate, respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters.	4.4.1 Develop a National Plan for Comprehensive Emergency Disaster Management.	National Plan established. No. of persons trained.	Protocol approved by Cabinet. Register	OPM, CATT, ODPM, MOE
	4.4.2 Develop and Implement Disaster Preparedness Plans for all child facilities, i.e. community residences, ECD centres, remand and detention facilities, schools, etc.	No. and % of facilities with Plans developed.	Plans. Agency Reports	OPM, MNS, MOE

OUTCOME 5: CHILDREN ARE EMPOWERED

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	MEASURABLE INDICATOR	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
5.1 Create spaces for children's active participation	5.1.1 Enhance children's engagement in democratic processes, social participation, environmental activism, volunteering and social entrepreneurship.	No. of children actively participating in events.	Agency Reports	All agencies
	5.1.2 Host national children's forums where children's views can inform and be incorporated in the development of national policies and programmes.	No. of national forums held. No. of children actively participating in the forums.	Agency Reports.	OPM, MOP
	5.1.3 Create accessible and secure feedback mechanisms for children's view on effectiveness of programmes and services provided within both public and private settings.	No. of mechanisms established. No. of target population utilising mechanism.	Agency Reports.	All agencies
5.2 Expand access to information and services aimed at reducing risky behaviour and facilitating informed decision-making.	5.2.1 Provide access to quality information that promotes healthy lifestyles and skills, provides risk reducing and prevention tips, encourages positive disciplinary practices and addresses the informational needs of children and their families.	No. of information tools developed. % target population accessing tools	Agency Reports. Metadata. Data analytics.	OPM, MOE, MOH, CATT, CPU, CTU, MSDFS
	5.2.2 Enhance efforts to improve online safety and limit children's exposure and access to age-inappropriate materials and information, including in the media.	No. of information tools developed. % target population accessing tools	Agency Reports. Metadata. Data analytics.	MNS, OPM
5.3 Create spaces and opportunities for children's achievements to be recognised and celebrated.	5.3.1 Expand the categories for national achievement awards to children under age 12.	No. of awardees under age 12.	Database	OPM
	5.3.2 Develop national publications highlighting the achievements of children and the work done to improve children's lives.	No. of publications developed.	Database. Agency Reports	OPM (Lead) with contributions from all agencies and general public



OUTCOME 6: CHILDREN ARE SUPPORTED

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	MEASURABLE INDICATOR	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
6.1 Enhance legislative and policy frameworks to support children's well-being.	6.1.1 Harmonise all new and existing legislation and policies with internationally ratified and/or signed conventions	No. of harmonised legislation and policies	Legislation. Policies	MLA, All Agencies
	6.1.2 Sign/Ratify international conventions to re-establish the government's commitment to improving the lives of children.	No. of signed/ratified Conventions	UN Reports	OCC, MLA
	6.1.3 Amend and fully proclaim sections of the package of children's legislation, develop policies and regulations to address gaps, and establish the necessary supporting frameworks.	No. of legislations, policies, regulations developed.	Legislation Proclaimed. Policies and Regulations approved by Cabinet.	MLA, All Agencies
6.2 Increase the provision of social protection mechanisms to support children and their families.	6.2.1 Implement national strategy aimed at addressing child poverty and breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty by ensuring food security and access to social services.	National Strategy Developed.	Cabinet Approved Strategy.	MSDFS
	6.2.2 Expand social safety net provisions including grants, supplemented nutrition programmes and cash based interventions to adequately support children faced with socio-economic vulnerabilities and specialised needs.	No. of social safety net provisions. % of targeted population with access to provisions.	Agency Report	MSDFS
	6.2.3 Establish a national programme to support the transition children to independent living.	National Transition Programmes	Agency Report	OPM/CA
6.3 Enhance the provision, development and operationalisation of support systems and specialized services for children.	6.3.1 Strengthen the human resource capacity of all national child agencies, divisions and units, namely CATT, CPU, VWSU, SSSD, OPM, CTU, NFS & CCAA.	% Staff ratio to targeted audience/caseload.	Agency Annual Report	All relevant Agencies
	6.3.2 Establish operational manuals and standards of conduct for each child agency.	No. of agencies with manuals and standards	Agency Report	All Agencies
	6.3.3 Establish a national training programme for all levels of staff working with children.	No. of persons trained.	Register	All Agencies
	6.3.4 Strengthen the provision of and access to wraparound services to support children's well-being.	No. of targeted population with access to services	Agency Report	All Agencies
	6.3.5 Establish facilities to adequately support the provision and easy access to integrated and inclusive children services.	No. of integrated and inclusive facilities established	Agency Report	All Agencies
	6.3.6 Implement cost-effective services through greater use of community-based and innovative service delivery models (e.g. ICT).	No. of community-based delivery models established	Agency Report	All Agencies
6.4 Ensure a coordinated approach to planning and provision of effective	6.4.1 Implement a National Protocol for Inter-Agency Coordination for Children in need of care and protection.	National protocol developed and finalised.	Cabinet Approved Protocol	All Agencies
	6.4.2 Strengthen support to CSOs (NGOs. CBOs & FBOs) to address gaps in service provision and ensure collaboration in programme implementation.	No. of grants provided to CSOs.	Agency Report	All Agencies



support systems and services for children.	6.4.3 Establish effective coordination and resource mobilisation mechanisms to ensure public-private and international partnership supporting the integration of services, scale-up and sustainability of interventions.	No. of coordination meetings held. Resource mobilisation strategy developed.	Agency Report	All Agencies
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NATIONAL CHILD POLICY

	1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere
	2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
	3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
	4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
	5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
	6 Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
	7 Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
	8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
	9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
	10 Reduce inequality within and among countries
	11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
	12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
	13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
	14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
	15 Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
	16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
	17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Development Theme I: Putting People First: Nurturing our Greatest Asset

Goal 1: Our society will be grounded in the principles of social justice

Goal 2: Social Services Delivery will be improved to better serve the needs of vulnerable groups

Goal 3: Citizens have access to adequate and affordable housing

Goal 4: The Healthcare system of Trinidad and Tobago will be sustainable and modern and deliver higher standards of healthcare

Goal 5: The people of Trinidad and Tobago will be empowered to lead health lifestyles

Goal 6: The family will be protected and supported

Goal 7: Trinidad and Tobago will have a modern, relevant education and training system

Development Theme II: Delivering Good Governance and Service Delivery

Goal 1: Our society will be grounded in the principles of social justice

Goal 2: The public service will have modern, effective and efficient management systems

Goal 3: Public Service delivery will be customer focused

Goal 4: Trinidad and Tobago will have a modern legal, regulatory and law enforcement system

National Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2020):

Developing Innovative People

Goal 1 – The people of Trinidad and Tobago will be well known for excellence in innovation

Goal 2 – Trinidad and Tobago will have a seamless, self-renewing, high quality education system

Goal 3 – A high-skilled, talented and knowledgeable workforce will stimulate innovation-driven growth and development

Goal 4 – The richness of our diverse culture will serve as powerful engine to inspire innovation and creativity

Nurturing a Caring Society

Goal 1- The foundation of Trinidad and Tobago will be strong families and strong communities

Goal 2 -Poverty will be significantly reduced

Goal 3 – All citizens will have access to adequate and affordable housing

Goal 4 – All citizens will be empowered to lead long, health lifestyles and have adequate access to an efficient healthcare delivery system

Goal 5 – The HIV/AIDS Epidemic will be contained and care will be provided for those infected and affected

Goal 6 – All citizens will have access to and participate in a sporting or recreational activity in keeping with our ‘Sport for All’ philosophy.

OUTCOME 1: Children are valued, their needs are prioritized and their best interests is given paramount consideration

Objective 1: Advocacy and social change behavior communication.

Objective 2: Prioritise children’s issues

Objective 3: Create spaces to celebrate diversity and foster inclusion

OUTCOME 2: Children are nurtured and grow in health safe environments which promote and foster their well-being and optimal development.

Objective 1: Ensure the provision of quality physical and mental health services

Objective 2: Enhance access to quality education services, including ECD and learning opportunities

Objective 3: Provide support to families, family environments and caregivers

Objective 4: Enhance community environments

OUTCOME 3: Children are protected from harm, violence, and exploitation and their legal rights are upheld.

Objective 1: Strengthen measures to prevent and respond to abuse, abduction, exploitation, trafficking and neglect

Objective 2: Enhance measures to reduce children’s involvement in violence and support their rehabilitation

Objective 3: Enhance measures to prevent child labour and children’s involvement in hazardous work.

Objective 4: Strengthen measures to prepare for, mitigate, respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters.

OUTCOME 4: Children are empowered and given an opportunity to play an active role as contributors to the society.

Objective 1: Create spaces for children’s active participation

Objective 2: Enhance access to information and services aimed at reducing risky behavior and facilitating informed decision-making

Objective 3: Create spaces and opportunities for children’s achievements to be recognized and celebrated.

OUTCOME 5: Children are supported and provided with quality services and necessary support.

Objective 1: Enhance legislative and policy framework to support children’s well-being

Objective 2: Increase the provision of social protection mechanisms to support children and their families

Objective 3: Enhance the provision, development and operationalization of support systems and specialized services for children.

Objective 4: Ensure a coordinated approach to planning and provision of effective support systems and services for children.

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

- 1.1.1 Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)
- 1.2.1 Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age
- 1.2.2 Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
- 1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, and distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work injury victims, and the poor and the vulnerable
- 1.4.1 Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

- 2.2.1 Prevalence of stunting (height for age <-2 standard deviation from the median of the WHO Child Growth Standards) among children under 5 years of age
- 2.2.2 Prevalence of malnutrition (weight for height >+2 or <-2 standard deviation from the median of the WHO Child Growth Standards) among children under 5 years of age, by type (wasting and overweight)

Goal 3: Ensure health lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

- 3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio
- 3.1.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
- 3.2.1 Under-5 mortality rate
- 3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate
- 3.3.1 Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations
- 3.3.2 Tuberculosis incidence per 1,000 population
- 3.3.3 Malaria incidence per 1,000 population
- 3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate
- 3.6.1 Death rate due to road traffic injuries
- 3.7.1 Proportion of women of reproductive age (aged 15–49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods
- 3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group
- 3.8.1 Coverage of essential health services (defined as the average coverage of essential services based on tracer interventions that include reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases and service capacity and access, among the general and the most disadvantaged population)
- 3.9.1 Mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution
- 3.9.2 Mortality rate attributed to unsafe water, unsafe sanitation and lack of hygiene (exposure to unsafe WASH services)

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote learning opportunities for all

- 4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex
- 4.2.1 Proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex
- 4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex
- 4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected)
- 4.6.1 Percentage of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex
- 4.a.1 Proportion of schools with access to: (a) electricity; (b) the Internet for pedagogical purposes; (c) computers for pedagogical purposes; (d) adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities; (e) basic drinking water; (f) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and (g) basic handwashing facilities (as per the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All (WASH) indicator definitions)

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

- 5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner, in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age
- 5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner, in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
- 5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18
- 5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age
- 5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location
- 5.6.1 Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

- 6.1.1 Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services
- 6.2.1 Proportion of the population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable sustainable and modern energy for all

- 7.1.2 Proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology

Goal 8: Promote sustained inclusive and sustainable growth and productive employment and decent work for all

- 8.7.1 Proportion and number of children aged 5–17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age

Goal 10: Reduce inequalities within and among countries

- 10.1.1 Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the total population

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

- 11.1.1 Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

- 12.8.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development (including climate change education) are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies (b) curricula (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

- 13.1.1 Number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies
- 13.1.2 Number of deaths, missing and persons affected by disaster per 100,000 people

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

- 16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age
- 16.1.2 Conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population, by sex, age and cause
- 16.2.1 Proportion of children aged 1–17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month
- 16.2.3 Proportion of young women and men aged 18–29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18
- 16.9.1 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

- 17.18.1 Proportion of sustainable development indicators produced at the national level with full disaggregation when relevant to the target, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics
- 17.19.2 Proportion of countries that a) have conducted at least one Population and Housing Census in the last ten years, and b) have achieved 100 per cent birth registration and 80 per cent death registration

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