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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC,  
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Initial reports submitted by States parties to the Covenant concerning  
rights covered by articles 10 to 12, in accordance with the second  
stage of the programme established by the Economic and Social Council  
in its resolution 1988 (LX)

Addendum

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

[18 February 1988]

B. Article 10: Protection of the family, mothers and children

1. "The Family" is an important unit within the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and this is exemplified in the position given to the Preamble to the Constitution:

"Whereas the People of Trinidad and Tobago -

- (a) have affirmed that the Nation of Trinidad and Tobago is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God, faith in fundamental human rights and freedoms, the position of the family in a society of free men and free institutions, the dignity of the human person and the equal and inalienable rights with which all members of the human family are endowed by their Creator."

One of the fundamental rights and freedoms recognized and declared in the Constitution, is the "right of the individual to respect for his private and family life".

2. Men and women are free to enter into marriage. The Marriage Act Chapter 45:01, contains the relevant provisions for the entering into marriage. There are no special measures to facilitate the establishment of a family. Efforts are being made to alleviate the housing shortage, for example, through the construction of more houses, as well as the development of certain areas for housing.

3. The income tax regulations provide for certain reliefs, for example, allowances for parents who have children attending school and university; a book allowance is distributed to all in order to assist in the purchase of school books.

4. There are child-care institutions, both public and private, which cater to the needs of working parents.

5. The private and public hospitals, nursing homes and the like, share responsibility for the offering of services to pregnant women. In the public hospitals, there is no discrimination, in that, irrespective of marital status, proper care is provided.

6. Certain maternity benefits are available under the National Insurance Scheme, while it is not uncommon for contracts of employment to contain provision guaranteeing benefits such as the right to continue working before and after childbirth. The National Insurance Scheme also ensures that the mother suffers no undue salary loss because of her pregnancy.

7. There are no specific measures for self-employed mothers and the like. But the National Insurance Scheme does provide some benefit to mothers on the death of their husbands.

8. Every effort is made to provide suitable protection for children and young persons, in order to give them opportunities and facilities for their healthy physical and psycho-social development. There are special institutions and schools for the physically, mentally or socially handicapped children, as well as delinquent minors.

9. There are legislative provisions which seek to prevent as far as possible, the employment of children and young persons. The Employment of Women (Night Work) Act (Chapter 88:12), and The Children Act (Chapter 46:01), are both useful guides. It is difficult, however, to obtain statistical or other data showing the number of children and young persons who are in fact, working.

C. Article 11: Right to an adequate standard of living

10. There are legislative provisions designed to protect tenants, such as rent control and legal guarantees. The Rent Restriction Act (Chapter 59:50), establishes Rent Assessment Boards to carry out the purposes of the Act, namely, to restrict the rents of certain premises and the right to recover possession of such premises.

11. The Land Tenants and Rate Payers Association is an important private organization which has assisted in securing security of tenure for land tenants.

D. Article 12: Right to physical and mental health

12. (i) Measures taken to reduce the stillbirth rate and infant mortality.

There is a Maternal and Child Health Programme which involves:

- (a) Pregnancy and perinatal care;
- (b) Infant and Child Health; and
- (c) Family Planning.

Pregnancy and perinatal care is provided free of charge at 103 health centres, 6 delivery units and 6 hospital obstetrical units. The first visit before 16 weeks is encouraged.

Infant and child health care is provided free of charge at all health centres and at four hospitals.

13. (ii) Measures taken for the health development of children.

There is a screening programme for early childhood defects. There is also a revitalized School Health Project with the following components:

- (a) School Health Delivery Service;
- (b) School Health Education; and
- (c) Environmental Sanitation Competition for Schools.

14. (iii) Comprehensive schemes and specific measures, including vaccination programmes to prevent, treat and control epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases and accidents in urban and rural areas.

There is a comprehensive programme to vaccinate children against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio and measles. Expectant mothers are vaccinated against tetanus.

Yellow Fever is an endemic disease which occurs approximately every 15 years. The majority of the adult population and children over one year have been vaccinated against this disease, particularly those who frequent forested areas.

There is an Occupational Health Unit which monitors occupational diseases.

The high prevalence of vehicular accidents is now a major source of concern to the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Status of Women.

15. (iv) Comprehensive plans and specific measures to assure all age groups and all other categories of the population, including in particular in rural areas, adequate health services including adequate medical attention in the event of sickness or accident.

A network of 103 health centres in strategic locations throughout Trinidad and Tobago has been established. These centres serve as delivery mechanisms for the provision of Primary Health Care and associated Public Health Programmes and interact with the secondary/tertiary care levels through a referral system.

Services offered include Maternal and Child Health, Immunization, Dental Services, Family Planning and general medical consultation. Vaccines and therapeutic drugs are provided free of charge.

Of the 103 health centres, 6 have doctors on call for emergency cases on a 24-hour basis. There are two general hospitals, one in the north, the other in the south, two county hospitals, three district hospitals, one hospital for psychiatric cases, one for obstetric and gynaecological cases only, and one for chest and heart disease.

16. (v) Main features for existing arrangements for the provision of medical care and methods of financing them.

Medical care is generally provided in the hospitals and health centres without cost to the patient. Where fees exist, these are minimal. The health services are financed from general taxation. A health surcharge was introduced in 1984, but the proceeds are not applied specifically to the financing of health care.

1. The Principal Laws and Administrative Regulations designed to promote the right to housing are:

17. (i) The Slum Clearance and Housing Act (enacted in 1962). This Law "made provisions with respect to the housing of persons of the working classes, the acquisition, reconstruction and management of Slum Clearance areas and development areas, the improvement of unhealthy areas, the repair and demolition of unsanitary dwellings".

18. (ii) The Housing Act of 1962 - This Law created the National Housing Authority "to replace the existing Statutory bodies dealing with housing, and to revise, consolidate and extend laws related to the encouragement of dwelling houses and home ownership". And the following regulations were derived from this Act:

- (a) National Housing Authority (Direct Loans) Regulation, which seeks to encourage home ownership by persons with low and middle family income in excess of \$1,500 per month;
- (b) National Housing Authority (Soft Loans) Regulation - This regulation provides loans to low income families to construct their own homes, provided their monthly incomes were less than \$1,500; and

(c) Housing (Income Tax Exemption) Regulation - This seeks to provide tax incentives to traders of newly constructed dwelling homes and approve mortgages.

19. (iii) Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee (Incorporation) Ordinance of 1951 - makes provision for a fund to be used for improving the living conditions and social well-being of workers employed in the sugar industry.

20. (iv) Regulation of Tenure (State Lands) Act 1986 - to regularize the tenure of certain persons who have wrongfully possessed State lands.

2. The measures taken aimed at expanding housing construction to meet the needs of all categories of the population are:

21. (i) The Aided Self Help Programme - This programme began in the 1950s and catered for low income families in both rural and urban areas;

(ii) Mass production of dwelling units and flatted accommodation (using large local and foreign Contractors done on behalf of the Government) to cater for low and middle income families;

(iii) Mortgage Financing - through the NHA for mainly low income persons to acquire their own homes and through Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company for the low-middle and middle income families;

(iv) The Assisted Housing Programme - in this programme, serviced lots with core houses were constructed. This was introduced with the economic decline of the 1980s;

(v) Development of Sites and Services, using funds received from the Central Government;

(vi) Sou Sou Land's Approach - development of sites and minimum services using indigenous standards and using the funds of applicants/beneficiaries; and

(vii) Incentives to the Private Sector:

(a) 100 per cent Tax Exemption to Traders in housing on the initial sale of a newly constructed dwelling house, not exceeding \$250,000;

(b) Ten-year tax holding on the earnings and gains from "newly constructed" qualifying housing units by landlords;

(c) Freedom from tax for 10 years on the annual rateable value of owner occupied houses; and

(d) Approved Mortgage Companies - who lend on qualifying housing units - enjoy the profits from the mortgage lending operation free from taxation. Value of the house must be less than \$250,000.

3. Measures taken or envisaged to solve the special problems of housing, water supply and sanitary conditions in rural areas are:
22. (i) Aided Self Help Programmes - where groups of beneficiaries organized themselves and supplied the labour for the construction of their own houses with funding for materials and technical direction from the State;
- (ii) Development of Sites and Services - using Central Government Funding; and
- (iii) Sou Sou Land's Approach - development of sites and minimum services - using applicants' funds.
4. The use of Scientific and Technical Knowledge and of International Co-operation for developing and improving housing construction:
23. (i) In the Aided Self-Help Programme - where low cost housing experts from the United States (United States Agency for International Development) assisted in initiating this programme;
- (ii) In the mass production of housing units - where contractors both, foreign and local, used the prefabricated method. This programme was funded by IDB; and
- (iii) The Cinva Ram method of the 1940s and 1950s using total local technology to construct houses from locally manufactured bricks.