

Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum

Friday, 10 July 2020

GEMMA: Natalie, you are currently muted. I'm just going to say hello and explain what I hope will happen today. I'm doing quite a lot of roles. My name is Gemma and I'm admitting people to the meeting. I'm hoping to line up a video, a recorded message in a moment to play you all.

I'm going to introduce Natalie who is convening the meeting so I will hand over to her but I just need to let you all know there's two things today.

This meeting is being recorded so we can save it and it will be accessible on the CDPF website afterwards. We have International Sign Language, if you need to access that, there are two people doing that, it comes up as Ramon on the screen. We also have captioning. I'm just going to ask that you mute for the moment just while I explain because it's hard for the captioners. I'm just going to mute everybody while I explain what is happening because it's hard for the captioners. Natalie, you are unmuted, if you could just bear with me one moment.

So we have International Sign Language. If it's hard to see where he's at, his name is Ramon. And we also have captioning which you can access by clicking the link in the chat. So I'm really hoping that that is all okay.

If anybody has anything that you need to ask, if you can put that message in the chat, the chat function is accessible by the bar which I think should show at the side of your screen, if you wanted to tap a message in there, that's fine, I'll get that. So I'm going to hand over to Natalie to introduce herself and everybody else and I'll line up the introductory video which we will need to do once we've done the introductions, thank you very much.

NATALIE: Good morning, everyone. My name is Natalie Murphy and I'm from Dominica, I'm the Caribbean representative for the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum. I was elected to that position in June of 2019 and it is my pleasure to welcome all of you to this meeting which is the first that I am hosting, convening, as the representative.

When I was logging in I understood that we have about 11 persons present with us. That is very good. So what we will do is to go around the Islands and to see who are the persons represented. Please identify yourself, your country, and the type of disability and then we'll move on from there, okay? I think what we can probably go in alphabetical order. I don't know who wants to go first. I know as far as I was told I know we had confirmation from Barbados, from Dominica, from Guyana, and from Jamaica and from Trinidad. I'm not sure who else is with us. So probably if we could start with anybody, they are from Antigua?

GEMMA: Do we have anyone Antigua on the line?

NATALIE: Apparently not. Anyone from Barbados?

>>: Hello, good morning.

NATALIE: Yes, go ahead.

>>: My name is (inaudible), I'm visiting here.

NATALIE: Okay. Welcome and nice meeting you.

>>: Thank you.

PATRICIA: Patricia, representing Barbados Council for the Disabled. I am visually impaired.

NATALIE: All right, welcome Patricia, second time meeting you, nice to have you.

PATRICIA: Thank you.

NATALIE: Okay, do we have anyone from Belize? No. Then we go to Dominica.

IRMA: Good morning. I'm Irma Raymond-Joseph, President of the Dominica Association of Persons with Disability.

NATALIE: Yes. And your disability?

IRMA: I am an amputee.

NATALIE: Thank you very much. All right, then we go on after, I think we have Grenada? Guyana?

GANESH: Good morning, I'm Ganesh from the Guyana Council Organisation of Persons with Disabilities.

NATALIE: Welcome, Ganesh.

GANESH: Hi.

NATALIE: Anybody from Jamaica? No? Anybody from St Kitts? No. Anybody from St Lucia? Okay. Somebody's coming on? Yes?

GEMMA: I'm not sure, is somebody there from there?

NATALIE: No, okay then we move on. Anybody from St Vincent?

CHERYL: Yes, please. Cheryl Adams and Danny Chambers.

NATALIE: Okay, give us your disability please.

CHERYL: Both visually impaired.

NATALIE: Hi Cheryl, nice having you.

CHERYL: And (inaudible) as well.

NATALIE: Okay. And Trinidad, do we have anybody from Trinidad? Well I have to apologise for my friend. I heard something, is that somebody coming on from Trinidad, no? I have to -- yes?

>>: We had Trinidad earlier. I think that person was inquiring about the International Sign Language.

NATALIE: Okay. They expect someone from Trinidad. And we're supposed to have had, it was going to be a (inaudible) and WhatsApp message from him this morning saying he had some issues with his power last night, electrical power that affected or damaged his computer so he is unable, unable be with us since he cannot hear and he was expecting to check, to have someone check it for him, if that's done then he will join us. So in that case we will have to depend on Gem to take all the notes for us, I understand the meeting is also being recorded.

GEMMA: The meeting is being recorded and there's also captioning as well so I'm just going to post that link again into the captioning. Unfortunately, some people have having difficulty understanding the signing, I think they may be don't do international sign. So that's something we will need to look an in the future.

NATALIE: Just a minute, I'm just getting a call, let me see who is calling. Maybe he can join us on WhatsApp. Let me take that call. (Takes call) all right so I was saying that let's keep or fingers crossed that he will be able to join us, so the meeting is being recorded and so we'll have notes so we can do a report. Okay. All of you will have known and read the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum is trying to hear from its members if they have been coping with the COVID-19 pandemic and looking at the way forward for the region and, from this meeting we're going to prepare a report that will be sent to the executive committee and then we will decide on what activities and programmes that can be organised and implemented going forward. So we have a short agenda and I think the first item on the agenda, if I can use my memory, is.

GEMMA: Natalie, I'm going on interrupt you right now. This is my fault, I didn't make this clear to you so I apologise to you and everybody else on meeting. I told them just before you arrived that we're actually starting with meeting with a short video. It's Richard who is the, for those of you who don't know, he is the general secretary of the CDPF and he is introducing the meeting. I will for future ones I will be able to play a subtitled one but unfortunately I can't make the sound on the video on that work so I'll play the audio version. Katy the captioner has the transcript for that so Katy I'm hoping you can play that. While I play the sound. I'll just get that ready.

NATALIE: I remember you said that to me, sorry.

GEMMA: No, absolutely fine. You are doing great! Just bear with me. Just bear with me, everybody! When everything is all this technology, you know? Just see how we go.

(Video)

"Hello. My name is Richard Reiser.

I'm General Secretary of the

Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum.

I'd like to welcome you to this regional meeting.

The purpose of these regional meetings is to follow up on our two international summits that we've had.

You can follow all the information about those on [commonwealthdpf.org](http://commonwealthdpf.org) and you will find them all there.

The purpose of these meetings is to bring together as many activists from our different memberships organisations across different regions, and to produce a report that will feed in to our general position as the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum that we put forward to the United Nations,

The Commonwealth and various Governments.

We would like you to look at the situation of disabled people in your countries and particularly the effect that is having on people with different types of impairment.

We would like you to look at particular pressure points which need addressing immediately, or very quickly.

And then we'd like you to look at issues that we are going to need for 'Building Back Better' as the United Nations call it - or the recovery from COVID.

I would like to start by saying the COVID pandemic is by no means over.

In the last two weeks there have been an additional 2,469,000 infections across the world and that is 20% of all the infections that there have been.

We can see this uneven pattern across the Commonwealth.

Countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, all still at very high levels.

India 37-39%, Bangladesh 32% and

Pakistan 18%.

And of course they are very large population countries so we think that it is important that we focus on that.

There is also big growth in southern Africa - South Africa in particular - with the growth over the last two weeks being at 50%.

Nigeria, which is also a very large population country, 29.6%.

And then Uganda, Zambia, Lesotho, Eswatini from much lower base all still growing.

We would also like to point out that even those areas which tend to be the small island countries around the Commonwealth there is growth again in some of those areas, such as Guyana at 32% - not a small island country but attached to the Caribbean.

Mauritius which is at 1%, that is fairly safe.

But the Maldives, 10%.

And Singapore has had a blip because of not looking at migrant labour, that's something they overlooked.

St. Lucia, very small, but 13%.

Trinidad and Tobago, 5.3%.

Belize, 26%.

So, the first thing to say is that this is by no means over.

The second thing to say is that we need to reinforce to all populations and particularly disabled people, the need to protect themselves, to socially isolate, to get the right support to deliver food, and other things they need, medicines for welfare to their houses, the need to keep their distance from other people and to frequently wash.

We should be demanding hand-washing points and sanitization in all public places from our governments.

We should be demanding people wearing masks in public transport and other close work situations and markets and so on.

We should be making people aware of how dangerous this pandemic is and we need to point out also that it's impacted disproportionately on disabled people.

What we have found out from our surveys is that DPO organisations have by and large not been listened to very much by government, belatedly more, particularly on accessible information - in Easy Read, Braille, subtitling and Sign Language - that there has been a lack of personal assistance, food, welfare, medicines, and usual medical procedures, even where those were promised by national governments down on the ground those haven't been coming through.

Unemployment and lack of reasonable accommodation, especially for self-employed which is a disproportionate number of disabled people.

The lack of access to online schooling for many of the 1.6 billion children who were sent out of school by lockdown and this has impacted inclusion in a big way, and the higher fatality rates for people in orphanages, care homes, mental health institutions of one sort or another and it underlines the point

that we need to be taking strongly forward Article 19 Independent Living.

We don't want people living in these institutions, we want them living in the community, supported by the community.

Is the first thing.

The second thing, on education.

We need to be building back much better inclusive education, not waiting for some point in the future but actually wholesale transformation on the education workforce, particularly teachers, to learn how to differentiate the curriculum and having a much wider curriculum and assessment system that accommodates everybody.

We need to mobilise the community and local areas to make schools accessible.

We need to challenge sexism which particularly effects girls in school, disabled girls.

And we need to be looking at getting much better systems of support in place for disabled people.

A number of countries, such as Malaysia, have increased the amount of welfare benefit that they are paying to disabled people.

We need to get this recognised that because we came out worst in this pandemic we need to now have some preferential treatment to get us back on our feet.

We also need much more support to get cooperative employment systems going for small self-employed business people, who are disabled, and recognising that community investment is the best way forward - particularly for disabled women to run their own collaborative businesses.

We need to get our voice listened to and get our message onto the mass media.

People need to utilise all channels, such as writing, Skyping, and contacting public discussion and taking part in it to get our profile much higher.

I wish you well in your deliberations and I hope that you'll feed back to us what you recorded.

And just a reminder for those of you who are not yet members you can join.

The membership form is free, you just have to fill in some details to make sure we know that you are run and controlled by disabled people in your country, or part of your country.

The form is on the website [www.commonwealthdpf.org](http://www.commonwealthdpf.org).

Thank you."

GEMMA: Natalie, that's the end of the video, so back to you.

NATALIE: Thank you very much, I'm sure we all listened attentively and heard the message from Richard and we're thankful to him for that. And we'll ask Gem to convene that to him on our behalf. As you heard, Richard said we have to continue to be vigilant, we must not leave our guards down. What he said to us I'm sure are the protocols that have been given to us by all the countries of the Commonwealth and we should take heed and do all we can to stay safe and to ensure that we not get affected and infected by this virus. We're thankful in the Caribbean that our death rates have not been very high. I think with the exception of Guyana, I don't know if there are any other countries, that's the only country that has recorded deaths among persons with disabilities. If I'm incorrect somebody will correct me on that. It means that, in spite of the fact that organisations may not have been consulted directly by our government, it means that we as persons with disabilities are taking this pandemic seriously and ensuring that we protect ourselves and that is what we have to continue to do. He spoke also about the survey, I'm not sure how many of you from the Caribbean will have completed that survey. In our next presentation as we look about the next item on the agenda, issues, current issues that are personal to us in the Caribbean, perhaps we could hear from you as to exactly what the situation is with you as we continue with our agenda.

I'll not keep the format as I did in alphabetical order, I'll leave it open to anybody who wants it talk to us, to speak to us, to share with us the experiences, the challenges, the successes, and I'll give each person 5 minutes to do that and then we will move on from there. So the floor is now open for anyone to tell us the current situation as regards covid in their country. Okay? Don't raise your hand, I can't see you. Yes? Since we have lots of people you'll have to speak up. Who wants to go first? The floor is open.

GEMMA: Natalie, we have somebody called Danny Chamber, somebody called Ganesh, we know and Patricia and there's two other people, I'm not sure which are their names. So perhaps one of you could help Natalie out and begin, please?

DANIEL: Good morning.

NATALIE: Yes.

DANIEL: I'm Daniel Chambers from St Vincent and I'm currently in St Vincent. As of right now, we have not really been getting any support. The organisation that I'm representing, the Voice of the Disabled, we have managed to just get some food vouchers for our members and so on, so that's the only thing we have managed to get thus far but there are things available but we have not been able to get access to them. There are things like love boxes with goods from the, by the goods from farmers, like provision but they're dealing with the churches, they give them to the churches, not to like organisations such as the blind or VOD but we're still in our current stage of getting our building repaired and so on so even if they were to do that, we do not have the capacity to, you know, take the love boxes but, nevertheless, I have been in touch with some persons with disabilities and only one of them has said they have got a love box because it's mostly the churches who are involved in distributing out that.

There's also materials for, if you need repairs on your houses, if you don't have family members who

would help you to get these stuff, to get the estimate and so on, that, too, is a problem because remember you have the social distancing thing and we are not quite as developed as some of the other countries where you can just catch a disabled bus and go into town. Our streets here are not too accessible for the blind because we have a lot of vendors and are trying to sort that out and so forth. We are now trying to get some ramps in buildings so for persons with wheelchair, it may be a bit of a challenge, but our transport system is not where it really should be. So, hence, that is another problem trying to do it by yourself.

NATALIE: Okay. Okay, thank you, Daniel, for your presentation.

GANESH: I can go if you like, it's Ganesh.

NATALIE: Just responding -- just a minute. I was just saying that we are happy to have heard from you, but one thing I didn't like and we were here to correct each other, when you talk about the disabled bus, I don't think there's any disabled bus, disability friendly vehicles and transportation indicators to the needs of persons with disabilities so bear that in mind, okay? Yes, Ganesh? You can go now.

GANESH: All right. Good morning, everyone. I'll provide a status update on the covid situation and some of the positives for the disability and some of the challenges. We have some what of a spike in cases, especially in the hinterland areas where a lot of mining is happening. So it's isolated in the mining area, about 75% of the current cases are in those areas. Sadly, I think I provided update when we met a couple of weeks back. One person with a disability, and that is the one who is visually impaired died in April. Other than that, I'm not aware of anyone else with a disability contracting the disease. In relation to support from government, although we have our own situation in Guyana with politics and no budget, we have we're still able, we have been able to get some support from government and governmental agencies. So far we were able to distribute about 1200 care packages that would include food items and sanitising products and so on for persons with disabilities who are registered with the various disabled organisations that we have across Guyana. That's just a drop in the ocean, because according to estimates we have about 30,000 persons living with disabilities. But the problem is that most of them are not registered in any organisation. So we can't really find them. We tried to publish numbers to get us distance and that was successful to an extent. Additionally, the government, they did provide some of the care packages and in May they launched a programme for persons could have applied online and using the telephone to get public assistance, that's again voucher for \$150 or you can get assistance for utility bill as rent. Persons with disabilities were again given priority. So when it comes to getting that kind of support I think it's pretty much adequate. In relation to getting information, I have been seeing for the past couple of months we have an information overload and listening to radio, social media, and television, they have been able to get enough information from reputable sources on the disease and taking all necessary precautions. We have a lot of masks and gloves that were donated so that, again, we have distributed persons with disabilities. (inaudible). Very few persons with disabilities have the need come out of their homes very often so they're not putting themselves or families at risk. In relation to the challenges, education is a major one because since the lock down they have been able it on engage by their (inaudible) and



there are a number of factors for that. Lack of technology, or by the end of the lack of internet access and then the main one is the lack of any plan to engage the children while they're away. So basically when school reopens, I'm sure a lot of children with disabilities will go back a grade or two because we know, especially the ones with cognitive disabilities they learn through repetition and reinforcement so they will have a major setback. Another issue that we had is the (inaudible). Persons who are blind. They had some issues in getting access to the funds. That is something which I'm going to rectify, although the banks do have a policy, they're still selecting how to give the cards because some persons get them and some don't. And we're moving forward. We are very much hopeful that -- (inaudible) -- useful in a sense to us we can have some positive out of it because employment, there are numerous examples of working remotely and that is something good for persons with disabilities, especially those with physical disabilities, to work remotely because we've seen how many, how persons can work in call centres, if they have a device and they have internet access so we're going to use those examples to advocate for persons with disabilities, so they can work remotely and we're doing, we are in the process of doing a survey, to assess the impact of the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown on persons with disabilities so that we can better inform policies in relation to education and (inaudible) and disaster reaction or whatever the crisis, how (inaudible) with disabilities.

So we're hoping to get all of those things -- we're hoping that when we finish our survey we can then talk to the Government and the relevant agencies to get some level of better planning. The disabilities commission and within the various government bodies. That's about it, from Guyana.

NATALIE: Thank you very much Ganesh. I have to say that based on your presentation you are doing quite good in the circumstances. You have challenges but you continue to press on. That is commendable. In terms of the comments you make with regards to persons with disabilities and employment, I made that some point at a workshop yesterday, organised by one of the ministries of government in terms of persons with disabilities and employment working from home. Given the experience of covid. I also noticed that in your presentation you already made some, you already began to look at some of the issues, going forward, because you mentioned about the survey and the impact, effect that it had had on persons with disabilities. So this is something that you can begin to take note of and, also, probably other countries might want to do the same, going forward, to see what impact it has had on persons with disabilities. So thank you, very much.

GANESH: You are welcome.

NATALIE: And we'll continue to do the best that we can, okay? All right next person.

Yes? Anybody else? Dominica?

GEMMA: What about Patricia.

NATALIE: The representative? Hello, are you there.

>>: Morning.

NATALIE: Yes?

>>: Hi, this is Calvin from (inaudible). In terms of our experiences of the whole covid pandemic, it has been challenging, some ups and downs. The quarantine and the social distancing has been some what of a (inaudible) for persons with disabilities in terms that they have not been able to move around without meetings and the social distancing, whereas you know you can't always go and visit as you would like to, and we're basically left alone at times. But in terms of hampers it has been relatively good, we have received some from the government as well as our affiliates and other organisations, helping each other. And, also, the private sector who had given prior to the fishermen, whoever, give the most vulnerable, disabilities, and I like to see that level of generosity, that care giving, whereas you can look (inaudible). My own issue is with the education sector, as it stands now, schools not been open, how many teachers are there that can do online teaching for persons with disabilities, who need that special or that one-on-one, that hands on experience? Because everything that can be done over the internet. Persons who are visually impaired might need that close interaction and guidance. So that is all I have to say but it has been up and down and the government has done their best and they will continue to do their best. And, for that, I'm thankful.

NATALIE: Okay. Tell me your name again, please?

>>: Calvin.

NATALIE: Okay, good to hear that.

PATRICIA: This is Patricia. Good morning to everybody, again. Well, at present, in Barbados we have 98 cases but one active one. Just recently we turned to Barbados, we have only had seven death as no persons with disabilities and for that we're grateful. With regards to the Barbados council for the disabled, they have been doing quite a commendable role in making sure that persons with disabilities, especially the ones who are affiliates of the BCD have been getting about as best as they could. In the earlier times of covid the council had used their accessible vehicle to get persons around, like, to the supermarkets and so, and that was quite welcome to persons with disabilities. With regards to children with disabilities, that was another area where parents would not have been able to get their children, let's say, to the centre where you do the rehabilitation and mobility exercises and so on, our children would have been lacking in getting their appointments being fulfilled and even now I would say many parents are hesitant in going to the centre to get their children, get their therapy and so on.

With regards to food, I should have mentioned that just now, the council has been doing another incredible job where we've been receiving food hampers from various charities and even now we are still receiving. What has been happening is that persons just like in Guyana under the wholesale, the affiliates would have been receiving, especially the ones who are more hard pressed and in their household, there is no employment, their persons are not employed. Even if they were employed, you know, they would not have been able to go to work because of what was happening. Hence, it would have caused some fall out in their access to money. With regards to that instance, let me just say to, on the government front, the welfare department has given a, I would say, a marginal increase, to those persons who would have been receiving welfare. Many, many parents and children also in receipt of this and that would have been quite welcome. I'm trying to remember there were one or two other

instances.

With regards to the Barbados council of the disabled, again, we are embarking on a food bank which we call the Harambe marketplace. And this is an area where I would say an initiative where we are sourcing basic food items to be -- and I hasten to say here, to, -- not to be given but they will be sold at a marginal rate, as long as we're able to acquire discounts and so on. So I would say that's something that's being done under the council.

There is also an initiative that is coming up now with UN FPA we've already been given the funds and they are presently getting the programme in place which would soon come out to persons.

There is another programme within the council which is called the wheelchair, we call it the wheelchair clinic where the church of the latter day saints have over the past two years would have been donating wheelchairs to persons through the council and that clinic I think will start today, again, saints day fall out of covid.

And another thing I would say, too, the government has received the 33 electric buses and I must adhere that the Barbados Council for the disabled again would now have to see if some of the matters that we would have asked to be taken in terms of audible messaging so that persons who are as blind and visually impaired and deaf would have been able to access the bus. So that is another work in progress which we hope that the council will be able to acquire the necessary discussion. We have had some discussions over time through town hall meetings, but it is now left for us to finally have it thrashed out with the government. I must say that we have not had enough consultation but this is a time now that we would do it. And, another thing, in terms of the access to online banking, that is another work in progress that's being done as well.

So all in all I would say we are trying, there are some programmes that are still continuing, and as much as, a lot of us are still at home, in terms of the transport and so on, that has been I would say that would have been a challenge, in terms of health. Education is another area that would have been mentioned by my colleague. So these are some of the things that we're grappling with and we expect that with regional discussion and so on we will be able to bring all these matters into the forefront and to force our governments that these are the issues of persons with disabilities and we will let them speedily address. Thank you.

NATALIE: All right. Yes, thank you Patricia, I think that was comprehensive enough from Barbados. Based on your report, I can tell that you have made quite a bit of progress in terms of ensuring that the needs of persons with disabilities addressing the covid era but I would like to ask whether, in spite of all your gains, whether you have any complaints coming from people with disabilities, whether they have any specific issues that they report to the council or to (inaudible) in terms of the covid.

>>: In terms of covid, I know there are --

NATALIE: (inaudible) whatever.

>>: Persons, I would say there are some families who, despite all the donations and so on, will not

have received anything and some of them are needy families. I am not sure if all the aid would have been getting to those persons who really need it. And I think that is, for me, that is one of our challenges.

NATALIE: Okay. Anyway we have to continue to press on because as we can hear and as we realise our work has to intensify and our advocacy has to be even further strengthened to ensure that we need persons with disabilities are addressed. However, we have to complement our business of the gains and strides that we've made and let's hope that we can, some of us, benefit from the successes that you have realised, okay?

>>: Thank you.

NATALIE: Dominica? It's your turn, now. Hello? Irma, can you hear me?

GEMMA: Natalie, shall I unmute her?

NATALIE: Yes, go ahead, unmute her.

GEMMA: It's not letting me. If you can hear us, can you try? There she is!

NATALIE: She has been resurrected! [Laughter]. Yes, Irma, go ahead.

IRMA: Good morning, good morning. It's nice to hear the others and sometimes when you hear these things you feel like you are left behind and nothing is happening for you when you hear what is happening in other countries. However, in Dominica we continue to be (inaudible) and praise that we can record that none of our members have been, have had the covid or died as a result of the covid. We cannot speak like the others for any food hampers been given out to our members or any monetary assistance, et cetera. However, the advocacy continues. We have been trying our best to stay in touch with our members, if that's the best we can do to bring hope to them to let them know we're still there for them and with them. But when we look at the whole covid issue I'm just thinking, based on what I heard Mr Richard say in his statement that as persons with disabilities, in terms of wear enough mask it's okay for some persons, those who are asthmatics and have other (inaudible) issues it is very difficult for them to wear. Also it is, if somebody is speaking with a mask on, how can a person who normally speech and hearing impaired, sometimes, they read, they're very good at lipreading, so that's a barrier for them. In terms of physical distancing, it is very difficult and I'm just looking at Dominica where we are directly always in the hurricane belt. So we have been gearing up for the hurricane season and we're looking that, in the event there is a hurricane that we have to move into shelters. I pray the good lord that he will guide and protect each and every one of us because I know it is going to be extremely hard because we do depend, as persons with physical disabilities, we do depend, persons who are blind shall wheelchair users, et cetera, we do depend on persons for assistance and in this small space it is going to be really, really a challenge for us. So sometimes when we try our best to do all the necessaries, even where ourselves in this sector, it is difficult for us to adhere to some of these protocols. And we expect others to assist us in that venture. And everyone looks for themselves that is why we have to look for ourselves and each other. If at one time we really have to share the love

among us, it's in times like this.

We have been saying that and it behoves whenever we get the opportunity to bring to the point that when we're seeking employment for our constituents that we bring across the point that covid has caused managers, CEOs, to stay home, and the new normal to work from home, so if we are asking for the physical access to the building for our members which they claim, sorry we can't, because of ... then we are saying our members can work from home, they have the ability and they can work from home because it was proven that this can be done due to covid, the whole, when the pronouncement for covid was made and persons were, and so are still working from home. So this is one area that we can tap into, to bring across the point that persons with disabilities who have the ability can work from home and be productive. This is where we are in Dominica, we continue to work with our members and we are, the survey to do the impact survey of covid on our members, I think that was a very good venture that we can take up. So even for us as organisations, it would put us on a track that we would know about our members, it's covid's impact that would help us in the event of any disaster that we will have all this data and information ready if needs be to pass on to the relevant authorities, whoever they are. That's it from me.

NATALIE: All right, thank you, Irma. As I said, we are not sure to what extent our persons with disabilities will have received, released supplies from the government. What we did, also, as organisation, was to try to contact most of all members as possible to see how they were coping, what their experiences were, what assistance they had received and most of them reported that they were doing okay and as early as April, as an organisation, we organised a meeting with the minister responsible for Dominicans with disability because we now have a minister with that portfolio. When we met with her we discussed with her the whole relief supplies for members and how we as an organisation felt that the whole issue could be handled if they would have provided us with the necessary supplies but to date we have received nothing in that regard. However, what we have heard from the government in the general statement is that none of the social programmes would have been affected, they were not going to cut off any of the support that is currently being provided to vulnerable groups and persons in the low bracket area of privileged persons which of course include us with persons with disability. So in terms of the national employment programme which they are implementing, persons with disabilities benefit from that. I know, as far as I know, that most of them continue to receive their monthly payment. There's also the public support programme, how they call it, public welfare assistance. That continues. We have some of our members and non-members, for people with disability, who are part of this programme and that continues. But it has not been increased. That is the thing, it has not been increased so they continue to have to receive the same amount, even if their needs would have increased in terms of wearing enough masks and getting the necessary supplies in terms of sanitisation, et cetera, et cetera. That is an issue for us. However, we are hoping that some announcement, some pronouncements will be made to us on July 22 when we hold our 36th annual general meeting to which we have invited the minister to address us. So Dominica has recorded no deaths at the moment. There are only seven persons in quarantine based on the figures provided two days ago. Our borders have been open partially and the fear is that when it is opened fully there is the possibility that some cases be imported and that the measures that were in

place to protect citizens and to ensure that no deaths had occurred we might just find ourselves entered into another phase. However, we continue to be optimistic, we continue to be hopeful, and looking forward. Sooner or later, to the end of this pandemic, also what we are hearing of that is not very encouraging news, yes?

NATALIE: I think we have heard from all of the countries here, yes?

>>: Natalie, can you just give me a couple of minutes, please.

NATALIE: Sure, go ahead.

>>: I want to kind of agree with Irma when he heard Guyana and Barbados' reports, I was wondering, somewhere St Vincent? And if we are really this much behind. But I'm feeling a little better now I would have heard Dominica's report. I think in St Vincent we are still struggling a lot to get the government and society to really come to the acceptance that persons disability, persons as well, and we would need assistance just as any other persons. We have our minister for persons with disability and I mean I would have tried on several occasions for him to come and meet with the members but it's always an excuse, he can't make it today, and et cetera, I think it's only one time we were able to meet with him and this was in January and Mr Charles who is here from Canada. So I know something like this he would like to attend. I have always been in contact with my members. I'm the President of our organisation, Voice of the Disabled, so we are fairly new. What I do, I created a WhatsApp chat to make sure I'm touch with them and I try my best every Sunday to talk to them, update them on necessary informations and stuff like that. But we were able to get a \$200 grocery vouchers and that is after Daniel and myself, we were invited for an interview on the SVG television and with my big mouth I start saying that we're not receiving any assistance from the government or even the private owners and so I had a call from the PS asking me to prepare a list agenda in the ministry of mobilisation. So I sent a list of names of 55 persons and were able to get a 200 voucher. The love boxes, they are donated to the churches from the I am really disappointed when a lot of my members complained that they have not been receiving any of these love boxes. And I also make note of that and I talk about it in the interview on the television. So I think we're quite behind, still, with government and the society here in St Vincent and the Grenadines, it has come to understand and recognise persons with disability.

So I realise that we have a lot of work to do, a lot of work that needs to be done. There are other organisations here. We have the National Society for Persons with Disabilities, we have the Society of and for the Blind and what I have been doing, since I began this new organisation, Voice of the Disabled is to get us all to come together. Work together. But there are still logging behind, if I should use that word.

So I'm seeing where we have a lot of work to do with government personnels and societies and even the private owners of businesses and stuff like that. Because we would have asked for some donation of mask and sanitisers because we wanted to go in and have a meeting I was surprised no one called and even over to give us some donations and stuff like that. So this is where we are here. We had 29 cases. I haven't heard of any of my members, or any person with disability among them but I am happy to report that, to date, we do not have, well, no known case of COVID-19 here in St Vincent and

the Grenadines. But, as Natalie was saying, when the border is open, when, well, we never really closed per se but when international flights start coming back, I think we are going to have some issues where COVID-19 is concerned. So this is my little bit on the issue here in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

NATALIE: Okay, thank you very much Cheryl. As we all will realise, we have a lot of work to do and covid has given us added responsibilities but, the harvest is plentiful but the labours are few. And based on my knowledge of the various organisations in the region, not many of the organisations have persons with disabilities who are prepared to take on the challenge. Most times it is left to a few. I know, for instance in Guyana, there are many (inaudible) but continues to persevere and get the job done in spite of the fact that he is totally blind. And, based on the representation at that meeting today, we are just still persons who are blind and visually impaired and I keep asking myself, where are the other types of disabilities? Those with physical disabilities but yet who are able it see? What contributions are they making towards the development of the organisation? And then when you, the sad thing is, when you try to do your best and get things done, you are sometimes criticised, you are sometimes not appreciated. There's also some suspicion that you are benefiting. I myself get my share of criticisms in Dominica when I meet certain persons who think that when the organisation gets assistance, when they get projects, that it has to be for individuals, not understanding that whatever funding is made available is for the benefit of the organisation and the persons they represent. And then you are accused of being, you know, thieves or whatever the case may be. So we have a lot of work to do. I don't know how we can do what we can to bring in our colleagues with other types of disabilities on board. However, we have to persevere and continue and be persistent because what we're doing is for the betterment of humanity and to advance the status and dignity of persons with disabilities around our island. So we have gone past an hour. We have less than an hour left for our meeting, so we have to move onto the next item. Also it is the way forward I think most of us addressed that in our presentations, if you will agree with me. What I would like us to do now is to go onto the next agenda item which is our priority areas in terms of issues that we would like to see the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum address. I would like to first make a suggestion that when whatever priority areas that we come up with, that we agree to, that the report that will be prepared should not only be sent to the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum, but it should be sent to our heads of government in the region, they call themselves Carricom, Caribbean community and interestingly, Carricom have a (inaudible) in the person of Senator Floyd Morris from Jamaica and I think we should present to him our findings, our report or recommendations, whatever the case may be so that he could take it up to Carricom on our behalf, I don't know what the others think but it is one of the suggestions and one of the ideas that came to my mind when I was preparing for this meeting. I would like to hear others' feedback in term was this idea that I have, if you think that is a good one and if you do then we have to ensure that this is taken to the highest level of the heads of government in the Caribbean. Yes? Anybody?

>>: Yes, I agree with that, here from St Vincent and the Grenadines, I really agree with that because I was wondering if we have anyone that are disabled representing this. This is news to me, I'm happy to hear it and I'm agreeing that whatever we come up with, we should share it with Carricom.

NATALIE: All right, yes, thank you. Anybody else?

GANESH: I missed it, so my apologies, there.

NATALIE: I was suggesting, you want me to repeat?

GANESH: I would appreciate that.

NATALIE: I was suggesting that whatever recommendation, whatever suggestions, whatever the outcome of our meeting today that it's sent a report, a report be sent to the Carricom heads of government through Senator Floyd Morris who is the Carricom reporter on disability. Because it's all well and good for us to come here, bring up all the challenges, all the difficulties, all the complaints and what should and what is happening and not happening, and not let our leaders know about it. So, going forward, as we prepare for to prioritise the three key area that is we want to take to the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum, for them to address, that list also be sent to Carricom so they will know that the organisations of persons with disabilities in the region have come together and we are speaking at an united voice in terms of saying to them, what we would like to see them do on our behalf based on our needs and not the case where they will be deciding for us and not doing the correct thing and the thing that we deserve. So that is the point I was making.

GANESH: I have no problem with that approach. My only concern is -- we have regional subset, I know we are a regional subset of CDPF. But then, as you know, a lot of us are also members of the (inaudible) which I am quite sure might be concerning to Carricom, too. So I'm wondering, I hope we're not getting into the territory of paragraph illegal (inaudible) but I have no problem sending it to Senator Morris. Outcomes from the meeting with some regional reps of the CDPF.

NATALIE: There's nothing wrong in (inaudible) doing something similar, too. I understand you don't want duplication.

GANESH: Exactly.

NATALIE: You have to be caution about duplication.

GANESH: You don't want to get into (inaudible) on this.

NATALIE: We have to find a way of how we handle that. How we approach that. If you can do it in collaboration, if the (inaudible), I have no problem with that.

GANESH: (inaudible) on the board, so ...

NATALIE: Yes. You want to comment on that? Hello? Okay, she must be talking to her husband, her husband is presently at the hospital so ...

GANESH: I think we should send it to the Carricom reporter so we can see if we can get other Carricom countries to send any bits of information they have so that -- so when you send it, rather than have it, one, two, three, four, five countries here, we can say, these are basically -- this is what ten or 12



territories are calling foment and try to incorporate more persons.

NATALIE: Okay. Irma, are you there now? Can you hear us? all right I guess you'll come in, in time. We can move on as I say we have to come up with at least three priority areas. I have been listening and picking up quite a few of them. If you could prioritise, we spoke about employment, we had an issue of access to technology and especially teachers who are not trained to teach classes online and how we're going to effect the children with disabilities. We also spoke about getting relief supplies and ensuring that persons with disabilities get the assistance that they require. Anybody can help in terms of some of the issues about transportation, is that issue, which is also a sore point and I was very pleased to hear that, to hear the number of disability-friendly vehicles in Barbados community has acquired. How the government are doing that. At the (inaudible) we have a wheelchair accessible vehicle that we implement a specialise taxi service. I'm not sure how many more persons or organisations there would be privileged to have such a facility. So, here, what other areas can we highlight? Can we prioritise?

DANIEL: Good morning, again, Daniel from St Vincent. I think for us here what we have to prioritise is jobs and our education for persons here and I'm sure other islands would agree. In St Vincent we don't have that many persons with a disability, it doesn't -- whether you are in a wheelchair or whatever -- it doesn't matter what disability but you don't have many people working, right? So they are dependent on family members or their government for monetary assistance and other funds of assistance. So one of the main priorities we will need put in place is education and jobs. I'm not sure, we have someone who does provide a wheelchair bus but it's privately owned, that's privately owned, that just takes persons to clinics, doctor appointments but that's privately owned. We have that but it's privately owned and persons are not really working so they won't be able to pay that fee. Also, in St Vincent, our terrain to find our members, we would like to start a database where you have all persons with disabilities put into this database so when you have things like covid hurricane, you would be able to find them. So that's a priority, finding all members once they have a disability, their location and numbers and so forth. And because we're a multi-island state, some would be from different islands, like we have St Vincent, then we have Bequia, Mustique, ... (lists islands) not just mainland and St Vincent, so those are some of the priority areas I think we would need to work on.

GEMMA: I'm really sorry. I think we'll need to take a very short break because I should have remembered to say this earlier, Katy who is captioning for us, she is doing this alone. And it's very intense. So we just need to take a few minutes. We will need to finish this whole thing by 5 o'clock my time. 12 o'clock your time.

NATALIE: 11.45? What time?

GEMMA: We've officially got about half an hour left.

NATALIE: Okay all right. We've covered quite a bit.

GEMMA: We've done brilliantly but we need to take a few minutes just briefly now so Katy can stretch her fingers, is that okay?

NATALIE: Okay, no problem.

GEMMA: We'll indicate to everyone when that's up.

(Break).

GEMMA: We're very keen to include people from the deaf community, (inaudible) from Trinidad so he contacted a deaf organisation there and it was all quite late and she responded yesterday, that was brilliant she wanted to come so she asked a couple of people. And I think because it was all a bit late, they didn't know it was going to be International Sign rather than American Sign, so by the time we had realised that and our signers are incredibly, I don't know what the word is, they know lots of different sign languages so they switched to American Sign following the notes on here. But by which time they had left, which is a real shame so I emailed the lady, I emailed the lady and said, please can you get them back? They will be able to access it now because it's in American Sign but I haven't heard. So the thing is, I don't think this is going to be the last meeting like this, I really hope had not. So for me it feels like a learning curve and I'll email them afterwards and say next time we have it, we'll have American Sign. So everyone is back on. So let's --

NATALIE: Let's continue.

GEMMA: Let's continue, thank you so much and sorry to interrupt you, Patricia.

NATALIE: Welcome back. Before the break we were discussing some priority areas that we would like to take to the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum so we addressed on our behalf in the region and I think we have some suggestions already, there was something on employment, there was something on public transportation, there was something on online training or training of teachers number terms of providing line education. What else? Somebody help me! Patricia was making a point about disaster readiness and (inaudible). Can you proceed, Patricia?

PATRICIA: Thank you, I will. What I was sharing with our colleague there is that here, in Barbados, under the National Assistance Board, the national assistance board is for the elderly and persons who are vulnerable so we also have what we call a Vulnerable Persons Committee. That committee, on that committee we have representation spread throughout the whole government service and I would say services that would cater to, in times of disaster. And what I was saying that, what we have done is that we update what we call a vulnerable persons list each year. And this vulnerable persons list would entail all persons who we regard as vulnerable including persons with disabilities, where they are, the type of disability, whether they are living alone or things of that nature. And it goes into that mass to list at the National Assistance Board so that in the time of a disaster, persons will know exactly where they are and we also have hurricane shelters and so you know where your hurricane shelter each year, you are updated as to where your hurry contain shelter is dependent on the catchment area where you live so that's the approach that we in Barbados have taken.

NATALIE: Okay. Yes. Are you done?

>>: Yes.

NATALIE: I was just listening to what you were saying. In terms of the committee, there was a suggestion that the survey, the suggestion that all organisations get a survey in terms of persons with disabilities and covid, probably that is something that we can incorporate in the questionnaire as well.

>>: Yes.

NATALIE: Just to say that in the Dominica, we have been placing emphasis on the appropriateness, sometimes it changes and we've been doing training, workshops and consultations with persons with disabilities because we've got some funding from the global environment facilities small grants projects and we've been doing a number of as I said workshops and consultations. We started last year. It came to an end officially last month but we still have the funding to continue the activity that was suspended because of covid. One of the things that we were able to do with our members and plan to continue that is to ensure that they all have a disaster preparedness plan, personal one and a family one. And we have also developed a disaster preparedness guide for persons with disabilities on that project, and we intend to share that information with our colleagues and our counterparts in the region and around the world so they will know what to do, not only persons with disabilities themselves, who don't know what to do in terms of disasters to cater to the persons with disabilities but also we have the families, the organisations, committees, disaster committees, we spoke about shelters, training for shelter managers as how to --

>>: Right.

NATALIE: Persons with disabilities and things like that.

>>: That's good. Thank you good.

NATALIE: In Dominica we concentrating in terms of disaster preparedness so this is also something that we need to ensure that persons with disabilities are prepared for disaster and we're not only talking about natural disasters because as covid has shown us, it would be a health, that, too, is a global and based on what we are hearing and how persons with disabilities are provided for or not being provided for, this guide, would help immense also and it is our intention to present this guide, copies of this guide to government, to members of the opposition, to civil society organise, field based organisations, family, et cetera et cetera et cetera. So everybody will know what to do if you have been affected by disaster. So this is one of the areas we can include in our survey, our disaster preparedness and so on.

I don't know what else we can talk about. Access to the physical environment is very critical.

>>: Yes.

NATALIE: We have people going to shelters and Dominica, too, I can also mention that the government has begun construction of hurricane -- natural disaster shelter, hurricane shelters, especially. And have the various districts in Dominica. And recently the first was opened and we were told that provisions have been made together for persons with disabilities but we have been trying to have an inspection to see if that has been done. But we hear about it and what we can say is based on our advocacy, you know, even though we're not directly consulted, but we can hear that these are

persons with disabilities are provided for. Whether it meets the needs of our constituent is another matter, these are things that we have to work with the authorities to ensure that it really does, you know?

>>: I was just dog going to say along with what you were saying, coupled with that, considering that, we also have to consider in making any kind of provisions for hurricane shelter as so on, we know we have this problem of dealing with covid, distancing and all of that, so that, too, would come into play.

NATALIE: Definitely. Yes. Because that is why I said we have to cater to emerging health issues.

>>: That's clear. Care should really be one of our, what is the word we used there just now?

NATALIE: Priorities?

>>: Right. Priorities, yes.

NATALIE: All right, thanks for that. Yes, anybody else has anything to add or something new to share?

CHERYL: Let me add to Daniel's contribution, Cheryl here from St Vincent. We have to make sure we have training for persons that are disabled and rehabilitation because a lot of them are very still dependent. So we need to get them, once they are able to move about, to be independent. And what that means is talking about, when it comes to the plan ... we really don't have, we know that there are persons with disability here. But, we have no idea as to how the per cent, the percentage of persons that are disabled in St Vincent and in Grenadines. And where we can find them. Every time we try to, you know, get to that, we are being told, oh, we don't know, we'll get back to you, and that has never been done. So we have to start from scratch. Even before we can do what Patricia is suggesting which is very good. And, so, I will make note of that. What we definitely need to have the data.

>>: Yes.

>>: For persons with disabilities are, where they are located and stuff like that.

>>: Yes, Cheryl, that's where your survey comes in. That is something we could have. We could work with the PDF to prepare a questionnaire, to ensure that it is across the board that the one question we use one questionnaire in the survey so that we could come and most of that data would be acquired. We would have to ensure that whatever data is accurate and you have capable and competent people going around and collecting the data for you and then some persons with disabilities, you can still have a disability, you want to associate with the organisation, it doesn't want people it know that they have a disability, they think some of them who are independent, they think they can manage and there's no need for them to get involved. But the survey, (inaudible) point, right Ganesh?

GANESH: I agree with what you and Cheryl said. In relation to having data. Yes, we in Guyana on the national commission of disabilities database, thousand persons with disabilities, out of that number,

probably 1400 persons are part of any organisation (inaudible). And any situation like we had like we're having, presently, we would not be able to really get assistance to all those ten thousand persons and ensure (inaudible) will be our 30,000. So it is very important to at least get a data for these people and smaller islands like St Vincent, and Dominica and so on, you guys are in a much better position. To get the data. And even though they might not want to be affiliated on the organisation, at least have them on the register.

>>: Definitely, yes.

GANESH: One of the things that you must push for when doing the data collection is also (inaudible). So you can plot in the coordinates of the location. (inaudible) that can be used for that purpose. So the numerators would have an internet ready device so when they go to locations and register someone or they someone they plug their coordinates. So that (inaudible) so as to bodies and so forth, they are trying to get assistance so these people are trying to get them out of a situation. They know where they are located by using GPS. (inaudible) and (inaudible) is a yardstick that is used by most countries in relation to gathering data by persons with disabilities. (inaudible) questions, it's available online. And that is the guide really that is used to capture the data. So, yes, in relation to priorities move forward I agree with everything that we said there. Health care, it's very important because we have a lot of people with disabilities, especially in the old age bracket that are not having their supply of medication. Jamaica, they had a good, well they still have a good system, where persons are scanning their prescription and sending it and there are medications that have been prepared and picking it up at a specific location. That is something that can be done too or you can push pour it to be done. Education and employment is my pet areas and something that we really need to push moving forward. Where technology should be incorporated more in delivering education to children with disabilities. Because for too long they are not spending the necessary resources in teaching children with disabilities. We're still using the old (inaudible) method that is useless. Where you are teaching these children. We're not seeing the potential that they can have once they can use technology. We have some good examples, we have (inaudible), it started in (inaudible) and that's for the blind and canned to physical disabilities. Persons were able to (inaudible) using (inaudible) electronic means so we've tried and tested methods and it has proven to be very successful and it's something we need to push our governments to do. Incorporate more technology in the classroom so that in cases of disaster, for instance, children can still be able to learn from home. Let them have the relevant curriculum and policies modified. We need to have hybrid system in place and make the task much easier for the teacher and the children. Employment, and I think we said earlier, where we can push for work for disabilities. We know that (inaudible) fully accessible built environment. I can honestly tell you we have been trying and not getting anywhere so we need to lucky at long term solutions and that's remote ... (inaudible) less cost both for the employer and the person with the disability who is employed but they don't need to travel and there's no need to fit the office space it suit that person and we can use examples of call centres and even the (inaudible) all of that can be done remote will you.

Training. Training is very, very important. When it comes to the skilled areas that not everyone's going to be academically inclined. We've trained about 400 persons since 2016 but sadly (inaudible)

employment is not, not been able to high success rate in getting people employed. But rehabilitation, Cheryl, this should be on the list because you have persons who are blind who can't use a cane and some of them might be living by themselves action some of them might be with someone that need their assistance and I can't assist them so they need to develop their living scale skills so at least they can use telephone and manoeuvre within their homes or in their yard or any crisis situation at least they know they have the basis skills to be able to get help or to actually survive for a while until assistance comes. Because it's really lacking. (inaudible). I'm just speaking from the blind but all disabilities, they need to have rehabilitation and we need more sign language, they send out alerts, how many that persons have access to a device? So they can get the alerts with the text message? How many blind persons can read it because not everyone has a smart phone. So there are loads of things that need to be in place and I'll thank you very much for that guide, whenever it's completed and if it's completed, (inaudible) have look and see if they can incorporate it.

NATALIE: Yes, thanks very much, Ganesh for all the points that you raised. I fully endorse them and, of course, the guide will be formally launched at our Annual General Meeting on 22 July and then, afterwards, we will circulate it.

GANESH: (inaudible).

NATALIE: Well covid caused that! [Laughter]. Blame it on covid! I didn't want to say that, sorry, I support the suggestion in terms of rehabilitation for not only the blind and what we have done, good just see the need to have an adjustment to blindness officer which we also tried to recruit but what we have seen is we need an adjustment to disability officer because you have a number of persons when they acquire disability, they have difficulty coping. In case of the blind we want to bring it all persons with disabilities, when they're quite across the board. And then you made a point about the technology access to ICT for persons with disability. I think this is something that we really, really have to pursue because although you said not everybody has a device, but if we (inaudible) implemented funding for that, there are agencies who will be willing to support with assistive aids and devices, as a matter of fact, the APD(?) is waiting for a formal presentation of assistive aids and devices including laptops, computers and other stuff from the international telecommunication union ... and suffers from Caribbean OCS, if the telecommunications authority. So we have these devices on the island waiting to presented and also we work with an organisation I mentioned earlier, GEF, the Global Environment Fund, the small grants programme, and they are interested in assisting us to develop projects whereby we could acquire assistance with the devices that we can ensure that more persons with disabilities have access to (inaudible) going forward because that is very, very, very important and crucial if we have to meet the challenges and you know really, really fall in line with the development that's taking place in the world in technology and that is developing rapidly. So I wanted to make this point. We don't have too much time left so anybody else want to share any new suggestion they have?

DANIEL: I'm Danny from St Vincent, I just want it make a quick observation and comment. I would like to see, I'm not too old of a person but I would like to see more collaboration with our different Caribbean islands collaborating on, you know, programmes and exchanging members to help to build countries that are not ahead. For a very long time I've been wondering what is been happening here in

Trinidad, I can't physically travel it these countries. It was not for this meeting, I would have not known in Dominica. Then the news now, you don't really hear, even though I'm a person who watches the news, you don't hear because you don't mention anything in case something major happens so you don't know what happens, unfortunately there's nobody who says what is happening in St Lucia, you don't get a true picture from Trinidad so I would like to not just wait for it form, we would exchange numbers and emails and whatever, and if you are doing a programme in St Lucia or in Dominica, we can do --he dropped out.

>>: He is still there but I think his connection.

>>: I think Danny was picking my brain a little well. Because I wanted to make this suggestion.

>>: (inaudible) formal school setting so if you have a (inaudible) that we can do that.

NATALIE: You are breaking up! We can't hear you. We get the point. Share enough information, networking, collaboration, partnerships and so that's the point that your making, yes? Okay.

>>: That is the point you are making.

>>: Is it possible that we here now can share contact information?

>>: Yes.

NATALIE: Definitely.

GANESH: I think it should be done but quickly which organisation are you guys from, Cheryl.

>>: Voice of the Disabled.

GANESH: (inaudible) because refer to get you back involved.

>>: We are Voice of Disabled and we are cross-disability. I will try to apply to the Caribbean Council for the Blind so we can become associate members.

GANESH: You are the person that transmitted to vendor, right?

>>: Yes.

GANESH: Because the thing about it, there are two forums for but WhatsApp groups that information is being shared. One is the DPI Presidents group, we are the organises from the region there and they do a lot of sharings and there's also the Caribbean leaders. So (inaudible) a lot of co-operation and information sharing. For a while. Because the organisation that preceded you had some issues.

NATALIE: I don't know part (inaudible).

>>: The national society for the blind, I would say they are not functioning. They really -- the building is there, they go to the building, maybe they make some mops and bring some chairs but that is just what is happening there. And nothing else.

GEMMA: Everybody, I'm really, really sorry to interrupt, we were out of time. And we really have to honour that because I had only booked the captioner and the signing language interpreters for two hours. If everyone's in agreement, we can put you in touch with each other, you can continue any kind of discussion.

GANESH: You can send us --

GEMMA: That's fine but for this one we need to wrap up now, so (inaudible) on the notes and make sure that you agree with the things you want to take forward. And Natalie will send that to you all and make sure everyone's happy with the input and stuff like that. Sorry to interrupt you. We have to finish. Natalie, I'll leave you to wrap up.

NATALIE: Yes. Okay. I want to say thank you to all of you for your participation. activate participation. I think the discussion was very rich. I think we covered quite a lot of ground. It is obvious that the situation and the conditions are similar so our experiences (inaudible) as was suggested for us to meet more regularly and share information, we will endeavour to do that. But I just want to say that it was a pleasure convening this meeting. Unfortunately our colleagues from Trinidad could not ... to include those who have not been represented here. So thank you very much for your attendance and participation and continue the fight, continue the struggle as we have established quite a bit of work to do. Quite a bit of the (inaudible) to do, quite a bit of advocacy to do but we must not give up. We have to be hopeful and optimistic and we have to persevere and we have to be persistent and that's what we've committed ourselves to do and that will eventually achieve our goals based on what we have set ourselves. Okay? Thank you very much, thank you.