



Civil Society Advocacy Case Study

under the [CSOs For Good Governance: Enhancing civil society's contribution to governance and development processes in Trinidad and Tobago](#) (CSOs4GoodGov) project

National Awareness and Education Campaign on Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities

Organisation(s): Caribbean Kids and Families Therapy Organisation (CKFTO) and National Centre for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD)

Date: 2013 to 2016

Geographic Location: Trinidad & Tobago

Partners: REPSOL E&P Trinidad and Tobago Limited (REPSOL)

SDGs in Action:



Caribbean Kids and Families Therapy Organisation (CKFTO) is a registered non-profit formed in 2008 in Trinidad and Tobago with a mission to provide therapy and support services to all children in need. National Centre for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) is a private non-profit organisation that provides individuals with the best opportunities for vocational growth and success. In 2013, CKFTO and the NCPD with sponsorship from REPSOL E&P Trinidad and Tobago Limited (REPSOL), launched a National Disability Awareness and Education Campaign **“Open Your Mind, Discover the Ability in Disability”**. The main objectives of this national campaign were to:

- change misconceptions on the issue of disabilities;
- promote persons with disabilities as productive contributors to national development;
- to encourage public and private sectors to provide employment opportunities for qualified persons with disabilities; and
- educate, sensitise and inform the public about persons with disabilities.

The national campaign involved the use of a public awareness and advertising campaign as well as outreach activities. School outreach initiatives were carried out across Trinidad and Tobago to sensitise school children about the myths and facts surrounding disabilities through interactive **Count Me In®** puppet shows.



Figure 1: Count Me In® puppet shows were carried out in schools in Trinidad and Tobago

A heavy media blitz was also incorporated into the national campaign which included press, television, mobile booths, radio, social media, billboards and websites and thus forced people to take notice. Seven local celebrities also came on board and used their celebrity status to urge the Government and the public to focus on the issues facing persons with disabilities and develop a culture of inclusion for all. A spotlight activity of this national campaign was the **“Break Down the Wall”** 2014 event where persons with disabilities were invited to “break down a symbolic wall featuring slogans of discrimination and marginalisation” to highlight common issues faced by the disabled in their struggle for inclusion and equal opportunity.



Figure 2: President Anthony Carmona and local celebrities at the Break Down the Wall event in 2014

popular local artistes and celebrities improved the success and visibility of the advocacy campaign.

Next Steps or Opportunities

CKFTO and NCPD are continuing on-going public education and awareness initiatives on disability as they advocate for the enactment of legislation by Government to support the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Key Results and Impact

This national disability awareness and education campaign was an important advocacy vehicle for highlighting issues faced by persons with disabilities and resulted in numerous impacts including contributing to the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in 2015. This campaign was championed by His Excellency President Anthony Carmona and later endorsed by the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Richard Blewitt. Their public support propelled the national campaign in 2015 and encouraged other CSOs and individuals to undertake related initiatives on disability awareness. The campaign also successfully contributed to increased employment of persons with disabilities in the public and private sectors and improved access to education and training opportunities for persons with disabilities. Moreover, two Independent Senators with disabilities were appointed to the Senate in 2013. This campaign also successfully contributed to a more inclusive school environment for children with special needs and an overall more sensitive society to all persons with disabilities.

Key Lessons Learned

- Collaboration and partnerships amongst organisations enabled more effective resource allocation and mobilisation for more impactful and meaningful advocacy.
- The advocacy campaign should be implemented over a sustained period of time to ensure desired impact i.e. years not months.
- Having a champion who is a public figure, such as the President, brought about major visibility and impact for the national disability awareness and education campaign.
- Utilising multiple forms of media, innovative outreach activities like puppet shows as well as

Advocacy Tips

- *Seek partnerships and collaboration with other CSOs when and where possible. There is value in building on each other's expertise and maximising resources.*
- *Any work on advocacy needs to be on-going, it cannot be "one-off".*
- *Be more knowledgeable of United Nations conventions, policies and laws which can impact the work of CSOs.*
- *Share information and seek support from relevant Government agencies where possible.*
- *Utilise all forms of media – print, electronic and social media in advocacy work.*

References and Links

YouTube: Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities Channel

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC074a7Y_W5hrdJqialZwZgw

Facebook:

@SocialIntegrationOfPersonsWithDisabilities

<https://www.facebook.com/SocialIntegrationOfPersonsWithDisabilities/>

Facebook: @CKFTO

<http://www.facebook.com/ckfto.org/>

Facebook: @NCPDTrinidad

<http://www.facebook.com/NCPDTrinidad/>

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