

UNICEF OFFICE FOR THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN AREA

**REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR)  
RECOMMENDATIONS ACCEPTED BY BARBADOS IN RELATION TO THE UNICEF MANDATE**

**2. Give consideration to all international obligations in the field of human rights provisions in revision of the Constitution; incorporation of international human rights obligation into domestic law.**

1. It is noted that Barbados accepted this recommendation and indicated that it was actively looking at further revising the Constitution and updating its legislation to conform to its treaty obligations.
2. In this regard, on 31 May 2012, the Ministry of Family, Youth Affairs and Culture requested and received immediate support from UNICEF for the engagement of a Legal Consultant to guide the reform of children and family law in Barbados in accordance with internal human rights obligations.
3. This consultancy started in July 2012 and is expected to:-
  - a. Review all Laws directly relating to Family and those Laws directly relating to Children in Barbados, *viz a viz* international standards, prevailing trends and best practice, especially in relation to CEDAW, *Belem do Para* and the CRC.
  - b. Produce a Green Paper detailing specific issues relating to required reforms of legislative and institutional approaches on family and children's issues, and pointing out possible courses of action in terms of policy and legislation, and to support public engagement on these suggested reforms.
  - c. Produce the final White Paper detailing Government's policy decisions on the specific issues and required reform of legislative and institutional approaches on family and children's issues to inform legislative and institutional amendment and reform.

**4. Strengthen efforts to improve its human rights reporting and submission of pending reports; extend standing invitation to human rights mechanisms and all special procedures of the Human Rights Council.**

1. It is noted that Barbados accepted this recommendation though citing human resources constraints to readily address its human rights reporting obligations.
2. UNICEF has been providing ongoing support to the previous and current administrations in a bid to conclude the long outstanding reports on state implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, due since November 1997. To date, UNICEF has supported three consultancies to undertake this work, with the most recent consultancy and final report which was widely canvassed with state

and non-state actors, was submitted to the Ministry of Family, Youth Affairs and Culture in June 2012. This Report is awaiting Cabinet approval for submission to the UNCRC Committee.

3. While successive Cabinets have appointed National Monitoring Committee on the Rights of the Child, comprising both state and civil society representatives, the Committee lacks the necessary structure, support and accountability to effectively carry-out its stated mandate and there necessary political will to effect the necessary changes appears low.

**13. Take appropriate legislative and administrative measures to fight against domestic violence and physical abuse of children, and engage in an exchange of information with those countries that are developing best practices in these fields. Work towards taking measures in relation to the psychological and physical impact of domestic violence on children.**

1. It is noted that Barbados rejected the notion that it requires appropriate legislative and administrative measures to fight against domestic violence and physical abuse of children.
2. Barbados has made some significant gains in ensuring that national laws, policies and practices conform to the spirit and intent of the Convention. Many of the positive developments have come in the form of legislative enactments or legislative reform geared at affording more care and protection provision to children at risk of harm. Despite these legislative interventions, the child protection mandate of the State still has scope for significant improvement.
3. One area in dire need of attention is the reporting procedure, along with general interagency collaboration. Barbados does not mandatory reporting requirements and this appears to have compromised the efforts at creating a centralized system through which all child abuse cases are handled.
4. The Child Care Board, the agency legally vested with the child protection mandate in Barbados, has identified this issue as one of the most significant factors undermining their ability to effectively respond to child abuse in Barbados. In the absence of any written policies or protocols, consistent reporting of child abuse to the Child Care Board is left to chance. There are a few verbal protocols with some agencies, but generally reporting is discretionary and occurs on an *ad hoc* basis.
5. In addition, the Board is aware that hitherto, its focus on tertiary responses to child abuse has neither been efficient nor sufficient, and need to ensure that the agency becomes the nucleus for recreating child protection as a part of the institutions of everyday life in the neighbourhoods and communities where children, live, study and play.
6. Therefore in line with the recommendations of the UNICEF-supported 2007 *Child Protection in Barbados: The Need for a National Reporting Protocol* report, in July 2012, UNICEF agreed significant support for a policy review of the child protection system in Barbados, including the modernization of the Child Care Board in particular.
7. In 2009, UNICEF commissioned a study among selected Eastern Caribbean countries (**Report attached**), including Barbados to assess the perceptions and opinions on child sexual abuse to inform a

behavioural change campaign. Significant myths abound related to definitions of sexual abuse and who is a child and need for protection of men who are primarily income earners of households.

8. As a result a multi-media campaign to raise awareness on child sexual abuse, as part of a wider child protection initiative campaign, with three strands was rolled out comprising: i) *Believe*: targeting mothers and female caregivers to believe their wards, investigate claims, report and follow-through cases of abuse; ii) *Real Men*: educating men about actions that constitute child abuse; persuading them not to engage in child sexual abuse and encourage their male friends not to engage in any actions that could lead to child sexual abuse; iii) *Tell Someone*: targeting children and general public on what are acceptable and unacceptable touches/behaviors and to tell a responsible person if one is uncomfortable with a situation so that help can be obtained. These radio and television public service announcements have been endorsed by state child protection agencies and are aired free of cost at primetime by the state radio and television station. (**Outline of Campaign attached**)
9. UNICEF has also been supportive of subregional actions to drive Governmental commitment to working against the abuse of children. The CARICOM Special Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) on Children and Youth on 10-11 July 2012 held in Georgetown, Guyana offered the unique opportunity to kick off a process for a greater engagement of Caribbean countries in the initiatives to end violence against women and children. There is was agreed that a mechanism be established to regularly report on progress on implementation of the UN Study's recommendations and the progress to achieve the goals of the UN Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women (UNiTE). UNICEF is providing support to CARICOM and participating Governments to ensure that this mechanism is activated.

**14. Eliminate all forms of corporal punishment from its legislation; abolish corporal punishment for children; address the concerns raised by the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Rights of the Child on corporal punishment; take measures to eliminate corporal punishment as a legitimate sanction in the law and to discourage its use in schools with a view to its eventual and total abolition; conduct public awareness initiatives to change people's attitudes to corporal punishment.**

1. It is noted that the Government of Barbados did not accept this recommendation, though agreeing to establish public awareness initiatives to change people's attitudes on corporal punishment.
2. The 2005 UNICEF Regional Assessment on Violence Against Children for the Caribbean confirmed that caregivers, including teachers, significantly favour corporal punishment as a way of disciplining children, and posited that not only are children suffering from pain (and too often injuries), but they also quickly learn that violence is a way to resolve conflicts and exert authority.
3. Not only is its use written into law in Barbados (as in many other Caribbean states), the practice is engrained in Barbadian and Caribbean culture. Although policy bans corporal punishment throughout early childhood institutions in Barbados, it remains the dominant form of discipline in homes, residential care institutions, as well as in primary and secondary schools. Unsurprisingly, surveys of children's views report that the majority of children themselves believe that physical punishment is a

valid and necessary form of discipline. The widespread support and use of corporal punishment is purported to be a result of a complex interplay of cultural and social norms including the belief that children are born 'wicked' and need correcting as natural part of character development. The practice is also backed by the religious admonition of '*spare the rod and spoil the child*' and the widespread belief of adults that they were not harmed by the physical punishment they received as children. Consequently there is reluctance of politicians to abolish its use unless by popular demand.

4. In light of these factors, since 2006, UNICEF has been working with the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development and the Barbados Union of Teachers to use schools as the entry point for working with teachers, children and their parents on alternatives strategies for instilling discipline and effectively managing classrooms.
  5. While initially a Coordinator of the Schools Positive Behaviour Management Programme (coordinating appropriate teacher training and behavior modification in schools) was funded by UNICEF, as of January 2012, this position is now fully state-funded. While more work is required, this move signifies important buy-in from the Ministry of Education in light of the positive trends they have noticed in participating schools. (**Report attached**)
  6. UNICEF is supported a national multi-media campaign on positive conflict resolution, accentuating the positive benefits of effective adult-child interaction and self- discipline, rather than dwell on the negative message of abolishing the practice of corporal punishment. (**Outline of Campaign attached**)
  7. A 2009 Barbados Union of Teachers (BUT)/UNICEF opinion poll found that support for corporal punishment in schools fell precipitously since 2004 when it was 69 per cent to a significantly lower marginal majority of Barbados at 54 per cent in 2009. Similarly, in 2004, 56% of children opposed the use of corporal punishment in schools, but in 2009, 74% of children are opposed to its use. The significant drop for support of corporal punishment provided both the Government and UNICEF the opportunity to mainstream and upscale the child friendly school approach, including alternative disciplinary methods. (**Report attached**)
  8. While the BUT/UNICEF also highlighted that older persons and females favoured its use more than the young and males. However, corporal punishment in the home was another matter. An overwhelming majority of Barbadians in 2009 (75%) still supported the use corporal punishment in homes, down slightly from 80% in 2004 and confirmed the need for continued social mobilization around the issue.
- 17. Bring its criminal laws on criminalization of consenting relations between adults of the same sex, and on offences of indecent assault and serious indecency that are defined vaguely, into line with international norms with respect to privacy and non-discrimination; take measures to promote tolerance in this regard, which would encourage more effective educational programmes for the prevention of HIV/AIDS; take all necessary action to protect homosexuals from harassment, discrimination and violence; consider introducing specific legislation and additional policy measures to promote tolerance and non-discrimination of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals.**

1. It is noted that the Government of Barbados highlighted its educational programmes for the prevention of HIV/AIDS within its comprehensive National Policy on HIV/AIDS.
2. Recognising the importance of the life cycle approach and to promote effective prevention and are within the context of the education system for children of all ages, UNICEF is continuing its long-term support for the teaching of skills-based Health and Family Life Education (HFLE). Notwithstanding significant progress to date, given the overly academic school environment, the non-examination status of HFLE continues to be central to many of the challenges being experienced in terms of quality assurance in the delivery of HFLE in the classroom, notably the need to urgently address perennial challenges with scheduling HFLE class time, high levels of teacher turnover, as well as teacher selection and training. (**Report attached**)
3. In an environment where HIV among youth is of major concern and the need for intensified emphasis on HIV prevention is widely recognized, these short comings in the education sector which compromise the fostering of protective behaviours among adolescents must be addressed with some urgency and UNICEF remains committed to providing the necessary support required.
4. In addition, UNICEF has been supporting the direction of messaging by researching not only the effectiveness of HIV prevention campaigns and messages, but also to find out from the adolescent target audiences, how such campaigns could be made more effective at reaching them and bringing about the required behaviour modification to lead to HIV and AIDS prevention. The late 2008 UNICEF study "*Are They Listening?*" polled Barbadian students who ranged in age from 14 to 18 years to obtain their views on the impact of messages of existing campaigns and to reflect these views to stakeholders for appropriate consideration and use. (**Report attached**)

**20. Continue with the positive efforts made in the field of education and share its experiences in the area with other countries.**

1. It is noted that Barbados accepted this recommendation and is noted to be a leader in education reform within the region.
2. One area of prevailing weakness however, is in the access and quality of special needs education provided. In 2011, a UNICEF-supported survey of learning disabilities in government operated primary schools in Barbados identified significant challenges within the teaching and learning environments with respect to the teachers' limited ability to teach reading as a skill and the lack of emotional, instructional and organizational support necessary for the development of students' receptive and expressive language skills. The key recommendation is for training and staff development to be implemented with a strong focus on the priority areas identified. (**Report attached**)
3. Similarly, a 2011 UNICEF-supported review of the Quality of Learning Environments and the Teaching Methodologies at government operated schools providing Special Education in Barbados identified challenges related to the limited number of qualified staff, and the need for the upgrading of assistive technologies to enhance developmental and educational opportunities. Key recommendations pointed to the need for a policy to guide the implementation, delivery and quality of special

education, a structured system for staff training and development of technically specific skills. (**Report attached**).

4. While the Government of Barbados has accepted these reports in principle, more in-depth discussion and research to inform policy and programme directions, are to be pursued.
5. Following successful initiation of the Positive Behavioural Management Programme in Barbados, lessons from this process evolved into a wider Child Friendly School initiative and introduced in four other programme countries in the Eastern Caribbean. A “child-friendly school” is a school where children and adolescents acquire and develop knowledge, abilities and life skills in a healthy and safe environment which is inclusive, protective and respectful of gender differences and of cultural diversity. It is concerned with the health, safety, security, nutritional status and psychological well-being of the child as well as with teacher training, appropriateness of approaches for teaching and learning and the efficient use of resources as emphasizes positive behavioural management strategies. (**Newsletter attached**)
6. Another weak area of the educational system relates to the meaningful participation of students in school governance. Again UNICEF’s 2009 study on *Participation in School-Based Clubs: What Teens Want Us to Know*” garnered the opinions of students whose reflections are being factored into the advancement of mechanisms for effective school governance and active participation. (**Report attached**).
7. More positively, Barbados understands the critical role that positive early childhood experiences play in early learning and the overall development of young boys and girls. In 2011, UNICEF collaborated with the Barbados Child Care Board to sensitize early childhood practitioners from the private sector about the value of early stimulation and the role of play in development and early education. This capacity building exercise was facilitated as part of the UNICEF “*Never Too Young to Learn*” and “*Think They’re Just Playing*” multimedia campaigns. This initiative supports an agenda which seeks to promote the enhancement of abilities and strengths of young children through the use of developmentally appropriate strategies in early childhood environments.

30 August 2012