PARLIAMENT
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

HRED

SEVENTH REPORT OF THE

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON

HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

THIRD SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT (2017/2018)

on

Inquiry into the Status of the Implementation of the recommendations of the 2015 Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development on the Examination of Programmes and Services which provide Support to Victims of Domestic Violence.

Committee Mandate

The Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity was established under House of Representatives Standing Order 106 and Senate Standing Order 96 and shall have the duty of considering, from time to time, and reporting whenever necessary, on all matters related to:

(a) compatibility of Acts of Parliament with human rights, and any matters relating to human rights in Trinidad and Tobago (but excluding consideration of individual cases);
(b) Government compliance with national and international human rights instruments to which Trinidad and Tobago is a party;
(c) the promotion of measures designed to enhance the equalization of opportunities and improvement in the quality of life and status of all peoples including marginalized groups on the basis of gender, age (elderly, youth, children) disability and the creation of an inclusive and more equitable society through greater social justice and sustainable human development within Trinidad and Tobago.

Committee Membership

Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP	Chairman
Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Kazim Hosein	Member
Mr. Esmond Forde, MP	Member
Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, MP	Member
Mr. Dennis Moses	Member
Mr. Saddam Hosein	Member
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Publication

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRDV	**Central Registry on Domestic Violence**
DVU	**Domestic Violence Unit**
HDC	**Housing Development Corporation**
IADB	**Inter- American Development Bank**
JSC	**Joint Select Committee**
MOE	**Ministry of Education**
MOH	**Ministry of Health**
MOWT	**Ministry of Works and Transport**
MSDFS	**Ministry of Social Development and Family Services**
MYGCD	**Ministry of Youth, Gender and Child Development**
NFSD	**National Family Services Division**
NGI	**Non-Government Institutions**
NGO	**Non-Governmental Organization**
NIDCO	**National Infrastructure Development Company**
NSAP	**National Strategic Action Plan**
OPM	**Office of the Prime Minister**
PAHO	**Pan American Health Organisation**
TTPS	**Trinidad and Tobago Police Service**
UN	**United Nations**
VWSO	**Victim and Witness Support Officer**
VWSU	**Victim and Witness Support Unit**
WCC	**Women City Centre**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. The Committee resolved at its Fourteenth Meeting held on September 08, 2017 to conduct an inquiry into the status of the implementation of the recommendations of the 2015 report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development on the examination of programmes and services which provide support to victims of domestic violence and agreed the following objective would guide the inquiry:

- **To determine the status of the recommendations of the 2015 Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development on the examination of programmes and services which provide support to victims of domestic violence.**

1.2. The Committee agreed that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS), Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) were to be invited to a public hearing on November 24, 2017.

1.3. The Committee obtained both oral and written evidence based on the objective listed above.

1.4. Some of the significant issues raised during the public hearing were:

- The recruitment status of vacancies at the Domestic Violence Unit, Office of the Prime Minister (OPM);
- The current number, adequacy and opening hours of safe houses in Trinidad and Tobago;
- The status of the four shelters under construction/refurbishment by the NIPDEC and the Ministry of Works and Transport;
- The response time of the TTPS upon receiving a report of domestic violence;

- The procedure followed by the VWSU upon receiving a report of an incident of domestic violence;

- The counselling services available at the National Family Services Division (NFSD), Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) and the VWSU for the perpetrators of domestic violence;

- The need for strengthened coordination amongst the various stakeholders of domestic violence inclusive of the MSDFS, VWSU and OPM;

- The factors that determine the choice of radio station and time slot for the 'Let's Talk' Radio Programme;

- The various outreach initiatives conducted by the TTPS, MSDFS and OPM to sensitize the citizenry on domestic violence;

- The current status of the Central Registry on Domestic Violence and the need for information sharing of the data collected by the Central Registry amongst stakeholders;

- The 24/7 availability of the VWSU personnel and shelters to victims of domestic violence;

- The process used to track the enforcement of protection orders and response time of the TTPS to reports of breaches to protection orders;

- The current VWSU staffing and infrastructure at police stations; and

- The placement of domestic violence victims in shelters via a referral process through the domestic violence hotline 800-SAVE.

1.5. The Committee submits its **Findings** and **Recommendations** with respect to the status of the recommendations of the 2015 Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development on the examination of programmes and services which provide support to victims of domestic violence in **Chapter 4 and 5.**

BACKGROUND

2.1. The Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development[1] on the examination of the programmes and services which provide support to victims of domestic violence was laid in the Senate on June 9, 2015 and on June 12, 2015 in the House of Representatives.

2.2. The objectives of the inquiry were as follows:

a. **to determine the adequacy of programmes and services for victims of domestic violence;**
b. **to determine the adequacy of resources of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for victims of domestic violence; and**
c. **to determine the relationship between the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development and other stakeholders in reducing domestic violence.**

2.3. During the 2015 public hearing, the Committee examined officials from the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development as well as the Victim and Witness Support Unit, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. The Committee also received eight (8) submissions from non-governmental stakeholders.

2.4. On July 23, 2015 a request for a Ministerial Response to the recommendations/comments contained in the report was sent to the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

2.5. A Ministerial Response from the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development[2] was received on August 13, 2015 and laid in the House of Representatives on July 1, 2016

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[1] Report on the Examination of the programmes and services which provide support to victims of domestic violence of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development, 2015. http://www.ttparliament.org/reports/p10-s5-J-20150610-HDES-r1.pdf

[2] Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, 2015. http://www.ttparliament.org/reports/MR-J-HRED-Rep1-R1-MGCYD.pdf

and in the Senate on July 05, 2016. A response from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service was not submitted to Parliament.

2.6. According to the Social Sector Investment Programme 2018, the Domestic Violence Hotline of the OPM recorded 426 reports of domestic violence for the period October 2016 to June 2017. While, the VWSU during the period 2015 to October 30, 2017, recorded, 7,308 clients serviced and 958 clients serviced for incidents of domestic violence. A breakdown of clients serviced is provided at **Appendix V**.

2.7. According to the, *"2017 UNDP Regional Analysis on the Policies to End Violence Against Women in Latin America and the Caribbean*[3]*"*:

- *"Only 2 of the 33 countries (6%) do not have an officially approved national action plan to address violence against women and/or gender (Trinidad and Tobago and St. Lucia), both Anglophone Caribbean.*
- *…since 2012, Trinidad and Tobago has been undertaking institutional efforts to formulate a policy to address gender based violence and sexual violence. According to the official sources consulted, the development of the first National Strategic Action Plan on Gender Based Violence and Sexual Violence was completed in September 2015, which would cover the period 2015 – 2020. However, the Cabinet has still not officially approved it according to the official sources consulted."*

2.8. The Committee is pleased to recognise that based on the recommendations of the 2015 report, some progress has been made by every agency dealing with domestic violence to realise some of the recommendations.

2.9. However, the statistics of domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago as seen in **2.6.** has prompted the Committee to examine the implementation of the recommendations of the previous report of the Committee to identify and suggest possible solutions to any challenges in their execution and implementation.

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[3] 2017 UNDP Regional Analysis on the Policies to End Violence Against Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Page 40-41. http://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/en/home/library/womens_empowerment/del-compromiso-a-la-accion--politicas-para-erradicar-la-violenci.html

Conduct of the Inquiry

2.10. The public hearing was held on Friday November 24, 2017. During this time, the Committee questioned the officials on the various matters based on the inquiry objective.

2.11. In 2015, the assignment of ministerial responsibility for 'National Family Services' and 'Gender Affairs' was moved from MGYCD to Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)[4].

2.12. Therefore, prior to the public hearing, notice was given as to the general objectives of the inquiry and in response, written submissions were received from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS), Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and the Office of the Prime Minister. These responses provided a frame of reference for the supplementary questions pursued at the hearing.

2.13. The Table below is a list of the persons who were invited to the public hearing.

Table 1
Officials Attendance List

NAME	POSITION
Ministry of Social Development and Family Services	
Mrs. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers	Permanent Secretary
Mr. Vijay Gangapersad	Chief Technical Office (Ag.)
Ms. Vidya Pooransingh	Director, National Family Services
Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS)	
Mr. Harold Phillip	Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag.) Crime and Support
Mr. Deodat Dulalchan	Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag.) Operations
Ms. Aisha Corbie	Manager, Victim & Witness Support Unit
Ms. Bernadette Sealy	Victim and Witness Support Officer
Office of the Prime Minister, Gender Affairs Division	
Ms. Jacqueline Johnson	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Antoinette Jack-Martin	Director, Gender Affairs

[4] Gazette No. 97 of 2015 dated September 23, 2015. http://news.gov.tt/sites/default/files/E-Gazette/Gazette%202015/Gazette/Gazette%20No.%2097.pdf

Ms. Patricia Hackett	Gender Training Officer, Gender Affairs Division
Mr. Kwasi Cudjoe	Coordinator, Male Programme, Gender Affairs Division
Mr. Owen Hender	Manager Policy, Research and Planning
Ms. Gaietry Pargass	Senior Legal Advisor

2.14. The **Minutes** and **Verbatim Notes** are attached as **Appendix I** and **Appendix II respectively**.

2.15. The Seventh Report was approved on March 07, 2018.

EVIDENCE

Objective: To determine the status of the recommendations of the 2015 Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development on the examination of programmes and services which provide support to victims of domestic violence.

3.1. Table 2 shows a status of the recommendations of the Report of the JSC on Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development on the examination of the programmes and services which provide support to victims of domestic violence.

Table 2
Status of Recommendations

2015 Joint Select Committee Recommendation	2015 Ministerial Response	Written Submissions (November 2017)
Objective 1: To determine the adequacy of programmes and services for victims of domestic violence		
The allocation of funding and human resources towards the DVU by the MGYCD become a priority in the upcoming fiscal year in order to achieve its mandate and effectively oversee the Central Registry for Domestic Violence (CRDV).	**MGYCD Funding:** Funding for the Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) including Programmes and Projects geared towards addressing the issue of Gender-Based Violence is included in the Ministry's current budget as well as the Estimates of Expenditure for fiscal year 2015/2016. **MGYCD Human Resources:** Increase in the Human Resource for the DVU. As a result of discussion with the Service Commissions Department in April	- **OPM Human Resources:** There are eleven (11) employees, twelve (12) vacancies and seventeen (17) positions awaiting approval. See Table 1 in Appendix IV for further details.

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>of 2015, the position of Manager, DVU was temporarily filled and recruitment for the established positions within the Unit commenced. Additionally, the Ministry is in the process of filling the other positions within the DVU as well as reviewing the overall organizational structure of the Unit.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>The MGYCD include the provision of transitional housing in its Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence/Domestic Violence stakeholder partnerships. Particular focus should be placed on the Southern Division which had the highest domestic violence cases reported between 2010 and 2014.</td><td>MGYCD Transitional Housing:
The MGYCD strongly agrees with the provision of transitional housing for victims of gender based/domestic violence. There is a challenge currently in accessing spaces for victims of domestic violence on a transitional basis.

However, the MGYCD proposes to collaborate with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development to establish transitional housing specifically for victims of domestic violence. In the interim, the Ministry intends to partner with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) offering this transitional housing service.</td><td>OPM Transitional Housing:
The OPM indicated that the Ministry has not received homes for use as transitional homes from the Housing Development Corporation (HDC) however, at the last discussions with HDC the OPM accepted offers for homes and is currently awaiting the outcome of the process.</td></tr>
<tr><td>The provision of additional resources to domestic violence shelters towards the provision of a 24/7 service and the creation of new 24/7 sanctuaries for domestic violence victims;</td><td>MGYCD Domestic Violence Shelters:
The MGYCD will continue to support Domestic Violence Shelters and other NGOs working in the area of gender-based/domestic violence through the provision of one-off grants, subventions, technical support and institutional capacity building initiatives.</td><td>OPM Domestic Violence Shelters:
<table>
<tr><td>Facility</td><td>Status</td><td>Completion Date</td><td>Contractor</td><td>Capacity</td></tr>
<tr><td>New Construction: 2 Female Shelters</td><td>ongoing</td><td>December 2017; January 2018</td><td>NIPDEC</td><td>52 persons including children</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

	Additionally, the Ministry is establishing three (3) domestic violence shelters/safe homes {two (2) Female Safe House and one (1) the Male Safe House} that will operate 24 hours daily and provide sanctuary/emergency housing for abused women and men and their children. **MGYCD Facility for Support Services:** Within immediate proximity (few yards) to the shelters will be the facility providing various interventions and support services. These properties forms part of an allocation of four (4) residential properties which were allocated to this Ministry by the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure (NIDCO) and are currently undergoing refurbishment.	Refurbishment of residential property: 2 Homes for use as shelters (one for men and one for women) — ongoing — December 2017; March 2018 — MOWT — 10 persons including children 1 Disability Unit **OPM Facility for Support Services:** In June 2017, the MOWT declared the facility unsafe for use and has recommended its demolition. The OPM is continuing its discussion with the MOWT to determine whether the building can be restored. The OPM has since shifted this operation to another space which will become available in Chaguanas.
Coordination with other government ministries and state agencies including the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD) and the Ministry of People and Social Development (MPSD) to allow for the early referral and access to financial aid, social services, training and counselling for the victim and family;	**MGYCD:** The MGYCD currently collaborates with various Ministries and other state agencies as well as non-state agencies in the execution of its mandate. Established protocols and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) will be developed between key agencies including the MHUD and the MPSD to ensure victims and their families receive adequate financial aid, social services and training. **MGYCD Inter-Ministerial Response Strategy:** The MGYCD is in the process of developing an Inter-Ministerial Response Strategy for	**-** **OPM Inter-Ministerial Response Strategy:** Strategy was led by the NFSD, MGYCD and was transferred to the Permanent Secretary, MSDFS in October 2015.

	critical incidents, including issues of gender- based/domestic violence. The main objective of this strategy is to provide a coherent framework for Social Sector Ministries/agencies to respond to critical and other incidents in accordance with acceptable standards of quality. This coordinated response will focus on two main components: • Effective first response; and • Quality of Response – with set standards for speed / timeliness; efficiency and reliability and trust.	
The development of programmes for victims of domestic violence to assist with the re-introduction into society;	**MGYCD Residential Property:** One of the four (4) residential properties which the Ministry acquired from NIDCO is currently undergoing refurbishment. This facility, located in South Trinidad, will be utilized as an Outreach Centre to conduct counselling, entrepreneurship training and skills development to victims of domestic violence who require the services as part of their healing and empowerment. **MGYCD Women City Centre Project:** The Women City Centre (WCC) Project is a collaborative initiative of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through Ministry and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). This centre/facility will provide integrated services for women (a one stop	***See above-mentioned response to*** **OPM Domestic Violence Shelters & OPM Facility for Support Services** **OPM Women City Centre Project:** The Women City Centre Project was discontinued along with the loan arrangement with the Inter-America Development Bank (IADB) for US $30 million by the government on account of the economic situation.

	shop) across five major areas namely: violence against women, sexual and reproductive health, economic autonomy, community education and child care. These integrated services will empower women by offering under 'one roof', services that meet their immediate and long-term needs. Additionally, the MGYCD will collaborate with various civil society organizations and state agencies to provide assistance to clients/victims of domestic violence.	
Public education programmes to support both the perpetrator and victims of domestic violence in collaboration with the TTPS' outreach programmes;	**MGYCD:** The MGYCD continuously conducts outreach public education programmes on various issues including domestic violence for which the TTPS and other key stakeholders provide their support. Additionally, new initiatives of the Ministry that address domestic violence include: • National Communication Strategy on Domestic Violence. The MGYCD is partnering with Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to formulate a National Communication Strategy through consultation with Key Stakeholders. This National Communication Strategy will form part of the MGYCD's National Strategic Action Plan (developed in collaboration with UN Women).	**OPM and MSDFS Programmes:** The various programmes and services provided to the victims of domestic violence and for public education at the OPM and MSDFS is provided in **Appendix V**

	• The Barbershop Initiative, which is an adaptation of the UN Barbershop Conference, is meant to engage the widest cross section of men and boys in a discourse on domestic violence, gender parity and sexual harassment as the Barbershop is the typical setting where men/boys converge and discuss various issues. In fiscal 2016, this initiative will be executed in several communities in the country. Continued initiatives of the Ministry include: • NFS, MGYCD, provides: ▪ Counselling and psychological care for both perpetrator and victims of domestic violence among other issues. ▪ Training for Lay responders to domestic violence in communities to equip volunteers of the community with knowledge/awareness of domestic violence and how to respond appropriately to instances of domestic violence. • The Gender Affairs Division (MGYCD) provides: ▪ Defining Masculine Excellence Programme which addresses the	

	subject of men and the notions of masculinity to address various issues including domestic violence. This is supported by other programmes managed by the Ministry such as the Food Preparation and Home Management Programme for Men 9 to 99 and the Gatekeepers Project for Men.	
Increased awareness that there are also male victims of domestic violence and the assistance available;	**MGYCD National Communications Strategy on Gender-Based Violence:** The MGYCD in collaboration with PAHO is currently developing a National Communications Strategy on Gender-Based Violence in which men and boys will be a specific target group. **MGYCD Shelters for Male Victims:** The MGYCD has dedicated one (1) of the two (2) domestic violence shelters under construction, specifically to male survivors of domestic violence. Additionally, in its 2015/2016 budget submissions the Ministry proposes to expand on training workshops and publications specifically targeting men and boys on the issue of domestic violence. The MGYCD's National Parenting Programme supports and strengthens parenting in T&T by offering parents the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies to meaningful address some common parenting challenges.	**OPM National Communications Strategy on Gender-Based Violence:** The report of the PAHO mission was submitted to the Ministry with recommendations for the way forward. The Communication Strategy is expected to be done in fiscal 2018 subject to the approval of the National Policy on Gender and Development and the National Strategic Plan. **OPM Shelters for Male Victims:** There are two (2) newly constructed shelters to be completed in December 2017 and handed-over in February 2018. OPM received six (6) residential properties from NIDCO for use as shelters and two (2) properties are currently being refurbished to be handed-over in December 2017 (1) and March 2018 (1). One of these will be used to house men and the other for women.

	MGYCD Barbershop Initiative and Defining Masculine Excellence Programme: Additionally, initiatives of the MGYCD also seek to promote awareness of issues of domestic violence for both males and females. However, some initiatives target males in particular namely: Defining Masculine Excellence Programme and the Barbershop Initiative.	**MGYCD Barbershop Initiative:** The Barbershop Initiative was officially launched on 29th June 2015 at Malick Youth Facility. This was a project managed by the Gender Affairs Division and the Youth Affairs Division. Subsequent programmes were not conducted due to the shortage of staff and disestablishment of the former Ministry. The Division will roll out the programme under the management of the recently recruited Coodinator of Male Programmes in fiscal 2018 in approximately five communities; four (4) in Trinidad and one (1) in Tobago. **OPM Defining Masculine Excellence Programme:** Ninety-three (93) and eighty-one (81) participants graduated in 2016 and 2017 respectfully. **OPM Food Preparation and Home Management for Men and Boys:** One hundred and seventy-three (173) and one hundred and ninety-five (195) participants graduated in 2016 and 2017 respectfully.
Objective 2: To determine the adequacy of resources of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for victims of domestic violence		
More MGYCD funding be allocated for research with specific focus on tracking victims of domestic violence to determine its impact on the victim's life.	**MGYCD Research:** Currently, no specific allocation has been dedicated for research as it relates to domestic violence. However, Cabinet via Minute No. 575 of February 20, 2014 approved the establishment of the CRDV. In its budget submission for fiscal 2016, the Ministry has requested funding towards the full establishment of CRDV. When implemented the CRDV will: • Provide a more efficient and effective method of monitoring domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago;	**OPM Research:** There is no specific allocation for research. There is an allocation made under Current Transfers and Subsidies-Non-Profit Institutions (NPI) Gender Affairs which is being used in fiscal 2018 to address the research needs of the Division. The OPM has identified the critical research areas and will collaborate with key stakeholders such as the Institute of Gender and the NGOs to advance the research agenda. The OPM in collaboration with IADB and UN Women is conducting a National Prevalence Survey on Gender-Based Violence. The core work of the survey has just been completed and submission is expected before the end of the year. Financial support

	• Quickly identify past victims/perpetrators of abuse and assist in obtaining a profile of victims and perpetrators; • Enhance the development of effective evidence-based policy and programmes through a deeper understanding of the incidence of DV; • Identify the groups at risk; • Improve communication/ collaboration among practitioners, by the provision of access to historical data/information from a trusted source; • Reduce the duplication of services by informing practitioners of all agencies involved with a case and by extension, duplication of costs of service delivery. The MGYCD strongly agrees with the recommendation for research. Thus, to facilitate this, additional funding will be requested by the MGYCD to build research capacity and conduct research in collaboration with key stakeholders. Additionally, through the allocation of funding, the MGYCD will partner with tertiary institutions and Civil Society Organizations (NGOs, CBOs, FBOs) through the One Off Grants to have research conducted.	is being provided by the IADB and technical support by UN Women. The objectives of the Prevalence Survey are as follows: • To obtain reliable estimates of the prevalence and incidence of different forms of violence against women; • To assess the extent to which intimate partner violence against women is associated; • To identify factors that may either protect or put women at risk of violence; • To identify how men's role in gender-based violence is manifested; and • To document and compare the strategies and services used to deal with intimate partner violence. • Ensure that the data and results of the study are put to good use and utilized in the different departments and institutions for formulating policies and legislation and other programmes of intervention against gender based violence.
The allocation of funding and human	Not submitted by TTPS	**TTPS Funding:**

<table>
<tr><td>resources for the VWSU by the TTPS become a priority in the upcoming fiscal year.</td><td></td><td>Additional human resources have been allocated to the VWSU. The requests for additional goods and services made by the Unit are acquired upon the approval of the relevant personnel.

TTPS Human Resources:
<table>
<tr><th>2015 Staff Complement</th><th>2017 Staff Complement</th></tr>
<tr><td>1 Manager</td><td>1 Manager</td></tr>
<tr><td>14 VWSO (contract)</td><td>17 VWSO (contract)</td></tr>
<tr><td>9 VWSU Offices (one in each of the nine TTPS divisions)</td><td>13 VWSU Offices across the TTPS</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>The development of transitional plans in the Northern, Southern and Tobago Divisions of the TTPS, where all requisite services are provided for victims of domestic violence.</td><td>Not submitted by TTPS</td><td>TTPS Development of Transitional Plans:
The VWSU continues to provide services for victims of domestic violence in the Northern and Southern Division of the TTPS. During 2015 to October 30, 2017, 7,308 clients were serviced and 958 clients were services for incidents of domestic violence. A list of the programmes and a breakdown of clients serviced are provided at Appendix V.</td></tr>
<tr><td>The increase of the resources to the Community Policing Units of the TTPS throughout Trinidad and Tobago;</td><td>Not submitted by TTPS</td><td>TTPS Community Policing Units:
There are 102 persons attached to the Community Policing Units throughout T&T. A breakdown of persons by Division is provided in Appendix III.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Objective 3: To determine the relationship between the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development and other stakeholders in combatting domestic violence</td></tr>
<tr><td>The creation of a coordinating body in the form of a Committee with representatives from TTPS, shelters and the</td><td></td><td>OPM Coordinating Body:
During the public hearing, the OPM indicated that it currently has a Note before the Cabinet for the creation of an Inter-Ministerial Committee to address the strengthening of the coordination and the legislation relating to domestic violence and other forms of violence against women and children.</td></tr>
</table>

MGYCD towards the creation of a domestic violence policy and to provide continuity and consistency of policy;	**MGYCD Central Registry on Domestic Violence (CRDV):** Cabinet via Minute No. 575 of February 20, 2014, approved the creation of an Inter-Agency Committee to oversee the establishment of the CRDV of which the TTPS is represented by the Crime and Problem Analysis Branch. **MGYCD National Strategic Action Plan & Domestic Violence Policy:** Currently, the MGYCD in collaboration with UN Women is developing a National Strategic Action Plan (NSAP) to end Gender-Based Violence in Trinidad and Tobago, which will include a National Communication Strategy. The Ministry will assume the coordinating role in the execution of the Plan. Additionally, data collection and analysis from the Ministry's initiatives specifically: the CRDV, DVU, Domestic Violence Model Shelters and the NSAP on Gender-Based Violence, will be used to guide the development of the Domestic Violence (DV) Policy.	**OPM Central Registry for Domestic Violence (CRDV):** The CRDV was completed and launched in April 2016. The Registry collects data from various agencies which interact with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. The data provides demographic (personal data [not names] including location), the nature of the incident and the referrals made for the care of the victims. Eleven (11) agencies were incorporated into the CRDV: • National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-SAVE; • Crime and Problem Analysis Branch, TTPS; • Eight (8) Domestic Violence Shelters; and • One (1) Counselling Agency. **OPM National Strategic Action Plan:** The Draft National Strategic Action Plan was completed in 2015. Consultations on the Draft Plan were completed and the Plan was submitted in January 2017 to the Cabinet. It is now before the Finance and General Purpose Committee of Cabinet for consideration. This covers all forms of violence, including domestic violence. **OPM Domestic Violence Policy:** There is no such policy. There is a Draft National Policy on Gender and Development which was submitted in 2016 to the Cabinet. The data contained in the Policy was updated and re-submitted in February 2017. The Policy was further revised in April 2017 and is currently being considered by a Special Committee of the Cabinet.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective: To determine the status of the recommendations of the 2015 Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development on the examination of programmes and services which provide support to victims of domestic violence.

4.1. The Committee noted the implementation progress of the twelve (12) recommendations given by the Committee in the 2015 Report, that is, three (3) recommendations were implemented, two (2) recommendations were not implemented and seven (7) recommendations are ongoing.

Human Resources

4.2. The Committee was informed that there are eleven (11) current employees, fourteen (14) vacancies, seventeen (17) positions awaiting approval for the Gender Affairs Division, OPM as at December 2017 **(Table 1 in Appendix IV)**. Officials indicated that eight (8) establishment vacancies were expected to be filled by the first quarter of fiscal 2018 subject to the availability of funds and Cabinet and PMCD approvals were expected for seventeen (17) positions by December 31, 2017.

4.3. During the period 2015 to 2017, the VWSU, TTPS staff complement increased from fourteen (14) to seventeen (17) VWSOs **(Table 2)** and persons attached to the Community Policing Unit increased from ninety-one (91) to one hundred and two (102) persons **(Appendix 3).** However, the Committee was informed that three (3) additional VWSOs are required to satisfy the full complement of staff for the VWSU and the VWSU, Tobago Division was awaiting recruitment of staff.

Infrastructure

4.4. The OPM indicated that there are currently eight (8) shelters in operation for victims of domestic violence, available on a 24/7 basis and are accessible for entry via referrals to the shelter or the domestic violence hotline, 800-SAVE.

4.5. The Committee noted that of the four new shelters to be completed by the OPM by March 2018, three (3) shelters will be allocated to female victims and the one (1) shelter to male victims of domestic violence. The allocation of shelters to victims was based on statistics from CAPA, TTPS and the domestic violence hotline, which indicated that 75% of domestic reports are from female victims.

4.6. During the period 2015 to 2017, VWSU offices increased from nine (9) to thirteen (13). However, the Committee noted there was an absence of a standard response time for domestic violence reports and all reports are expected to be dealt with promptly within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt of a report.

4.7. The Committee noted that the majority of the TTPS stations within each division are equipped with a private reception area to interview victims of domestic violence.

4.8. The Committee was informed that when a protection order is granted by the Court, a copy of the protection order is served to the TTPS and TTPS serves the protection order to the alleged perpetrator. With regard to breaches of protection orders, there is a TTPS database to log all warrants for arrest and all police officers can access this database to ascertain whether a warrant was issued for the domestic violence perpetrator.

Programmes and Services

4.9. The Committee was pleased that in addition to the various community outreaches done by the OPM, MSDFS and the VWSU **(Appendix V)**, the MSDFS and the OPM share

information on their respective Facebook pages relating to domestic violence programmes and activities.

4.10. In instances when a domestic violence victim does not want to pursue legal action against the perpetrator, the VWSU will conduct an assessment and offer counselling to the perpetrator. The Committee noted that unless by order of the Court, there was an absence of mandatory counselling programmes for a perpetrator of domestic violence.

4.11. The Committee expressed concerns with the audience reach of the MSDFS radio programme, "It's Family Time; Let's Talk," due to the allocated time-slot of 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. being outside of the ideal timeframe to target the school and working populations.

4.12. The Committee was pleased with the success of the 'Defining Masculine Excellence Programme' and the 'Food Preparation and Home Management for Men and Boys' of the OPM which boasts of a total of 542 participants during 2016 to 2017.

Formal Coordination Mechanism

4.13. The Committee was informed that the OPM submitted a Cabinet Note to create an Inter-Ministerial Committee to strengthen the coordination and legislation related to domestic violence. However, the TTPS was not consulted or invited to participate in this activity.

Central Registry for Domestic Violence (CRDV)

4.14. The Committee was pleased that CRDV was completed in April 2016 and eleven (11) agencies were incorporated into the CRDV. However, the VWSU and agencies from the MOH and various NGOs who provide services for domestic violence are yet to be included **(Table 3 Appendix V)**. Additionally, while the CRDV collects information on

domestic violence victims and perpetrators and influenced the creation of the Draft National Policy on Gender and Development, the CRDV has not contributed to data to justify the provision of programmes and services.

4.15. The Committee commends the collaboration of OPM with IADB and UN Women on the National Prevalence Survey on Gender-Based Violence and officials expressed an estimated completion date by December 31, 2017.

New Policy Initiatives

4.16. The Committee was pleased by the new MSDFS family policy initiatives such as the National Social Mitigation Plan and the Draft National Parenting Policy that are currently at the stakeholder consultation phase and seek to provide support to families and reduce incidences of domestic violence.

Recommendations

4.17. The Committee reiterated the implementation of the 2015 recommendation that the MSDFS and OPM create a co-ordinating body in the form of a Committee with representatives from the TTPS, MSDFS, OPM and shelters and the Inter-Ministerial Committee be commenced by September 2018.

4.18. The Committee recommends the development of transitional plans in VWSU Tobago Division, TTPS, in order to ensure that services listed in Table 1 of Appendix V can be provided by September 2018.

4.19. The Committee recommends that the vacancies in the Gender Affairs Unit, OPM be filled by September 2018.

4.20. The Committee supports the provision of additional domestic violence shelters stated in the 2015 Report and recommends the completion and hand-over of the four

(4) domestic violence shelters under construction (inclusive of one (1) shelter allocated to male victims of domestic violence) by April 2018;

4.21. The Committee recommends that in the absence of the financial resources to recruit four (4) VWSOs per division, the VWSU collaborate with tertiary level students to introduce a volunteer programme to supplement the necessary human resources for the services provided by the Unit.

4.22. The Committee recommends that the OPM widen the access of CRDV to include the VWSU by June 2018 and generate and publish Annual Statistical Reports on the CDRV on the OPM's website and Facebook page that can be used to develop and inform policies, programmes and services on domestic violence by other stakeholders.

4.23. The Committee recommends that by September 2018 all TTPS stations include in its infrastructure private interviewing room for persons who are victims of domestic violence.

4.24. The Committee recommends that in order to improve the level of effectiveness of its current MSDFS programmes and services, that a data analysis is conducted to ensure that its outreach programmes appeal and target different audiences.

4.25. The Committee reiterates the need for additional public outreach programmes on domestic violence targeted to children under the age of eighteen (18) years and recommends that the Gender Affairs Division, OPM initiate outreach programmes in primary and secondary schools in consultation with MOE by September 2018.

4.26. The Committee recommends that the OPM submit the National Prevalence Survey on Gender-Based Violence upon its completion.

Your Committee respectfully submits this Report for the consideration of Parliament.

Sgd.

Dr. Nyan Gadsby Dolly, MP

Chairman

Sgd.

Mr. Kazim Hosein

Member

Sgd.

Mr. Esmond Forde, MP

Member

Sgd.

Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP

Member

Sgd.

Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, MP
Member

Sgd.

Mr. Dennis Moses

Member

Sgd.

Mr. Saddam Hosein

Member

Sgd.

Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir

Member

March 07, 2018

APPENDIX I
MINUTES

EXCERPT OF THE MINUTES OF THE 16TH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY, HELD IN THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR, TOWER D, PORT OF SPAIN INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, 1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN ON FRIDAY NOVEMBER 24, 2017

Present

Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP	Chairman
Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP	Vice - Chairman
Mr. Dennis Moses	Member
Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, MP	Member
Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir	Member

Secretariat

Ms. Candice Skerrette	Secretary
Ms. Khisha Peterkin	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Aaneesa Baksh	Graduate Research Assistant
Mrs. Delrene Liverpool-Young	Legal Officer I

Absent/Excused

Mr. Randall Mitchell, MP	Member [Excused]
Mr. Kazim Hosein	Member [Excused]

Office of the Prime Minister – Gender Affairs Division

Ms. Jacqueline Johnson	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Antoinette Jack-Martin	Director (Ag.), Gender Affairs
Ms. Patricia Hackett	Gender Training Officer
Mr. Kwasi Cudjoe	Coordinator, Male Programme
Mr. Owen Hender	Manager Policy, Research and Planning
Ms. Gaietry Pargass	Senior Legal Advisor

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Mrs. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers	Permanent Secretary
Mr. Vijay Gangapersad	Chief Technical Officer
Ms. Vidya Pooransingh	Director, National Family Services

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service – Victim & Witness Support Unit

Mr. Harold Phillip	Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag.) Crime and Support
Mr. Deodat Dulalchan	Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag.) Operations
Ms. Aisha Corbie	Manager, Victim and Witness Support Unit
Ms. Bernadette Sealy	Victim and Witness Support Officer

Public Hearing

7.1 The meeting reconvened at 10:43 a.m. in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room.

7.2 The Chairman welcomed and thanked the officials for attending. Introductions were made.

7.3 The Chairman invited opening statements from:

- Ms. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers — Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
- Ms. Jacqueline Johnson — Permanent Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister (Gender and Child Affairs)
- Mr. Harold Phillip — Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag.), Crime and Support, TTPS

Summary of Discussions

8.1 The following issues arose during discussions with the officials *(for further details, please see the Verbatim Notes)*:

i. The status of the recruitment to fill the vacancies at the Domestic Violence Unit, Office of the Prime Minister (OPM);

ii. The current number, adequacy and opening hours of safe houses in Trinidad and Tobago;

iii. The status of the four shelters under construction/refurbishment by the NIPDEC and the Ministry of Works and Transport;

iv. The response time of the TTPS upon receiving a report of domestic violence;

v. The procedure by the VWSU after receiving a report of an incident of domestic violence;

vi. The counselling services available at the National Family Services Division (NFSD), Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) and the VWSU for the perpetrators of domestic violence;

vii. The need for strengthened coordination amongst the various stakeholders of domestic violence inclusive of the MSDFS, VWSU and OPM;

viii. The factors that determine the choice of radio station and time slot for the 'Let's Talk Radio Programme;

ix. The various outreach initiatives done by the TTPS, MSDFS and OPM to sensitize the citizenry on domestic violence;

x. The current status of the Central Registry on Domestic Violence and the need for information sharing of the data collected by the Central Registry amongst stakeholders;

xi. The 24/7 availability of the VWSU personnel and shelters to victims of domestic violence;

xii. The process used to track the enforcement of protection orders and response time of the TTPS to reports of breeches to protection orders;

xiii. The current VWSU staffing and infrastructure at police stations; and

xiv. The placement of domestic violence victims in a shelter via a referral process through domestic violence hotline 800-SAVE.

8.2 The Chairman invited the head of each entity to make a closing statement.

8.3 The Chairman provided a summary of the discussions and thanked the officials in attendance.

Adjournment

9.1 The meeting adjourned at 12:36 p.m.

I certify that the Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

December 08, 2017

APPENDIX II
VERBATIM

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY HELD IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS ROOM (WEST), LEVEL 6, (IN CAMERA) AND J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM (MEZZANINE FLOOR) (IN PUBLIC), OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, THE PORT OF SPAIN INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2017 AT 10.43 A.M.

PRESENT

Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly	Chairman
Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Dennis Moses	Member
Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh	Member
Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir	Member
Miss Candice Skerrette	Secretary
Miss Khisha Peterkin	Assistant Secretary
Miss Aaneesa Baksh	Graduate Research Assistant

ABSENT

Mr. Randall Mitchell	Member
Mr. Kazim Hosein	Member

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
GENDER AND CHILD AFFAIRS DIVISION

Ms. Jacqueline Johnson	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Antoinette Jack-Martin	Ag. Director, Gender Affairs
Ms. Patricia Hackett	Gender Training Officer
Mr. Kwasi Cudjoe	Coordinator, Male Programme
Mr. Owen Hender	Manager, Policy, Research and Planning
Ms. Gaietry Pargass	Senior Legal Advisor

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mrs. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Vidya Pooransingh	Director, National Family Services Division
Mr. Vijay Gangapersad	Ag. Chief Technical Officer

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE (TTPS)

Mr. Harold Phillip	Ag. Deputy Commissioner, Crime and Support
Mr. Deodat Dulalchan	Ag. Deputy Commissioner, Operations
Ms. Aisha Corbie	Manager, Victim and Witness Support Unit
Mrs. Bernadette Lewis-Sealey	Victim and Witness Support Officer

Madam Chairman: Good morning everyone. It is my pleasure to reconvene the 16th Meeting of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity. This public hearing will be broadcast on Parliament Channel 11, Parliament Radio 105.5 FM and the Parliament's YouTube Channel, *ParlView*.

I would like to welcome with us this morning the officials from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, the Office of the Prime Minister, Gender and Child Affairs and the Victim and Witness Support Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. My name is Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, and I am the Chairman of the Committee, the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity and with me there are several members of the Committee and I invite them now to introduce themselves to you starting with our Vice Chairman.

[*Introductions made*]

Madam Chairman: Now that we have introduced ourselves. I invite our officials here with us to introduce themselves and maybe I can ask to start with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, followed by the Office of the Prime Minister and then followed by the Victim and Witness Support Unit of the TTPS.

Introductions made by Officials of:
Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Office of the Prime Minister, Gender Affairs Division
Victim and Witness Support Unit, TTPS

Madam Chairman: Thank you so much for all being here with us this morning. Domestic violence includes any form of abuse, whether mental, physical, verbal, financial, sexual, or psychological committed by a person against a spouse, child or any other member of the household. Data from the TTPS indicates 11,441 domestic violence reports between 2010 and 2015, 75 per cent of them relating to female victims; that is over 8500. Also in this period, there were 131 domestic-violence related deaths, 56 per cent of which were female.

As a Committee, we are sure that it is these types of statistics which would have led this Committee in its former iteration, the JSC on Human Rights, Diversify the Environment and Sustainable Development to examine the programs and services which provide support to victims of domestic violence in the Fifth Session of the Tenth Parliament.

Out of the findings of this examination, 12 recommendations emerged. Since 2015 the available statistics do not show a marked decrease in domestic violence with at least 14 deaths due to domestic violence up to 2017 and more than 1,500 reports lodged, and this is between 2015 and 2017. This has prompted this Committee in its current iteration to examine the status of the implementation of the 12 recommendations mentioned before, with a view to identifying and suggesting possible solutions to any challenges in execution for at least some of them.

So our objective this morning, is to determine the status of the recommendations of the 2015 report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Diversify, the Environment and Sustainable Development on the examination of programmes and services which provide support to victims of domestic violence. I would like to acknowledge and thank the different Ministries and units for supplying the follow-up submissions that were asked for and we got submissions from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, from the Office of the Prime Minister, Gender and Child Affairs and from the Victim and Witness Support Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

At this time, I would like to invite brief opening remarks from Mrs. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, followed by Ms. Jacqueline Johnson, the Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister with responsibility for Gender and Child Affairs, followed by Mr. Harold Phillip, the Deputy Commissioner of Police of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Thank you again Chair. Once again, I am happy to be a part of another session like this to provide information on a matter of national importance, domestic violence. The issue continues to be an especially worrying one for both policy makers and practitioners in the sector of Trinidad and Tobago. The data on its own speaks to the enormity of this social scourge and I will not go into it because I am sure we will hear much about it as we continue in this session this morning.

Domestic violence, however, is symptomatic of much broader issues confronting the family, including economic, financial hardships, unemployment, substance abuse, mental issues which you know we have been dealing with a lot in the public these days, among others. It is therefore, necessary to not only treat with the presenting problem of family violence but also the underlying issues, and I think this is very important. The Family Services Division and by extension, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, therefore has a key role in this regard as the Vision 2030 National Development Strategy, as we may know, requires our Ministry to protect and support the family as a fundamental institution of society.

We are, therefore, of the view that a combination of behaviour change, and victim support initiatives would be necessary for us to treat effectively with this issue of domestic violence. This is particularly relevant in the context of our current economic situation which has the potential to increase tensions within families.

In this regard the National Social Mitigation Plan which was developed by the Ministry in collaboration with the Health Economic Unit of the University of the West Indies to cushion the impact of the economic downturn on the population and which was approved by Cabinet in August, is relevant and timely and I thought it would be useful to bring this to the fore at this session.

The plan includes a number of initiatives to support and strengthen the family, especially vulnerable families, and some of these include the introduction of a programme to address values, attitudes and behaviours of the population which was held in great importance in the Vision 2030 document, the establishment of health and wellness centres in communities, enhancement and implementation of the STEP UP (which is the Social Empowerment and Transformation Programme Uplifting People), where we will focus on empowerment of vulnerable families and ensuring that that programme is actually implemented in all the social programmes in the sector, and the maintenance and acceleration of the plans and initiatives focusing on gender-related issues and I am sure the Office of the Prime Minister will treat with those.

The implementation of these initiatives, of course, together with the move to finalize the National Parenting Policy which was laid in the Parliament this year and the development of a national family policy which will be undertaken in this fiscal year, will go a long way in strengthening the institution of the family and reducing the incidence of family violence. The ministry is presently working towards meeting with key stakeholders in the social sector to discuss the implementation plan for the roll out of the National Social Mitigation Plan over the next five years and we look forward to collaboration with all agencies. Thank you, Chair.

Madam Chairman: Thank you so much, Mrs. Bailey-Sobers. Ms. Johnson.

Ms. Johnson: Madam Chair, we are happy to be here. These discussions encourage us to look at what we have ratified, in terms of the international conventions on the rights of the woman and our own Vision 2030 goal to achieve gender equality. At the Office of the Prime Minister, we continue to focus on those programmes that would lead us toward the achievement of that goal of gender equality in 2030. Our specific programmes continue to be focused on reducing domestic violence by building the awareness among our citizens of the scourge of this problem, and its effects not only on family but on communities and, in fact, the entire cost of dealing with domestic violence from an economic perspective.

We have started to treat with those strategic issues such as the legislation, the strategies to deal with domestic violence and gender-based violence as a whole and we also have been trying to outfit the Domestic Violence Unit so that we can specifically focus on the programming necessary to address domestic violence. So I hope that this discussion can lead us to some additional strategies that we can focus on in treating with this critical issue. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you so much. Mr. Phillip.

Mr. Phillip: Good morning once again. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service welcomes this opportunity to assist the Committee. In so doing, we continue to work with all our stakeholders. We also continue to build our capabilities and our competence within the police service and continue to engage in outreach programmes to sensitize the different and various communities in their efforts to stem the scourge of domestic violence. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you so much. So we will move now to the commencement of questioning. Let me just remind all Members who are at the Committee as well as the officials with us to direct your questions to the Chair as we proceed along our questioning time. So let me start off the questioning, and I will address this question to the Office of the Prime Minister's officials. And you mentioned it in your opening statement with respect to the staffing at the unit. Now if I look at the recommendations coming out of the 2015 examination, one of them that was directed towards the Ministry with responsibility for Gender, Youth and Child Development, which is now the Office of the Prime Minister and that unit, there was an issue about the funding and the HR resources of the Domestic Violence Unit, and the recommendation was that that would be a priority in the upcoming years.

Looking at the submission which we received from you, we note that the position of Manager, Domestic Violence remains vacant at this time and that there is an acting Director of Gender Affairs as well, and that you were moving to fill those positions. And if I read the submission correctly, the full complement of the unit will be roughly 36 persons of which 14 positions are filled right now, and that is if I am reading it correctly. So on the basis of what I have before me and my interpretation of it, we seem to still have some critical vacancies, HR vacancies, and obviously

that would impact upon the effectiveness and efficiency of the unit.

What and how soon—what is the status of recruitment for this unit and how soon will that unit be filled, at least to the level where you can have a reasonable response in the way that you would want to, based on your plans?

Ms. Johnson: The Office of the Prime Minister has made strides in terms of filling these positions in the Domestic Violence Unit and the Gender Affairs Division as a whole. We are currently seeking to have PMCD renew some of the positions which expired recently and as I indicated in my submission that Note is before the Cabinet currently. So we are hoping by the end of this month we will have Cabinet's approval and we can proceed with the recruitment and selection of candidates for those positions.

The other positions that we need to have created, those are currently before the Public Management Consulting Division for consideration, and we have had discussions with them and we are hoping that we will have this finalized by the end of the year. These particular positions are specific to domestic violence and that is the Coordinator of the drop-in centres and the counselors for the gender support offices that we intend to create in south, central, and hopefully in north Trinidad. These centres will provide resources for victims of domestic violence and counselling services.

The Manager of the Domestic Violence Unit and the Director Gender, we have gotten the approval, as I indicated, from the Commission to proceed with our own recruitment for those two positions guided by the regulations established for the devolve function by the Service Commissions Department.

We have promised to be up to speed in terms of the establishment for the Gender Affairs Division and by extension the unit, by the first quarter of 2018, subject to the availability of funds.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, and just to confirm, the two director positions which are being handled internally, those have been advertised for already?

Ms. Johnson: Because of the situation with the court matter at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, the Commission had initially advised that we hold our hands. In a correspondence recently we got permission from the Commission to proceed with the advertisement of those two positions.

Madam Chairman: Thank you so much. Sen. Mahabir.

Dr. Mahabir: Thank you very much for being asked to comment first Madam Chair. I have a question for Ms. Pooransingh, and the question is this. The issue of domestic violence is associated with the issue of safe houses, and I would like to know how many safe houses are currently in operation in Trinidad and Tobago at this time? And from your experience, given the incidence of this problem and it seems not to be abating, how many safe houses do we need? So how many do we have in operation and how many do you think we need, in order to address this problem at this time? Thank you.

Ms. Pooransingh: Good morning again. At this time I do not have an exact number of the actual operational safe houses. Office of the Prime Minister, Gender and Child Affairs may have that figure. In terms of having access to safe houses, it is a problem. There is a need for more and not just the way they are operating now because there are some circumstances where you need to place a female and children and some of the safe centres are not capable of housing a family of maybe a female with four children, male and female, with even teenaged children. They are not geared to handle those types of situations. So it is an issue and I know previously the Office of the Prime Minister Gender and Child Affairs were looking at establishing a couple more of these safe houses where you can house families but I suppose they will be able to say the status on that.

Dr. Mahabir: May I ask the Office of the Prime Minister to respond?

Ms. Johnson: Certainly, we currently have eight shelters and these are all run by private individuals, non-government organizations. Our intention is to operationalize four shelters, four safe houses, shelters as we call them. Two were newly constructed, to accommodate families, women with children and that capacity, we indicated in our submission, we are looking at 52 persons including children there.

We also have two residential-type three bedroom units, which the Ministry of Works is refurbishing for us to house victims as well. One for males and we hope, one for females.

The two shelters that NIPDEC constructed for us, have been significantly delayed because of the absence of the funding. So the contractors, when they were not getting their payment, they actually demobilized their construction activities at the site. We have been able to raise a loan, a government-guaranteed loan to make the payments and the construction has now started back at the sites and NIPDEC has indicated that we will get the handover of those properties, one in December2017 and one by the end of January2018. So those would be the four additional shelters that the government would operationalize in this fiscal year.

Madam Chairman: If I may, one of the misconceptions, if I may call it that is that domestic violence is a problem which affects only women. Now if I understood you correctly, there should be four government safe houses to come on stream within this fiscal year and one of those will be for men. The question I am asking is, what is the incidence of male seeking shelter for domestic violence issues? And should we, if we have four that are going to come on stream, should we dedicate all of those to women, because we have more women who would need access to those shelters. Is it the best use of the shelter? And I am sure there are more demand than we can supply. Is it the best use to dedicate it, one of them, exclusively for the male use?

Ms. Johnson: Madam Chair, we know that 75 per cent of our reports are related to women and that is based on what we have gotten from CAPA, the police, as well as from our hot line. So that is the data that we are using to determine that we would allocate one for men and other three to women. With regard to specific numbers, Madam Chair, I cannot say with any certainty what those numbers are looking like at the present time.

Madam Chairman: So if they do come on stream in the next fiscal, as we expect that they would, and there is not a great demand by males, what would be the thinking? Would it be that you will use the one that is dedicated to males, maybe to house females with sons over 10? Because in the submissions, I saw that there was an issue with boys over 10 being housed in the safe houses.

Ms. Johnson: The two new facilities we constructed would house women with children, including boys. The two residential facilities that we are creating we would not be able to house women there who have boys. And so those two units we are setting aside for men, based on the demand we may be able to convert it for the use of women based on the demand, but the other one we have set aside that for a single family. The one with men we are hoping to have a disabled unit on the bottom floor and on the top floor would be dedicated specifically to one family. Those are residential two and three bedroom-type units.

The new units we have constructed are designed in such a way that you have an apartment-type setting within the facility which would accommodate a woman with a daughter and a son. So there is now accommodation for women who want to leave their homes with their children, which includes a male.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: I believe this question I will focus to Mr. Harold Phillip. When a woman calls for help; she is being physically abused. Is there a recommended time of response from the police station to the woman's home where she is being violated? And what is the time that the police ought to respond and what is the time that they actually do respond in Trinidad? So the question is, is there a recommended time within which you must respond to that victim and what is the time that is carried out or it is—at the police stations in Trinidad and Tobago that response is made to that particular victim?

11.10 a.m.

Mr. Phillip: With respect to all reports, be it domestic violence and other general reports—

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Give us domestic.

Mr. Phillip:—we have not set a time but we expect—our requirements are that all reports should be attended to promptly, and we have been so doing to the best of our ability in terms of responding to reports of domestic violence.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Do you all have any issue with respect to transport and so now? I know it has always been a problem—no vehicles and so at the police station. Do you all still have issues with transport and so on?

Mr. Phillip: Generally, we do not have issues with respect to transport at this time in the police service.

Dr. Mahabir: A follow-up, Madam Chair. You said the police respond promptly. What does "promptly" mean in policing? Does it mean in half an hour, an hour, tomorrow? I do not know what promptly means with respect to policing in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Phillip: When the report reaches the police or comes to the attention of the police, once we have vehicles outside or if we need to utilize officers from the station what we do, because of the very nature of those reports that, in fact, could cause injury and harm, police officers are required to be dispatched promptly to attend to those reports.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Phillip.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: I just would like to know, is there an international standard you all are guided by with respect to time of response. Is there an international guideline?

Mr. Phillip: No.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Now, domestic violence as we all know does not happen overnight. We know it starts with a first issue, an incident. I would like to know: What is the collaboration between the police and the social services department when a report is made? So I am asking the Victim and Witness Support Unit to tell us: What is the relationship and the support mechanism in place to deal with that first report and the continuation—helping the victim to get out of that circle or that spider's web?

Mr. Phillip: I would like the Manager of the Victim and Witness Support Unit to assist please.

Ms. Corbie: Thank you very much, Mr. Phillip. The Victim and Witness Support Unit, as you rightly said, Ma'am, recognizes that domestic violence, it does not occur overnight with a victim and there is a process by which this type of offence and trauma exist. So once a report comes to Victim and Witness Support Unit via a referral—be it from the police station, be it from a social support agency, be it a tragedy that we recognize in the media—the officers of the Victim and Witness Support Unit respond within—our standard is within 24 hours of getting that information, we seek to make contact with the victim. This contact is made once we get some telephone contact information. If the information is received via the media, we attempt to liaise with the related police station, access the investigator and we contact the victim via phone inviting them to come in or if they are unable to come in, we attempt to develop a plan towards visiting the victim as necessary.

Once we engage the victim, a detailed needs assessment is conducted with this victim to determine what is his or her present state—what are the needs, what are the needs that we can provide and what agencies we can liaise with towards providing these needs. The initial focus is towards his or her safety. Is there a need for a safety plan?—which we would develop same and encourage the clients to implement it.

Once this is implemented, some clients may look towards applying for a protection order. We would give them detailed guidelines as to how the process works. If they decide to do so, we accompany them to court because sometimes even the court space may be re-traumatizing for the domestic violence victim. So we assist them with that and, thereafter, the client may decide—because we leave it up to the client because of self-determination for them to select what they decide to do. Some clients may decide to go to a shelter because of safety. In so doing, we would access the 800-SAVE or some shelters that we liaise with in terms of networking for the client to be safe.

As would have been mentioned previously, in our experience, we also have the challenge of domestic violence victims that are female and have male children beyond the age of 10. So that continues to be a challenge to us as well. However, in the instances where a shelter is not accessed or they are not willing to go to a shelter at that time, they are encouraged to go to another safe place, be it a friend or a relative. Further to the accommodation being settled, then we look at the other needs that the client may possess.

We liaise with a number of agencies that would sometimes offer entry level positions to the clients, because we recognize there is a financial component that may keep several persons in domestic violence situations. So we would also liaise with agencies that would assist them with employment. We would advocate on behalf of our clients, and we constantly partner with the National Family Services Division relative to offering assistance to clients through

assessing them for different grants that they may be eligible for with these other agencies, governmental agencies—be it public assistance, be it some other form of social welfare or support.

So these are just some of the agencies that we would liaise with on behalf of our clients. Of course, we also have the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board that may assist, given the type of offence that may occur and the compensation that the clients may be entitled to, based on their parameters.

Madam Chairman: Thank you so much. What I want to ask though, specifically, all of the measures that you have outlined—and there are many and we would take it that there is a lot of support being offered—but I want to bring it back to what the enquiry is looking at with respect to how that has changed since 2015 based on recommendations that were made. I heard you mentioning some of the things that would have come in here because they asked specifically in the third recommendation about the creation of a coordinated body.

I looked at the submissions from each of the agencies and what I did not see was that creation of any formal mechanism by which there is liaison between the three agencies that deal with domestic violence. Because one of the things—and in your explanation, you referenced being able to be the intermediary for the domestic violence victim in different areas, in the courts and so on. This I imagine would have been the idea behind this virtual one-stop support shop—I am calling it that—that would allow a domestic violence victim to come into one place and be able to access the services that are available.

So I understand that the Victim and Witness Support Unit may do this informally where you have a natural nexus. Has there been since 2015 any move by any of the agencies before us to bring together into one coordinating body that type of one-stop shop for domestic violence victims that would allow them to come in, you know, as they are broken, scattered and to be able to be carried through all of the different permutations of assistance that can be given to them so that their journey is easier, and the support is easier to be able to be accessed? Is there anything like that happening? This is an open question to any of the agencies before us.

Ms. Johnson: Madam Chair, what you raised there is critical. The Office of the Prime Minister currently has a Note before the Cabinet to address strengthening the coordination and the legislation relating to domestic violence and other forms of violence against women and children. That Note speaks to the creation of an inter-ministerial committee to discuss the very issue that you are raising there: how do we coordinate the efforts in various agencies of government to ensure that a victim of domestic violence is accessing a one-stop to get all the services—shelters, financial services, counselling—all the things that we have detailed in the report which looks at the review of the Domestic Violence Act and the necessary structure to be put in place to ensure that these people receive the services that they need in a very kind of holistic fashion. So that was submitted to the Cabinet. It is with the Finance and General Purpose Committee for a decision to come shortly.

Madam Chairman: And if I could very quickly ask this; as a Member of Parliament, this interests me very much because from time to time we get women coming with different issues. Some of them are domestic violence sufferers/victims and some of them feel that they are threatened and it may reach to that. So it has not gotten there yet, but it may reach to that. In both instances: What is the best advice? Who do I send? The person who is actually a victim? Do I send them to the Victim and Witness Support Unit? And the person who has the potential they think to become a victim, where do I send that person?

Ms. Pooransingh: There are different levels of entry in terms of intervention for domestic violence. At the National Family Services Division, we get referrals from the court and, in most instances, some incident would have already happened, and both parties are sent to us for counselling, for trying to arrive a resolution. So at National Family Services, we do not just look or treat with the victim. We also treat with the alleged perpetrators.

So what we try to do is, we try to assess what are the underlying factors that are leading to the conflict. Once we identify that then we try to treat with each area in terms of counselling, in terms of referral to relevant agencies. There are some times we may not be able to find a resolution. It might be best for placement. So, it depends on each situation. There is no general fixed rule. We treat each situation for whatever is happening in that person's or persons' lives. So sometimes there are children involved, and if the children are at risk and need to be removed, we would network with either the Children's Authority or we would network with other relatives or friends who might be able to lend shelter for a short time until we continue to work with the families.

If it is financial, we would refer to social welfare. Sometimes we network with non-governmental agencies also to fulfil the clients' needs. So we do not just restrict to referrals within the government service but also outside. So in terms of—you were asking where to send the victims. The victim can come to Family Services, but as I said we treat with the whole family. We do not just treat with the victim because we want to find out what is the problem, what is causing the dysfunction in the family. Usually if someone is engaged in violence that means something is wrong, that the person needs help. So we try to see how we could help the perpetrator.

Madam Chairman: Sen. Mahabir wants to follow up and Sen. Moses after him. The question is still open to the others if they want to address it while they are addressing the other questions, because they are following up from this.

Dr. Mahabir: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. This is a direct follow up from the comments of the Family Services Unit, and that is, you indicated that you treat with the whole family unit, so that there is a victim and there is a perpetrator. The perpetrator may have his own issues—if there was no perpetrator there would be no victim and—he may have alcohol, narcotic, substance abuse, unemployment, a range of issues. What I would like to know is this: Do you have a programme in place of mandatory counselling for the perpetrator such that once he has been accused of domestic violence that he goes into this programme so that he or she can see the errors of his ways?

And I want to bring in the police here as well, because under the Summary Offences Act, it is illegal to be violent to another person under sections 4 and 5—under section 5 I think of the Summary Offences Act someone can be liable to six months' imprisonment whether you are related or not; being violent to another person is a criminal offence. I am wondering, from you, what is the counselling; and from the police, second, whether instead of indicating to the individual that we are going to press charges, do you refer the perpetrator to the family services for a programme of counselling first so he can mend his ways on her ways?

Ms. Pooransingh: We do not have by itself a mandatory programme where the perpetrator has to be in counselling, but when the matter is referred by the court that makes it mandatory. So if a family is referred for a matter—I have to say a matter because it can be two persons, three persons, four persons—once that matter is referred then that makes it mandatory.

Dr. Mahabir: Thank you very much. You see, it was indicated that it is a matter referred by the court. I am wondering whether the police—there was in the past, a Community Police, wanting to keep the family intact, not wanting to because the perpetrator may be the sole income earner in the family. Does the police take it upon itself—the soft touch of the police service—to have the perpetrator undertake a programme of counselling so that, at least, he can mend his ways before he is subject to court processes?

Mr. Phillip: Thanks. If when the report is made, a criminal offence has been established and the victim has, in fact, went to seek medical attention and we got a medical certificate, those two sections that you made mention of under the Summary Offences Act which are sections 4 and 5—assault, aggravated assault or assault by beating as the case is—generally persons, once the victim is pressing, we would certainly pursue a criminal charge. In other instances, sometimes you find that the victim wants the person to be warned, and it is in that light that the Victim and Witness Support—and you would find that other kinds of remedial actions are taken in relation to the perpetrator.

Dr. Mahabir: Madam Chair, one last follow-up on this. And the last follow- up is, in my visit to the prison I had the privilege—as a member of this Committee to visit the prison—I met some individuals who were in prison because they were unable to pay child support. I did not meet anyone who was in prison because he was violent to a family member. Would you say that there is a high incidence of the victim pressing the charges at the Magistrates' Court or at the other courts to ensure that there is justice or is it that many of these cases are dismissed somewhere along the line?

Mr. Phillip: Well, in some instances, remember that fines—because there are summary fines paid and so on, some people may even get, because it is a first offence, reprimanded and so on. So there are a number of sanctions that take place. This is why you would find—

Dr. Mahabir: So, basically, you depend on the courts then to refer the perpetrator to the counselling, you do not think it is a police matter?

Mr. Phillip: We have said that if the victim—if when the report is made and the victim is not pressing for the

perpetrator to be prosecuted, in that light, we refer the person for counselling and so on.

Madam Chairman: Who offers that counselling? To whom do you refer?

Mr. Phillip: I will have to refer the Victim and Witness Support Manager to speak about that.

Ms. Corbie: Thank you Mr. Phillip, thank you Madam Chair. In the most part, the Victim and Witness Support Unit services crime victims, but we have also been offering support to perpetrators or alleged perpetrators of domestic violence. In particular instances where the female does not want to pursue legal action and just require a warning and there may be children in the home, we will conduct an assessment and we will offer that similar support to some perpetrators of domestic violence. What remains, however, is at this point it may not be mandatory so the perpetrator may choose not to attend. So that is one of the issues that may occur in terms of him or her getting that type of support to mitigate the type of abusive behaviour.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Chair. Just two questions. The first one is a short one. What is number of reported cases of domestic violence in Tobago in respect of last year and this year? That is the first one. The second one relates to the procedure or protocol employed by the unit, the Victim and Witness Support Unit, to address complaints by victims of domestic violence in respect of breaking protection orders by the abusers?

Ms. Corbie: Thank you very much.

Mr. Phillip: In terms of the number of reports of domestic violence in Tobago, in 2016 we would have had 18 reports, and to date we would have had eight reports of domestic violence reported to the police in Tobago to date. The second question?

Mr. Moses: The second question deals with—to address complaints by victims of domestic violence relative to breaking protection orders by the abuser.

Ms. Corbie: Thank you very much. Relative to clients that may report that there have breaches in the protection order, we would usually direct the client to the police because of the breach that would have occurred. There would be legal ramifications towards the breaching of a protection order. So, in so doing, we would engage the police officers at the nearest police station as soon as is possible and encourage the victim to report that incident and have the matter pursued through the police at the related station. However, if there are other supports needed to the victim, in addition to the legal aspect, that is where we will offer that type of assistance to them.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: I want to take us back to the remit of this Committee meeting today, which really speaks to the programmes and services provided to victims of domestic violence. I am happy to hear Family Services, when you brought up the point about the perpetrators that you deal with families. I also heard another submission which admitted that perpetrators sometimes do not attend. I want to go back to my first question when I asked you about the programmes.

Now, I think we need to be more open because certainly there is a cut-off point between the services of the Victim and Witness Support Unit and the services which are offered by the Family Services Division. There needs to be a coordination. I saw also where in the last recommendation Cabinet had agreed to the creation of an inter-agency committee to oversee the establishment of a central registry, all those sorts of things. I want to know what type of coordination we have. Because a victim of domestic violence can be a victim from one to 20 years or their entire lifetime and, therefore, that is why the programmes and the services which are provided to these victims are so critical.

What coordinates the both bodies, Family Services, social agencies? What coordinates you all, to really hold on to the perpetrators as well as the victims and, more so, the perpetrators because they could be termed repeat offenders because it is a cycle of violence? How strong is that body, the relationship between both parties, the police and the agencies in keeping abreast with these perpetrators as well as the victim?

Then too, you have a victim depending on financial support and that is why a victim would usually go back to the perpetrator because they depend on that financial support. So any kind of relationship to combat that has to be strong and robust. Family Services, tell me something—the police has said that the perpetrators sometimes do not attend—what do you do when that happens or do they inform you that things are not going as planned because the

court matter itself can take a long time to be completed?

Ms. Pooransingh: Those are a lot of issues there. Unfortunately, we do not have the authority to mandate a perpetrator to attend counselling or to be privy to whatever intervention that we would apply. So we do depend—we do network. Networking is our key. It is what we use to keep the intervention ongoing. So, for instance, if we are talking about a breach of a protection order then we network with the police and we network if there other agencies involved we would network with those agencies. If there are issues in terms of finance, we network. Again, the networking has to be that cement that keeps the whole process together. So if there are financial issues, we network with the relevant agencies that would lend that type of assistance.

Sometimes we think outside the box. Sometimes the person may not qualify for, let us say, a social welfare grant, so then we have to go outside the box and think of maybe an NGO that may be able to help. So it is not always restricted to the services that are provided within the Ministry. We rely heavily on the court, again. So if we are treating with a case, a matter, and we see that there is a potential for a breach we would indicate via writing to the magistrate to inform our observation and we would make recommendations.

In terms of—I know you were weighing your question heavily on the finance which tends to keep the victim in the perpetrator's control, so once we recognize that we offer options, but as Victim and Witness Support would have said, it all depends on the person. The person makes the decision. We cannot force.

We have been discussing—the key agencies have been having discussions. We have had discussions and we are looking at—whilst we understand what each other's roles are, every agency has their remit and they would work with the clients until a certain point. Let me give an example. If the Victim and Witness Support has intervened initially with a matter and they have gone through the court processes and a person has received a protection order, but there is need for parenting, there is need for other types of issues to be addressed, they would refer to Family Services and then we would do the long-term follow-up. So, it is not that the matter is just finished after a protection order is granted or not. There would be other issues that would have to be addressed and that is where we continue to work, that is where we engage in case management. In case management you do not have a cut-off point. You work with the family, you work with the individuals until they reach a higher level of social functioning.

Madam Chairman: If I may draw your attention to two of the recommendations that were made in 2015—they deal with public awareness and education. Looking at the submission from Family Services, there is a programme that is run on the radio. It is called "It's Family Time, Let's Talk" and that programme does deal with the topic of domestic violence at times. It deals with parenting and so on and different issues, but domestic violence is raised there. My question is: What is the target audience of this programme? Based on that, is that target audience matched with the station that the programme is run on and the time it is run? Are there young women being targeted, girls and boys being targeted for this programme? Where it is run then, does it reach that particular audience? Is that audience the target? If that is not the target, then what is being done by Family Services as well as the other agencies to sensitize the youth about this problem that we have in Trinidad and Tobago?

Ms. Pooransingh: In terms of the radio programme, "It's Family Time, Let's Talk", what we do, first of all, our target is the national community. It is not just one category. It is the whole national community. When we are looking to air the programme what we do is we do a comparison and we try to get a radio station that has a wide listenership as possible. We also look at the time slots that would be available by the station and what we think might be a feasible time to catch certain—well, not just housewives but other persons. So the intent is not to capture just a small percentage of persons, but the wider community, because if you want to stem domestic violence, it cannot be one group of people who is sensitized. It has to be everybody.

Madam Chairman: All right. So what station is it run on and what time does it run?

Ms. Pooransingh: The last programme we held, it was on i95.5 FM and it was between the hours of 10 to 11. Half hour of that hour would have been open to the public to call in

Madam Chairman: So do you agree with me then that if you are offering it between 10 and 11 then the whole school population and lot of the working population who cannot listen to a radio at this type of the day would not be privy to the programme. So what other measures then? So this target audience would really be maybe your homemakers, those who are at home at this time or the few people who are working in a situation where they would listen to a radio at

that time or those who are on the road. So this will not target young people at all.

What other devices have you been able to come up with—any of the agencies—that would target young people and would bring these types of messages which are critical for young people to hear—young girls who are entering into relationships—and need to look at the signs of what could be a domestic abuser or boys because we are recognizing this. What is being done to, one, sensitize young men that they can be victims of domestic abuse, sensitize young women that they are also at a higher risk than boys of getting into domestic abuse-type relationships, and how they can access help, how they could look for the signs? What is being done with public awareness for our young people coming up getting into relationships? This is an open question to all of the agencies that deal with this.

11.40 p.m.
Ms. Pooransingh: If I may, it is a challenge in terms of the times because you have children attending school, and my suggestion would be that you have programmes in the school. At least you get that one population, so you have that under the social studies. The curriculum has to be readjusted in order to introduce that type of sensitization. And I do agree that the young men have to be sensitized on what is domestic violence and how to prevent it. So whilst it might be a challenge to capture with one programme all the different age groups, you would have to look at different channels, different avenues, and I respectfully suggest that the school population would be one avenue. And I suppose you have student support services that can take up that level of responsibility. In terms of—the networking still happens, because if there are seminars or lectures in the school we are invited to come in and give information on domestic violence. So there are different channels, but in terms of if you are looking at the young persons, we have to start somewhere, and I respectfully suggest that you start at the schools and readjusting or revisiting the curriculum.

Ms. Corbie: If I may—

Madam Chairman: Before you follow up, could I ask any of the other agencies to respond on this. I am seeing someone from the Office of the Prime Minister, and then we will take the Victim and Witness Support Unit.

Ms. Jack-Martin: If I may, Madam Chair, what the Office of the Prime Minister, Gender and Child Affairs does with respect to bringing awareness to the population about gender-based violence and domestic violence, we conduct a number of outreaches and a number of community fairs. As of tomorrow we celebrate the elimination of violence against women and we have a community fair at City Gate where we share information and public information about domestic violence. What we also do, we also receive requests from agencies asking us to come in to conduct training on domestic violence. We have just recently conducted one at the defence force where we had about 75 persons in attendance. We also receive requests from Servol and YTEPP, and other agencies. So that is one way that the Office of the Prime Minister responds to that, outreaches and community fairs.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. The official from the Victim and Witness Support Unit.

Ms. Corbie: Thank you, Madam Chair. From the Victim and Witness Support Unit standpoint we would offer to both children, as well as adults. In terms of targeting children in sensitizing them with the effects and the impact of domestic violence, we would have conducted a number of workshops at several primary schools, as well as tertiary institutions towards the whole idea of domestic violence, what it is, how do I know if I am a victim, and where do I get assistance. We would have also dealt with community groups, a number of community groups we would hold workshops with and we liaise, of course, very directly with the police youth clubs, and we will do presentations at the police youth clubs where we have a large catchment of young persons attending those clubs, and sometimes their parents, so as to share that information about domestic violence.

In terms of outreaches and fairs, through the TTPS they would also host outreaches and we would have a booth there– victim support– as one of the branches or the units of the organization sharing about domestic violence with members of the public, as well as outreaches of other agencies, as our colleagues at OPM. Victim support is partnering with them as well, and has a booth there, as we speak, sharing information on domestic violence issues. And when we look at persons that may be adults, we also have support groups, and these supports groups are both for—we have children support groups for persons that are children, as well as for adults to treat with matters of violence on the whole, and some of them would tune in directly to domestic violence.

Recently, we would have hosted a confronting fear one-day workshop where we would have shared with a number of stakeholders, as well as victims on how do we deal with the fear of crime in terms of violence, and we

would have looked at domestic violence, how do you identify if you are a victim, where do you get help, what is normal, what may not be normal, and we had a whole catchment of social agencies there sharing of their services with members of the public. So those are some of the things that the Victim and Witness Support Unit would do on an ongoing basis to sensitize the citizenry.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Harold, did you want to weigh in?

Mr. Phillip: I just wanted to add to that, our community police officers, they work closely with the communities, and including the Victim and Witness Support Unit. So they do outreach programmes within the community also along the lines of sensitizing the community with respect to domestic violence. So the community police officers, they go to schools, they go within the communities and they do the same thing too.

Madam Chairman: Can I ask, just as a follow up to this, does anyone do any type of robust social media intervention? What information is available on social media to reach that population who may not come out to any of the outreaches, who may not be involved in the police youth club, who may not come out to the different agencies presentations? Is there any social media presence at all that gives someone all the information that they would want to get and gives them an indication of where they can find assistance, and that type of support?

Ms. Jack-Martin: At the Office of the Prime Minister, Gender and Child Affairs, on our Facebook page we share all the information that pertains to domestic violence, men's programme, and all the activities that the Gender Affairs Division undertakes. It is on our Facebook page.

Ms. Johnson: Madam Chair, if I may just add, what is required here is really a look, an analysis of the data that we have available so that we could carefully segment the groups so that we could bring the programming closer to those areas in our country where we have the prevalence, higher prevalence of domestic violence. And I think that is what the information—that is what we want to do at the Office of the Prime Minister, given the new data that we have been having since 2015, and those positions which we have recently filled in September there, our gender training officer and our male programming officer, are intended to look at that kind of segmentation to design the programming necessary to achieve that purpose.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you. I am listening to the Victim and Witness Support Unit and, respectfully, it comes across very flowery and academic here. My question is, the number of measures you have to put in place to deal with these victims, and we have so many agencies here, are any of these agencies outfitted with the resources to effectively deal with the victims in this country?

Ms. Bailey-Sobers: Madam Chair, if I may, talking on behalf of Family Services Division, that we are on a drive to actually staff the division. We recognize the importance of the division with respect to the family and ensuring that those values, attitudes and behaviours, and as I indicated that was an important programme that we would be moving towards implementing in fiscal 2018, which I believe will assist in helping families to deal with the issues that present so that it does not reach to the stage of domestic violence, but that unit we are moving towards staffing, giving the staffing that is required in that division. So, the Ministry of Social Development side, that is what we are working on feverishly in the Ministry for that particular division.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: In the mean while what happens to the victims? Whilst all these things are happening, do you refer them to other agencies whilst this is being outfitted?

Ms. Bailey-Sobers: I will ask Ms. Pooransingh to speak, but the unit continues with the resources that they have, and I think they complement the staff by networking with the other agencies, including the Office of the Prime Minister and Victim and Witness Support Unit. But I also wanted to indicate that a critical aspect of what we have to do with the coordination has to do with the protocols that have to be established between the agencies so that persons do not fall through the cracks, and that is an area that Family Services has been working on. And I believe with the coordination, that Note that went the Cabinet, that may have spoken to that very important area also, but Ms. Pooransingh would speak to that other area.

Ms. Pooransingh: Whilst we know that there is a shortage of staff and there is a need to build capacity it does not

mean that the work stops, and we do continue. We do remedial and we do preventative, and through the preventative means we have the radio programme where we are disseminating information, plus we have the training, the community training workshops that we call the responders to domestic violence. So that is one way while we are dealing with the remedial through the case management at our 11 locations, because we are located in 11 areas. So we are still there. We are still present, even though we may have some challenges, we are still offering the service. We do not turn anybody away, and we are still trying, as I said, through the preventative means, in terms of the media messaging. We do have a Facebook page. The Ministry has a Facebook page where information is also provided, and we do the training workshops, while we also continue with case management at the regional levels.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: At the end of the case management is there any follow-up process with respect to the victims, to see the end result?

Ms. Pooransingh: Well, as I said before, there is no cut-off point. You have to be satisfied that you have reached the persons—and I am saying persons because it is not just the victim, it is the family, it is the couple; it is whomever you are treating with. So you do not just, you know, just do a few sessions and leave it there, you have to be satisfied that the persons have reached from a lower level of functioning to a higher level of functioning. So, literally, you do not close off a case until you are satisfied that they have been rehabilitated to some point where they can now live a stable life.

Madam Chairman: Okay, let us take a question from Mrs. Jennings-Smith.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Now, I have listened to some of the submissions there and, quite clearly, what comes out is the need for us to track perpetrators, keep abreast with victims. I have heard you talk about limited resources, shortage of staff, and we are looking at targeting, giving responses more targeted, cost effective, and it brings me back to the whole point of the Central Registry which was completed and launched in 2016, and I am quoting here from the answers given by the Office of the Prime Minister. I want to ask you, since then to now, what is the number of agencies which contributed to the registry? That is just one question. Are the agencies being trained, or have been trained to effectively use the registry to capture data? And is the Central Registry on domestic violence effective when it comes to capturing data? And last but not least, how is the Central Registry being used to interconnect safe and civil society organizations to reduce duplication? And are you able to deal with the gaps that the different department offers?

Madam Chairman: So I think what is being asked is a brief on this registry, how is it working, you know, what is happening there, who is trained to use it, who is accessing it; that kind of brief.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Who has so far contributed to this registry, and that is the Central Registry on Domestic Violence?

Ms. Jack-Martin: The Central Registry on Domestic Violence is an information system which collects and integrates information relating to any person who is a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence offences. So far the registry has eight shelters and one counselling center. We also have the information from CAPA. We also have information coming in from National Family Services. We are in the process of collecting information from the Ministry of Health, agencies that get data on domestic violence.

Madam Chairman: Who uses the Central Registry? What exactly is the purpose of it? Why was it established? And what were the objectives of it? And is it meeting any of the objectives which it started off with?

Ms. Jack-Martin: Okay, the objectives is to provide efficient and effective method of monitoring domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago. It also enables early identification of needs, timely responses, and effective, holistic intervention strategies. So when we collect this data we hope, at the end of the collection of the data, to design programmes that would meet the needs of the persons that are being abused.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Can you say how many persons that you have made a difference, and how many family lives you have impacted in so far since you have had that agency, that registry ongoing?—because I am looking at when you capture data, how real time it is, and when you are really able to make effect. And tell us now, because we are talking about data, tell us how many persons you have impacted upon and the success.

Ms. Jack-Martin: Because it is an information system, we have not yet reached the stage where we are providing

interventions. I It is actually data collection in order to inform policy and programmes.

Madam Chairman: Could I just ask, the data you are collecting is it on offenders, victims? What type of data goes into the registry?

Ms. Jack-Martin: It is the data on the victims themselves, as well as the perpetrator. The data that is collected is the demographics of the client, the family members of the client, the detailed case notes of the clients, referrals and enrolments. It has not reached the stage of coming up with interventions as yet.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: So are you saying that you are just collecting information, you are not analysing the information, you are not collating to make responses, or to give guidance to the different agencies for better response action?

Ms. Johnson: Madam Chair, the registry is in its early stages of development. What we have now is about 12 agencies contributing to that data. Earlier we said that we need to now—we have started the analysis process that would lead us to segmenting the various categories that we need to deal with to promote awareness and to deliver services. One of the things we have already seen with the data coming out is the prevalence of domestic violence in certain areas. So we know now that we have some resources on board, we are focusing on designing programming for certain groups and certain areas. That is the purpose of the registry. So the data, some of it is real time, for example, the ones coming in directly from the shelter. We have trained those persons to use the system, and we do continuous training in that regard, because the people at the shelters, they change very often. We also have CAPA brining in their data on domestic violence into the registry, and we also have like rape crisis and those NGOs that focus on domestic violence contributing to the information. Once the information is collected, what we do is analyse the information to advise on policy and programmes.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: And how soon do you expect that to happen?

Ms. Johnson: That process is ongoing.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: No, you just said that you have not reached that point of analysing, making analysis and—

Ms. Johnson: No, we have not reached the point of doing programmes, but it certainly has influenced the decisions we made with the gender policy, with the domestic violence strategy, so it is influencing policies already. The programming part, it has not begun to influence that area as yet, and delivery of service. We know, for example, from the data we have collected that we need to put counsellors and create gender-resource centres to provide services for victims who believe they may be a victim or a perpetrator. We also know that we need to provide services for victims, and we know we need to set them up initially in certain areas, however, that whole programming part, for example, to provide counselling is still in the making. I indicated in my submission that we want to create the gender resource centres in two areas in Trinidad, and that Note is before the PMCD so that we can get the positions created to employ counsellors to provide the services and information for victims of domestic violence.

Madam Chairman: Sen. Mahabir.

Dr. Mahabir: Yes. Thank you. Madam Chair, this is a follow up, it is not a substantive, I have another substantive which I will raise subsequently, but the follow up is an issue raised by Ms. Pooransingh of Family Services, and the submission was that the school population is currently not exposed in any meaningful way to the information you offer in the radio programme and with the expertise you have And I am simply wondering whether you have had any contact with the Ministry of Education so that they can add in their curriculum somewhere, social studies, somewhere, a module on domestic violence. And I raise this in the context of what I see in mainstream media. There is a programme with sexual abuse, and children are speaking about it, and I thought it was a very valuable message where children are telling other children about the issue of sexual abuse. Now we are dealing with victims of domestic abuse, many of whom are children who are traumatized, although they would not have been the victims themselves of physical violence but simply witnessing it, and I am wondering whether you have the resources to prepare a module with online resources—the UN, I know, has a lot of things on this—so that you could submit to the Ministry of Education for consideration, or is it that you do not think it is within your remit to make an overture to the Ministry of Education, which currently controls some 400,000 students who happen to be a captured audience? So as a potential solution to solve this problem in the long term, is your unit able to produce a module, first off, and have you had any discussions

with the Ministry of Education for including it in their curriculum?

Ms. Bailey-Sobers: Thank you. There is no reason why we cannot collaborate with the Ministry of Education. As a Ministry treating in the social sector with the issue, and I would suggest that this is an issue that we can all—I am talking about all the agencies, all the Ministries—discuss further following this session, and I am sure the Office of the Prime Minister may have had some interaction with the Ministry of Education, but I would let them speak to that. But I see no reason why we cannot look at it and address the issue of the school-age population, and also child-friendly material in this area to introduce in the schools.

Ms. Johnson: Madam Chair, we have had discussions with the Ministry of Education with specific reference to the Health and Family Life Education programme that is being managed by the Ministry of Education, and it is with specific reference to domestic violence and child abuse. So those are the areas that we thought were critical for inclusion in that HFLE programme being managed by the Ministry of Education at the schools.

Dr. Mahabir: Could we then put a target that maybe by September of 2018, maybe nine months from now, in the new academic year, schools in Trinidad and Tobago will have available to them the material—prepare the child-friendly material, as PS, Jacinta Bailey-Sobers said, so that they can include it into their curriculum?—and, therefore, it is not as if we are talking about it but we are putting something concrete, reasonable timeline and, therefore, we can start sensitizing the school-age population on this particular difficult programme.

Madam Chairman: Senator, if I may, I do not know if these officials will be able to speak to that because that really would reside with the Ministry of Education and, therefore, even their best efforts they would not be able to give a commitment to that because they would not—

Dr. Mahabir: But, Madam Chair, I am talking about preparing the module. What the Ministry of Education to do will do, but do you think a nine-month period would be enough time for you to prepare that particular module so you will have it available in case the Ministry of Education wishes to use it by the new academic year? Do you have the resources, the manpower, the available tools?

Ms. Johnson: Madam Chair, I think we do, and it is a matter of engaging the Ministry of Education in a discussion, and looking at what they currently have on that programme.

Madam Chairman: And a lot would depend on what their interaction is and what time is available and when, so point taken. Sen. Moses, you wanted to ask a question?

Mr. Moses: No.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Then, to a question that deals a little bit with the human resources again, going back there because that is the crux of the matter, if you have the resources to be able to offer the services, and in the submission coming from the TTPS, I note that between 2015 and 2017 there has been an increase in the number of victim and witness support officers and the number of victim and witness support offices. So going from 14 officers in 2015 to 17 in 2017, and nine offices in 2015 to 13 in 2017, and my question is–because what was raised in the recommendations, just going back, dealt with the training for the officers and ensuring that they were fully trained to deal with victims, to receive victims of domestic violence. And my question is, what are the measures that are put in place to monitor the effectiveness of the interventions that are made? And has the increase from 2015 to 2017 resulted in an increase in the effectiveness of the Victim and Witness Support Unit with respect to treating with victims of domestic violence? And are there any intentions to increase the number of officers or the number of offices in 2018?

Mr. Phillip: In terms of monitoring the effectiveness of the Victim and Witness Support Unit, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has in fact recently hired persons to do monitoring and evaluation, all in an effort to assist us in adequately monitoring some of those particular responsibilities. So we are still in the formative stage in terms of dealing with that process. In terms of hiring additional victim and witness support officers, we have space for three—approval for three other officers, and subject to budget constraints in this fiscal we would be looking forward to at least hiring those three officers.

In terms of when we get the additional resources we could look at having one or two additional locations. Generally, when we look at the number of officers in some discussion we realize that we may have to make an

application to certainly increase the number of officers, because given our divisional responsibility, we are of the view that as much as four officers per division would adequately fulfil the responsibilities, but we have to go with our financial requirements at this point in time.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Staying on that point, you speak of a victim and support unit, and we received documentation from the TTPS telling us about a community policing unit, and we see sections like Port of Spain division—well, let us go to Central Division, where we have at present a complement of 22 officers, can you distinguish between community policing and victim support unit? And are victim support officers working on a 24-hour basis, as well as the community police officers? How do they work?

12.10 p.m.
Mr. Phillip: The community police officers are either members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service or members of the Special Reserve. The Victim and Witness Support persons are civilians who have been employed with the police who have special qualifications in the field of social science, social work and while they are rostered for eight hours, they are actually on call, so that if they need to come out during any 24 hours to give some assistance, they could. But the Victim and Witness Support officers are civilian staff who have been employed to staff the Victim and Witness Support Unit.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Well certainly I am looking at the listing here and we see, for instance, in Central Division, you have 22 officers working in the Community Policing Unit—Central Division. How do they work? Do they work eight to four? Do they work around the clock 24 hours so that they will be always available? How do they work, the 22 officers?

Mr. Phillip: The divisional commander within each division has the responsibility for rostering officers attached to that division, and as their particular responsibilities come up–I am saying that they are in fact available over the 24, but the divisional commander has that responsibility to detail them.

Dr. Mahabir: A follow-up but on a slightly different angle, and this is really to the police because MP Jennings-Smith spoke about the availability 24/7 of the victim support officers. I want to ask a slightly different question, and this is referring to something that has gone horribly wrong. The court has granted a restraining order against a perpetrator. This restraining order has been violated in the past with loss of life. What I would like to know from the police and from the Victim Support Unit is this: when the court grants a restraining order, are you informed; do you keep a track of it? And when a victim complains that someone may be in breach of that order, how promptly do you respond at the level of the police? At the Victim Support Unit do you have a sort of a sponsor officer who would look at this case and take the violation of the restraining order seriously, to provide some kind of 24/7 support for this particular victim?

So the question to the police is this: are you informed by the court? Do you keep a record of these restraining orders, and how promptly do you respond when a victim says she fears that this may be violated? And the second to the Victim and Witness Support Unit, are you available so that in the case of any breach of this order you are able to provide some kind of counselling assistance while you wait for the police to attend to this matter?

Mr. Phillip: Whenever an order has been granted, whether interim or a full order, the police within the district—a copy of this order is in fact served on the police. As a matter of fact we are required to serve the order on the respondent, so we also keep a copy in our records at the police station, so we are in fact aware of orders that have been granted.

Whenever there is a breach of that order, based on the fact that the applicant or the victim would have come to us, the police would in fact investigate that matter and where there is evidence we will prosecute the respondent or the particular perpetrator for breach of that order, and the Victim and Witness Support officers would be aware of that particular matter and they would also deal with the victim. They will support the victim as is necessary.

Dr. Mahabir: Commissioner, there were cases—we have seen it in the media—where one of these restraining orders was violated. I think you can recall a case in Tobago where a woman was actually murdered by someone who was under this particular order. Something would have gone wrong in that situation. What from your experience in policing would have gone wrong, because you have the order, the reports were that this particular victim made the report to the police? Is it that you did not respond in time, or you did not think it was important, or is it that there are some other factors beyond your control which would allow this breach of order to occur and the loss of life to result? The question

is: What could have gone wrong?

Mr. Phillip: While I am not particularly aware, I do not have the facts of that specific case, so I would not be able to comment. However, if in fact a report was made and the police failed to respond, the police would have certainly not acted appropriately, and certainly we would have had to investigate that matter to see where we would have breached, which officer would have in fact been at fault with respect to not taking the appropriate action.

Dr. Mahabir: Have you had cause within the service to undertake this type of internal investigation or is it not really something which occurs normally within the service? Have you had cause to investigate this particular situation in the past?

Mr. Phillip: We have in fact been treating domestic violence reports very seriously, to the extent that reports of domestic violence or breach of the orders the inspector or the sergeant at the station are the only ones who have been assigned to deal with these matters, and wherever incidents may have occurred, certainly the Professional Standards Units would be engaging and investigating those matters.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: I have a follow-up to you. When we have domestic protection orders, what system do you have in place to share that information throughout your organization? For example, a breach may have been committed and it is reported, and you are may be on the lookout for that particular perpetrator, what system do you adopt to ensure that all officers throughout Trinidad and Tobago are aware of that breach, that person, the name and description?

Mr. Phillip: Once the matter is investigated, if we have not been able to arrest the perpetrator certainly we would obtain a warrant, and we have a database where warrants are in fact entered onto the database, and all police officers on the Versilex System could checks the database to determine if there is a warrant for anybody in Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Mahabir: The victim support services, I needed to get a response from them. With respect to a victim who has been granted a restraining order against an individual, do you have within your unit someone who can be contacted very quickly, so that in the case of an individual who has genuine fear and concern that the order may be breached they can communicate with that person, and that person can then act as a sort of sponsor for them to provide assistance while you are waiting for the police person to act?

Ms. Corbie: Thank you very much. All the officers of the Victim and Witness Support Unit are required to work on call 24 hours, so we would get calls from victims. Once they feel that they are in need of support, they would contact us and we would respond accordingly to offer that support to them, be it whether the day or in the night, we respond accordingly. We may even make contact with the police station on their behalf if they have not contacted as well. We may accompany them to the police station as the need may exist at that point.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: The submission from the Office of the Prime Minister indicated that the locations of shelters could not be released, and must remain private and confidential. My question is, is there any reported cases where the perpetrator has found a victim at that shelter?

Ms. Jack-Martin: The only time that happens is if the client calls the perpetrator from the shelter. I remember one shelter complaining that that took place, and they had to evacuate the client from that shelter to protect the safety of the others.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: I am really concerned about information sharing and data. I want to ask the Victim and Witness Support Unit of the TTPS, are you in possession of, like, the information from the Central Registry from the Office of the Prime Minister?

Ms. -Corbie: No we are not.

Madam Chairman: That actually is one of the recommendations that we are going to make. We understand that it is an incremental process and we are now phasing in, because it just came to fruition in 2016. So one of the recommendations I expect that we would make is that as this is built out and as the coordinating agency comes into play, which is why that is so central, that type of information would be available to all of the agencies that deal with

domestic violence. Are there any last questions?

Dr. Mahabir: Thank you very much for indulging me, Madam Chair. I do have a question for the police again, last question I assure the Committee and I assure you Madam Chair. Usually of course the victim has to make a report. She may contact the social worker, but she has to make a report. She may physically have to come to the police station. I would like to know what has been done within the recent times to ensure that police stations are designed to have a separate, private room where you can handle this particular report with the sensitivity that it requires, and do you have female officers on call who would be able to come and attend to a victim of domestic violence and other types of violence, and who may be in need of that kind of treatment by the officers?

Mr. Phillip: Yes, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service we have in fact remodelled. We no longer call them "charge rooms", we call them reception areas. We also have within each particular station interview rooms where victims could be privately interviewed. Female police officers are in fact available either at a particular police station or within the division. If a particular police station for some reason does not have a female officer at a particular point of time for one reason or the other, they could in fact get assistance from another police station within the division or even outside of the division. So we have female police officers available during the 24 hours of the tour of duty.

Dr. Mahabir: All police stations now in Trinidad and Tobago do have these private interview rooms, there are none outstanding?

Mr. Phillip: Well let me say most of them, because we do have one or two that we still have to bring up to speed, but most of them, and within each division we do have that facility—within each division.

Dr. Mahabir: The Assistant Commissioner now say that by September of 2018, nine months from today, all of your stations will be up to speed with respect to these interview rooms.

Mr. Phillip: Subject to budgetary concerns.

Dr. Mahabir: Very well.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Hosein could not be with us today. He is a member of the committee, and he did send some questions, and so I want to ask the Vice-Chairman to just ask the last questions which would have come from Mr. Hosein.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: These questions are for the Office of the Prime Minister. Can you tell us with respect to the new shelters that you are about to open, would they be on a 24/7 basis?

Ms. Johnson: Yes, they are intended to be.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: How would you do the intake of victims, can they come at any time of the day or night and be accepted?

Ms. Johnson: There is a process in place. We have a domestic violence hotline. Persons who call that hotline we would arrange for them to access the shelters. So it is a referral basis. You have to be referred to the centre. What would be open, and we hope to run an extended schedule with that, would be the gender resource centres where anyone can walk in from off the streets.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: I know there is a principled approach in place where they ask the victim to get a protection order in place before they are accepted. How do you deal with that, are you going to accept them immediately after? Like for example if at 2.00a.m. in the morning you get a call and they call the hotline, can they just come to your residence?

Ms. Johnson: It is a 24 hours/seven days a week operation.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Great, thank you very much. I just wanted to clear that up. I know that the TTPS has a halfway house. Can you tell us if that house is in operation, and how do you all operate to victims of domestic violence and abuse?

Mr. Phillip: I need to get some additional information to be able to answer that question.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Is the Victim and Witness Support Unit in contact with that house? Do you utilize that house? What are the services that you gain from that house?

Ms. Corbie: Relative to the house that is located at Four Roads Police Station, the Victim and Witness Support Unit has been in contact with that house. We are normally assisted with overnight care for victims and witnesses of domestic violence.

Madam Chairman: So I will like to invite now Mrs. Bailey-Sobers, Ms. Johnson and Mr. Phillip to make brief closing remarks.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Thank you very much, Chair. Again I want to indicate how thankful we are as a Ministry to have been part of this session. Certainly the information sharing is always useful, and some of the information that came out certainly pointed towards the need for further collaboration with our stakeholder agencies and this particular area of domestic violence. Some of the sharing also would contribute to our planning as we move forward to fiscal 2018 operations and activities in the communities.

We also remain committed as a Ministry to the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee and also to the future liaison with our stakeholders on some of the recommendations that came out of this actual session this morning. So, again, thank you very much Chair.

Ms. Johnson: Some of the issues we have raised here are clearly identified in the gaps we discovered when we looked at the institutional arrangements in place to treat with domestic violence, and the shortfalls in the legislation of the Domestic Violence Act.

One of the things that a lot of the discussion here hinges on is how we use that interministerial committee that has been proposed to look at the institutional strengthening of the agencies and the systems to deal with domestic violence, how that committee deals with the implementation of some of the recommendations which came from the general public of Trinidad and Tobago, and the key agencies that are working in the area of domestic violence.

It would be instructive to see what happens within a year, again, subject to the approval of the Cabinet here, what happens. Hopefully when we come back here to discuss this issue, we should be in a better position to say what is being delivered and how effective we are in terms of reducing domestic violence, and achieving that gender equality that we talk about for 2030.

The discussion here has been rich and rewarding, and we hope that we would have a lot of the things that we want to see, in terms of domestic violence, implemented within the shortest possible time frame. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you so much.

Mr. Phillip: The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service would want to continue deepening their working relationship and networking with the other stakeholders. We would also want to ensure that in order to increase our efficiency and effectiveness in particular, not only dealing with crime but in particular dealing with domestic violence, the whole aspect of domestic violence and domestic violence prevention, that we would enhance our capability of the officers to ensure that we increase their competence. I thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you so much.

If I could just take a minute to summarize some of the things that we have discussed, some of our findings, and a couple of the recommendations that would have come out as we were making our discussions.

The Committee is pleased to recognize that based on the report of 2015 and the recommendations that were made, there has been some progress I think by every agency dealing with domestic violence to realize some of these recommendations.

In the OPM we realize that there is a move to fill the critical director positions that have been outstanding by

year's end, and that is calendar 2017. So we do recommend and support that this is done so that the entire unit can be filled out by first quarter of 2018 as is the plan.

The eight safe houses that are run by NGOs, the OPM intends to operationalize four further safe houses, two that are newly constructed and two three-bedroom units that are being refurbished at this point in time. We expect that that would come on stream in this fiscal and run on a 24/7 basis where it is always open and available for victims.

Seventy-five per cent of the domestic violence reporters, those who report, are female and, therefore, of the four new centres that have been identified and should be operationalized very soon within this fiscal, three would be available for females, one available for male and these are also going to take into consideration the issue that was raised in the 2015 report where families with boys over 10 cannot be accommodated, and so this is going to be addressed with these four centres that are going to be operationalized.

Also looking at the issue of the coordinating agency, which is one of the paramount suggestions in 2015, and that has been suggested and is before the Cabinet, and we recognize that from the OPM—and we anticipate that once the approval is given then the information would be shared with all of the other agencies who do not seem to have that information right now—but we anticipate that as 2018 rolls over and that institution is approved, that will spread to the other agencies, and we can see that coming to the fore in 2018. Because I think we all recognize as one of the critical pillars of this discussion that information sharing, coordination, use of resources, networking, reduction of duplication, all of these things are critical to ensure that the domestic violence victims receive the kind of efficient service that we all want to provide to them through our different agencies.

One of the other findings that we should mention is the public awareness that was mentioned in the 2015 report. Though there are still things going on, everybody has identified that they do workshops, there is the radio programme being run by the Family Services Division, the community police are also involved, and in different police outreaches there are the booths where domestic violence is discussed and the attempt is made to increase public awareness. I think we can all agree though that there needs to be a more specific focus towards dealing with young people and there awareness, and men as well, which is two of the main recommendations of 2015.

So we want to suggest in our recommendations that young people do need to be exposed in a greater way. One of the recommendations coming from the OPM was that there needs to be some data analysis done to identify the different audiences and develop specific programming to reach those audiences. One of the suggestions came out from our discussions that the schools could be used, and that the agencies could actually develop modules which can be used, and in discussion with the Ministry of Education, can be made accessible to the young people who really need to hear this message, so that as they get older they would be able to have the awareness and to avoid some of the problems that face domestic violence sufferers in the future. So that is one of our recommendations as we go forward.

Also with respect to the central registry, we recognize that in 2015 it was mentioned. It was completed in 2016 which is progress, and it is being developed on a phased basis, let us say. So one of our recommendations would be that by 2018 this central registry, which has been able thus far to influence policy decisions, would be able to go further into influencing now programming decisions. Of course we look forward to that central registry also being available to all agencies, and if in fact the coordinating agency does get off the ground, as we recommend it should in 2018, then that would be one of the main areas of data collection, and that would also speak to one of the recommendations made in 2015 which dealt with research and information gathering for the purposes of policy formation as well as programming effectiveness.

We also recognize that the TTPS has begun to hire some M&E specialists to deal with looking at how effective the interventions are, and we do recommend that in 2018 all of the agencies look towards ensuring that we are not only doing, but we are looking at what we are doing and its effectiveness with respect to how we move forward with our programming, any tweaking of policies that is necessary, to make our services more effective to those who we are trying to assist.

So I think that basically is a capsule of what we discussed, our findings, our recommendations going forward. I want to thank the officials who came out here, and I want to thank you also for taking on board the recommendations of 2015 and moving, each of you, positively in the direction of ensuring that what we do at the JSCs does not just end in the talking, but it goes forward into what the Ministries and the agencies do in order to affect the quality of life of the citizens in Trinidad and Tobago.

So I want to thank you. We have executives here, and I know that you would be working with your staff members to ensure that these changes were made, and you would be continuing that work so that maybe in two or three years, if another committee calls and looks at the reports of 2015 and 2017, they would see that steady progress, and most importantly the victims and the people who we are trying to serve will also feel the effects of us making that effort to serve them better. So I want to thank you so much for your work in this regard.

At this time I want to thank our viewers, our listeners and I want to declare this meeting now adjourned.

12.36 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*

APPENDIX III

List of Community Policing Officers

Number of Persons Attached to the Community Policing Unit of the TTPS

	Division	2013				Total	2014				Total	2015				Total	2016				Total	2017				Total
		Insp.	Sgt.	Cpl.	PC		Insp.	Sgt.	Cpl.	PC		Insp.	Sgt.	Cpl.	PC		Insp.	Sgt.	Cpl.	PC		Insp.	Sgt.	Cpl.	PC	
1.	Port Of Spain	1	1	1	6	9	1	1	1	5	8	1	1	1	7	10	0	1	2	6	9	0	1	2	6	9
2.	Northern	0	0	1	5	6	0	1	2	10	13	0	2	1	8	11	0	0	1	8	9	0	0	2	6	8
3.	Western	0	1	0	4	5	0	1	1	4	6	0	1	1	4	6	0	1	0	4	5	0	1	0	2	3
4.	North Eastern	1	1	0	5	7	1	1	2	4	8	0	0	1	6	7	0	0	1	6	7	0	0	1	7	8
5.	Eastern	1	0	1	7	9	0	1	0	7	8	0	1	1	6	8	1	0	0	9	10	1	1	0	10	12
6.	Central	2	2	3	8	15	2	2	2	8	14	2	1	3	12	18	2	1	3	12	18	0	1	3	18	22
7.	Southern	0	1	2	9	12	1	1	2	9	13	1	0	2	8	11	1	0	2	8	11	1	0	1	8	10
8.	South Western	0	0	2	8	10	0	0	2	13	15	0	0	1	14	15	0	1	2	11	14	0	1	2	12	15
9.	Tobago	0	0	1	3	4	0	0	2	1	3	0	0	3	2	5	0	2	4	10	16	0	3	3	9	15
	TOTAL	5	6	11	55	77	5	8	14	61	88	4	6	14	67	91	4	6	15	74	99	2	8	14	78	102

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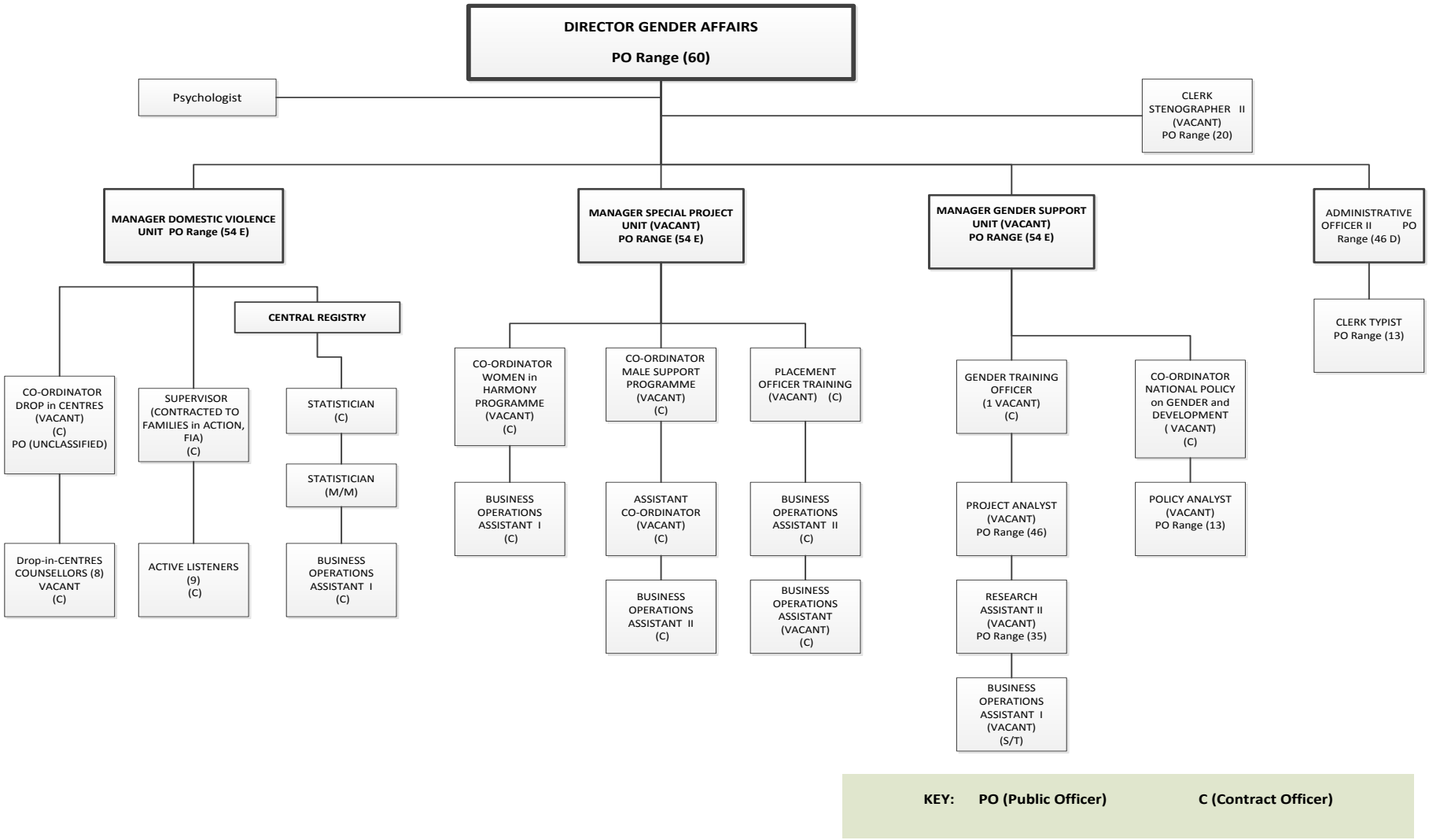
APPENDIX IV Staffing, Vacancies and Organization Chart of the Domestic Violence Unit

Table 1

Current Position/Employees	Positions Awaiting Approval	Current Vacancies
Gender Training Officer (1) [Contract]	Project Execution Officer (2) [Awaiting PMCD Approval]	Director of Gender (1) [Establishment]
Coordinator, Male Programmes (1) [Contract]	Active Listeners (5) [Awaiting PMCD Approval]	Manager, Domestic violence Unit (1) [Establishment]
Statistical Analyst (1) [Contract]	Coordinator, drop-in Centres (1) [Awaiting review by PMCD]	Psychologist (1) [Establishment]
Active Listeners (1) [Contract]	Counsellors (9) [Awaiting review by PMCD]	Manager, Gender Support Unit (1) [Establishment]
Project Execution Officer (1) [Contract]		Policy Analyst (1) [Establishment]
Project Execution Assistant (1)		Research Assistant II (1) [Establishment]
Business Operations Assistant I (1)[Contract]		Clerk Stenographer II (1) [Establishment]
Director, Gender Affairs Division (Ag.) (1)[Establishment]		Statistical Office III (1) [Establishment]
Administrative Officer II (1) [Establishment]		Coordinator, National Gender Policy (1) [Contract]
Clerk Stenographer II (1) [Establishment]		Placement Officer (1) [Contract]
Temporary Clerk Typist (1) [Establishment]		Business Operations Assistant II (1) [Contract]
		Business Operations Assistant II (1) [Contract]

Status of Positions at Domestic Violence Unit as at November 2017

GENDER AFFAIRS DIVISION ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



APPENDIX V

List of Programmes at MSDFS, OPM, VWSU

Table 1
List of Programmes and Services

OPM	MSDFS	VWSU
Barbershop Initiative	Radio Programme "It's Family Time; Let's Talk"	Individually tailored emotional support and counselling
Food Preparation and Home Management for Men and Boys		Workshops / presentations to schools and the general public on domestic violence
Defining Masculine Excellence Programme		Advocacy and liaison with social support agencies on behalf of the victims
Counselling on Domestic Violence		Updates on police reports/ investigations
Administer advice, placement or referrals to other agencies as per the clients' needs		Emotional Support for clients for hearings
Workshops, Seminars and Outreaches on Domestic Violence		Group Support Services
Training workshops entitled "Lay Responders to Domestic Violence"		Assistance to source accommodation via shelters
		Guidance through Court processes i.e. Orders

Table 2
Number of Clients Serviced by the VWSU

Year	Total number of Clients serviced	Number of Clients serviced for incidents of domestic violence
2015	2,290	419
2016	2,027	384
Jan 2017 – Oct 30th 2017	2,991	155

Table 3
List of NGOs

NGOs that provide Support Services for Victims of Domestic Violence	
Families in Action	Rape Crisis
Coalition Against Domestic violence	National Muslim Women's Organization of Trinidad and Tobago
National Hindu Women's Organisation	Organization of Abused and Battered Individuals (OABI)
Network of NGOs of T&T for the Advancement of Women	WINAD
Domestic Violence Reaching Out	The Halfway House
GROOTS	Women Working for Social Progress
Hope Centre	