



TWELFTH REPORT OF THE

THE COMMITTEE ON

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS

THIRD SESSION OF THE 11TH PARLIAMENT

INQUIRY

Examination into the Administration of Disaster relief in
Trinidad and Tobago.



Public Administration and Appropriations Committee

The Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC) is established by Standing Order 102 and 92 of the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively. The Committee is mandated to consider and report to Parliament on:

the budgetary expenditure of Government agencies to ensure that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval;

the budgetary expenditure of Government agencies as it occurs and keeps Parliament informed of how the budget allocation is being implemented; and

the administration of Government agencies to determine hindrances to their efficiency and to make recommendations to the Government for improvement of public administration.

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Mr. Wade Mark	Member
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine	Member
Ms. Amrita Deonarine	Member
Mr. Garvin Simonette	Member

Committee Staff

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Publication

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Members of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee



Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-
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Dr. Lackram Bodoë
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Mr. Wade Mark
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Mr. Clarence Rambharat
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Mrs. Ayanna
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Ms. Nicole Olivier
Member

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report of the PAAC for the Eleventh Parliament contains the details of the examination of the relevant stakeholders regarding the Administration of Disaster Relief in Trinidad and Tobago.

The objective of the Committee's inquiry was to:

- determine the preparedness of Trinidad and Tobago for a disaster; and
- publicise pertinent information on the provisions readily available to the public in the event of a disaster.

The Committee decided to undertake this examination based on current news and recent disaster events in the country. In undertaking this examination the Committee employed two (2) mechanisms:

- Written Submissions; and
- Public Hearings.

The Committee made a call for written submissions to stakeholders and thereafter focused on a review and analysis of the written submissions. Subsequently, the Committee conducted a Public Hearing with stakeholders. The approach adopted by the Committee took into account issues identified by the public and responses received from stakeholders. Specific issues relative to the stakeholders were also identified. The Committee has made recommendations related to the issues identified. Observations and recommendations are presented in chapter 2.

INTRODUCTION

THE COMMITTEE

The PAAC of the Eleventh Republican Parliament was established by the revised Standing Orders to:

- examine current public expenditure, thereby capturing the full budget cycle by providing Parliamentary oversight of the implementation of the budget; and
- conduct a real time examination of the expenditure of Ministries and Departments.

Membership

1. In the 11th Parliament the Members of the Committee were appointed by resolutions of the House of Representatives and the Senate at sittings held on Friday November 13, 2015 and Tuesday November 17, 2015 respectively.
2. By resolution of the House of Representatives on November 24, 2017, Brigadier General (Ret.) Ancil Antoine was appointed as a Member of the Committee in lieu of Mr. Maxie Cuffie.
3. By resolution of the Senate On November 3, 2017, Ms. Jennifer Raffoul was appointed as a Member of the Committee in lieu of Mr. Dhanayshar Mahabir.
4. By resolution of the Senate on November 28, 2017 Mr. Ronald Huggins was appointed as a Member of the Committee in lieu of Ms. Allyson Baksh.
5. By resolution of the Senate on November 27, 2018, Mr. Garvin Simonette was appointed as a Member on the Committee in lieu of Mr. Ronald Huggins.
6. By resolution of the Senate on November 27, 2018, Ms. Amrita Deonarine was appointed as a Member of the Committee in lieu of Ms. Jennifer Raffoul.

Chairman & Vice-Chairman

By virtue of S.O. 109(6) and 99(6) of the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively, the Chairman of the Committee is the Speaker. At its First Meeting held on January 27 2016, Dr. Lackram Bodoie was elected as the Vice-Chairman.

Quorum

In order to exercise the powers granted to it by the House, the Committee was required by the Standing Orders to have a quorum. A quorum of three (3) Members, inclusive of the Chairman or Vice-Chairman, with representatives from both Houses, was agreed to by the Committee at its First Meeting.

METHODOLOGY

Determination of the Committee's Work Programme

At an in-camera meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday December 28, 2017, it was agreed that the Committee would engage in an inquiry into the Administration of Disaster Relief in Trinidad and Tobago.

Review of Documents

The Committee determined the examination would begin by a call for written responses from stakeholders to questions posed by the Committee. Questions¹ were sent on December 29, 2017 and written responses were requested to be submitted by January 8, 2017. Written responses were requested from the following stakeholders:

- Ministry of National Security (MNS)
- Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service (TTFS)
- Office of Disaster and Preparedness Management (ODPM)
- Tobago Emergency Management Agency (TEMA)
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries
- Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
- Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

Implementation of the Work Programme²

Based on the content of the responses received from stakeholders and matters arising in the public domain, the Committee determined that an examination in public was necessary. The Public Hearing was held on Wednesday January 17, 2018 during which, the Committee conducted a panel examination with stakeholders. As a result of the information and issues arising from the Public Hearing, the Committee decided that another hearing was necessary. The follow up hearing was held on Wednesday April 16, 2018. Officials of the following entities were re-examined:

- Ministry of National Security;

¹ Questions sent to all stakeholders are included in **Appendix I**.

² The detailed Inquiry Process is at Appendix II.

- Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government; and
- Office of Disaster and Preparedness Management.

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process outlines steps taken by the Committee when conducting an inquiry into an entity or issue. The following steps outline the Inquiry process followed by the PAAC for its inquiry into the Administration of Disaster Relief:

- i. Identify entities to be examined –
 - Ministry of National Security (MNS)
 - Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service (TTFS)
 - Office of Disaster and Preparedness Management (ODPM)
 - Tobago Emergency Management Agency (TEMA)
 - Ministry of Finance
 - Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries
 - Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
 - Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government
- ii. Preparation of Inquiry Proposal for the selected entities based on their role in the Administration of Disaster. The Inquiry Proposal outlines:
 - Description
 - Rationale/Objective of Inquiry; and
 - Proposed Questions.
- iii. Consideration and approval of Inquiry Proposal by the Committee;
- iv. Request for Written Response sent to the entities on December 29, 2017.
- v. Preparation of an Issues Paper by the Secretariat for the Committee's consideration, based on written responses received from the entities. The Issues Paper identified and summarised matters of concern in the responses provided by the entities;
- vi. Based on the responses received and the issues identified, the Committee agreed to have a Public Hearing. The relevant witnesses were invited to attend and provide evidence on two instances, January 17 2018 and April 18, 2018.
- vii. Following the Public Hearing, a request for further details was sent to the entities on January 22, 2018 and April 23, 2018.

ISSUES, OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ministry of National Security

i. Staffing Issues at the ODPM

During the examination of the ODPM the Committee learnt that the ODPM merged its Call Centre Unit 511 with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service's E999 Call Centre. The ODPM explained that the merger was seen as an economically viable solution. However, this merger posed some challenges for the ODPM as the 511 was also a Customer Care Centre. The ODPM claimed that the 511 Centre had the capacity to move from five to fifteen operators during an incident. The 511 Centre allowed real-time communication with the population, monitoring of social media and warning first responders and other entities based on the reports received. Additionally, the ODPM indicated that as a result of the merger it was unable to adequately provide customer care and follow up.

During discussions with the Ministry of National Security, the Committee was informed that the ODPM had been experiencing a staff shortage for the past seven (7) years. ODPM stated that, they needed 44 employees on staff but were operating with only 18 employees. Officials indicated that Members of staff were performing three (3) to four (4) functions and that officers at the technical level were performing managerial functions as well. The ODPM was required to have a staff complement of forty-four (44), however, at the time of the public hearings, the ODPM had eighteen (18) employees. The MNS stated it was in the process of interviewing persons to fill these vacancies. The ODPM explained that the issue of staffing was co-related to funding and to persons who were desirous and have studied within the particular field of risk crisis and emergency management.

Recommendations:

- ***The MNS should prioritise the hiring of staff for the ODPM to alleviate staff shortages.***
- ***The MNS should submit a progress report to the Parliament outlining the progress made in filling the vacancies at the ODPM by January 31, 2019.***

ii. Risk Reduction Management Centres (RRMCs)

The Committee was informed that the RRMCs were intended to function as instruments to increase capacity within the targeted territories to reduce risk in relation to disaster risk identification, analysis and communication. However, due to budgetary constraints MNS was unable to action the ODPM's proposal with respect to the RRMC Model. As such, an alternative approach was proposed by the UNDP for the realisation of the RRMC via a Cost Sharing Agreement. Under this Agreement, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago was expected to contribute US\$4,033,752, while the UNDP would contribute US\$75,000.

A review was conducted by the Legal Unit and the International Affairs Unit (IAU) attached to the MNS and amendments to the Agreement were proposed, notably;

- the inclusion of roles and responsibilities of both parties;
- the use of accounting regulations; and
- the submission of periodic reports to the MNS.

The MNS advised that due to continued budgetary constraints it was uncertain if the Ministry would be able to proceed with the project given its required contribution. The MNS at the time of the inquiry was liaising with the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs to renegotiate the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement (SBAA) with the UNDP to enable the implementation of the RRMC Model.

Recommendations:

- ***The MNS should provide an update on the implementation of the RRMC Model by January 31, 2019, including its final decision on the UNDP proposal and any alternative it has considered.***

Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management

Sensitization of the public

The Committee questioned the effectiveness of the ODPM's public education/sensitization programme. Of particular concern was the differences among the use of classifications like "incident", "event", "occurrence" and "disaster". The Committee queried whether the

definitions for these terms were understood by the general public. The Committee also sought insight into the efforts made by the Agency to educate the public about:

- the difference between an incident, event, occurrence and disaster;
- the resources available before and after these happenings;
- how resources can be accessed; and
- how assistance was provided.

Officials explained that the ODPM was a coordinating agency and not a First Responder. The Agency believed that there is a misunderstanding by the public of its role. At the follow-up inquiry conducted with the Agency, the Committee questioned the activation of the ODPM Application (App) which could be used as a sensitization tool. The ODPM explained that the App was designed to present information on various hazards and the required actions before, during and after a particular hazard. The App also had features related to emergency preparedness for example, a checklist of items that should be included in an emergency kit.

On the sensitization of children, the ODPM stated that it worked with the Ministry of Education on a public education programme for schools. Some teachers were engaged by the ODPM to deliver public education and sensitization to children. The ODPM indicated it planned to work closely with the Ministry of Education once the resources were available to continue.

The Committee also learnt of the ODPM's Community Organize and Ready for Emergency (CORE) Programme which was intended to sensitise the public. CORE was a five-part programme aimed at:

- making members of communities flood smart;
- building better and safer construction;
- assisting vulnerable communities and persons with special needs; and
- building resilience and understanding exposure.

With regard to the ODPM's social media presence, the Agency explained that Social Media monitoring was an additional function for employees who were already carrying out various duties in light of staff shortages. As a result, there was no employee dedicated to

social media monitoring. The ODPM expressed its desire for the creation of a Customer Care Centre which would improve the agency's Social Media presence.

Observation:

- *The Committee notes the sensitization efforts by the ODPM in the country's schools and its work with the Ministry of Education.*

Recommendations

- *The ODPM should provide to the Parliament by January 31, 2019 a schedule of its visits to schools for the academic year September 2018 to July 2019.*
- *The ODPM should develop a manual defining and including examples of incident, event, occurrence and disaster clearly stating the role and responsibilities of the ODPM. This should be completed by January 31, 2019.*
- *The ODPM should re-launch the*
 - i. *CORE programme to ensure information is shared with the population on a continuous basis; and*
 - ii. *The Agency should develop a semi-annual schedule for the programme across Trinidad. A status report on the re-launch should be submitted to the Committee by March 31, 2019.*
- *The ODPM should conduct a needs assessment and thereafter acquire the requisite services of dedicated personnel to monitor and increase its Social Media presence. The ODPM shall submit a status update by January 31, 2019.*
- *The ODPM must revisit the use of Social Media to involve more than the sharing of information from the Trinidad and Tobago Meteorological Office and other agencies. ODPM must create content that is specific to the anticipated or existing hazard, and must ensure that its use of Social Media also involves the opportunity for the public to respond and have their responses addressed. The ODPM shall submit a status update by January 31, 2019.*

Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service

The TTFS and Natural Disasters

The Committee sought clarification on the role of the TTFS in the event of a disaster. The Committee learnt that the TTFS responded to bush fires in the dry season and flooding in the rainy season. The TTFS had a Search and Rescue Unit, which took the lead in responding when there was an incident over rough terrain or for cliffs or the removal of trees as was required. The TTFS further explained that it responded in almost any incident that required an emergency response from agencies in Trinidad and Tobago. If the response required was beyond the capacity of the Fire Service, the ODPM would be contacted for assistance. For instance, in the event of major bush fires the TTFS would coordinate with the ODPM to source Bambi Buckets to assist with the bush fire response.

Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

i. Volunteer Network and the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)

The Committee was informed that the CERT programme undertaken by the Ministry was geared towards training persons in the community to respond in times of an emergency or a hazard. CERT members were chosen by Councillors and members of the community. A CERT team comprises of twelve (12) persons. However, the Volunteer Network was a mechanism used to recruit volunteers from all 14 Corporations. These volunteers and CERT members were utilised in the event of any hazard. The explanation provided for the Volunteer network and the CERT programme was conflicting and provided no clear understanding.

Observation:

- ***The Committee had difficulty in distinguishing between the CERT and Volunteer Network.***

Recommendations:

- ***The Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government should develop clear definitions of both the Volunteer Network and the CERT programme to avoid misunderstandings. This should be done by January 31, 2019 and submitted to Parliament.***

ii. Staffing Shortages at Regional Corporations

The Committee questioned whether each Regional Corporation was adequately staffed. The Ministry informed the Committee that the fourteen Regional Corporations were not

fully staffed. However, if there were a need for an emergency response, all Corporations would be mobilized to provide assistance as required.

Recommendations:

- ***The Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government should develop a standard operating procedure to be utilized in instances when multiple Corporations are required to provide emergency responses.***
- ***The Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government should address staffing issues identified and provide an update to the Parliament by January 31, 2019.***

Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries

Claims

At the Public Hearing the Committee learnt that there were approximately 38,900 registered farmers in the country. The Ministry indicated that it received 400- 500 claims per year. It was further explained that claims vary annually on an event basis. When floods occur the farmers must submit claims within seven (7) working days to the County Office. The claim form requires bio data for example:

- name;
- address;
- hectares of land affected;
- crop;
- actual crop; and
- maturity of crop.

Within approximately ten (10) days the District Office collated the claims and distributed them to the flood investigating teams who helped ensure transparency of the process. Teams would visit the farmers to verify their claims. Once all information has been verified it was entered in the Agricultural Development Bank's Cost of Production Calculator. Calculations were done using a Scientific Disaster Assistance Model also known as the "UWI Model". The timeframe between making a claim and payments was approximately six weeks to two months.

In instances in which farmers were unable to visit to the District Office to make claims due to the severity of the flooding, their registration files were used to calculate the loss. The Ministry further expressed that the verification process could be improved by the introduction of a system where crops could be registered. This would allow farmers to indicate the crops planted and the acreage.

Recommendations

- ***The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries should conduct a review of its current system, verification process for assessing claims when providing flood relief assistance to farmers and identify ways in which the system can be improved. A draft report should be submitted to the Parliament by January 31, 2019.***

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

The Committee learnt that in the event of a disaster the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services was considered a second responder. Primarily, the Ministry provided relief to individuals and households in the form of clothing grants, provision of school supplies and rental accommodation. If a house had to be repaired because of an event, the Ministry would offer financial assistance up to \$20,000 once a damage assessment was conducted. In the instance where a citizen was unable to provide the necessary documents required to access a grant, officers would conduct field assessments and view the damage. Relief would be provided on the basis of what the officers can visually validate on the ground and not on the production of any receipts, or invoices. In a case where the items have already been removed by the Regional Corporation, the Ministry would acquire such information from the relevant Corporation.

The Committee was informed that counselling services were also provided through the Ministry's National Family Services Division.

Tobago House of Assembly (TEMA)

i. Virtual Vision APP

During examinations the Committee learnt of a technological based virtual vision application (App) used by TEMA to assist in sharing and receiving information. The

Committee was informed that the App can be easily downloaded from Mobile App Stores at no cost. The App provided information on all shelters, seismic events and medical and first-aid applications in the event of chemical exposure, among other features. Persons could also report incidents or emergencies by recording or taking photos with their smartphones. This information could be sent to TEMA to identify the exact location of the incident or the emergency. The Virtual Vision App was managed by a back-end service provider and costs \$40,000 annually, with a 24-hour, seven day coverage. Officials indicated that TEMA had the capacity through its information technology system and an IT supervisor to monitor the App on a 24-hour basis. They also stated that the App had been successfully applied throughout the island of Tobago.

Observation:

- ***The Committee noted the benefit of the application of the Virtual Vision App utilised by TEMA.***

Recommendation:

- ***The ODPM and all Regional Corporations should collaborate with TEMA to explore the possibility of this App being used throughout the country to assist in disaster management.***

ii. Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Programme

The Committee was informed of the TEMA's CERT Programme provided communities with an immediate response during emergencies or disasters. In a subsequent response, the Committee learnt that there were two centres located in Moriah and Speyside. Ideally there should be eight (8) teams with four (4) teams each assigned to the centre. However, the Committee learned that five (5) CERT teams comprised of five persons per shift; with, Four (4) to five (5) persons per team, inclusive of one (1) Team Leader and one (1) Assistant Team Leader.

However, the Speyside centre was closed for renovations. TEMA informed the Committee that the Tobago House of Assembly's Management Services Unit indicated that this complement was adequate for the day-to-day operations. These personnel were exposed to training on (but not limited to):

- Emergency Medical Technician and Basic Life Saving training

- Basic Disaster Management
- Two-way Radio Communications
- Water Rescue
- Fire Suppression
- High-Angle Rescue Training
- Rope Technician
- Light Tool and Equipment Training
- Incident Command System

Observation:

- *The Committee notes the proactive efforts being made by TEMA through its CERT Programme thus ensuring quick response and awareness in the event of emergencies or disasters and recommends greater collaboration between ODPM and TEMA.*

Recommendation:

- *There should be greater collaboration between the ODPM and TEMA. The Ministry of National Security should submit a report to Parliament by January 31, 2019 on the plan (including implementation schedule) to facilitate collaboration between the ODPM and TEMA.*

Ministry of Finance

Adequacy of Allocation

The Committee enquired into the method of quantification of the sum allocated to the Ministries for flood and disaster relief by the Ministry of Finance (MoF). MoF explained that the expenditure for relief for the two years immediately preceding was used as the basis for allocating funds in a current year. There also existed avenues for increasing the initial allocation made to Ministries in the event that funding was found to be insufficient to meet claims. A request by a Ministry for an increase in its allocation was subject to the Cabinet's determination and approval. In that scenario, Cabinet would determine the increase in allocations. The MoF also informed the Committee that the current revenue position of the Government was a factor in meeting a request for an increase in a Ministry's allocations.

Additionally, the MoF had access to its Contingency Fund to facilitate unexpected events and catastrophic losses resulting from a disaster. The Committee learnt that the flooding which occurred in May 2017 was supported by this fund. As a result, a total of \$35 million was allocated, however as at the date of the public hearing, the sum was not fully utilised.

Observation:

- *The Committee notes the Ministry's use of the Contingency Fund for unforeseen events.*

Recommendations:

- *The Ministry should revise the policies in place for determining compensation or assistance and in providing a more timely response to disbursements under its Contingency fund.*
- *The Ministry should continuously revise the standard allocations for natural disasters given the increase in frequency of claims in recent years. A status of the revision conducted on policies should be submitted to Parliament by January 31, 2019.*

i. Flooding in July, August and October 2018

Subsequent to the public hearings held with ODPM on July 1, 2018, various areas in Trinidad were affected by severe flooding. This was due to a Tropical Wave which caused rains over a 72 hour period.

Trinidad experienced flooding again on August 13 and 14, 2018 which was as a result of the interaction of a low-level trough with the Inter Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ).

In additional information provided by the ODPM those two incidents were categorised as Level 1 Incidents. The ODPM stated that the weather situation (thundershower activity) was amplified by high tide occurrences experienced on those days. This resulted in street and flash flooding in Municipalities in South, Central and North Western Trinidad. The ODPM further explained that the flooding events reported were influenced by poor drainage and insufficient capacity networks, maintenance, lack of a sustainable drainage

system, indiscriminate dumping and land use which resulted in accumulation of surface water.

In response to these incidents the ODPM utilised its Standard Operating Procedures.

- (a) Maintained contact with the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and affected Municipal Corporations, the Defence Force, the Met Office and the Ministry of Works and Transport;
- (b) Briefed the Minister of National Security;
- (c) On request from the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation for the August 13 and 14 events, prepared for delivery eighty (80) Family Food Packs comprising of dry food (family of 5 for 3 days) for residents of Beetham Gardens. This distribution was cancelled as a result of unrelated security issues which arose in the community.
- (d) Maintained situational awareness on a daily basis to a body of Emergency Support Function (ESF) and governmental executives; and
- (e) Issued public advisories and maintained contact with the Information Task Group (ITG);
- (f) Dissemination of safety tips along with emergency contact numbers

The Committee also noted that several parts of the country experienced severe flooding and disruptions in October 2018.

Observations:

- *The Committee notes the efforts made by the Office of Disaster Preparedness Management. In relation to the flooding and severe disruptions of October 2018, while the Committee did not request further submissions from the ODPM and the MNS, the Committee notes all that has been reported in the media including the comments from the ODPM and MNS.*
- *The Committee notes the increase in social media activity subsequent to the October 2018 floods.*

Recommendation:

- *The ODPM should develop a mechanism for documenting lessons learnt. A copy of the documentation of the lessons learnt as a result of the three (3) incidents in July, August and October 2018 should be submitted to Parliament by January 31, 2019.*

CONCLUSION

During the Third Session of the Eleventh Parliament, the PAAC conducted an examination into the Administration of Disaster Relief in Trinidad and Tobago. During the course of the examination which consisted of written submissions and two (2) public hearings, the Committee followed up on a number of issues from the responses received from stakeholders.

During the course of the examinations the Committee discovered that the stakeholders were experiencing difficulties with staffing, sensitization of the public, insufficient funds for natural disasters and lack of policies to promote efficiency and effectiveness. The Committee is of the view that the adoption of its proposed recommendations will lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness in the administration of disaster relief and also stronger more coordinated responses in the event of disasters. Moreover, the Committee intends to monitor the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations proposed in this Report.

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

Sgd.

Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George
Chairman

Sgd.

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Vice-Chairman

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APPENDIX I

Questions to Ministry

Questions submitted to Witnesses

General Questions

1. What are the plans for disasters such as flooding, hurricanes or tropical storms landslides and earthquakes in each Ministry?
2. Are there any provisions for relief under your Ministry?

Ministry of Finance

04/001/12 - Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF)

Questions:

1. What types of disasters are covered by this facility?
2. What is the formula used by the CCRIF to determine the insurance payout to Trinidad and Tobago?
3. What is the policy for the use of the money when received?
4. Who benefits from the money received?
5. What are the terms and conditions of the payout?
6. How will the insurance received from this facility be administered?
7. Which Ministry would be responsible for the disbursement of funds received from the CCRIF?
8. What are the oversight mechanisms in place to ensure that monies are spent on the purpose for which it was intended?
9. What mechanisms are in place to ensure transparency in the Ministry and selection of recipients?
10. How is the value of damage determined?
11. What type of assessment is done to determine the amount of relief provided both financially and otherwise?
12. Are there other provisions granted by the Ministry for Disaster Relief?

Ministry of Agriculture Land and Fisheries

04/008/04 – Relief of Flood Damage - \$2,000,000

Questions:

1. How will the allocation be administered?
2. What is the policy for the use of the allocation received?

3. Who benefits from the allocation?
4. What are the oversight mechanisms in place to ensure that monies are spent on the purpose for which it was intended?
5. What mechanisms are in place to ensure transparency in the Ministry and selection of recipients?
6. How is the value of damage determined?
7. How are areas prioritized when receiving financial aid?
8. How are areas prioritized when receiving assistance?
9. What type of assessment is done to determine the amount of relief provided both financially and otherwise?
10. Are there other provisions granted by the Ministry for Disaster Relief?
11. What relief is offered to farmers whose crops and livestock have been affected?
12. What does the Ministry do if the demand for relief exceeds the allocation provided?
13. Which Non-Governmental Organisations, Civil Society Organisations, Religious Groups and Community-Based Organizations collaborate with the Ministry in the provision for Disaster Relief?
14. Is there a register of communities that are susceptible to flooding and other hazards? If yes, how is this utilized in the provision of disaster relief?

Ministry of Social Development – Social Welfare Division

Questions:

1. Which unit deals specifically with Disaster Relief?
2. On average, how long does it take for the Corporations to assess damage and present an evaluation on affected areas to the Division?
3. How does the Division determine the sum in the form of grants to be awarded to victims?
4. How does the Division prevent abuse by victims of this provision given by the Ministry?
5. Which Non-Governmental Organisations, Civil Society Organisations, Religious Groups and Community-Based Organizations collaborate with the Division in the provision for Disaster Relief?

6. Is there a register of communities that are susceptible to flooding and other hazards? If yes, how is this utilized in the provision of disaster relief?

Ministry of Rural and Local Government – Regional Corporations

Questions:

1. How does the Permanent Secretary provide meaningful oversight of state enterprises, statutory bodies and other agencies receiving disbursements for disaster relief?
2. What is the role of the Regional Corporation in Disaster Relief?
3. What is the usual response time for Corporations to assess the damage after a disaster?
4. How are areas prioritized when receiving financial aid?
5. How are areas prioritized when receiving assistance?
6. Which Non-Governmental Organisations, Civil Society Organisations, Religious Groups and Community-Based Organizations collaborate with the Ministry in the provision of Disaster Relief?
7. How are shelters set up in rural areas? Are they easily accessible for residents?
8. How are residents informed of these shelters in the event of a disaster?
9. What is the role of the State Enterprises under the purview of the Ministry in Disaster Relief?
10. What role does the Regional Corporation play in collaboration with the ODPM during and after flooding?
11. Has consideration been given to the implementation of community managed initiatives whereby, at the local government level, Councilors along with other delegated persons within communities are trained to coordinate relief following a disaster?
12. Is there a register of communities that are susceptible to flooding and other hazards? If yes, how is this utilized in the provision of disaster relief?

Ministry of National Security

General questions

1. How does the Permanent Secretary provide meaningful oversight of state agencies receiving disbursements for disaster relief?
2. Are there other provisions granted by the Ministry for Disaster Relief?

Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service (TTFS)

Questions:

1. What is the role of the TTFS in Disaster relief?
2. Is there a monetary provision under the TTFS to assist in disaster relief?
3. Are there procedures in place to deal with disaster relief?

Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM)

Questions:

1. What is the role of the ODPM in Disaster relief?
2. How are value of damage determined by the Office?
3. Which Non-Governmental Organisations, Civil Society Organisations, Religious Groups and Community-Based Organizations collaborate with the Corporations in the provision for Disaster Relief?
4. At present, what procedures does the OPDM have in place to inform citizens of specific measures and safety tips before the occurrence of a disaster?
5. What actions are taken by the OPDM prior to the occurrence of a disaster?
6. How does the OPDM collaborate with these bodies?
7. What procedures are in place to assist flood prone areas before a disaster?
8. What public education initiatives are in place to inform citizens on what actions must be taken before, during and after a disaster?
9. Does the ODPM indicate prior to a disaster, potential shelters where victims can seek refuge?
10. Is social media utilised to inform citizens of disasters? If yes, how? If no, why not?
11. Are hotlines immediately set up to receive calls from persons needing assistance?
12. How does the ODPM differ from other agencies e.g. Local Government or regional Authorities in responding to national disasters?
13. How is information shared to communities during the time of a disaster?
14. On average, how many workers are on hand to respond to a disaster if need be?

15. What agencies are contacted during a disaster and what is the role of these agencies?
16. Does the ODPM seek assistance form Regional Bodies for cleanup and rescue or is there rescue and response teams specifically attached to the office?
17. How are areas prioritized when receiving financial aid?
18. How are areas prioritized when receiving assistance?
19. What role does the ODPM play during and after flooding?
20. Are there official partnerships with companies that provide drinking water to assist in providing drinkable water to persons in need of same?
21. Is there a register of communities that are susceptible to flooding and other hazards? If yes, how is this utilized in the provision of disaster relief?
22. Has consideration been given to the implementation of community managed initiatives whereby, at the local government level, Councilors along with other delegated person's within communities are trained to coordinate relief following a disaster?
23. Is clear and concise language used in bulletins after a disaster? If yes, provide a sample.
24. Are satellite phones available in the event that there is a breakdown in digital communication following a disaster? If yes, who has access and what is the user policy?
25. What is the status of the Community Disaster Risk Reduction Programme?
26. Provide an update on the Communities Organised and Ready for Emergencies (C.O.R.E) Programme?
27. Has the project achieved the goals intended?

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS)

Questions:

1. What is the role of the TTPS in Disaster relief?

Flooding in October 2017 from 19th – 22nd October

Several areas in South Trinidad experienced severe flooding, public perception was that relief was untimely and inadequate. There has also been criticisms of the poor manner in which the designated agencies coordinated relief.

Questions

1. What measures are in place to deal with this type of disaster?
2. What measures are in place to clean up after?
3. What role does the Regional Corporation play in collaboration with the ODPM during and after flooding?
4. ODPM issues warnings and messages on flooding via media channels, however how do they inform persons who do not have access to these information channels?
5. At present, does the Regional Corporation have a full complement of staff/volunteers to deal with the scale of the flooding that occurred?
6. Are volunteers recruited to assist in clean up flood areas around the country?
7. How can persons volunteer to assist in clean up when a disaster occurs?

Follow up questions to entities for additional information

Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries

Provisions Granted by the Ministry

1. Provide brief details of the Flooding/Natural Disaster Assistance Policy.
2. What is the timeframe for farmers to receive financial assistance for livestock and crops?
3. As a farmer awaits assistance, are financial assistance in the form of a stipend given to farmers? If no, what is provided during this time?

Ministry of National Security

1. How does the Permanent Secretary provide meaningful oversight of agencies under its purview who are recipients of disbursements for disaster relief?
2. In its response to the Committee, the ODPM stated that, correspondence was sent to the Ministry for consideration regarding the implementation of community managed initiatives. What is the status of this?

Further request for information

1. A status report on the progress of the Risk Reduction Management system (deadline **May 15, 2018**).
2. A progress report on the draft loan agreement with the United Nations Development Programme.
3. Locations of the field components for the FUSED Response Exercise.

Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

General Questions:

1. Are key performance indicators used to determine the efficiency of the Disaster Management Unit?
2. If yes, what are the key performance indicators? If no, how does the Ministry determine the efficiency of the Disaster Management Unit?
3. Describe what methods are used by the Ministry to educate communities on the Disaster Management Cycle?
4. What mitigation strategies are utilised by the Regional Corporations?
5. How many field officers are assigned to each Corporation?
6. Are Corporations divided into sections where one field officer is assigned?
7. How many field officers are currently employed under each Regional Corporation?
8. Describe the function and benefits of the DMU 800 numbers.
9. Has the DMU 800 number system achieved its purpose in the event of a disaster? Has it been tested?
10. Is there someone assigned to specifically assess the damage caused during or after a disaster?
11. What is the status of the MRDLG's Disaster Plan?
12. At which level of incident were the October and December flooding cases rated?

Oversight

1. What tools would the Permanent Secretary require to properly manage assets and liabilities to assess the performance of the Ministry/Departments?
2. Do the principles stated in the State Enterprise Performance Monitoring Manual allow the Ministry to ensure satisfactory monitoring of the Departments under its purview?
3. Are there other forms of monitoring methods used by the Ministry to efficiently monitor the Municipal Corporations?
4. Are the Municipal Corporation financial reports submitted to the Ministry in a timely manner?
 - i. Provide the dates for the last report submission by each Corporation
5. With regard to Disaster Relief Funding, how are these funds monitored to avoid mismanagement and misuse of funds?
6. Is a special audit conducted to ensure compliance when utilising these funds?

Shelters

1. What items are "pre-stocked" in shelters?
2. How often are the shelters inspected? When was the last inspection conducted?
3. How many signs were erected in fiscal 2016-2017?
4. What period is considered the "off season"?
5. What were the criteria used in identifying shelters in each region through the 2016 signage project?

Volunteers

1. How does the Ministry ensure Municipalities are effectively and continuously training their volunteers?

Role of the State Enterprises (Municipal Corporations)

1. What is the function of the Incident Command Systems?
2. How would this system assist with Disaster Management?
3. Who are the Regional Coordinating Stakeholders?
4. For the past twelve (12) months, can you provide the date of each stakeholder meeting for each Corporation and the stakeholders present?

Registered Communities

1. What is the status of inputting the lists of flood prone and other vulnerable areas within each Municipality into spatial maps?

December Flooding and Landslides

Questions:

1. Generally, what are the major causes of flooding in Trinidad?
2. In light of the statements made by the Minister: “One of the contributors leading to flooding was illegal dumping of garbage into major drains and waterways”, are there ways in which citizens can report cases of illegal dumping?
3. What relief has been given to the victims affected by flooding in Mayaro on December 31, 2017?
 - i. There were also reports that this specific area was affected by floods that occurred in October, has the Ministry developed preventative measures, strategies or plans that would assist these residents in preventing the level of damage that occurred during this period?
4. Provide an update on the current condition of the North Coast Road.
5. What mechanisms will be implemented to mitigate the landslides on the North Coast Road?

Further request for information:

1. A copy of the updated National Response Framework.
2. The scheme of works for flood prone areas.
3. The dates and areas scheduled for drills in 2018.
4. The timeline for the proposal on Volunteer and Council Members Training and any further details.
5. Timeline for the completion of the Post Incidental Maintenance Plan System.
6. A copy of the Ministry’s Hazard Plan.
7. The schedule for the site visits to each Corporation.
8. Schedule for the submission of outstanding audited financial statements by Regional Corporations.
9. The Disaster Management Plan for each Corporation.

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

1. How valuable are the reports submitted by the Corporation in monitoring disbursements?

2. Does the Corporation submit its reports in a timely manner?
3. What criteria is considered when conducting an assessment to determine which service should be given and to whom?
4. How is the form of relief given determined?
5. Are the monetary services provided to disaster victims sufficient?
6. Who is responsible for the clearance of monetary services awarded by the Ministry?
7. How soon after an incident will a victim be assisted by the Ministry?
8. Does the Ministry verify quotations from applicants? If yes, how? If no, why not?
9. What measures are in place to ensure accountability and transparency in the disbursement of funds to victims?
10. Have there been instances/attempts of deception by applicants toward the Ministry?

Prevention of Abuse by Victims

1. How effective are the procedures utilised in the prevention of abuse by victims?
2. Have there been any instances of abuse by victims?
 - i. If yes, what were the outcomes?
 - ii. Were these victims penalised?
 - iii. Was there recovery of items or funds granted?

Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management

General Questions:

1. Is research conducted to identify areas that may be prone to natural disasters?
2. Does the ODPM give recommendations on infrastructure development around the country which may pose a long-term threat to communities? Or are they only responsible for mitigating problems if they arise?
3. Are there tools that are used to identify problems and problem areas before they arise?
4. How many offices does the ODPM currently have? Are these offices easily accessible to the public?
5. How soon will the National Damage and Needs Assessment Framework be developed?
6. In the absence of an official assessment, how does the ODPM determine the value of damage sustained during disasters?
7. Has the ODPM considered re-evaluating the merger of the 511 with E999 system? If yes, what new system is proposed?
8. Has the ODPM considered collaborating with TEMA to determine a more cost effective App and call centre system?
9. What are the challenges/issues faced in mobilising and coordinating the country's key agencies?
10. Provide a copy of the National Response Framework.

Procedures in place to assist flood prone areas before a disaster

1. When are the relief items distributed to the respective DMU's of Regional Corporations?
2. What is done to ensure there is a sufficient level of stock of relief items for distribution in the DMUs prior to distribution?

Implementation of community managed initiatives

1. What was the outcome of the RRMC pilot exercise conducted in 2014?
2. On what basis were the 144 persons selected to receive CERT training?
3. What were the outcomes of the training sessions provided at Councilors' Offices?
4. What were the Councilors' response to these training sessions?

Further request for information:

1. A copy of the ODPM's Hazard Plan and/or Map.
2. The timeline for the update of the Hazard Plan.
3. A copy of the Comprehensive Framework utilised by the ODPM.

Tobago Emergency Management Agency

1. Presently, how many teams exist across Tobago? State the communities.
2. What are the qualifications/criteria required to become a member of CERT?
3. What does the training provided to teams entail?
4. How many persons on are each team? Is this number adequate to carry out the necessary tasks?
5. When was the last Sensitisation and Awareness Campaign held?
6. What methods are used to educate children in the communities?
7. How often does TEMA visit schools in Tobago?
 - i. When was the last visit conducted?
 - ii. Where was the last visit?
 - iii. What were the outcomes?
8. Describe the sensitisation sessions conducted.
9. How are these sessions beneficial to communities?
10. Are the goals of the Agency met by the execution of these training sessions?
11. What process was used to map inundation zones?
 - i. State the zones.
 - ii. What has TEMA done to eliminate these zones across Tobago?

Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service

1. Provide a detailed list of the issues with the Emergencies Ambulance Act.
2. Provide the draft manual for the Standing Operating Procedures and Contingency Plans by June 30, 2018.

APPENDIX II

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process outline steps taken by the Committee in the conduct of an inquiry into an entity or issue. The following steps detail the Inquiry process followed by the PAAC:

- i. Identification of entity to be examined;
- ii. Preparation of Inquiry Proposal for the selected entity. The Inquiry Proposal outlines:
 - i. Description
 - ii. Rationale/Objective of Inquiry; and
 - iii. Proposed Questions.
- iii. Consideration and approval of Inquiry Proposals by the Committee. Upon approval, questions are forwarded to the entity for Written Responses;
- iv. Request for written responses is sent to the entity on December 29, 2018. Responses were received from the Ministry on January 8, 2018.
- v. Preparation of an Issues Paper by the Secretariat for the Committee's consideration, based on written responses received from the entity. The Issues Paper identifies and summarises any matters of concern in the responses provided by the entity or received from stakeholders and the general public;
- vi. Review of the responses received and the Issues Paper by the Committee;
- vii. Determination of the need for a Public Hearing based on the analysis of written submissions and the site visit (if required). If there is need for a public hearing, the relevant witnesses will be invited to attend and provide evidence. There is usually no need to examine the entity in public if:
 - i. the Committee believes the issues have little public interest; or
 - ii. the Committee believes that the written responses provided are sufficient and no further explanation is necessary.
- viii. Issue of written request to the entity for further details should the Committee require any additional information after the public hearing.
- ix. Report Committee's findings and recommendations to Parliament upon conclusion of the inquiry.
- x. Receive Ministerial Responses. Review responses.
- xi. Engage in Follow-up.

APPENDIX III

Minutes of Meetings

**THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE –
THIRD SESSION, ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-NINTH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY JANUARY 17,
2018 AT 2:10 P.M.**

**IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS (EAST) MEETING ROOM, LEVEL 6 AND THE J.
HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR, TOWER D, OFFICE OF THE
PARLIAMENT,
INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE,
1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN.**

Present were:

Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George	-	Chairman
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	-	Member
Mr. Clarence Rambharat	-	Member
Mr. Ronald Huggins	-	Member
Ms. Keiba Jacob	-	Secretary
Ms. Sheranne Samuel	-	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Brian Lucio	-	Graduate Research Assistant
Ms. Rachel Nunes	-	Graduate Research Assistant

Absent were:

Dr. Lackram Bodoie	-	Vice-Chairman (Excused)
Mr. Wade Mark	-	Member (Excused)
Ms. Nicole Olivierre	-	Member (Excused)
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine	-	Member (Excused)
Ms. Jennifer Raffoul	-	Member (Excused)
Mr. Daniel Dookie	-	Member (Excused)

**EXAMINATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF DISASTER RELIEF IN TRINIDAD
AND TOBAGO**

- 6.1 The Chairman called the public meeting to order at 2:40 p.m., in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room, Mezzanine Floor.
- 6.2 The following officials joined the meeting:

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

Ms. Vashti Shrikensingh-Jitman - Permanent Secretary

Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management

Captain (Retired) Neville Wint - Relief Officer /Officer in Charge,
ODPM

Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service

Mr. Roosevelt Bruce - Chief Fire Officer (Ag.)
Mr. Marlon Smith - Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Ag.)

MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Ms. Desdra Bascombe - Permanent Secretary
Mr. Rishi Siew - Senior Disaster Coordinator

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Ms. Suzette Taylor-Lee Chee - Permanent Secretary
Ms. Cherry-Ann LeGendre - Director of Budgets
Mr. Narine Charran - Assistant Director (Ag.) Macro Fiscal
Unit, Economic Management Division

TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Mr. Raye Sandy - Chief Administrator
Ms. Melaura Agbeko - Contingency Planning Officer

Tobago Emergency Management Agency

Mr. Earl Hernandez - Assistant Director, TEMA

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mrs. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers - Permanent Secretary
Mr. Vijay Gangapersad - Chief Technical Officer (Ag.)
Ms. Anne-Marie Quammie –Alleyne - Co-ordinator, Non-Governmental
Organisation (NGO) Unit
Mr. Troy Pollonais - Deputy Director, Social Welfare
Division

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, LAND AND FISHERIES

Mrs. Angela Siew - Permanent Secretary
Ms. Sati Gangapersad - Agricultural Officer I

6.3 The Chairman welcomed the officials, members of the media and the public.

- 6.4 The Chairman outlined the mandate of the Committee and the purpose of the hearing. Introductions were then exchanged.
- 6.5 The following issues arose from the examination of the Administration of Disaster Relief in Trinidad and Tobago:

Ministry of National Security

1. The MNS' role in addressing the staff shortage at the ODPM;
2. The role of the MNS in overseeing coordination efforts of the ODPM;

Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management

1. The sensitisation efforts undertaken by the ODPM;
2. The key performance indicators used to determine the effectiveness of the sensitisation efforts.
3. The need for greater public sensitisation efforts by the ODPM;
4. The ODPM's definition and classification of a disaster, incident, event and emergency;
5. The different levels of incidents;
6. The role of the ODPM in disaster management;
7. The effectiveness of the ODPM;
8. The ability of the ODPM to deal with inclement weather in 2018 given the experience of 2017;
9. The role of the ODPM with regard to flooding in Trinidad;
10. The initiatives undertaken by the ODPM following Tropical Storm Bret, targeted at improving communication;
11. The revision of the Disaster Measures Act Chapter 16:50 (Act 47 of 1978);
12. Staffing issues at the ODPM;
13. The status of the Incident Command System;
14. The function and monitoring of the ODPM App;
15. Costs and challenges associated with the management of the ODPM App;
16. The reasons for merging the 511 hotline with the E999 call center;
17. The challenges resulting from the merger of the 511 hotline and E999.

Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service

1. The role of the TTFS in disaster relief;
2. The existence of specialised units to deal with disasters;
3. The relationship between the TTFS, the Regional Corporations and the ODPM;
4. The existence of emergency response plans;
5. The availability and use of ambulances at the TTFS;
6. Issues with the Emergencies Ambulance Act;
7. Contingency Plans and Standard Operating Procedures for the TTFS.

Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

1. Staffing and vacancies at the Regional Corporations (RCs);
2. Collaboration among Corporations in the event of a disaster;
3. The preparedness of the RCs to respond to a disaster;
4. The development of a business continuity plan for the RCs;
5. The RCs Disaster Cycle and Disaster Management Plans;
6. The distinction between the Volunteer Network and the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT);
7. The establishment of Volunteer Networks in RCs;
8. The functions and management of the CERT teams.

Ministry of Finance

1. The revision of the allocation given to MALF for Sub-item 008-04 Relief of Flood Damage;
2. Revision of the Disasters Measures Act Chapter 16:50 (Act 47 of 1978) of the ODPM.

Tobago Emergency Management Agency

1. The control and function of the TEMA Virtual Vision App;
2. The features of the App;

3. Total cost of operating the App per year;
4. TEMA's multi-hazard warning system;
5. The outcomes and recommendations derived from the last full scale drill in March 2017;
6. The management of shelters.

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

1. The definition of disaster;
2. The role of the MSDFS in disaster relief;
3. The timeframe for receiving counselling post-disaster;
4. The psycho-social intervention offered by the Ministry.

Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries

1. The definition of disaster from the perspective of farmers;
2. The number of registered farmers;
3. The value of losses in fiscal 2017;
4. The sum paid to farmers in fiscal 2017;
5. Payments of past claims to farmers;
6. The process and verification of claims at MALF;
7. Measures used to prevent abuse by claimants;
8. The amount of funds utilised from the sum allocated to sub-item 008-04 Relief of Flood Damage;
9. The Disaster Assistance Model;
10. The level of satisfaction with the current verification model.

6.6 The Chairman thanked officials for attending and they were excused.

[Please see the verbatim notes for the detailed oral submission of the witnesses]

SUSPENSION

- 7.1 At 5:46 p.m., the Chairman suspended the *public* meeting to resume *in camera* for a post-hearing discussion with Members only.

ADJOURNMENT

- 10.1 The Chairman indicated that the Committee's next meeting was scheduled for **Wednesday January 31, 2018 at 1:30 p.m.**, when the Committee will commence its inquiry into the Construction, Maintenance and Refurbishment of State-Owned or State-Funded Housing Projects and Units. The meeting was then adjourned.

- 10.2 The adjournment was taken at 6:00 p.m.

We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

January 30, 2018

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUESTED

RE THE ADMINISTRATION OF DISASTER RELIEF IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Ministry of National Security

1. How does the Permanent Secretary provide meaningful oversight of agencies under its purview who are recipients of disbursements for disaster relief?
2. In its response to the Committee, the ODPM stated that, correspondence was sent to the Ministry for consideration regarding the implementation of community managed initiatives. What is the status of this?

Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management

General Questions:

1. Is research conducted to identify areas that may be prone to natural disasters?
2. Does the ODPM give recommendations on infrastructure development around the country which may pose a long-term threat to communities? Or are they only responsible for mitigating problems if they arise?
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4. How many offices does the ODPM currently have? Are these offices easily accessible to the public?
5. How soon will the National Damage and Needs Assessment Framework be developed?
6. In the absence of an official assessment, how does the ODPM determine the value of damage sustained during disasters?
7. Has the ODPM considered re-evaluating the merger of the 511 with E999 system? If yes, what new system is proposed?
8. Has the ODPM considered collaborating with TEMA to determine a more cost effective App and call centre system?
9. What are the challenges/issues faced in mobilising and coordinating the country's key agencies?
10. Provide a copy of the National Response Framework.

Procedures in place to assist flood prone areas before a disaster

1. When are the relief items distributed to the respective DMU's of Regional Corporations?
2. What is done to ensure there is a sufficient level of stock of relief items for distribution in the DMUs prior to distribution?

Implementation of community managed initiatives

1. What was the outcome of the RRMCC pilot exercise conducted in 2014?
2. On what basis were the 144 persons selected to receive CERT training?
3. What were the outcomes of the training sessions provided at Councilors' Offices?

4. What were the Councilors' response to these training sessions?

Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service

1. Provide a detailed list of the issues with the Emergencies Ambulance Act.
2. Provide the draft manual for the Standing Operating Procedures and Contingency Plans by June 30, 2018.

Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

General Questions:

1. Are key performance indicators used to determine the efficiency of the Disaster Management Unit?
2. If yes, what are the key performance indicators? If no, how does the Ministry determine the efficiency of the Disaster Management Unit?
3. Describe what methods are used by the Ministry to educate communities on the Disaster Management Cycle?
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3. How many signs were erected in fiscal 2016-2017?
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Role of the State Enterprises (Municipal Corporations)

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Registered Communities

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December Flooding and Landslides

Questions:

1. Generally, what are the major causes of flooding in Trinidad?
2. In light of the statements made by the Minister: “One of the contributors leading to flooding was illegal dumping of garbage into major drains and waterways”, are there ways in which citizens can report cases of illegal dumping?
3. What relief has been given to the victims affected by flooding in Mayaro on December 31, 2017?
 - ii. There were also reports that this specific area was affected by floods that occurred in October, has the Ministry developed preventative measures, strategies or plans that would assist these residents in preventing the level of damage that occurred during this period?
4. Provide an update on the current condition of the North Coast Road.
5. What mechanisms will be implemented to mitigate the landslides on the North Coast Road?

Tobago Emergency Management Agency

1. Presently, how many teams exist across Tobago? State the communities.
2. What are the qualifications/criteria required to become a member of CERT?
3. What does the training provided to teams entail?
4. How many persons on are each team? Is this number adequate to carry out the necessary tasks?
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7. How often does TEMA visit schools in Tobago?
 - iv. When was the last visit conducted?
 - v. Where was the last visit?
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8. Describe the sensitisation sessions conducted.
9. How are these sessions beneficial to communities?
10. Are the goals of the Agency met by the execution of these training sessions?
11. What process was used to map inundation zones?
 - iii. State the zones.
 - iv. What has TEMA done to eliminate these zones across Tobago?

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Questions:

1. How valuable are the reports submitted by the Corporation in monitoring disbursements?
2. Does the Corporation submit its reports in a timely manner?
3. What criteria is considered when conducting an assessment to determine which service should be given and to whom?
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10. Have there been instances/attempts of deception by applicants toward the Ministry?

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1. How effective are the procedures utilised in the prevention of abuse by victims?
2. Have there been any instances of abuse by victims?
 - iv. If yes, what were the outcomes?
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 - vi. Was there recovery of items or funds granted?

Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries

Provisions Granted by the Ministry

1. Provide brief details of the Flooding/Natural Disaster Assistance Policy.
2. What is the timeframe for farmers to receive financial assistance for livestock and crops?
3. As a farmer awaits assistance, are financial assistance in the form of a stipend given to farmers? If no, what is provided during this time?

**THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE –
THIRD SESSION, ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**MINUTES OF THE THIRTY-THIRD MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY
APRIL 18, 2018 AT 1:30 P.M.**

**IN THE ANR ROBINSON MEETING ROOM (WEST), LEVEL 9 AND THE J.
HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR, TOWER D, OFFICE OF
THE PARLIAMENT,
INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE,
1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN.**

Present were:

Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George	-	Chairman
Mr. Clarence Rambharat	-	Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	-	Member
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine	-	Member
Mr. Wade Mark	-	Member
Mr. Ronald Huggins	-	Member

Ms. Candice Skerrette	-	Procedural Clerk
Ms. Sheranne Samuel	-	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Brian Lucio	-	Graduate Research Assistant
Ms. Rachel Nunes	-	Graduate Research Assistant

Absent were:

Dr. Lackram Bodo	-	Vice-Chairman (Excused)
Ms. Nicole Olivier	-	Member (Excused)
Mr. Daniel Dookie	-	Member (Excused)
Ms. Jennifer Raffoul	-	Member (Excused)

**CONTINUATION OF INQUIRY INTO THE ADMINISTRATION OF DISASTER
RELIEF IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

7.1 The Chairman called the public meeting to order at 2:37 p.m., in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room, Mezzanine Floor.

7.2 The following officials joined the meeting:

MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Ms. Desdra Bascombe	-	Permanent Secretary
Mr. Rishi Siew	-	Senior Disaster Coordinator

Ms. Susan Ali - Accounting Executive II (Ag.)

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

Ms. Vashti Shrikrisen-Singh - Deputy Permanent Secretary

OFFICE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND MANAGEMENT

Mr. Dennis Marcelle - Information Technology Infrastructure Specialist

Ms. Denise Anderson - Regional Coordinator for the Preparedness Response Unit (PRU)

Ms. Franchesca Peters - Training and Education Specialist

7.3 The Chairman welcomed the officials, members of the media and the public.

7.4 The Chairman outlined the mandate of the Committee and the purpose of the hearing. Introductions were then exchanged.

7.5 The following issues arose from the continuation of the examination into the Administration of Disaster Relief in Trinidad and Tobago:

Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

- i. Responsibility for disaster relief at the Ministry;
- ii. The Ministry's disaster response mechanisms;
- iii. Collaborations with the Met Office on forward planning and capabilities for future events;
- iv. The difference between a Level 2 and a Level 3 disaster;
- v. Disaster response at a national level;
- vi. Where the role of the Ministry ends and the role of the ODPM begins, in the occurrence of a disaster;
- vii. Plans to sensitise the public and increase attendance statutory meetings;
- viii. Methods used to eliminate risk and improve recovery post impact;
- ix. Relief items prepositioned in the shelters of sub-offices and how these items are funded;
- x. Details on the "Dreft" Fund;
- xi. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction;
- xii. The attendance of staff and burgesses at community meetings;
- xiii. Testing of Early Warning Systems across Trinidad;

- xiv. Drills conducted during this dry season;
- xv. Collaborations with the MET Office regarding drills;
- xvi. The existence of an organised evacuation plan for major cities and towns;
- xvii. Collaborations with Tobago regarding Egress plans;
- xviii. The status of a Post-Incidental Maintenance Plan;
- xix. The identification of Cedros and the Lady Young Road within the Ministry's Hazard Plan;
- xx. Re-engagement of TEMA with a view to incorporate best practices;
- xxi. Coordinating mechanisms between the Ministry and the ODPM to deal with disaster management, preparedness and training;
- xxii. The ways in which the Ministry disseminates information from the field to the ODPM during and after a disaster;

Regional Corporations

- i. The status of the Regional Corporations' Disaster Management Plans;
- ii. Volunteer networks at each Regional Corporation;
- iii. Expansion of the volunteer network and the CERT Programme;
- iv. Public attendance at community meetings of the Corporations;
- v. Plans by the Ministry to increase participation of burgesses at Corporation meetings;
- vi. Vacancies at the Regional Corporations;
- vii. Complement of Field Officers and Coordinators for each Regional Corporation;
- viii. Role of the Field Officer;
- ix. Monitoring of Field Officers;
- x. Site visits to the various Regional Corporations by the Ministry;
- xi. Reporting mechanisms utilised by Regional Corporations;
- xii. The benefits of an Integrated Financial Management System at Regional Corporations;
- xiii. Clarification on the National Response Framework;
- xiv. Outstanding financial statements of Regional Corporations;
- xv. Mitigation drives at Regional Corporations;

- xvi. The reporting mechanisms of each Regional Corporation post-meeting with Field Officers and stakeholders;
- xvii. Planned proposals to the Ministry of Finance for a larger allocation for Regional Corporations;

Ministry of National Security

- i. The existence of a Contingency or National Emergency Fund;
- ii. Agencies under the Ministry's purview that receive an allocation to support national emergencies or disasters;
- iii. The availability of funds at the Ministry specifically to treat with Disaster Relief;
- iv. Status of the proposal for the development of Risk Reduction Management Centers;
- v. Status of the Loan Agreement with the United Nations Development Programme for the Risk Reduction Management Centers.

Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM)

- i. The establishment of a fund at the ODPM to support any major disaster;
- ii. Coordinating mechanisms between the ODPM and the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government to deal with disaster management, preparedness and training;
- iii. Volunteer training conducted by the ODPM;
- iv. ODPM's assessment of whether response agencies can handle a disaster;
- v. The impact of information gaps on the ODPM's performance of its functions;
- vi. Initiatives used to identify and remedy information gaps;
- vii. Collaboration with TEMA regarding improvements to the ODPM App;
- viii. Re-engagement of TEMA with a view of incorporating best practices and cost-saving methods;
- ix. The activation of the ODPM App;
- x. The identification of Cedros and the Lady Young Road within the ODPM's Hazard Plan;
- xi. Updating of the ODPM's hazard plan;

- xii. The need for greater sensitisation of the population by the ODPM;
- xiii. Upcoming sensitisation efforts in light of the pending hurricane season;
- xiv. Greater use and monitoring by ODPM of its social media platforms to sensitise the public;
- xv. Consideration of a national drill exercise;
- xvi. National Emergency Exercise Day (NEED) held by the ODPM;
- xvii. The need for a customer care center;
- xviii. Details on the FUSED Response and Crisis Response Exercise;
- xix. The preparedness of the country in the event of a disaster;
- xx. The Risk Reduction Management System of the ODPM;
- xxi. The availability of electronic boards to seamlessly transfer information from Disaster Units across Trinidad.

7.6 The Chairman thanked officials for attending and they were excused.

[Please see the verbatim notes for the detailed oral submission of the witnesses]

ADJOURNMENT

8.1 There being no other business, the Chairman thanked Members for their attendance and the meeting was adjourned.

8.2 The adjournment was taken at 5:16 p.m.

We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

April 23, 2018

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUESTED
RE CONTINUATION OF INQUIRY INTO THE ADMINISTRATION OF
DISASTER RELIEF IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

- i. A copy of the updated National Response Framework.
- ii. The scheme of works for flood prone areas.
- iii. The dates and areas scheduled for drills in 2018.
- iv. The timeline for the proposal on Volunteer and Council Members Training and any further details.
- v. Timeline for the completion of the Post Incidental Maintenance Plan System.
- vi. A copy of the Ministry's Hazard Plan.
- vii. The schedule for the site visits to each Corporation.
- viii. Schedule for the submission of outstanding audited financial statements by Regional Corporations.
- ix. The Disaster Management Plan for each Corporation.

Ministry of National Security

- i. A status report on the progress of the Risk Reduction Management system (deadline **May 15, 2018**).
- ii. A progress report on the draft loan agreement with the United Nations Development Programme.
- iii. Locations of the field components for the FUSED Response Exercise.

Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management

- i. A copy of the ODPM's Hazard Plan and/or Map.
- ii. The timeline for the update of the Hazard Plan.
- iii. A copy of the Comprehensive Framework utilised by the ODPM.

Appendix IV

Verbatim Notes of Public Hearing held on:

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2018

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 2018

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE TWENTY-NINTH MEETING OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, HELD IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS (EAST), (IN CAMERA), AND THE 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 WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2018, AT 2.40 P.M.

PRESENT

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Mr. Clarence Rambharat	Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	Member
Mr. Robert Huggins	Member
Miss Keiba Jacob	Secretary
Miss Sheranne Samuel	Assistant Secretary

ABSENT

Mr. Wade Mark	Member
Miss Jennifer Raffoul	Member
Mr. Daniel Dookie	Member
Miss Nicole Olivierre	Member
Miss Melissa Ramkissoon	Member
Dr. Lackram Bodoie	Vice-Chairman
Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine	Member

Tobago House of Assembly

Mr. Raye Sandy	Chief Administrator
Ms. Melaura Agbeko	Contingency Planning Officer

Tobago Emergency Management Agency

Mr. Earl Hernandez	Assistant Director
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Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Mrs. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers	Permanent Secretary
Mr. Vijay Gangapersad	Chief Technical Officer (Ag.)
Ms. Anne-Marie Quammie-Alleyne	Co-ordinator, NGO Unit

Mr. Troy Pollonais

Dep. Director, Social Welfare Division

Ministry of Finance

Ms. Suzette Taylor-Lee Chee

Permanent Secretary

Ms. Cherry-Ann LeGendre

Director of Budgets

Mr. Narine Charran

Asst. Dir. (Ag.), Macro Fiscal Unit, Economic
Management Division

Ministry of Agriculture Land and Fisheries

Mrs. Angela Siew

Permanent Secretary

Ms. Sati Gangapersad

Agricultural Officer I

Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

Ms. Desdra Bascombe

Permanent Secretary

Mr. Rishi Siew

Senior Disaster Coordinator

Ministry of National Security

Ms. Vashti Shrikensingh-Jitman

Permanent Secretary

Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management

Captain (Ret.) Neville Wint

Relief Officer /Officer in Charge

Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service

Mr. Roosevelt Bruce

Chief Fire Officer (Ag.)

Mr. Marlon Smith

Asst. Chief Fire Officer

Madam Chairman: Good afternoon and I wish to welcome all members of the agencies and departments participating in today's discussion, the members of the media and the members of the public.

I am Bridgid Annisette-George, the Chairman of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. The Committee on Public Administration and Appropriations, PAAC, has a mandate to consider and report to the House on:

- (a) The budgetary expenditure of Government agencies to ensure that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval;
- (b) The budgetary expenditure of Government agencies as it occurs, and to keep Parliament informed of how the budget allocation is being implemented; and
- (c) The administration of Government agencies to determine hindrances to their

efficiency and to make recommendations to the Government for the improvement of public administration.

The purpose of this Eighteenth public meeting of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee of the Eleventh Parliament is to examine the administration of disaster relief in Trinidad and Tobago. The Committee is desirous of hearing from the relevant stakeholders to discover challenges being faced by the various agencies involved in the administration of disaster relief in Trinidad and Tobago. The Committee hopes that the meeting would be fruitful and provide workable solutions to improve the administration of disaster relief.

This meeting is being held in public and is being broadcast live on the Parliament Channel 11, Radio 105.5 FM, and the Parliament YouTube channel, ParlView. Viewers and listeners can send their comments related to today's enquiry via email to Parl101@tpparliament.org, [Facebook.com/TTParliament](https://www.facebook.com/TTParliament), and [Twitter/TTParliament](https://twitter.com/TTParliament).

I now invite members of the representative agencies and departments to introduce themselves, and therefore may I start with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. Then maybe I can invite the Tobago House of Assembly to introduce themselves, please. I believe we have the Ministry of Finance, might I invite the PS from the Ministry of Finance to introduce herself and her team. Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. Ministry of National Security.

[Introductions made]

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Might I now invite the members of the Committee to introduce themselves, starting on my extreme right.

[Introductions made]

As I said before, I am Bridgid Annisette-George and I am the Chairman of the Committee. So we are here to talk about the administration of disaster relief. I think in opening the conversation a proper place to begin might be to ask each of the agencies if they could define for us what disaster means to their agency in the context of disaster relief. Therefore, just for the flow of it we can start with the ODPM.

Capt. Ret. Wint: Chair, good afternoon. In determining disasters and what defines the ODPM operation, a disaster is a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and

impact, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources. Against that definition is how the ODPM addresses the issues of disaster management and relief.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So would I be correct to say that for ODPM disaster is really a state of affairs and not an event?

Capt. Ret. Wint: It is not an event because you can have an event which does not basically create widespread destruction to human, material or even economic loss. So there are disasters, there are incidents, there are events—all define and contribute to how a response is coordinated and managed from the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management.

Madam Chairman: So would I be correct in saying that a disaster for you is a state of affairs resulting from an event?

Capt. Ret. Wint: That would be correct, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: And just so that we could put it a little more in context as we have you here, what is an incident?

Capt. Ret. Wint: An incident is the occurrence of an event natural or man-made caused, that requires emergency response to protect life and property; for example, a terrorist attack, a bush fire, hazardous material spilled, aircraft accident, earthquakes, hurricanes, even tropical storms, public health emergencies, and other occurrences, as I said, which require a response.

Madam Chairman: So that is an incident? And what is an event?

Capt. Ret. Wint: An event is a planned or unplanned activity in which the emergency management system of Trinidad and Tobago and local government authority and all national response entities can manage the occurrence of that event.

Madam Chairman: All right. So, would all events be an incident? Or, all incidents would be an event?

Capt. Ret. Wint: All incidents would basically be an event.

Madam Chairman: All incidents would be an event. So an incident and an event is an occurrence, a happening.

Capt. Ret. Wint: An occurrence, a happening. As I said, the event is either planned, staging of any planned event or unplanned, for example the occurrence of an earthquake.

Madam Chairman: Right. And what would make an incident an event would be the fact

that it would require only a local or national response?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Right. And what then therefore would be an emergency?

Capt. Ret. Wint: An emergency means the occurrence or an instance for which the determination of the Cabinet of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and subsequent recommendations to His Excellency the President, assistance is needed to supplement national efforts and capabilities to save lives, protect property, ensure public safety and security or avert the threat of a catastrophic incident in any part of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So just see if I have it right. So an incident is an occurrence, that occurrence might be an event or an emergency, because those are the responses?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: So what makes it an event or emergency is the response?

Capt. Ret. Wint: The response and the severity of the impact of the hazard that you are dealing with.

Madam Chairman: The response and the severity of the impact?

Capt. Ret. Wint: The impact. So if you have an event which is a tropical storm, it might not reach to the stage of an emergency but can be classified as a severe event, and the nature of that event would determine the type of response that is required. You can have a devastating earthquake similar to what happened to Haiti, which can be classified as an emergency to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago that requires both regional and international assistance to augment local resources in treating with that particular event.

Madam Chairman: Just correct me if I am wrong. I would have thought that the impact is what made it a disaster. So a disaster may not be an emergency because the response to the event or the occurrence, incidents, is either local, or national but it may be a disaster that might not be an emergency—emergency being a response meaning, if I understood you well, a determination that is made by the Cabinet based on the impact. So I do not know if I am understanding because, you see, the definitions to me might create a little confusion in carrying the discussion further.

Capt. Ret. Wint: Ma'am, you are correct on the definition is what is required to carry the conversation further, because you can have an incident in a particular municipal corporation which can be declared a disaster for that corporation but not a disaster for Trinidad and Tobago, and therefore the resources of the State can be applied to that

particular incident. So the definition is critical for us to understand how the national response framework and the response agencies and also the support agencies would respond to that particular incident and how persons, with what I consider gazetted authority, will treat that incident based on the organization.

Madam Chairman: Let me just ask so that I ensure that all of us are on the same page. For the Tobago House of Assembly, in terms of disaster relief, what do you understand to be a disaster?

Mr. Sandy: I concur with the definitions given by the ODPM expert there. The difference with the Tobago House of Assembly, and I am kind of getting ahead of your question there, is that the TEMA, the organization in the THA that has the responsibility for responding to disasters, also has the capacity to treat with disasters. In other words, they are not just a coordinating agency, they do have some capacity to actually get involved and treat with disasters.

Madam Chairman: Let me just ask. All agencies here accept the definition of disaster, event, incident and emergency within their operational framework? Mrs. Bailey-Sobers.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Yes we do, but I just wanted to indicate that in the case of Ministry of Social Development and Family Services we do have what we call critical incidents at the individual or family level. So, for example, a fire and so on, we also look at critical incidents as a murder that may have taken place in the home or a fatal accident that would impact the family in that we may need to supply some services and support in order to address the situation.

Madam Chairman: So would those critical incidents come under disaster relief under that terminology?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: They will. Well, we would provide support under that terminology to the family and to the individual.

Madam Chairman: So that even though we all accept that, I would say that even within the context and the response from ODPM, I see sometimes the wording of incident and disaster, based on the questions we have been asking you all, taking on a different context. So for instance if we look at your response to the question: What actions are taken by ODPM prior to the occurrence of a disaster? Are we talking disaster here or incident?

Capt. Ret. Wint: We answer the question as it relates to an incident which can—

Madam Chairman: Yeah. All right. So let me just ask you just before you answer—so

that, in your view when last Trinidad and Tobago, or any community in Trinidad and Tobago, would have suffered a disaster?

Capt. Ret. Wint: I would say within the last year communities would have suffered what we call “severe incidents” but were not declared a disaster by the respective municipal corporations. So we have not had what I consider a disaster, but would have experienced severe incidents which created some level of disruption, but there was no declaration of a disaster with the occurrence of any of the hazard impacts that affected Trinidad and Tobago within the last three years.

Madam Chairman: So we have had incidents but not disasters? Who declares a disaster?

Capt. Ret. Wint: On the advice of the municipal corporation through its disaster coordinator, and their inability to deal with the incident, the Ministry of Local Government would indicate to the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management that they are unable to cope with the response and therefore they can declare a disaster to which the national response framework would be activated, the National Emergency Operations Centre would be activated with all the emergency support function representative to treat with the incident at hand. Therefore the Executive would be informed, which might also require other measures to be taken through the Minister of National Security advising the Cabinet and the National Security Council.

Madam Chairman: So that if I understand well, let us say the landslips recently, that would have been in the municipality of where?

Capt. Ret. Wint: San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, Chair.

Madam Chairman: So that community may have felt severely impacted, but it was left for the regional corporation, San Juan/Laventille, to declare that a disaster?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Yes, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman: Therefore if it is not declared, the inability to cope is not of the particular district or community, but of the regional corporation?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Yes, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Therefore all the agencies around the table understand that? I am asking. Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, is that your understanding?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: I am not sure who is answering.

Mr. Siew: Yes, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay, that is your understanding. Let me ask this—and I do not know which agency—in terms of sensitization of our public and our communities with respect to incident, event, occurrence, disaster, do you think that that message is understood, that definition is understood?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Honestly, Chair, no it is not understood and the words are sometimes improperly used to describe the occurrence of an incident. Therefore, we hear the term that we have “a disaster” and therefore there is an expectation from a disaster, but it is not necessarily a disaster. So the term is understood by the practitioners, it is not fully understood by the persons who are impacted and their needs are understood based on the fact that they are impacted. But for the responding and supporting agencies, those terms are understood because it guides how they respond and operate.

Madam Chairman: I have seen in a lot of the responses, sensitization. Is there a need therefore for our publics to understand? Do you all think there is a need for our publics to understand that basic definition?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Yes, Ma’am, there is a need for the public to understand it and appreciate it.

Madam Chairman: And who undertakes that kind of sensitization?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Right now the ODPM is engaged in sensitizing, but it also requires an all-of-government approach because that sensitization also extends to the agencies present here who are engaged in some level of response or relief, and therefore the script should be by all entities and in a manner to which we have that all-of-government approach in sensitizing the public on exactly what those things mean to each of us.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So when we say right now that is being done, we say “as we speak” meaning currently?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Currently, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman: And what is the form of this sensitization?

Capt. Ret. Wint: The form of the sensitization is utilizing the media platforms, social media, public engagements, ads, to which the public is advised. The ODPM utilizes the social media platform, Facebook, Twitter, even our web pages to sensitize the public. We have in the past engaged in a mass and massive public education campaign which saw media going out into communities educating them on issues of disaster risk reduction and

disaster management.

Other Ministries, and they would speak to that, Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government through its 14 municipal corporations also engage the communities in their understanding and preparedness. So having that understanding and preparing, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, as one of our partner agencies and key stakeholders, is also engaged in that public education campaign.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So you say the public campaign is about disaster preparedness and mitigation, yes?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Disaster preparedness mitigation is all encompassing. We are looking at all the hazards, and therefore how does one reduce their risk; we are looking at the vulnerable communities, persons with disabilities. And therefore that campaign basically is an all-hazard approach in educating the population of the risk to which they are exposed in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Chairman: But does it get to the very fine basic matter that you are dealing with a very narrow definition of disaster?

Capt. Ret. Wint: I would say we have attempted to do that, Ma'am. Has it reached all our population, honestly I am of the view that we might have reached almost 75 per cent of the population.

Madam Chairman: All right. So let me ask something. You say you have been doing sensitization, what are your measures, your yardsticks, your parameters of the effectiveness of your communication and the success? You said you have done it in the past, what tools have you used to determine how effective it is to inform what you are saying you are currently doing?

Capt. Ret. Wint: The tools we employ would be basically the amount of persons we have engaged from the community outreach going out to the various communities. That programme was called Community Organize and Ready for Emergency, CORE, which was a five-part programme between 2011 and 2017, where issues of becoming flood smart, building better and safer construction, assisting the vulnerable communities and persons with special needs, and also the issue of building resilience and your understanding of your exposure.

The success—we have been able to execute a substantive amount of hours with the private, public and civil society. The amount of areas touched on a monthly basis has also

increased over that time, and the response from the community that we have sent out officers to, utilizing volunteers, also indicates that the message has been received by those who were able to partake and those who were able to get the message even through our postal initiative at times where we sent out information through TTPost, in trying to get to all. And that was one of the initiatives we used in attempting to get all from one media utilizing the TTPost network to deliver to almost every home in Trinidad and Tobago.

That particular project was a 72-hour protocol in which we tried to educate the population that in the occurrence of any severe incident you must be able to sustain yourself for at least 72 hours before any first responder or support entity can get to you.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So what you are saying is one of your yardsticks is let us say you have sent communication to 70 per cent of the community. So you look at a community, you determine the number of households, you have delivered to 70 per cent as far as you are concerned, therefore you would have reached with your message 70 per cent?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And not reach in terms of understanding the distinctions and the niceties that you have explained there?

Capt. Ret. Wint: That understanding is then followed up by the walkabout through the community and also supported by the engagement of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government on their own programme with those communities.

Madam Chairman: When last you all had a walkabout through any specific community? If you could tell me when last and which community.

Capt. Ret. Wint: I think the last walkabout would have been in early 2016, and I cannot say the exact location, but that programme has been sort of stymied based on funding and resources of the ODPM to maintain the programme.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Can I invite any other questions before I continue?

Mr. Huggins: Good day, just for clarity because I was listening to the response there. I believe a former colleague of yours would have—I am listening to the terminology, because you said we have not experienced a disaster over a particular period of time. There has been no disaster. Reflecting on one of the comments of your former colleague who caused a bit of an uproar in the media when he described what happened with Bret, I believe, as small—you know, as minor. Is it that in the language or definitions, because it

does not qualify as a disaster, it is seen as something minor for the ODPM?

3.10 p.m.

Capt. Ret. Wint: Member, I will attempt to answer your question and permit me to stay away from my predecessor's comment. All occurrences of incidents are considered serious. The ODPM takes the response and the coordination of response based on the incident and the impacts here. Yes. So the protection of life and property, critical structure is a priority and we work closely with all the entities.

Now, there is that public—and you have expressed the issue of, so all are serious, the incident will determine the response. The incident will also determine the timing of the response. So for instance, if you have flooding in a particular area where you have four or five feet of water, based on some the agencies and their limited resources, that water has to subside before we can even attempt to bring resources in and therefore, it is serious. For the impacted person we are moving slow, but for the responders their lives also have to be calculated and taken into consideration.

The assets that are being deployed have to be taken into consideration and therefore, for each incident an incident-action plan is developed, resources are identified and, therefore, the risk is assessed whether we can move now to bring some level of relief or there is time, based on the incident that we are managing, and I used the example of flooding, that that water maybe needs to subside for the drivers to see the side of the road so that the affected residents or burgesses can be attended to. So all, just to close, incidents are serious. All incidents are taken because they affect life and property and the response is crafted based on the occurrence.

Mr. Huggins: I know there is always room for improvement and I know you have identified some of the activities you engage in, in terms of communication. Now, there is a particular expectation by the public of the ODPM, there may be some differences in terms of the functionalities and the expectations. So given the occurrences like Bret and so forth, have you redefined or developed or improved on any sort of communications so that the public will be able to manage their expectations?

Capt. Ret. Wint: We have improved on the communication to the public, and with every incident there is what we consider as after-action review of the incident and the gaps which have been identified, corrected. So that the expectation of public notification, information, we have utilized the framework of an all-of-government approach to ensure that the public

is informed especially through social media and, therefore, utilizing the information task group which is set up under the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications, we utilize all the communication officers to ensure that once there is an event or an incident that we push out messages based on social media using the traditional media platform so that persons can be informed.

Mr. Huggins: Are you satisfied that that communication is effective and is there any mechanism for feedback to make sure that you are on target with your communications strategies?

Capt. Ret. Wint: The communication is effective, more can be done. The ODPM previously had what we call a fibre-one centre which allowed us—and we call it a customer-care centre—to monitor social media, post messages, give feedbacks and even communicate with the impacted reporter of any response. That system has been merged with the E99 and manned 24/7 to receive calls from persons; however, it lacks the ability to do what we call the customer care which is basically to call back persons who have made reports to find out if they were satisfied with the response from the various agencies or even to monitor social media. And social media for disaster risk reduction is not the social media that we know by the individual. It requires a 24/7 monitoring and operation, it requires of the ability to answer hundreds of messages within minutes.

At this point in time the ODPM does not have that capacity based on a shortage of staff to respond. So there is a delay in responding to some of the social media messaging, and we are trying to, with the assistance of the Ministry of National Security, beef up the staffing at the 511, the E99 centre, and even within the Office of the Disaster Preparedness and Management so that we can have the personnel to monitor social media to ensure the messages, but, yes, more can be done.

It also looks at our early warning mechanism and how that is done. We do utilize the service providers of TSTT, Flow and even Digicel, but again, that messaging is based on the definition and when do we push, but because of the incidents of the, I would say, the last year, we are revising as with common international practice our systems and procedures and trying to improve it based on the expectations of the population of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Huggins: So is it that you are developing a formal strategy to get that done? And is there a time frame?

Capt. Ret. Wint: There is a strategy. What we are doing, we are refining the strategy based on the incidents, based on the resources that we have available right now and therefore, the resources are now leading and like all other entities finding resources where to utilize the technology, and what resources we have, and when I talk resources I talk about the human resource to manage these things and push out messages. So the strategy is there, it is being refined and it is being refined against the resources that are available at this point in time.

Mr. Huggins: With your leave, Madam Chair, in times like these when we talk of managing resources and scarce resources these are the times where we need to be most innovative. In terms of, well you spoke about the human resource aspect, tell me about the ODPM app and if the app is useful in any way in terms of that type of engagement with persons making reports?

Capt. Ret. Wint: The ODPM app allows the public who have downloaded that app to get messages, bulletins, know where the nearest shelter is to their present location once their GPS location is on. The emergency contact numbers for the 14 municipal corporations and the Tobago House of Assembly, and other first responders. The app, again, has suffered because of the fact that we do not have all the resources to man the app. That app also needs a 24 hour/seven and therefore, from the moving of the 511 into E99 and the reduction of staff which was there to man that also impacted on the ability of the ODPM to real-time post messages and monitor messages.

And therefore, with one officer in the unit—what I consider a public education unit—it is a bit difficult and therefore, even the resources of the E99 the merger of that also places an additional burden on them both to manage the E99 system and 511 system even to the point of search capacity, because you can have a normal day now and in a twinkle of an eye you have a severe incident where you have 500 persons calling to report anything.

Madam Chairman: Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: All right. Thanks, good afternoon. I want to understand the purpose of the merger because everything you have said so far as to the merger it did not bring any benefits. So if you could just enlighten me, please?

Capt. Ret. Wint: The merger was made as a result of fiscal measures; it was contracted to a private contractor and it was felt that placing the 511 under one roof with the E99 would have been an economic viable solution to the issue. However, it did pose some challenges

for the ODPM because it was not just a call centre, it was a customer-care centre. It was a centre which had the capacity to move from five operators to 15 operators on the occurrence of an incident. It was a centre which allowed us to real-time communicate with the population, monitor social media, even warn off the first responders and other entities of occurrences based on the report that we were getting.

So at this point in time the Ministry of National Security is engaged in recruiting personnel to beef up that particular unit. So the function of the, what I call the consequence management part of the Ministry, can be addressed. So with that we are being very engaging in order to get information, get it out, but there is a challenge, and I am hoping within this fiscal year that challenge can be overcome so that the expectations can be met.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: How does it compare with the Tobago experience? Because I am sure TEMA would have its challenges, but as a Tobagonian and somebody who would have benefited from the services of 211 and all of that I could say, I could proudly say that the service is quite efficient. You call in 211 and they will direct you to emergency or non-emergency and then within a short space of time you get feedback. They will call you, say, well okay, we are sending out a team or the matter is being addressed. So that happens. So, how do you compare with that Tobago experience?

Capt. Ret. Wint: We, at one time, were able to do that, Ma'am, but as I said with the merger and the inability to maintain that expectation, the response is not delayed. However, the Ministry of Local Government, having identified that we were having issues they, last year, launched their hotline contact information to which burgesses can now contact because of the fact that there was a gap; they identified the gap because they also have that responsibility for the response and, therefore, each municipal corporation now has a hotline to which burgesses can make those calls.

Based on the severity of the impact of the impacted municipal corporation needs further assistance, the mechanism is there for the chief disaster management coordinator to contact the ODPM or sometimes some of the entities directly so that assistance can be had. So, yes, we have a problem, but the gap has been identified and filled to one level, but we are still making strides to improve what was presently there in order to support the national response framework of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: In the discourse before you noted your public outreach and your

sensitization efforts. Do you have any strategies in place to target primarily children to help our nation's children to be aware and alert so to be better able to respond in times of disaster or if there is an incident or event or whatever?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Yes. Member, from the ODPM's perspective, yes, we have been working with the Ministry of Education going into schools, doing our public education programme; we have even engaged some of the teachers in order to prepare them to even deliver the public education and sensitization to the schoolchildren, understanding that that foundation being the schoolchild can be influential in the home. So, we have targeted the schools, we work closely with the Ministry of Education, and we will continue to do that once the resources are available to continue to engage them.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Wint, let me just ask. In terms of the schools, what level of schools do you all target? And if you can give us a recent example of a school that you all would have interfaced with?

Capt. Ret. Wint: My recent, I would say, we had a project with Digicel Foundation where we targeted schools with persons with various disabilities to which we have Tobago and throughout Trinidad and Tobago which was quite successful and where we engaged them in understanding their risks, understanding how they respond even within their home.

Within the schools we use primary schools, secondary schools based on the programmes that have been targeted and even on the request of schools and communities. But the last successful engagement was through the Digicel Foundation where they have sponsored that particular programme which has now been targeted as a template for the region and was presented at the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management conference in Bahamas in December, and the successes were identified and are being looked at to see if they can be copied in other parts of the region.

Madam Chairman: That was December this year at the conference, but when? You told me the last was the Digicel, but I do not have an idea whether that was 2017?

Capt. Ret. Wint: 2017, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: 2017 was that programme?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Thank you. All right. So, I just want to ask a question of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. In terms of this, we had asked:

What is the role of the municipal corporations under the purview of the Ministry in disaster relief? And we were told about monthly meetings through your regional coordinating stakeholders' meetings. Is this a meeting held by the Ministry or by each of the 14 municipal corporations?

Mr. Siew: Madam Chair, this meeting was held at each of the 14 regional corporations; however, the Ministry under the disaster management unit also holds all monthly meetings with them to be abreast of what is taking place in each of the 14 corporations. As the Senior Disaster Management Coordinator, I personally attend all the coordinators' meetings, stakeholders' meetings so that we can be on the same ball with everything.

Madam Chairman: So there is once a month in each regional corporation?

Mr. Siew: That is correct, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And who are the stakeholders who attend?

Mr. Siew: All right. We have persons from fire service, we have persons from T&TEC, WASA, all the different resources that are in alignment with first response in the country. Those persons sit on the stakeholders' meeting as well with the councillors and the chairman for each of the municipal corporations.

Madam Chairman: And this is different from the—the corporations always had a regional coordinating committee meeting—

Mr. Siew: Yes.

Madam Chairman:—but this is separate and distinct from that?

Mr. Siew: This is separate and apart from what

Madam Chairman: And could you therefore give to us in writing, say over the last 12 months, okay?—as for each corporation, when such meeting occurred, and the stakeholders who were present?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Okay? Now, in terms of the—if you can tell a bit about this incident command system and how this works?

Mr. Siew: All right. Again, the incident command system is a system that is used by all 14 corporations, as well as the Ministry in collaboration with fire service and it brings all of us on a standard levelling of operations so that we all understand the jargon and the way that we would be expected to respond in times of any hazard, so it gives everyone a clear and definite role as to their functions during the time of a hazard.

Madam Chairman: All right. So therefore, this is something that is already established?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: And all the corporations know about it, they understand the commands?

Mr. Siew: Corporations are aware of the system. The fire service uses the exact system, police as well, ODPM as well uses the exact system.

Madam Chairman: All right. So therefore, what happens then at a regional coordinating stakeholders' meeting?

Mr. Siew: All right. We have different projects that are ongoing in the each of the corporations under the disaster management unit. We take this opportunity to—

Madam Chairman: Like, for example, programmes?

Mr. Siew: For example, we have Carnival coming up—

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Siew:—so each of the 14 corporation will get involved with the local Carnival committees in their region—

Madam Chairman: Yeah.

Mr. Siew:—so we need to be on par with what is taking place until the event is over, as you would say. So we utilize these meetings to get everybody on board so we would know what resources we have and what they would need in the event. So, we also use that to allow the other stakeholders to come in to set up our emergency command system at the office of the disaster management units based at the corporations.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Now, I wanted to find out, in terms of your corporations and having the staffing levels that might be required. Somewhere in one of your submissions I would have read something about the assessments, people being trained to do assessments—

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman:—and the role of engineers and your health officers and your building inspectors in the regional corporations. Are all your corporations adequately staffed with the requisite amount of building inspectors, engineers, health inspectors? Are there any vacancies in any of your corporations?

Mr. Siew: Yes. There are vacancies in certain corporations, but what we are doing, as Capt. Wint would have said, is that we are utilizing the all-of-corporations approach, so we

now utilize, for example, the building inspector from Tunapuna/Piarco to assist in San Juan/Laventille and they are able to assist us during this time. So, we are utilizing the all-of-corporations approach or the all-of-government approach. So when a hazard impact takes place, what we do is bring the resources of the regional corporations together on a level one so that we can respond as a corporation not necessarily as a disaster management unit. So the resources are there for us to coordinate and respond in times of emergencies.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So what happens if the incident affects Diego Martin, Port of Spain and San Juan at the same time?

Mr. Siew: Simultaneously, we have had—

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Siew: Yes. We have had that situation taking place on Divali, as well as for Bret and as of recent for the Christmas season, where we saw for Bret we had 13 corporations impacted. For the system of Divali we had 11 corporations being impacted. Now, what happens is that the corporations that are not affected will come together with their resources and we will work hand in hand to assist each other in times of emergencies. So, we have that collaboration, we have that understanding with each of the 14 corporations to assist.

Madam Chairman: All right. So that that applies not just to personnel, that applies to equipment and any other sort of resources.

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am. Take for example, the situation that took place in Maracas recently with the landslide. It fell under the purview of San Juan/Laventille; however, we were able to pull resources and trucks from the Port of Spain Corporation, as well as the Diego Martin Corporation to assist with the clearing, so this is where the collaboration works with the 14 corporations.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And does that collaboration, let us take your example that you have just given.

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Would that in any way impact Diego Martin in its functioning otherwise? So you pull their trucks, the assumption would be it would not impact if the trucks are idle. How does that affect Diego Martin?

Mr. Siew: All right. With the new establishment of the disaster management cycle we have now put in place a business continuity plan for the 14 corporations. Now, they would

not cut their nose per se and spoil their face for another corporation. So what they would do is make sure that the resources that they can give will be able to be sent to the corporations that are requesting on TWS section and the county superintendent.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So let me ask: Would each corporation—or let me put it this way, the equipment that a corporation may have, let us use for example Diego Martin, let us say trucks, let us say cesspool trucks, or let us say excavators, anything. Are you satisfied that each corporation has equipment in the various categories that would be satisfactory to their needs for normal work?

Mr. Siew: As member said before, there is always place for improvement and we will continue saying that. However, resources are limited, and in terms of mechanical resources we have a lot of issues right now in terms of funding so that we can have vehicles up and running as per need. All right? But the resources are there, for example, Diego Martin needs back-up they will call on San Juan, they would contact us here at the Ministry and we will get the resources from other areas to assist.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Now, in terms if you could just explain to us what a disaster cycle looks like?

Mr. Siew: All right.

Madam Chairman: What is involved with the disaster cycle?

Mr. Siew: In the past the disaster cycle would have started with the impact. So you have the impact, boom, everything goes up in smoke or whatever the case may be, and then you would start the cycle there with the response and the recovery and then you would go back into preparedness and you go back into mitigation again. However, with the new scheme of things we have now started the cycle from the preparedness and the mitigation standpoint. So, we are no longer waiting, let us say, being reactive, it is now being proactive. So, we are starting the cycle on the mitigation part and the preparedness part, so the impact would not be as drastic, for want of a better word, when it happens.

Madam Chairman: So what determines what you are preparing for in any corporation?

Mr. Siew: Again, each of the 14 corporations have their disaster management plan, and each one of the regions are different. So for example: Penal/Debe, flooding; Barrackpore, flooding; Maracas, landslides. We do not see any flooding in Maracas area coming down that way unless it is into Maraval. So each of them, as we would say, has a culture of disasters that will take place. So the disaster management units in their plans have now

identified flood-prone areas in each of the 14 corporations and the resources.

So for example, if we know something is going to take place during the rainy season in Blanchisseuse, equipment and materials are pre-positioned at the newly established sub-office in Blanchisseuse to assist with the response. So we “doh” have to worry about cleaning from outside going in; we now have equipment inside, as well as outside so we have both sides being tackled.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And your disaster preparedness plans, how often are those prepared or updated?

Mr. Siew: Disaster management plans for the 14 corporations are done on an annual basis. I recently collected all 14 disaster management plans last week and I am now going through them to make sure that everything is in accordance. We have county superintendents being changed, we have CEOs being changed. Each of the plans has to be modified on a yearly basis so that it reflects these changes in each of the corporations.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Member Rambharat.

Mr. Rambharat: Thank you, Madam Chair. Capt. Wint, I just want to go back to the opening question from Sen. Huggins which you said you do not want any part of. I just want to go back to it, because I think it is important that we understand the context in which Dave Williams may have said what he was quoted as saying. And a lot of what I listened to, based on the questions asked by the Chairman, for me personally, I am not really caught up in the definitions of disaster, incidents and all of that. And my own view is that maybe the ODPM is too caught up with the definitions and not with the work that it is supposed to do, and I am on public record in relation to my views on the ODPM.

What Dave Williams was quoted as saying was, “You see this as a big thing, for us this is a small thing”. And that is fair enough because my own view of the design of disaster management and the context of which—let me just give you the context. I come from the east coast of Trinidad. I grew up understanding that we would continuously have problems because along the east coast we have 17 miles of coast, we have a river to cross to get from Mayaro to Sangre Grande. To get from Rio Claro to Princes Town we have a river to cross. To get through Tabaquite we have a river to cross. We have coconut trees lining the east coast roadways, we have teak, pine, mahogany, lining all the other roads, so I grew up knowing about incidents and disaster management.

But in 2014, in November 2014, we had severe flooding on the east coast, and the cut-off of

that critical link between Manzanilla and Mayaro for which nobody appeared prepared.

In 2016, we had a private developer letting out hundreds of thousands of gallons of water from a pond that flooded an area called Radix Road damaging and in many cases destroying close to 50 houses. Mr. Gangapersad is there, he has followed all of these with me. And in the context of some comments I made recently about public servants, he is an outstanding public servant—let me just take the opportunity to say that—and there are many like him in the public service, we just need more like that. Let me continue.

In 2017, as Minister I was out for Bret long before Bret came. I even got into trouble with the Met office for advising about Bret four days before it happened. And in the Divali period last year I was also out.

3.40 p.m.

You see, for a householder, a family with two children, or a dog, mattress, wooden chest of drawers, four feet of water is a disaster. To you, ODPM, it is nothing. And perhaps that is what Mr. Williams was saying, “small thing for me, big thing for you.” And perhaps that is the problem with the ODPM, that there is absolutely no clarity on the role. And even your Mission Statement talks about disaster risk management and climate change adaptation. That is news to me, and I am sure it might be news to you. I never knew ODPM having a role in climate change adaptation. Even your Facebook page demonstrates that there is an absolute lack of clarity in your role. So without going into the definitions, could you assist me in understanding what is the role of the ODPM in relation to these floods that we have been having, and we continue to have in the country?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Member, thanks for the question. The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management is the country’s strategic risk reduction coordinating entity. And therefore in relation to the series of floodings that we have had, the role of the ODPM, based on its mandate, is to engage all the stakeholders in order to develop mitigation plans and to respond to hazard as being identified. The ODPM does not have the resources to clean drains. We could identify that drains need cleaning, we could identify rivers need cleaning, we could identify with the resources of the Met office where hillside has been severely burn, and with the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture determine if those areas would be susceptible to flooding based on the run-off.

So, the role as it relates to your question on flooding and the prevention of flooding is basically to identify what is needed, how these agencies can mitigate the impact of

flooding, and advocate for those mitigation actions to take place. On the occurrence of a flood, that is a different role that the ODPM comes in as it relates to coordinating response of the entities, coordinating the distribution of relief through the various support entities, and therefore ensure that there is a systematic approach to deal with it. So that is where we see ourselves, and that is the function that we perform as the strategic coordinating agency, working closely with the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government to bring that needed relief to the affected burgess.

Mr. Rambharat: But I am not seeing that happening on the ground. I mean, it may be happening on the PowerPoint presentations in the ODPM, but I am not seeing that happening on the ground. What I have seen, I have seen the regional corporations getting more and more organized in terms of their disaster management unit. I am seeing that, and better coordination; I am seeing the Ministry of Works getting more and more involved and, you know, I am not seeing the ODPM. I am not seeing this function that you say you perform being performed.

Capt. Ret. Wint: Member, by your own comments, the activities that you see taking place on the ground is as a result of the inter-agency collaborative framework and coordination to which the ODPM is engaged in. So, having local government on the ground, having the defence force, having the Ministry of Works, the Ministry of Health, CEPEP, all these entities are placed on some level of activation notice, either on the early warning systems that we have, and therefore because of the three-tier response level of Trinidad and Tobago to which the local government and its 14 municipalities, and by extension the Tobago House of Assembly, have that responsibility for the first response of an incident. The severity of the incident, whether it be level one, two or three, based on the national response framework will determine what other resources need to be had which are outside the remit of the local government entity to coordinate. So the mobilization of the defence force is not at the local government level.

The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management, through its emergency support function mechanism, would then contact, if the defence force needs to be mobilized, the Chief of Defence Staff or his assigned staff officer, to ensure that the relevant resources are available to the impacted corporation. So, the compliment you have made to the respective agencies is in no part alone to the ODPM, but that collaborative all-of-government approach, responding to incidents is where—the ODPM is not a first responder, but based

on its Cabinet assigned, ensure that coordination is had to these entities to respond to the needs of the municipal corporation that is impacted.

Madam Chairman: Right. Thank you. I would like to just move the discussion a bit to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. And in the submission the Ministry would have pointed to the fact that there is an overall policy to assist farmers and fisherfolk after a flood or a natural disaster, and that it is based on assistance and not on full compensation for losses, and would have indicated that there is a policy for flooding and natural disasters. So I would like if the Ministry or the PS in the Ministry could give us some insight, explanation about this policy on flooding and natural disasters. And again, I would want to know how does the term “natural disasters” fit into the definition of disaster as explained by the ODPM?

Mrs. Siew: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Well, with regard to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, the impact of flooding, inclement weather, is what we would look at, because it would impact on our clients as the farmers, fisherfolk, et cetera. The policy as we explained in our submission is really to guide us so that we would be able to, in an equitable fashion, offer some relief to farmers, fisherfolk, et cetera. The guidelines offered in the policy for doing such would be better explained by the person who actually uses it. So I would want to pass it on to Ms. Gangapersad for her to explain how it is used.

Ms. Gangapersad: Madam Chair, according to the policy, the policy is the Cabinet Minute, 1594 of 2013/06/06. I would like to deal with the eligibility criteria and the primary eligibility criterion first. The applicant must be a registered farmer. According to our Farmer Registration Programme, the criteria for registering as a farmer are more than 18 years old, the person must be a citizen or a resident, and must show some form of tenure to the land that is being cultivated. What happens? In terms of the definition of disaster, I cannot recall that the Ministry of Agriculture would have defined disaster in any papers per se, and it is really—we deal with flooding especially, and as it impacts on farmers. And due to severe weather conditions—so for example, over the last year, it would have been flooding associated with Tropical Storm Bret, the flooding associated with the ITCZ around the Divali period, and to a lesser extent the Christmas floods of last year. In terms of the—should I go into the process in terms of what happens?

Madam Chairman: You said eligibility—

Ms. Gangapersad: Yes.

Madam Chairman: You must be registered?

Ms. Gangapersad: Registered as a farmer.

Madam Chairman: So, let me ask, how many registered farmers would you have in the records of the Ministry of Agriculture?

Ms. Gangapersad: In the records of the Ministry it is approximately about 38,900 registered farmers. We have about nearly equitable numbers in the regional administrations north and south. So, in south we have about 18,900 registered farmers. So, for example, I am in Victoria, we have 9,900 registered farmers and counting. Normally we anticipate that we will get about 400 to 500 claims, depending on the severity of the incident, per region. So, for example, if I used the—

Madam Chairman: Would that be per year?

Ms. Gangapersad: Maybe on an event basis. So, for example, can I quote for Bret?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Ms. Gangapersad: For Regional Administration South, for Bret, we had a total of 230 claims across the region, and the region is comprised of four agricultural counties: St. Patrick East, Nariva/Mayaro, St. Patrick West and Victoria. The claims would have come up to the value of \$2,261,741.51. For Regional Administration North, again, four agricultural counties: St. George West/St George East, St. Andrew, St. David and Caroni, there were 534 claims, and the value of the losses in that instance would have been \$13,927,071.63. Generally trends would show over the years that the Regional Administration North will receive more claims than Regional Administration South. The value too will correspond to a greater amount. What happens when a flooding incident occurs? So, for example for Bret and for the Divali floods, I will just go through the process that we went through.

When the floods occur the policy says that the farmer must submit the claim within seven working days. We have a little bit of flexibility in terms of that, because we noticed in Bret and in the Divali flooding too, that farmers in some areas could not exit from their areas to come into the county office. The process is that the farmer will come to the county office to submit the claim, and we have an example of a claim form here, and what is required. So, for example, the claim form will have the biodata, the farmer's name, his address, the holding address, the area affected in terms of the hectares. That kind of information. You will have the crop, he will submit the actual crop. He will also submit the stage of

maturity. The office will, within that period of submission then, say for example it was 10 days, the office will collate all of the claims, and the supervisor within the system will distribute to the flood, what we call our flood investigating teams—and to ensure transparency of the process two members will comprise the team.

Each county has either six or seven agricultural districts. So, in Victoria we have seven agricultural districts, and what you would find is the district officer, say, for example, Moruga, will form part of the team for the Moruga floods. And another district officer from within the county or outside of the county, depending on the staffing situation, will go and visit the farmer to verify the claim. That information is also part of the other part of the claim process, and the officer again will verify the crop, the area, and the stage of maturity. This information is then inputted into what we call the Agricultural Development Bank Cost of Production Calculator. So the figures are automatically generated for further processing into the—these figures, and I will give you an example of the kinds of figures that are generated. Just one minute please.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Ms. Gangapersad, just one minute. So there is a sort of scientific method?

Ms. Gangapersad: It is a scientific disaster assistance model.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Ms. Gangapersad: We call it the UWI model for short. It was done by Dr. Pemberton of the University of the West Indies in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture's committee.

Madam Chairman: Once you get a claim from a registered farmer and you verify the claim, you apply your model—

Ms. Gangapersad: You apply your model. First, the cost of production data from the Agricultural Development Bank calculator—originally the model had called for things like county averages, and farmer average, farmer yield, et cetera. But because we could not, at that point in time, to apply the model, we could not per county actually get verified figures, we used a standard figure across the country with the ADB cost of production. For example, if you have bodi as a commodity, the officer will indicate in his part of the process, he will indicate the variety, whether the plot was irrigated or non-irrigated, the month or the year that it was planted, and the area damaged and, of course, the stage of maturity, as I said before. This is now—

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but just a minute. So basically, once you have certain inputs that are verified, you apply this scientific method and you come up with a figure that would be paid.

Ms. Gangapersad: With the figure that would be paid.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Ms. Gangapersad: And we use a 75 per cent compensation, as recommended by the model. The model will come up with 100 per cent compensation, 75 per cent compensation and 50 per cent compensation. But 75 per cent was the recommended compensation rate.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and what determines 75—why do you use 75 and not 50?

Ms. Gangapersad: That was recommended out of the model. So, generally, not generally, on all occasions we use 75 per cent.

Madam Chairman: You apply 75 per cent. Okay, let me ask you about your verification. If the farm had been under water for a number of days, how then does a visit after the flood has subsided, how does that verify that I had the crop there?

Ms. Gangapersad: Sometimes, like with leafy vegetables, as you know about farming—

Madam Chairman: No, I do not know about farming.

Ms. Gangapersad:—it will totally disappear. Because they are registered farmers, we have a system where we, as much as resources permit, register—well, we note on the farmer—each farmer has a registration file. When he comes in to register—

Madam Chairman: Just let me stop you there, are you required to register annually or you register once?

Ms. Gangapersad: There are two types of registration. You have what we call the green card registration where the farmer satisfies all the criteria. For the Farmers Registration Programme, that is three years. It is renewed three years. And related to farmer registration, once the farmer is a green card holder he is eligible for the Agricultural Incentive Programme. So, for example, depending on what the enterprise is, he is eligible for certain things, like vehicles, or machinery, equipment, et cetera.

All of these services rented to the farmer require a farm visit. So at the farm visit the records will be placed again on a form. So we can refer to that, but because our callback—we just do not have the resources to do the callback. If the records were recent enough we can refer to that. But more often than not, the officers, because they are going through

their districts, they may more than likely have an idea in terms of the cultivation. But, generally you will find that there will be some little bit of evidence that a crop would have been there. So, for example, things like tomato, “melongene”, et cetera, pumpkin, you will have remainders of the crop being there.

Madam Chairman: So, would I be correct in saying, or may I ask, is the verification process a satisfactory one as it exists now?

Ms. Gangapersad: As in anything there is room for improvement, and it will be ideal if we can have a system where crops can be registered, so a farmer can come in and give notice, for example, that he would be planting a particular acreage, et cetera, or, if we have enough resources, that officers can do a callback very quickly, especially those farmers who have lettuce where it is four weeks; it is a four-week harvest.

Madam Chairman: Okay, let me ask you something. What prevents that desirable system from operating or being put in place? Because from what you have given as your first example, the onus is on the farmer.

Ms. Gangapersad: Yes.

Madam Chairman: That you give notice. So, whether your—

Ms. Gangapersad: No, that is just a recommendation.

Madam Chairman: I understand that. I am asking, what prevents that from being put into operation? I understand that you say that everything requires improvement, and I would accept that no system is foolproof, but you recognize that you have a big deficiency. You have an option that might not be perfect, but might be a bit of improvement. What prevents your first option from being implemented?

Ms. Gangapersad: We would have made that particular recommendation a few years ago, because it has to be something that is nationally implemented, and it never came to fruition.

Madam Chairman: So you made the recommendation to where?

Ms. Gangapersad: Well, it would have been to the hierarchy of the Ministry at that time.

Madam Chairman: You would have made it to the Ministry?

Ms. Gangapersad: Well, as a region.

Madam Chairman: As a policy?

Ms. Gangapersad: As a region so that it could be part of a policy.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Has it been followed up on?

Ms. Gangapersad: Not as far as I am aware.

Madam Chairman: Okay. All right, so what would prevent a region from saying, provide up front. Because you do not have sufficient staff, as you say, that will be desirable, to do, say, routine regular investigations/visits. What prevents your region from doing it? Even if it has not been accepted as a policy for everybody, what prevents your region from doing it?

Ms. Gangapersad: If it is one particular area of the country does it, it would seem to be an unfair system or an inequitable system. So it has to be done nationally, or even as a pilot project, for example.

Madam Chairman: So, based on that I would be correct in saying that the verification process is after the fact?

Ms. Gangapersad: The verification process—it is a mixture. It is mixture, because sometimes the officers will have the records in terms of what is on the ground, and—there would be a mixture, so they have to verify afterwards.

Madam Chairman: Let me ask you something. How many officers you have in your county?

Ms. Gangapersad: I have six officers right now.

Madam Chairman: You have six?

Ms. Gangapersad: Yes.

Madam Chairman: And, let us say in the last year, how many of the farms your officers were able to visit before any claim?

Ms. Gangapersad: Okay, I will—

Madam Chairman: So, let us say Bret was the first claim in 2017. Right? Prior to Bret how many farms between January—Bret was what, June?

Ms. Gangapersad: Yes.

Madam Chairman: July? June/July?

Capt. Ret. Wint: June.

Madam Chairman: June. How many farms your officers would have visited between January and May in your county?

Ms. Gangapersad: Okay. So I would extrapolate from my FRP visits, farmer registration visit, sorry, and the agricultural incentive visit. We had 1,100 incentive applications for the year, and we had about 900 registration applications for the year, which makes it

approximately 2,000. I am just extrapolating the data—if it is 2,000, half of the year, it may be for sure that we would have visited 1,000 farms.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so you would have visited half the number of farms in that period.

Ms. Gangapersad: Half the number in that particular period.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So that you would have been able to—you would say that you run a fairly good efficiency in knowing, in front, what your production is like by your farmers?

Ms. Gangapersad: By the farmers, but remember maybe the people who are affected, they may not have renewed registration or had new applications for registration, or they may not even have applied for incentives. What we do too is whilst an officer is going into the area to do agricultural incentives he is required to at least visit and talk with the farmers in that particular area, so we cover a little more ground in that way. What we also do, because we are so severely short- staffed, we put a system in place where a group of officers will go into a particular area, a particular district and work in that district, say, for example two weeks, and they will cover more farms.

Madam Chairman: So, are you telling me then that you are fairly satisfied that you have a process of verifying the farms in production in your county, what crops they have, and at any given time, the maturity of the crops?

Ms. Gangapersad: At any given time the maturity of—fairly satisfied.

Madam Chairman: You are fairly satisfied. Okay. All right, so thank you. So that, let me ask, so that at the end of the day your computerized system gives you a figure?

Ms. Gangapersad: A figure.

Madam Chairman: All right. Now, let me ask you something. In your information gathering you would know areas that are susceptible to flooding?

Ms. Gangapersad: To flooding.

Madam Chairman: Does your agency therefore, having satisfied a claim, let us say Bret, and you satisfied a claim with particular farmers, would those farmers qualify again within the same year for another claim, the Christmas floods or the ITCZ?

Ms. Gangapersad: They qualified—for the Divali floods?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Ms. Gangapersad: Yes, they qualified for the Divali floods, but what we found and it was

very—I will find the word just now. But what we found, it means that they were taking our advice. Extension officers would have been telling the farmers that, listen, you need to plant on higher areas in the event that the farmers had higher areas. What we found in the Debe district, for example, and the records would show that whilst Debe experienced a lot of floods in the Divali period, there was significantly less damage recorded in that period, because where farmers had higher areas in which to plant they did not go back to what we call the flood-prone area. They went back on the higher parts. So we found that very encouraging.

Madam Chairman: Yes, but that is voluntarily.

Ms. Gangapersad: That is a voluntary—

Madam Chairman: So what I am saying is, would you repeatedly settle a claim from a particular farmer who is in an area that is identified as a flood-prone area?

Ms. Gangapersad: When the policy on flooding would have been done, there was supposed to be accompanied to that, an approved list of flood-prone areas. That would not have accompanied the policy, but we have historically, areas where we have been getting claims, say, for example, over the past five years. So, we know what the flood-prone areas are, but in terms of an official document accompanying the policy saying these are the flood-prone areas, we do not have that. So you find that there are instances where farmers will get paid—say, for example, Bret and for the Divali floods.

Madam Chairman: Even though your historical data show that this area would be susceptible to flooding, as a farmer I could continue to plant there, make a claim every time I am flooded, and 75 per cent of my claim, as verified by whatever process would be paid? So that in five years if I am flooded out 25 times I can be paid?

4.10 p.m.

Ms. Gangapersad: In terms of—can I give an example? So for example—

Madam Chairman: No, just answer that. Because that is the only conclusion I could come to from what you are saying.

Ms. Gangapersad: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Yes. So that there is really no incentive for me as a farmer to move? You would agree with that or not?

Ms. Gangapersad: Well, it depends on where the farmer has the land also to cultivate.

Madam Chairman: Well, we are talking about I am in a flood-prone area.

Ms. Gangapersad: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So there is no incentive for me to move. And in fact there really is no real concrete evidence that I have had this amount of bodi, because it went away with the flood or it is at this state of maturity. Agree or not? To me all I have heard seems to be based on a lot of— and I mean no disrespect to you, eh, please. That is the system you have to work with. But a lot of it seems to be based on guesstimates. I might be wrong, but that is what it appears to me.

Ms. Gangapersad: We try to visit three days after the—

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but you already told me and you gave me the example of that. We understand the constraints and there is no disrespect to you at all. We just want to understand the system as it works, right? You have no control over the weather. According to you, you check the meteorological data so, yes, it is a fact that there was a lot of rain. It is a fact that this area was under water. It is a fact that the farmer could not come out for seven days, right, so that, he could not come out to you until the water has subsided. But there is a fact that there is nowhere registered that I really had 10 acres under production. I have 10 acres of land, but other than my saying I had 10 acres of land in bodi, there is no real way of verifying that. Is that so or not?

Ms. Gangapersad: What we asked farmers to do is also take photographs, for example, when we cannot go into the area because we anticipate that there would be problems like that so that at least we have some kind of evidence. Because when the officers—so, for example, I had an incident recently in Barrackpore that I had to deal with and there was no evidence of the crop and we could not pay the farmer.

Madam Chairman: So you are saying, with my claim I am required to provide as much as I can—

Ms. Gangapersad: Some evidence.

Madam Chairman:—evidence to support my claim.

Ms. Gangapersad: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I think, for me, that brings a little level of satisfaction.

Ms. Gangapersad: In addition to the photographs the farmers will generally keep there—well, some rudimentary form or records. Not in the form of actually putting it in a book or something, but they would have their bills in terms of what would have been used, et cetera. So if they had a crop of tomato they would have, maybe the purchase of the

seedlings or the seeds and fertilizer, et cetera. So we look for all of those types of evidence depending on the situation.

Even another claim in Barrackpore with a particular farmer that we are accustomed to, when the team visited they realized that even though the pumpkin was under water for, maybe it was two to three days, but with Bret—was it Bret?—with Bret, the evidence showed that the pumpkin really was affected by a disease as opposed to, even though it was affected by water. So we denied the claim. Hence the reason for sending technical people out there. They could discern things out there that the layman would not be able to.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Now let me ask one other thing. In terms of your allocation under this Head for fiscal 2017/2018. I think you got \$2 million as the allocation. I do not know what you received. How much of that at this stage is committed to claims? Do you have an idea? Either paid or claims that have been settled.

Ms. Gangapersad: I think the PS has that information.

Mrs. Siew: Yes, 2016/2017?

Madam Chairman: No. 2017/2018.

Mrs. Siew: 2017/2018, we only have \$38,000 so far.

Madam Chairman: In claims, or you have paid?

Mrs. Siew: No. We have not paid off anything as yet.

Madam Chairman: You have not paid any claims?

Mrs. Siew: Yeah. In our accounts unit we have \$38,000 thus far.

Madam Chairman: Let me just ask the question. The \$38,000 thus far, are there claims amounted to \$38,000 or are there claims that have been settled?

Mrs. Siew: Claims amounting to \$38,000 in our accounting unit right now as we speak. With regard to the Divali, it was in October 2017, we had—not Divali, sorry. Bret, we had \$12 million.

Madam Chairman: Bret would be last fiscal, not so?

Mrs. Siew: Last fiscal, \$12 million—

Madam Chairman: So we are talking this fiscal.

Mrs. Siew: Right. Twelve million in Bret which we would have recovered by IBA in this fiscal, right? In 2017 we have the \$38,000 thus far and we are in the process of dealing with the Divali 2017 which we have to pay, we want to pay in the next two weeks. So that would amount to about \$2 million, 1.2 in the regional north and around eight in the

regional south.

Madam Chairman: So your allocation in just settling Divali would be exhausted?

Mrs. Siew: Yeah, it would be exhausted.

Madam Chairman: So what happens, do you have claims made against Christmas floods?

Mrs. Siew: Right now we are working on that. We are working on the claims. We have not completed that as yet for the Christmas floods. And we are going to be out of funding.

Madam Chairman: You are going to be out of funding?

Mrs. Siew: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: So what happens then?

Mrs. Siew: Well, actually we would either vire funds from other areas, similar to what we have done in the past, or we may seek the assistance of the Ministry of Finance. Now in some instances, like in the case of Bret and the case of the Divali floods, Cabinet had approved certain sums. So for Bret it was \$30 million and for Divali it was \$35 million. So we can approach the Ministry of Finance with regard to that.

Madam Chairman: All right. But that approval by Cabinet was separate and apart from your allocation?

Mrs. Siew: Yeah, yeah.

Madam Chairman: All right. So let me ask you. From your historical experience, okay, would \$2 million have been adequate? We are not talking about what has happened with Bret, and say Divali, which might have been unusual.

Mrs. Siew: I would say, no, because looking at the 2015/2016 it was close to \$6million in expenditure.

Madam Chairman: In expenditure?

Mrs. Siew: Yeah. Although money was allocated through Cabinet for Bret and Divali in 2016/2017 we have close to \$14.5 million with regard to that. So I would say depending on what occurs within the year, in terms of flooding and so, it could be much, much, much, more than the \$2 million.

Madam Chairman: So that, let me ask you: therefore, is there need to relook the policy for assistance in light of what the historical data suggest? Because it seems that you need like about \$20 million every year.

Mrs. Siew: Well, it depends on what occurs during the year. I would say there needs to be a holistic look at the flooding situation as it relates to inclement weather, because there

are a number of things that could be put in place. We have to look at development, what kind of—in terms of the development, I am talking about housing and so on. You have development that is unplanned that may cause flooding. We have to look at that, to put things in place for that.

We also have to look holistically with the ODPM, rural development, agriculture, works, et cetera, to pool resources. All of those things are a cost with regard to the use of the equipment, purchasing of equipment, purchasing things like pumps and all of that. All of those things have cost. So it is not just allocation for the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. It has to be, we have to look at it in a holistic way and seek to identify what are the costs involved, in a holistic manner. It should not be only looking at farmers in a silo. It should be all over. Citizens that get affected as well with regard to that.

Madam Chairman: No, but I am just talking about your allocation for the flood and natural disasters in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

Mrs. Siew: I would say, no, it is inadequate and I am basing it solely on what occurred last year, because we would have spent close to \$15 million with regard to flood.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I just want to ask the Director of Budgets here in terms of what we have just heard from the Permanent Secretary. What therefore determines the allocation? What do you all look at to determine the allocation? Because it would appear from the historical data there seems to be a wide mismatch between \$2 million and what you would have paid in 2016/2015. What determines the allocation?

Ms. LeGendre: Okay. Madam Chair, basically when the Budget Division reviews submissions by Ministries and Departments we are constrained by the revenue position of the Government overall. The last two years would have been very challenging so we would have looked at the past expenditure trends, that would be a basis, and we would have based the allocations on that premise. But during the year there are always avenues for the Ministry to make representations that certain allocations are underprovided and Cabinet could make decisions on how to increase allocations there. So as best as possible we look at expenditure trends, the request of the Ministry, but it is a lot of competition in terms of allocations per Ministry.

Madam Chairman: So from what I am hearing, it would appear that this cannot be sustainable. It cannot be sustainable that—we understand the challenges of the country. But even if the country had all the money in the world it cannot be that even with the

policy that is in place in terms of eligibility and all the great computerized programmes, that every year—because the weather, we could control so much. Every year claims are being made in this large quantum. Is there not therefore, maybe, a need to relook policy in terms of how compensation or assistance is determined to feed back into allocation and almost to a sort of continuous revision based on what an allocation is going to be given by the Ministry of Finance in every year.

Ms. LeGendre: Yes, I understand the point you are making and that might be something that the Ministry of Finance would now have to look at. I cannot say that it was the focus in the past, but it definitely could be something that we would have to look at in terms of policy and at allocation of funding accordingly.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but not just only Ministry of Finance, but in terms of—does the Ministry of Finance have any input in the policy as determined by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries for assistance?

Ms. LeGendre: In terms of the Budget Division, no, I cannot say that we have a direct input. I do not know if the PS, Ministry of Finance would want to have a response there.

Ms. Taylor-Lee Chee: Generally only if there is a financial element to the policy we would be asked to comment, but generally we do not get involved in the development of the policy.

Madam Chairman: So they have a policy that allows for a certain figure which historically is happening, but the Ministry of Finance knows it cannot meet that figure. And therefore the policy could continue, ad infinitum, without any sort of push coming from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries that, look, there needs to be some revisit of your policy so that your output figures can be more reflective of what your allocation is.

Ms. Taylor-Lee Chee: Well, certainly I think when we discuss with the Ministries at the end of the financial year, we discuss reductions and we gave certain directives. But there is a meeting in the middle, there is a negotiation that happens—

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but that is coming up for your budget. But what I am saying is, you said that you are not involved in a policy unless there is a financial element. The policy that the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries has for this particular vote turns up numbers at the end of the day, numbers that are nowhere in sync, historically with what you give as an allocation. So my question is, one, is there not a financial input

for the Ministry of Finance in helping the Ministry arrive at a policy that would result in figures annually that are more acceptable, having regard to the competition for funds, the stringent circumstances we are in, et cetera.

Ms. Taylor-Lee Chee: Yes, certainly there is input for the Ministry to be involved in the policy making up front. We also have certain contingency instrument that we have in place to facilitate any extraordinary expenditure that would be related to a disaster. So we have the CCRIF, the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility and we also have a contingencies fund which we can draw upon in case of unforeseen events. So apart from being involved in the policy we also would have at the back end some contingency funds that we could draw on or would receive in the event of a disaster.

Madam Chairman: All right. So historically, have your contingency funds been used to satisfy the demands of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries? And if they have been used, have they been adequate?

Ms. Taylor-Lee Chee: So, we have in the Ministry, we have a contingency fund in the amount of TT \$100 million that we use, not only for natural disasters, but for any sort of unplanned, unforeseen expenditure. So for the May event we did utilize that funding. It was, I think we utilized—Cabinet had agreed to, I think, \$35 million to be utilized. That amount has not been fully utilized as yet.

We also have the CCRIF fund and this year following the October event, we received US \$7 million as a payout under our excess rainfall policy. That amount would have been deposited into the Consolidated Fund to facilitate any extraordinary expenditure that would have been required. But there is no one-to-one matching of the funds received with the payout. It was just that we received an additional amount of funds to facilitate any—

Madam Chairman: Is there competition for these backup funds in terms of, is it only going to be used for the agricultural losses or is it a fund that in the discretion and the wisdom of the Ministry, will be used for any unforeseen expenditure of any nature?

Ms. Taylor-Lee Chee: Right. So Cabinet determines the allocation. So Cabinet would determine who gets what and the Ministry of Finance would facilitate the allocations as approved by Cabinet.

Madam Chairman: Okay. All right. So it may not necessarily meet everything, every claim that is a justifiable claim in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. Correct?

Ms. Taylor-Lee Chee: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay, thank you. Let me just ask one other question to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. Generally what is the time lag for settlement of a claim? It is a justifiable claim that I have made. What is the time lag between my claim and the payment of the 75 per cent of my claim?

Mrs. Siew: Depending on the volume of claims we get, it may be between six weeks to two months.

Madam Chairman: Between six weeks to two months. And let me ask something. So I am a farmer, I am totally wiped out. Is there any sort of other financial assistance given to me between the determination of my claim and the payment of my claim?

Mrs. Siew: No.

Madam Chairman: So I might not be able to start back up then, because you just told me it is not compensation, it is assistance.

Mrs. Siew: It is assistance.

Madam Chairman: Okay, then. All right. Thank you.

Mrs. Siew: But we have to go through our verification process and all of that.

Madam Chairman: No, I am not critical, I am just—yes. All right, thank you. Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Good afternoon again. I wanted to understand, what are some of the best practices re compensation internationally and regionally? And also, if our farmers have insurance policy, is that a practice here?

Mrs. Siew: As far as I am aware, no. Farmers do not have insurance. The Ministry, from what I am advised, in the past has recommended that farmers have crop insurance and so on, but for whatever reason that never came into fruition. I understand that the insurance agencies were a bit reluctant with regard to that.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: What happens internationally and regionally in the event of, like natural disaster or excess rainfall? Would the State do the compensation of farmers abroad and even up the islands, do they have their own insurance? What happens?

Mrs. Siew: I am uncertain of what happens with regard to insurance but PS, Ministry of Finance had indicated that there is a Caribbean insurance or a facility that can be had by nations who have experienced that kind of disaster.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: And nothing at the personal level?

Mrs. Siew: I do not know.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Not a farmer. Okay. Would you be able to guide me, like what happens abroad with farmers? Do you have any idea?

Ms. Gangapersad: I am not aware.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Not aware, okay.

Madam Chairman: All right. I would like to just ask one other question of ODPM before we go on to another agency. Are there any plans for a revision of the Disasters Measures Act, Chap. 16:50?

Capt. Ret. Wint: The answer to that is, yes. Within the last three or four years the ODPM has presented its draft disasters Bill for Trinidad and Tobago for consideration and presently attempts are being made to have it on the legislative agenda, but that has to go through a consultation process, but we have identified the need for a disasters Act because within Trinidad and Tobago there are approximately 40 pieces of legislation scattered across our books that deal with disaster. And the Disasters Measures Act is limited in its application and therefore we have, through consultancy, developed the document for the commencement of that process to bring into fruition our disaster Act for Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Chairman: So the main—you are saying, “app” or “Act”?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Act.

Madam Chairman: Act. All right. So that it is unlikely that this would reach the legislative agenda in the short term.

Capt. Ret. Wint: Yes, Ma’am, most likely it would not.

Madam Chairman: Okay. All right. I just want to ask a question of TEMA. You say you have an app, a-p-p? How does this operate? Let me ask that, how does this app operate?

Mr. Hernandez: Madam Chair, Virtual Vision is a technological based app. It has a front end and a back end. So let me explain. The app can be downloaded from the Play Store onto any smartphone for free. Once the user has enacted the app, based on the information that was uploaded, based on assessments conducted in the field, on the 300 km of acreage that the island of Tobago exists on, that information is superimposed through pockets in the app. For instance, if you go into your phone now and we had the TEMA app on our phones you will see something called “shelters”. When you click on that shelter app,

within the app, it tells you geographically the location of all shelters on the island of Tobago, the telephone number, who is the shelter manager, GPS location by latitude and longitude, et cetera.

Another feature of the app: you can be a reporter using the app. If your smartphone has a camera and you pass in an area where an event, an incident or an emergency is happening you can take that photo and send it directly through the front end to the back end of the app. We at TEMA would receive your photo, it would be geo-tagged, which means it would have the coordinates already embedded into the JPEG file and we can now know exactly where that incident is occurring because you have sent us the information.

The app also has something called WISER. WISER is a hazardous material recall. As you may know we are a technological advanced country. We do have chemicals, biological agents on our streets, in our warehouses, in our industries, at our airports, at our seaports. If there was to be a hazardous material release, whether chemical, biological, explosive, nuclear or radiological you can go into your WISER app as a first responder and a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and have a clear understanding of the hazard of the chemical, biological agent, nuclear event, et cetera. It will also give you precautionary measures to be taken. It can also give you medical and first-aid applications in which citizenry would have to take in the case we have a chlorine gas cloud; it would be an oxygen scavenger. So therefore respiratory ailments would be the first to appear.

The app also is used in times when we want to inform the public that there may be a hydro-meteorological event, rainstorms, hurricanes, et cetera. As the ODPM indicated, when we have a seismic event—we are overdue for a seismic event of 250 years. Our last seismic event was in 1776 in San Jose, which was our first capital, and based on the GAR Report of 2013 by the United Nations, Trinidad and Tobago, Trinidad itself sits on the Cocos Plate. The plate passes through Manzanilla and cuts through into Point Lisas and exits into Claxton Bay into the Venezuelan continent.

The app can also, if we have that information coming from UWI seismic, there is a link on the back end that the app will notify all persons who have it on their phone the event of that seismic event. So in retrospect, in the four years that we had version one and in the two years that we are now using version two, that app has been tremendous in our application on the island of Tobago.

But, Madam Chair, permit me, we live in a technological world. The technology

sometimes fails us. We need to be careful that we do not allow, as Albert Einstein said, our technology to take over our humanity. It still remains with the human aspect on how we are going to manage our incidents, events, emergencies and disasters.

4.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Sir. Let me ask something. Is there an equivalent app in Trinidad?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Yes, Ma'am. The ODPM has the equivalent app but as previously indicated we are stymied with manpower to manage that particular app as it is right now. So at this point in time we can send out alerts to persons who have downloaded that app just as they did with the Tobago app, but we are severely understaffed, Madam Chair, and the resources to man that particular app in the manner in which we had developed the app to suit—

Madam Chairman: When last did the app work in the manner it was developed to function?

Capt. Ret. Wint: The last post would have been in October, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: October—

Capt. Ret. Wint: 2017.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Let me ask TEMA. How many people manage your app?

Mr. Hernandez: Madam Chair, our app is managed by a back-end service provider. That service provider provides us with 24-hour, seven days coverage, but we also, in TEMA, have the capacity through our information technology system—we have an IT supervisor who monitors the app on a 24-hour basis. So whatever comes in, whether it is a back-end issue or a front-end issue, we have a real-time monitoring of the app going in and coming out.

Madam Chairman: Do you have an idea of the annual cost of the services of the provider, the third-party provider of the app?

Ms. Agbeko: Good afternoon, Madam Chair. That is about TT \$40,000.

Madam Chairman: Per month, per year?

Ms. Agbeko: Annually, sorry—subscription.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. And let me ask ODPM. Your app was being handled internally or that is the one where you said you had an external provider and cost efficiencies, this is why you—

Capt. Ret. Wint: External provider to manage the app and the customer-care call centre, all integrated, because from that particular platform we were able to send messages, receive messages and—

Madam Chairman: What was the cost, your annual cost?

Capt. Ret. Wint: For the provider to manage the call centre, staff the call centre 24/7, answer calls, is approximately \$350,000 a month.

Madam Chairman: Can I ask what would have accounted for that great disparity between your figure and—

Capt. Ret. Wint: The disparity is to provide, as I said, the social media monitoring of all social media platform, the manning of the WebEOC platform to which incidents are reported by municipal corporations and other stakeholders, the manning of a 24/7 customer-care call centre with the capacity for surge, meaning on a normal day the operation will take place with five operators and if there is an incident, that system can then be vamped up for 15 operators to take calls. And therefore, that contributed to that particular cost because of the deliverables that were required.

That also allowed almost all emergency first responders to know what has been happening. The 14 municipal corporations also were able to see real-time what has been reported by the population. So, therefore, there was not an issue of local government wondering what is happening. They could have stayed from any off-site and know of the reports that were coming in, the contact information, even the operator who received the call, and even to the point that they could have even gotten feedback on the response based on the report that was made.

Madam Chairman: And may I ask TEMA if they could give us some insight into this multi-hazard early warning system? What is this?

Mr. Hernandez: On the island of Tobago it is very unique, in that our square acreage gives us a mountainous platform. We have, at this point in time, two early warning systems, one located in the Carnbee area, which is in the east—in the east, yes—and we also—in the west, sorry. And we also have one located on Fort King George. Every first Thursday of every month that early warning system is checked. There is an announcement made via the communications officer at TEMA. It is broadcast throughout the notification to the public, a test is being conducted.

The two early warning systems give us the capacity that in case we have to do a push

notification of an early warning hazard, an event, or an incident, we can notify the public in real time. What we are doing right now, Madam Chair, is that in the Charlottesville area which is deeply prone, that if we have a hydro-meteorological event, Charlottesville, Roxborough, Speyside, will be cut off.

We are now looking, based on our vulnerable assessments, to do a third early warning system located either in Flagstaff or in the Roxborough area that will give us line of sight. Each one of the horns on the early warning system has a 15-mile radius of decibel-hearing, so once we go on, we can either remotely send out a message; we can use our smartphone to send a coded message via the IP address over the Internet to alert the public. And what we are testing now is to have an off-site which was done—we had two representatives go to Beijing, China, and from China they were able to activate our early warning system. So it does not matter where in the world that we may be, once you have the coded system, we can activate our early warning.

Madam Chairman: I just want to ask ODPM, is there any community in Trinidad that has a similar, sort of a multi-hazard warning system?

Capt. Ret. Wint: There are communities that have what we consider a traditional early warning system. So for instance in Blanchicheusse, if my memory serves me right, there is a siren established with a particular person assigned on the village council, through the community emergency response team, within that area, know how to activate that particular—

It is not as grand as what Tobago has, again because of its own history with hazard impact, but within the municipal corporations there are some corporations—and I would not say corporations—corporations and communities within the corporation that have established their early warning systems. Along some river courses there are individuals who have been trained to alert water resource agencies, even the ODPM and the regional corporation, if water rise is being seen. So the system exists and as Mr. Hernandez said, we are not only dependent on the modern technology, so we utilize our traditional means of even the phone call; call the respective disaster management unit or the first responder of notification.

Madam Chairman: All right, thank you. Let me ask the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. Along the Crystal Stream Highway in Diego Martin, there is a structure with a signal—a blue structure with a signal—that from looking at it, it seems to

work or be intended to work as some sort of hazard warning system.

Mr. Siew: Yes, Madam Chairman. That is one of the early warning systems that was installed by the Diego Martin Regional Corporation—DMU. We also have similar systems installed in Mayaro where we monitor the levels of the water courses throughout that region. That was a pilot project that was done. The Minister there would be able to explain on that, if need be. We also have the similar issues with waste water, water resource agencies that are positioned in the Caroni basin. So when the level of the water reaches a certain level it triggers a mechanism on everyone's app or on everyone's phone, that is, the message is sent to different entities so that we can start sending out the bulletins.

Madam Chairman: All right. I just want to know, that one in Diego Martin, does it work?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am. It is tested every Wednesday—the second Wednesday in the month.

Madam Chairman: Okay, thank you. Member Huggins.

Mr. Huggins: I am just curious. To the Ministry of National Security, Permanent Secretary: Can you tell us what is your role in overseeing the coordination efforts of the ODPM?

Ms. Shrikensingh-Jitman: The ODPM is a division of the Ministry of National Security. They get an annual allocation. This year's allocation was \$16 million. And we oversee their purchasing, their procurement and payment of salaries and relief supplies.

Mr. Huggins: Can you give us some further clarification in terms of the challenges identified by the ODPM in terms of resources, especially in terms of the response function of the app and other limitations with their human resources?

Ms. Shrikensingh-Jitman: Right now I can speak to the limitations of the human resources. The organizational structure requires 44 persons to be on board but currently the ODPM only has 18 persons on board. We are currently conducting interviews to bring persons at strategic levels on board for the ODPM.

Mr. Huggins: How long has that shortage existed?

Capt. Ret. Wint: That shortage would have been in existence for the last seven years, Sir.

Mr. Huggins: Last seven years. Seven years, you said?

Capt. Ret. Wint: The structure of the 44 based on the organizational structure, yes,

seven years, and we have been able to manage utilizing a volunteer system, utilizing the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force to augment, especially where we have to activate the National Emergency Operations Centre. Members of staff are presently sometimes doing three and four functions. We have officers at the technical level performing managerial functions and therefore we have been able to do what we can and I am able to, in the present, supervise those persons in the exercise.

So there is a tremendous understaffing and if that is corrected, again further expectations can be met. However, like with all other entities, the issue of staffing is co-related to funding and also co-related to persons who are desirous and have studied within that particular field of risk crisis and emergency management.

Mr. Huggins: Part of the ODPM's function—I think one of the major parts—is preparedness, if I am not mistaken, and in the event of the occurrences we had in 2017 where there was a lot of public outcry, I would like to know—or at least the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago would like to know—what has been put in place that would be different to what we would have experienced in 2017?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Member, can I just ask for a clarification when you say what has been put in place in relation to?

Mr. Huggins: Well, you have had a shortage for the past seven years. You said that you are making steps—or the ODPM is making steps—to address that. I think the public would like some kind of reassurance in terms of their confidence. I mean, we are talking safety and security here, and—

Capt. Ret. Wint: The preparedness of Trinidad and Tobago is heavily co-related to the preparedness of every individual of Trinidad and Tobago. The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management has engaged in a public education to prepare the population, warn the population of the respective hazards per each community. That notification allows respective agencies, such as local government and other, what I call, support agencies, to render the level of education and training, even to the point of the first responder agencies, training and resources.

So I will use, for example, Point Lisas Industrial Estate, Couva Police Station, the ODPM has advocated that the police station, or the police district at Couva, is a specialized unit, just because of what Point Lisas has. And therefore, the resourcing of that unit—respirators, PPE—is part of our advocacy, but then again, is the understanding of the risk

to which we are exposed. So the confidence of the population lies within the confidence of the individual: “Am I prepared to at least sustain myself for the first 72 hours of an incident” in which the first responders you are expecting to come to you can also be impacted, to which the severity of the incident requires time for that response to be mounted?

So what we have been doing, and we will continue to advocate, one, that the all-country approach, the individual responsibility that “I have a responsibility for myself and my family to be prepared for at least to engage the 72-hour protocol” which will allow the other entities to get to you so that a response can be had. So in really wrapping up, member, the level of preparedness is a holistic approach for every member of the population, every organization. It starts at the local, the community, the individual, corporate Trinidad and Tobago and our governance structure, to ensure that we can respond to any incident that impacts life, property and governance of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Huggins: Thank you very much for that. I would just like to end by asking if you are satisfied that the ODPM is fully prepared for similar occurrences as of what would have taken place in 2017?

Capt. Ret. Wint: My answer to that is, yes, not the ODPM but the ODPM and all the relevant agencies. And I wish to assure the members and even the public, we are as prepared as we can be. The impact of the incident would determine. Japan is one of the most prepared countries in the world and when they had their earthquake they, too, had difficulties. And, therefore, we need to understand that the preparedness is everybody. Much more can be done. Much more resources can be applied to all entities, but we have to work with what we have. By working with what we have, that responsibility, though placed on the ODPM as the coordinating entity, but also that responsibility has to be transferred to every government agency, every corporate entity and every individual. Once that is achieved, then we can say we are prepared to deal with the information that we have and therefore we are prepared to respond to any impact that affects us.

So, yes, member, I am satisfied at this time; more can be done but it requires an all-government, all-population approach in being prepared.

Mr. Huggins: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member Rambharat?

Mr. Rambharat: Just to ODPM. The National Response Framework sets out three levels. Could you give us an example of what would be a level one incident, or I think—level one; what would be a level two, what would be a level three? I want to make sure I use your word. Level one—

Capt. Ret. Wint: Level one, level two and level three.

Mr. Rambharat: Right. So what would be level one?

Capt. Ret. Wint: A level one, based on the three-tier response is the regional corporation and its support entities can tend to the incident utilizing the resources of which it has.

Mr. Rambharat: Right. So give me an example of—

Capt. Ret. Wint: An incident of level one would have been the flooding of Port of Spain as of yesterday.

Mr. Rambharat: Right. Level two.

Capt. Ret. Wint: A level two, where one or more corporation is impacted, so, for instance, the Divali or Christmas flooding, to which the resources of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government can be applied to that particular incident. There might be the need for additional resources, i.e. the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, CEPEP or other entities, and therefore that is coordinated with the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government to respond to that particular incident. The National Emergency Operations Centre might be partially, or partially activated, to coordinate response based on the incident action plan that has been inter-agency developed to respond to that.

Mr. Rambharat: But that is a level two.

Capt. Ret. Wint: Right. A level three—

Mr. Rambharat: Before you go to level three, you said that the response may be coordinated and you said that NEOC may be brought in. So who is coordinating the response in that case?

Capt. Ret. Wint: All right. The National Emergency Operations Centre is a function of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management. That centre is staffed by what we call emergency support function representatives of 19—

Mr. Rambharat: So it is the ODPM.

Capt. Ret. Wint: Right—19 ministries, civil organizations and it is—

Mr. Rambharat: And the level three, what happens with a level three? Give me an

example of a level three.

Capt. Ret. Wint: A level three could be similar to what Dominica experienced, which would be declared a level three, to which the resources of the country have been exhausted. The Cabinet has been so advised and a national disaster is declared, which would allow the ODPM, through the Ministry, to request international assistance, regional assistance to mount a response. You can also have a localized level three. Based on the impact, again, the incident will determine that. But in best practice and the international understanding, a country's level three would be declared and that would present the avenue for regional and international assistance.

Mr. Rambharat: So an incident—I call it incident, event, disaster; it is all the same to me—it is moving. It could be level one that becomes a level two, that becomes a level three.

Capt. Ret. Wint: Correct.

Mr. Rambharat: And the ODPM is doing what at this stage? Are you monitoring?

Capt. Ret. Wint: At a level one, the ODPM, with its interagency mechanism, would be monitoring what local government is doing—

Mr. Rambharat: Well, let me ask you this—

Capt. Ret. Wint:—and therefore—

Mr. Rambharat: Is monitoring and coordination, are those not responses? Are you not responding to the event?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Member, permit me, you made the comment that incident, emergency, is all the same—

Mr. Rambharat: No, I say to me, not to you.

Capt. Ret. Wint: No, well—

Mr. Rambharat: I accept this.

Capt. Ret. Wint: Right, it is to you, and therefore, in order to permit me to clarify—

Mr. Rambharat: Let me just, before you go there, is coordination with the Defence Force and the police, is that not a response to something that is happening?

Capt. Ret. Wint: It is a response by the responsible entities in responding to the incident. The ODPM would be coordinating the response and providing the resources, or getting the resources that are required, even requested—

Mr. Rambharat: So the coordination—

Capt. Ret. Wint:—but the ODPM—and I need to take this opportunity, that the ODPM is not a response agency. The ODPM coordinates the response of the entities who have a legal responsibility.

Mr. Rambharat: I want to ask you this question. Is this why—because I go back to what I said about Dave Williams and his comments, and as unacceptable as they were, given the particular situation in the country, I said that maybe Dave Williams was representing the understanding within the ODPM. Let me finish that, because in your submission on page 6 in response to question 12, you are making it clear to this Committee, in your submission in response to the question—

Capt. Ret. Wint: I am seeing it, member.

Mr. Rambharat: Right. On page 6, you are making it clear to us that the ODPM is not a response agency as purported in the media and by comments made in the public domain. Now, the media, by your admission, and the public, have a view. I am going to just refer to a submission made to us by the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, and in their submission the Ministry is saying to us—and I read: We asked the question: What role does the regional corporation play in collaboration with the ODPM during and after flooding?

And the answer to it is:

A draft disaster plan identifies the ODPM as having a pivotal role in the disaster cycle consistent with its mandate. The ODPM activates its full response during a level three incident and takes command and control in such events. However, a level one and two are managed by the DMU of the regional corporations.

And I could understand it, that a level one, which is a localized incident, is managed by the regional corporation. You are monitoring it. It can go into a level two. But the Ministry—line Ministry—with responsibility for the municipal corporation, they are saying to this Committee that you activate a full response, and you are saying in your submission that you are not a response agency, and that tells me—I get the impression that the ODPM is a ghost. Because when you read the submission by TEMA, for example— and my colleague, Minister Franklin Khan, I have heard him say on many occasions that TEMA represents the model of disaster management and risk preparedness in the country, and TEMA is very clear in their submission. They say to us—we asked: How does TEMA differ from other agencies, local government or regional authorities in

responding to national disasters?

And TEMA says:

TEMA not only focuses on coordination but also has a response arm in the form of the Community Emergency Response Teams.

And that is something that I feel that I have to ask you about, and I have to put it for my own benefit and the benefit of my community, because I opened by taking up—and the Chairman pulled me up. But this is vital to my community and it is also vital for the Ministry I represent, that there seems—I am asking you if a problem facing the ODPM, is its view that it is not a response agency and the public and the media's view that the ODPM has a response responsibility, which is confirmed by what has been submitted to us by the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Member, let me see if I could address your issues. While the submission by local government speaks to the response framework as a level one, level two, level three, recent events, even at a level two, require the National Emergency Operations Centre to be activated to support the efforts of local government, members of the defence force being deployed, assets being deployed, resources from the ODPM warehouse being deployed to support where necessary.

While I understand your stance as far as a response, yes, it can be considered a response, but in the field of disaster risk management and by its practitioners, response has various components, and all response has to be coordinated from a central location. Any disaster management model across the world, you have your first responders, you have your operation centres, you have your incident action plan and you have responsibilities. We can take the model of FEMA. You have state, federal, local and tribal. Matched against Trinidad and Tobago, the state coordination agency, similar to FEMA, would be the ODPM.

At the local level it would be either TEMA or Tobago. Tobago has its peculiar situation and therefore TEMA is—and based on its geographic space, has to have the capacity not only to coordinate but to respond. They point that they have, even to the world's first professional and certified CERT teams. Within the municipal corporation of Trinidad and Tobago, at least 50 per cent of them have CERT—Community Emergency Response Teams that respond.

5.10 p.m.

The operational arm or the person that assists the ODPM is the first engineer battalion of the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment. We have, as the ODPM supplied the battalion with resources to respond to support local government. So if I am taking your definition as response as doing something, yes, we will respond, but we will respond by coordinating the efforts of the first responders to the impact and, therefore, the examples that you gave are all relevant but I would say with all due respect, member, it is relevant to the geographic space, the identified hazards and the resources that are available. So we will monitor. If it is escalating we go to level two. If the Ministry of Local Government has indicated that they need help and their resources cannot cope, we will then activate. If we go to a level three and we go to level two we will do the same thing. So, yes, we are responding, but we are responding coordinating the efforts of the first and support responders to the severity of the impact.

So when you are complimenting Mr. Gangapersad for the effort from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, the ODPM supports that efforts. After Bret they were short of evaluators. We coordinated and got through. The request was made from the Ministry to ODPM, I have homes to evaluate, I have no personnel. Through our response mechanism we were able to get persons from the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force and teams were deployed based on the national response framework, not only to assist the Ministry to Social Development and Family Services, but the local government in conducting the initial damage assessment to which we were able to get that situation picture and brief the other entities of what is happening.

So I will lean to say, yes, we respond, but our response is based on risk and crisis management and not on the general definition of going out there. You would not see the ODMP member out there. You will see the members from the municipal corporation, you will see members of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, the Red Cross, CEPEP. That is the response. What do they need to respond? Wheelbarrows, shovels, boots, sandbags, other personnel. We will assist them in coordinating that response. I hope I am able to satisfy—

Mr. Rambharat: Mr. Wint, I am happy for the sake of the ODPM that you have accepted that you have a response role, and let me assure you that you did not have to tell me that the ODPM people do not go out there, because I was tempted to ask when last you went out to Mayaro, Cedar Grove, Navet, Pool Valley Road? Because if the ODPM goes out

there—if these people who are costing us \$16 million a year, if they go out they will understand how people felt when Dave Williams told the country what is a big thing for you is “small thing” for me. That hurt across the country because people during Bret, during the Divali flooding, and the most recent—but those two in particular it hurt because I was there not because I am a Minister, but because I am from a community that has been hurt by these things.

Capt. Ret. Wint: Chair, member, permit me please. Col. Dave Williams did make the statement and he did apologize for the statement. However, having been a witness to the events and to the statement, that particular phrase was not captured in its entirety and permit me to comment. The question which was asked was: was the National Emergency Operations Centre activated for a big event like this? Response: if you think this is a big event this is a small event. In comparison to what was happening in Dominica and other islands. The question was related to the National Emergency Operations Centre being activated.

The response given by Col. Williams was in relation to the National Emergency Operations Centre, and therefore, his comment, which is now public knowledge, was in relation to there was not in his anticipation a need to fully occupy the National Emergency Operations Centre at Mausica or Tacarigua to coordinate the response of the entities, and a virtual activation based on our SOPs was initiated.

And therefore, while you insist on that response, yes, it hurt, but I think what contributed the hurt of everybody and I will say this, is that the comment was not publicized in the manner in which it was given and we also need to look back at his explanation of that event. I was there, that was the question asked, that was his response, and then it went out of control day after, which resulted in his tendering his resignation thereafter.

Madam Chairman: Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Chair. My question is to TEMA, maybe Ms. Agbeko or Mr. Hernandez. When was the last nature drill or simulation in Tobago; what were some of the lessons learnt; and what action has been taken thus far to implement recommendations coming out from lessons learnt?

Ms. Agbeko: Member, our last exercise—we normally do the national emergency exercise day and that was a full-scale exercise that we would have done in March of 2017. However, we do have smaller exercises that we do on a regular basis, but that was the last

major one that we did with our main stakeholders. Things that we would have noticed that we could improve upon are definitely our interagency coordination, certain things with response times and routes and so on. However, those are mechanisms that we are making sure—we have an improvement plan that we are working on at this point in time to make sure that we identify and fill all those gaps as soon as possible.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: When is your next drill planned for?

Ms. Agbeko: In accordance with Caribe Wave 2018, we are actually planning our emergency exercise on, I believe it is March 15th this year.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: So by March 15th the lessons learnt, the recommendations would have been implemented by then?

Ms. Agbeko: Definitely, because we are all about continuous improvement and we are making sure that we fill the gaps along the way so that in the event that we do have to execute and exercise, or actually respond to an incident or disaster, we are fully prepared.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay, another question. When I worked at community development I knew we had some challenges in terms of whenever we are activating the shelters, getting the keys and ensuring that the centres were fully prepared—that issue has been resolved?

Ms. Agbeko: We have worked on that. At this point in time we actually did some more training with our shelter managers so that they would understand the importance of their roles. They are just key holders. They actually have a very integral role in the community, especially being the ones who would actually activate that shelter mechanism. So we had that training with them not too long ago and we did have some activations with regard to Divali, Bret, and so on. When we did activate that we were able to have at least 18 shelters opened at any point in time because they understood the fact that they were not key holders. So a lot of those gaps are already filled.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: My other question is to the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. Tell me how you see the Ministry fitting into all this emergency response, your role, and what you are supposed to do?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Member, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, we are a second responder. Primarily we provide relief to individuals and households in terms of household items. We would also provide a clothing grant, school supplies, house rental. If the household has to move because of the event, we also provide house repairs up

to \$20,000 once we assess that the issue has to do with damage to the home, and also counselling services through our National Family Services Division. So primarily these are the services that we would provide as second responder.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: So I would have gone through your booklet, your little booklet on accessing grants and services, and at every stage you are required to bring proof, documentation. My house is flooded, I have no roof, all my paperwork is damaged, how am I going to access the assistance from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: I will ask one of my officers who actually works on the ground to speak to this issue, Mr. Gangapersad.

Mr. Gangapersad: Thank you, PS. Member, the booklet contains generally the services offered by the Ministry, and these are the requirements for the grant. In times of the disaster— these are usually not the requirements in times of disaster. Actually, what happens during times of disaster, our disaster mechanism is activated. Our officers actually go out into the field and conduct the assessment where they actually see the item that has been damaged, or in the case where the items have already been removed by the corporation they get information of such, and the relief is provided on the basis of what the officer can actually validate on the ground and not on the production of any receipts, or invoices, and stuff like that.

Madam Chairman: Member, if you just permit me one minute. I am quite mindful that the representatives of Tobago may have to catch a flight, and therefore, I think for any other questions we would have for THA or TEMA, we can send those in writing and therefore, Mr. Sandy and Mr. Hernandez, I want to thank you all for coming. At this stage we will excuse you all so that you can make your flight back to Tobago. Thank you very much.

Mr. Sandy: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

[Mr. Sandy and Mr. Hernandez depart]

Madam Chairman: Mrs. Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Madam Permanent Secretary, sorry. If in the event of a disaster I may need psychosocial intervention, how will I go about assessing that; and how long would it take before I actually receive the counselling and whatever I may require?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Psychosocial counselling services are provided by the National

Family Services Division. Generally, when we are involved in intervention with respect to disaster relief or critical incident, the persons who go to do the assessment, in doing the assessment they would also determine whether counselling is needed, and that referral would be made to the Family Services Division and an officer will intervene. Generally, once the Division receives the request they identify an officer to go in. So it should not take longer than three days. Mostly it would be by the next day if the resources are available. We do have some resource issues in the Family Services Division, so this is why I am saying generally it should be within three days that they should get that counselling.

Madam Chairman: I would just like to address the conversation to the Fire Service of Trinidad and Tobago, and in their response to the question what is the role of Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service in disaster relief, and therefore, if I am guided by the definition of Mr. Wint I would want to say in event relief. Their response was that it is the linchpin of response, and therefore, I would ask the fire service if they could develop on what they see their role as, and the relationship between themselves on the one hand and the regional corporations on the other hand in responding, and between themselves and the ODPM.

Mr. Bruce: Thank you, Madam Chair. The word “relief” really is what we are looking at. Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service does not have much of a role in disaster relief. Response yes, management yes. We coordinate with—well we use the coordination of the ODPM to respond to disasters. We were looking at the word “relief” really.

Madam Chairman: “Relief” meaning aid, that sort of thing. That is what you were looking at?

Mr. Bruce: We interpreted “relief” to mean recovery from the disaster. Relief as recovery. Now, we aid in terms of if there is flooding we go out and we pump, we work; where there are landslides we go out and we render assistance; we remove fallen trees and that kind of thing, but that really is the response. The word “relief” was not really—well, we did not really translate the word “relief” to mean the response. So maybe that is why the answer was as it was there.

Madam Chairman: So that in the terms of your response, if you can give us an idea of how is that activated; if you have any specialized units to deal with response? I mean, we tend to look at you in terms of fire, but in terms of any event, say flooding, the landslides, what then is your role in an active way?

Mr. Bruce: Right. Fire service is a unique agency in that we respond to bush fires in the

dry season, we respond to flooding in the rainy season. So we respond all the time. We have a multiple type of response. We have the Search and Rescue Unit, they are the ones who take the lead in going out where there is an incident over tough terrain, over like cliffs and that kind of thing. They will take the lead in removing fallen trees and those kinds of incidents. The general fire service will respond to the fires of different kinds, the floodings and that kind of thing.

In fact, almost any incident we have that calls for a response from agencies in Trinidad and Tobago, the fire service takes the lead and, of course, we are assisted. If the response called for overwhelms the fire service, we coordinate with the ODPM. Like, for instance, when there were major bush fires we coordinated with the ODPM to get stuff like the Bambi Buckets and that kind of thing to assist us with our bush fire response.

Madam Chairman: And in terms of responding do you have a, I want to say an all-of-fire approach, or is it limited to your various sub-quarters or divisions in the various municipalities?

Mr. Bruce: There is an all-of-fire approach. For instance, when we had a major fire in the Trincity area we called on resources from the Central Division to assist. So it is not a case that we only use the localized assets. If we need assets, we pull from anywhere. We put a coverage plan in place. So we may have to use—like in that instance we may have to use Couva or Savonetta to cover the Chaguanas area when we call assets from Chaguanas. So there is an all-of-fire approach, or all-of-fire service approach with a coverage plan in place.

Madam Chairman: And in terms of your procedures and these protocols that you referred to, protocols for various levels of emergencies, have specific contingency plans and so on, are these shared with the various other responder agencies and the regional corporations?

Mr. Bruce: Yes, as mentioned earlier, there is a regional corporation meeting that the fire service takes part in. We have a representative on the ODPM committee and we share these protocols with all our fellow agencies. In fact, we implemented from last year, every quarter there is a major simulation exercise that we share the information with the other stakeholders, and we intend, at least once per year, to do a major simulation exercise including all these stakeholders.

Madam Chairman: Now, all your protocols are they updated from time to time?

Mr. Bruce: We are in the process of putting them together in a document. We have a policy committee now developing policy for the fire service. Quite a few of the protocols

mentioned were unwritten protocols that were passed on. We are in the process of putting policy together now to document all these protocols.

Madam Chairman: And I expect this exercise has started of putting it—

Mr. Bruce: Yes.

Madam Chairman: When is it likely to be completed? Because the problem is, of course, we know all who are over a certain age know the story about Jack being a black dog, so what happens with unwritten protocols? I see you are too young to know the story with Jack being a black dog, but Mr. Wint knows quite well. So we know what happens with the spoken word being passed on from time to time, it could really very well affect the integrity of what you think are existing protocols. So how soon would this exercise with respect to it being documented and forming an operating manual, be completed?

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will take this one. Actually, I am one of the persons tasked with putting together the policies and it is a process that would have started, and as we prioritize certain items or processes to be formalized, we would have them in writing. So it is ongoing and we will be trying to cover as many of those items as possible, but it is something that would have been started already.

Madam Chairman: Asst. Chief Officer Smith, I think I see five protocols here, or standing operating procedures, or contingency plans, whichever it is, five, so let us deal with these five. When would this process of documentation be completed, of these five?

Mr. Smith: I am not quite aware of the five that you have before you, Madam. Could you please—

Madam Chairman: Okay. I will just ask maybe for you to see your submission of January 4th—and when I mean yours, fire—which is signed by the Acting Chief Fire Officer. It is dated January 04, 2018, and it says, the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service standard operating procedures and contingency plans are comprehensive and include: protocol for various levels of emergencies, hazards, specific contingency plans, mitigation and recovery operating procedures, damage assessment, emergency operation control procedures. Are these what are the unwritten protocols which are now being reduced into writing?

Mr. Bruce: Yes, Madam Chair, that is what I am referring to.

Madam Chairman: And would these then be Officer Smith what you are tasked with?

Mr. Smith: I was tasked with not quite all of these. What I was tasked with as a matter of priority, they were dealt with. So these items are yet, at least some of them to come before

me to give them that level of priority to have them done.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So again I guess I switch back now to the Acting Chief Fire Officer to find out what is the time frame for start and completion of producing a physical manual of these protocols, procedures and contingency plans?

Mr. Bruce: Thank you again, Madam Chair. Well we have various officers tasked with various parts of the plan. We are hoping that by the end of this quarter we should have drafts for each of the plans we are looking at here to put together in a comprehensive manual sometime in the second quarter of calendar 2018.

Madam Chairman: So can I commit you to 30th of June, 2018?

Mr. Bruce: You can commit me to the end of June 2018.

Madam Chairman: The 30th of June, 2018?

Mr. Bruce: The 30th of June, 2018.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Member Rambharat.

Mr. Rambharat: Mr. Bruce, I was enjoying everything you were saying. I was not planning to ask a question, but I have to. The five that are listed there, none of this is in writing?

Mr. Bruce: In terms of a comprehensive document, no. What we have—okay, take for instance the damage assessment, we use different theories to put together damage assessment. We will use the—

Mr. Rambharat: All right. Let me get straight to the point because every time I land at Piarco I see that fire station there, purpose built and staffed and everything and I am comforted. In the case of an emergency I believe that there will be a specialized response, and I imagine that all the airlines that operate and the airport itself, part of its certification process would have included that particular emergency support, and you must have provided to the satisfaction of various agencies, for example, hazard specific contingency plan. In the event of an emergency on an aircraft you have specific hazards, so that must have been documented?

Mr. Bruce: Yes. For Piarco we have documented emergency response plans. That is for Piarco and aircraft firefighting. What I am alluding to here is a general emergency response plan. We will have emergency response plans for Piarco; we will have emergency response plans for Savonetta, for Chaguanas, for Point Fortin, but in terms of a general disaster emergency response plan, that is what we are talking about in this document here.

Mr. Rambharat: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Bruce: There are written plans for specialist areas.

Mr. Rambharat: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And in terms of emergency ambulances response in the case of an event, which agency would that fall under?

Capt. Ret. Wint: Ambulance services will fall under the remit of Ministry of Health, and their contracted medical service provider being Global Medical Response of Trinidad and Tobago Ltd. And for Tobago, under the Tobago House of Assembly and its Division of Health.

Madam Chairman: And therefore, ODPM would coordinate that response?

Capt. Ret. Wint: ODPM will coordinate with the Ministry of Health and other entities based on the national ambulance directive. We may have to bring in private contractors. Again, it is also based on the need and what is required in responding to the incident.

Madam Chairman: Now, you know once upon a time some of the corporations had ambulances, does that still exist?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am, a few of the corporations, mainly the CTs, would have ambulances assigned to them.

Madam Chairman: And are they operational?

Mr. Siew: They are operational and they are staffed, but only at the first responder level. So when you start going above in terms of EMTB, EMTP, those are not well-equipped as they are assigned as basic life support. Emergency technical, paramedics as well, they do not have that facility, but they have the basic first responder services.

Madam Chairman: So that they can be used.

Mr. Siew: They are utilized in a lot of instances in different areas. For example, in Couva, they utilize it as well there. In Point Fortin, they also use them in the industrial estate as well.

Madam Chairman: Does the fire service have any ambulances?

Mr. Bruce: Yes, we have an ambulance service in the fire service with ambulance station throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Chairman: So is that available for a response to an event, and what level of event?

Mr. Bruce: We have officers trained to the level of EMT. At present, we are going

through some teething problems with the new emergency ambulance Act and meeting all the dictates of the Act, but we have ambulances, we have persons trained to the level of EMT. Some persons need to be recertified. We are working on recertifying and meeting the dictates of the ambulance Act, but, yes, we have ambulances.

Madam Chairman: So it is quite possible that you may not be able to use your ambulance to respond because you are not compliant with the dictates of the Act.

Mr. Bruce: We are working on getting it. There may be a possibility that we may not have responses in all areas, but that is being worked on at present.

Madam Chairman: You could give me an idea of the time frame that you feel that you would be compliant so that your service will be fully available if required?

Mr. Bruce: We have asked for a legal opinion on the point that we are sticking on, and I am hoping to get that legal opinion before the end of this week so that we can put things in place to be fully—

Madam Chairman: So what I will ask Officer Bruce, I will not ask you to share the point here with us, but I will ask you if in writing you can share the point, the issue with the Committee Okay?

Mr. Bruce: Certainly, I will.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. And by way of winding-up I just want to ask some questions. I think Mr. Siew you might be person to answer these questions for me, and it is really—in the response from the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government you all talked about this CERT Programme, I also saw something about—what is it called?—something volunteer—network of volunteer programme.

Mr. Siew: The National Volunteer Network, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Are they the same programme?

Mr. Siew: No, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: They are two different programmes?

Mr. Siew: Yes.

Madam Chairman: What is the distinction?

5.40 p.m.

Mr. Siew: All right, the CERT programme is one that is geared towards training persons in the community to respond in times of an emergency or a hazard. All right? The volunteer network is a mechanism that we are using to recruit volunteers under the

Ministry in the 14 corporations so that those persons who are recruited can now be trained as CERT members to assist in the response mechanisms.

Madam Chairman: So CERT members, the CERT programme, those people are not volunteers?

Mr. Siew: Yes, they are volunteers in Trinidad. However, in Tobago, they are not. Mr. Hernandez.

Madam Chairman: No, just before we go to Tobago. So you have the CERT programme?

Mr. Siew: Yes, we have CERT programmes in the 14 corporations.

Madam Chairman: Who are volunteers?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: That you have trained?

Mr. Siew: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Per corporation?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am. Per community.

Madam Chairman: These volunteers would have been identified by councillors?

Mr. Siew: By councillors and members of the community. So we are looking at faith-based organizations, we are looking at CBOs, we are looking at NGOs. We are also going to schools and we are doing the trainings in the schools. As member would have spoken about, we need to get the information to the kids so that they can now take it into the homes and this is the line that we are focusing on. We have geared the CERT programme as well towards the deaf and the hard of hearing and the visually impaired so we are working on that to make sure that all components of the communities are taken care of.

Madam Chairman: All right. So the people who are trained under the CERT, they are expected to respond to assist the agencies as a result of an event?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am. We utilize the CERT volunteers and the CERT members to respond in the event of any hazard.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So let me ask you, these CERT-trained people become a team?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Is there a stipulated number of members to a team?

Mr. Siew: Basically we look at 12 persons, however we have one person who is geared towards radio communications, two of them who are medical operations, we have another

one who is logistics. All of them are incorporated. However, we cross-train each of them, so in the event of an emergency, we happen to lose one, the others will pick up the slack.

Madam Chairman: All right, so you usually have teams of 12.

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Let me ask something. There are specific numbers of teams per corporation—

Mr. Siew: Each corporation.

Madam Chairman:—or is there a flat number?

Mr. Siew: No, there are specific numbers to each—it varies. It depends on the way that they would draft the persons in at the end of the day. But each corporation has—

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but what I am saying is—no, is there a desired? So let us say Mayaro is a very large area geographically and may not be as densely populated, let us say, as Diego Martin. Would you then, therefore, take into account population density, geographic spans to determine what would be a desirable number of teams?

Mr. Siew: Yes, that is done. We actually use the topography, the geography and as well as the population density to identify the amount of persons that we would need to develop the teams in each of the regions.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So in each of the corporations, do you have the desired number of teams and the desired number of persons per team?

Mr. Siew: At this present time, we do. However, we are always looking at increasing the capacity in terms of response and developing the mechanisms in each of the 14 corporations.

Madam Chairman: All right. And when last would you have trained teams or persons?

Mr. Siew: You would have recalled, persons may recall the incident where we had vehicles turned over on the highway where we blocked, that was a result of a CERT training that was done. We have taken into consideration hazmat situations.

Madam Chairman: When was that?

Mr. Siew: That was in October.

Madam Chairman: Of 2017?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am. But we had another situation we did in the Point Lisas area where we had an explosion of an oil tanker on the road. Again, the CERT volunteers were responsible for responding in times of that together with Fire Service and other agencies.

Madam Chairman: Okay, thank you. All right. So the network of volunteers, would I be correct to say that that is just a different mechanism for recruitment of people for CERT?

Mr. Siew: All right. We have the standard operating procedures of recruiting volunteers, yes. However, we tend to lose the volunteers trickling out at any given time. The network is now geared towards keeping these volunteers with us, keeping them on a database so we would know exactly where we have the guy with the chainsaw, where we have the guy with the boats, where we have the guys who can do EMT programmes. So this is what the volunteer network database is going to do for us at the 14 regional corporations.

Madam Chairman: Outside of San Fernando City Corporation, has the network been established in any other?

Mr. Siew: Yes, it has been established in all 14 of the corporations. We are looking at from Diego Martin all the way to Sangre Grande, from Tunapuna/Piarco all the way down to Point Fortin. Each programme was launched individually in each of the 14 corporations and it was handed over to the corporations now to start developing on that with the database that was developed by the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And when was that? Because it might have been a misreading of the submission which is dated January the 5th which gave the impression that it was only implemented, tested and tried in San Fernando. I am seeing regional corporation but I think that is a city corporation.

Mr. Siew: San Fernando was the actual pilot project that was done last year, early last year and then from there, we took it to the other corporations: Sangre Grande, Tunapuna/Piarco, San Juan/Laventille.

Madam Chairman: And Diego Martin.

Mr. Siew: And Diego Martin.

Madam Chairman: Right. Might I ask Members if there are any other questions? Because it is now 5.45 so I think now is really a good time to bring this very enlightening discussion to an end. I want to thank all the members from the various organizations for coming and staying and enlightening both the Committee and the members of the public about a very sensitive discussion. I am sure Mr. Wint, we were all very much educated by disaster, event, incident and emergency and I think, maybe, a lot of our expectations are really based on a misunderstanding of those definitions. But as you say, the education

continues.

Again, I want to thank you all. I want to thank the members of the media and the members of the listening public who followed us, who sent in questions. I want to wish you all a safe journey home and thank you. I now bring this meeting to a close. Thank you very much.

5:47 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*

**VERBATIM NOTES OF THE TWENTY-FIRST PUBLIC MEETING OF THE
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, HELD IN
THE ARNOLD THOMASOS (EAST), (IN CAMERA), AND THE 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
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 2018, AT 2.37 P.M.**

PRESENT

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Mr. Clarence Rambharat	Member
Mr. Ronald Huggins	Member
Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine	Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	Member
Mr. Wade Mark	Member
Ms. Sheranne Samuel	Assistant Secretary

ABSENT

Dr. Lackram Bodoë	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Daniel Dookie	Member
Ms. Jennifer Raffoul	Member
Ms. Nicole Olivierre	Member
Ms. Melissa Ramkissoon	Member

**MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Ms. Desdra Bascombe	Permanent Secretary
Mr. Rishi Siew	Senior Disaster
Management Coordinator	
Ms. Nilliufa Suzanne Ali	Ag. Accounting Executive II

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

Ms. Vashti Shrikrisen-Singh	Deputy Permanent Secretary
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OFFICE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND MANAGEMENT

Mr. Dennis Marcelle	Information Technology Infrastructure Specialist
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Ms. Denise Anderson

Regional Coordinator for the
Preparedness Response Unit (PRU)

Ms. Franchesca Peters

Training and Education Specialist

Madam Chairman: Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to the representatives of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, the Ministry of National Security and the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management. Welcome to the members of the media and welcome to the members of the listening and viewing public. I am Bridgid Annisette-George, the Chairman of the Committee on Public Administration and Appropriations of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Committee on Public Administration and Appropriations has a mandate to consider and report to the House on:

- (a) the budgetary expenditure of the Government agencies to ensure that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval;
- (b) the budgetary expenditure of government agencies as it occurs and keeps Parliament informed of how the budget allocation is being implemented; and
- (c) the administration of government agencies to determine hindrances to their efficiency and to make recommendations to the Government for the improvement of Public Administration.

The purpose of this 21st public meeting of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee for the Eleventh Parliament is to continue its enquiry into the administration of disaster relief in Trinidad and Tobago. The Committee is desirous of hearing from the relevant stakeholders to discover further challenges being faced by the agencies involved in the administration of disaster relief in Trinidad and Tobago. The Committee hopes that this meeting will be fruitful and shall provide workable solutions for the improvement of the administration of disaster relief.

The meeting is being held in public and is being broadcast live on the Parliament's Channel 11, radio 105.5 FM and the Parliament's YouTube channel, *ParlView*. Viewers and listeners can send their comments related to today's enquiry via email to parl101@ttparliament.org, Facebook\TTParliament and Twitter @ttparliament.

I will now invite the representatives from the Ministry of National Security, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management and from the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government to introduce themselves, and maybe we can start with the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

[Introductions made]

Ms. Bascombe: I have two officers here to support this initiative this afternoon.

Madam Chairman: Ministry of National Security.

[Introduction made]

Mrs. Shrikrisen-Singh: I shall ask my team from the ODPM to introduce themselves.

[Introductions made]

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, and now may I invite members of the Committee to introduce themselves starting at my extreme right.

[Introductions made]

Madam Chairman: The Committee is ably assisted by its Assistant Secretary Ms. Sheranne Samuel and also its Research Officers Ms. Rachel Nunes and Mr. Brian Lucio.

To lead off the discussion, I will call upon member Rambharat.

Mr. Rambharat: Thank you, Chair. I will direct the first question to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

On the last occasion we spent a lot of time with the ODPM, and we did not ask much of Rural Development, but we want to lead off today recognizing that at that enquiry on that day and since then, we have satisfied ourselves that Rural Development plays a very critical role since you are the entity that is closest to affected areas, and you have some level of response capability.

We also believe that a lot of people do not understand, one, the role the different entities play. So, for example, the role of the Disaster Management Unit in the corporation and the overarching responsibility. So, one, what does everybody do, starting with you individually, and who coordinates disaster relief. I just want to clarify that while we focus on disaster relief, we also recognize that forward planning is an element that contributes to our ability to respond and provide relief. So the question is to understand the role of the Ministry's disaster response mechanism and your understanding of how it is all coordinated at a national level.

Ms. Bascombe: Thank you very much. I will start with the organizational structure of the Disaster Management Unit in head office, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. We have one position of Chief Disaster Management Coordinator and one position of Senior Disaster Management Coordinator. Only the post of Senior Disaster Management Coordinator is currently filled. That person has overarching

responsibility for policy development, strategy development to guide the activities of the regional corporations.

We have Disaster Management Units in each of the 14 regional corporations, headed by a Disaster Management Coordinator and two field officers per corporation. I will now ask our Senior Disaster Management Coordinator, Mr. Siew, to drill down into the specific roles of each of the entities.

Mr. Siew: Thank you, Madam PS. The roles and functions of the Disaster Management Units of the 14 regional corporations are basically guided by the disaster management cycle where we would have the impact, the preparedness, the mitigation and the recovery aspect of the disaster management cycle. The 14 corporations are now responsible for that entire cycle.

So we cut trees, for example, mitigating against any hazards that may occur with trees. We also monitor watercourses. We also help out and assist in terms of providing machinery for the cleaning of watercourses, some minor watercourses, in the event of blockage and that kind of thing.

The Disaster Management Unit at the Ministry is responsible for coordinating all aspects of disaster management response within the Ministry. So the Disaster Management Coordinator, the senior coordinator, is responsible for the 14 officers who are based at the regional corporations together with the 28 field officers and the 14 communications officers.

We have an integrated communications system as well set up within the 14 communications, in the event that cellphones go down, we have radio communication as well. We also utilize other entities, for example, REACT, the Amateur Radio Associations, in the event that something should happen.

Also we have the CERT volunteers based within the 14 regional corporations as an ongoing process. We start with the basic CERT training which develops the persons to respond, medical response one and two, psychosocial support as well as basic search and rescue features as well implemented in this training. So each one of the corporations is responsible for developing and maintaining that batch of CERT volunteers.

We also have a new initiative started with the Ministry as well under the guidance of the PS, where we have a volunteer network now being set up within the 14 corporations. So we will no longer have to worry about holding on to the volunteers. We keep them

together with us, we work with them and we keep enabling them as we go along.

Mr. Rambharat: Is there a national coordination taking place?

Mr. Siew: There is a national coordination taking place under the auspices of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management. We work alongside with them in terms of providing relief recovery as well as mitigation aspects. The reporting mechanism goes towards the ODPM where we will report every single incident and every single item that takes place within the regional corporation.

Mr. Huggins: Good day. You mentioned the 28 field officers across the corporations. That number is correct?

Mr. Siew: Yes.

Mr. Huggins: What is the role of the field officer?

Mr. Siew: The field officers' job description basically states where they go out into the field. They accumulate information. They do DAN assessments, IDA assessments. Sorry, initial damage assessments, damage and needs assessments. They go out and they meet and they greet with the public, the members of the communities.

We also involve them in training as well. So they will go into the public and meet with the burgesses and train these persons to become more resilient in the event of an emergency. They also have the portfolio of the filing in the office, making sure that the operations of the Disaster Management Units within are done in accordance. We have two of the field officers positioned at each of the 14 corporations, hence the 28 persons.

Mr. Huggins: I have a report in front of me here that says there is one field officer in Diego Martin and there is one field officer in Port of Spain, and in Siparia there are no field officers.

Mr. Siew: That has since changed as of last month. The interviews were completed and the field officers have now been enshrined within the system of the regional corporations, the cities and the boroughs. So it has changed and everybody is filled now, Sir.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Where does the role of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government end and the role of the ODPM begins in disaster relief?

Mr. Siew: Good day, Sir. The Disaster Management Unit of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is responsible basically for the level 1 and level 2s that will take place within each of the regions. When we escalate into a level 3, this is where the activation of the ODPM takes place, and they will step in, for example, external

interventions or interventions with the other agencies, for example, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force. This is where the ODPM will come in to disaster management. Level 1 and level 2, the regional corporations can handle that on their own, even if we need to use a brother/sister system, in terms of responding.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: You are saying that the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is responsible for levels 1 and 2?

Mr. Siew: Yes Sir.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: And ODPM is responsible for level 3?

Mr. Siew: As long as it goes into a level 3 and we are unable to cope with that, the mechanism of the ODPM then kicks in.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: What is the difference between level 2 and level 3?

Mr. Siew: Again, it will be the severity and the amount of persons impacted that will determine whether or not—for example if we get, let us say for a Bret, that was a level 1, level 2, in some areas. We did not go into a level 3, however, it exceeded the capacity of the regional corporation that was impacted in the southern area. We had to ask for assistance from the ODPM to assist us with that, in terms of the military to go in with the high trucks to get the relief items to the persons there.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: I have before me the National Response Framework, December 2010. Is this the same response framework that we are using, or has that been upgraded as the case may be?

Mr. Siew: That has been upgraded somewhat, but we still have the basic fundamentals of that framework. We now use also the Sendai framework. We have gone away from that.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: There is a little confusion on my part, because at level 3 it says here in the framework, “Should the national resources become overwhelmed, the President will declare a national emergency. In such a scenario though, the ODPM through the Ministry of National Security, Foreign Affairs and Finance will coordinate the acquisition of regional and international systems”. So according to this, level 3 is only when the President gets involved and declares an emergency?

Mr. Siew: Yes, and we cannot handle from the regional corporations.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: So up until this point in time, we have not had a level 3?

Mr. Siew: No, Sir.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: So then up until this point in time, ODPM is absolved from any co-

ordinations so far?

Mr. Siew: We will not say that they are absolved, Sir, what we would say is that they are there to assist us in the event of an emergency. We work hand in hand with the ODPM. We work hand in hand in collaborating with them to make sure that we get the resources. Some of the resources that we may need from the regional corporations we may not have at the time, so we will draw down on the system of the ODPM to assist in terms of that.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Siew, for the understanding of the listening public, could you give—and I do not know if it exists on maybe your website or ODPM or somebody—what is a level 1? It is okay to look at it in terms of resources, but for the resident in a community who might be flooding, who might have the threat of a landslip, that is a level 10 for them. But for us, we keep getting this in terms of your resources and your ability to handle. What is that in terms of some kind of measure that the ordinary citizen could understand? That look, if I see this or this happens, that happens, I know it is a level 1, okay, or I know it is a level 2, or I know it is a level 3?

Mr. Siew: All right, good. So we will start off the discussions by saying that a disaster is anything that exceeds the capacity of the person affected to cope with it. That is what the definition of a disaster is in the ideal world.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so let me ask you something. It means then, it is a subjective standard?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: So therefore, in different communities or in different households in the same community, it could be a disaster or not?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am. For example, let us say in the Oropune area, we would have the lower part of Oropune being flooded four feet of water at any given time in the event of an emergency. But the upper part of it would only have like two to three inches of water. So we will categorize the level 1 starting at the top, but as we go in to the community and we start identifying the streets, this is where the initial damage assessment would be done. We will start deciding whether or not we should escalate the response mechanism so soon.

Madam Chairman: But you spoke about it, if I remember well, in terms of the person's ability to cope. So let us take your particular community that you have identified. In one house my neighbour is a single parent working in a very menial job, in my household it is two public servants, we would have a different capacity.

Mr. Siew: A different coping mechanism and capacity; yes, Ma'am.

2.55 p.m.

Madam Chairman: So that what is a disaster for my neighbour living 10 feet away would not be classified as a disaster for me.

Mr. Siew: No, Ma'am, not necessarily. It depends on the person's capability and ability to cope with the emergency. This is how we would classify it. So, for example, we go into a community and we see a person who is affected, who is differently abled, for example, that person will definitely receive the full brunt of the assistance of the Disaster Management Unit as opposed to someone who can basically walk out of the system on their own.

Madam Chairman: So let me ask you something. That is your understanding and I am sure a lot of us might be educated by that. How is the public informed of that? So that I know in my community, I am seeing 10 feet of water but the assistance I am getting is very different from the assistance my neighbour is getting because I am classified differently.

Mr. Siew: The Disaster Management Unit will prioritize when they get on site. So again the IDA is done, the Initial Damage Assessment is done and we will prioritize as to who would need the assistance firstly. So it is called the first triage in the instance.

Madam Chairman: So you do not take into the ability to cope with my financial resources and so on, because that is not visible.

Mr. Siew: That is not visible at that time. We deal with what we have at the end of the day, the tangibles that we have at the end of that day. This is what we need to respond to. So this is what we do. So we would know whether or not we call in the fire service or we call in the search and rescue department, for example, to assist with that.

Madam Chairman: If you could just repeat that, I am lost at the end of day. I am really lost, so that there is 10 feet of water but I have a ladder and my neighbour does not ask you, so you are calling the fire services for them, you do not call in for me.

Mr. Siew: We would call in for the entire neighbourhood but when they reach there they will prioritize according to the severity and the more impacted persons.

Madam Chairman: “Oh”, so that depending on how I could cope, is not that it is a disaster, depending on how I can cope you will determine priority with respect to the response. Okay, so define for me again what is a disaster in light of the discussion?

Mr. Siew: This is what we have on paper. A disaster is classified as any event that takes place that exceeds the capacity of the person to cope with it.

Mr. Mark: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. May I ask the Deputy Permanent Secretary, National Security, is there a contingency or national emergency fund that is housed within the budgetary allocation of the Ministry of National Security?

Ms. Shrikrisen-Singh: No, member, we do not have a fund such as that.

Mr. Mark: So can you advise this Committee whether you are aware of any agency coming under national security that would have any allocation to address national emergencies, contingencies or disasters that may occur in the country?

Ms. Shrikrisen-Singh: I am not aware of any under our Ministry.

Mr. Mark: And seeing that the ODPM would be falling under your Ministry and they are the center of activity in terms of coordinating national disasters, may I ask someone from the ODPM Office, is there an allocation that we can see building up over a period of time that would be used whenever a disaster occurs, be it an earthquake or a significant magnitude, whether it is a hurricane between three and five or just between two and five in terms of the category, as examples. Do we have any fund established for that?

Mr. Marcelle: Member, not under the Ministry of National Security but under the National Emergency Operations Centre we have a function, an emergency support function for finance, which is led by the Ministry of Finance. When national resources of funds from the national purse has to be drawn down the representative from the Ministry of Finance will reach into that Ministry and they can allocate funding either by shifting from various agencies or different Ministries to assist in the finance, if those events do occur.

Mr. Mark: From your experience and knowledge of how national disaster management bodies

operate on a global basis or scale, would you agree with me that there is need for a specific allocation that can be built up over a period of time, specifically dedicated to disaster management rather than something occurring and we have to run to the Ministry of Finance and they would try to get from here or there or wherever they can. What would you advise, given your own experience in the field of technology, your knowledge of disaster management and the international best practice?

Mr. Marcelle: From the international point of view we have interacted with agencies who, some do have that fund and then some would rely either on their state or their government to provide the additional funding. All things being equal, it would be nice for us to draw down on an emergency fund directly from the Ministry or somewhere else during times of emergency, especially to support local government, rural development and other agencies. If that can be done it would be beneficial to both us and the wider community.

Mr. Mark: Would you feel comfortable in recommending to this Committee that such a proposal be considered by this Committee?

Mr. Marcelle: I think it is a good proposal. It is something that definitely we can explore, or should be explored. There are constraints right now on finances, but if we can explore it and see what can be made available, as you said we can start small and build, it would be an asset towards all members.

Mr. Mark: All right. Madam Chair, may I go back to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

Madam Chairman: Just one minute, member Mark. Member Antoine—all right, you can proceed.

Mr. Mark: I just wanted to ask maybe Mr. Rishi or the Permanent Secretary, we talked about the disaster manager and the two field assistants in the 14 regional corporations, municipalities and the rest. Can you definitively inform this Committee whether all these positions are filled? I am not just talking about the disaster manger that you referred to earlier, but you said earlier on that there is a disaster manager in each corporation along with two field officers or assistants. Do we have vacancies in those areas or are these areas fully manned to deal with any eventuality?

Mr. Siew: Member, the position of Disaster Coordinators for the 14 regional corporations are filled as of two months ago, as well as the field officers positions are also filled.

Mr. Mark: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Might I just ask, Mr. Siew, as far as the coordinators, how many are provided per corporation, one?

Mr. Siew: One coordinator per regional corporation, city or borough.

Madam Chairman: Right, okay. And might I ask something in terms of the field officers. Would these field officers be people who reside within the regions that they are assigned to?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am. We have positioned persons strategically according to their living location via our utmost—

Madam Chairman: So your position in terms of the area under your jurisdiction is related to where you reside?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: In all 14?

Mr. Siew: As far as we could possibly do because of the fact of the employment scheme that we have had and the matrix we have had. We recently had to just shift around one or two of them a little bit, but other than that all the others are properly well taken care of.

Madam Chairman: But for two, would it be two persons or two corporations or two regions that you have that mismatch?

Mr. Siew: Two persons, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Two persons. And where is this, may I ask?

Mr. Siew: One would be in the Diego Martin, your area as well and the other one would be in the Port of Spain area, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: All right, and as far as the communications technicians in all the regional corporations, that office is filled?

Mr. Siew: We have a position of four officers that still need to be filled. However, the shortlisting was done last week and the interviews are carded for the following week.

Madam Chairman: So that you expect that shortly, every regional corporation would have a communications technician?

Mr. Siew: We are pushing to have all the positions filled before the start of the wet season, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: When is that?

Mr. Siew: That is soon.

Madam Chairman: When is that?

Mr. Siew: We are looking at the 5th of June, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: The 5th of June, thank you.

Mr. Huggins: Through you, Madam Chair, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, one of the requirements that you mentioned in terms of being able to properly assess the regional corporations is integrated financial management system. How would that work in your opinion to better assess the performance of the corporations.

Ms. Bascombe: Okay, if we had an integrated financial management system in existence then I as the Permanent Secretary would be able to log on to my laptop or tablet and get real time information on the expenditure and expenditure patterns of the corporation. The current system is, it is really devolved. We have the CEO in charge of a corporation and that person is a mini accounting officer. So any expenditure under \$300,000 is approved by the CEO. And when we get the financial statements in the Ministry, which could be months after, then we would realize what kind of expenditure is taking place in the corporations. But if it was integrated it would be real time.

Mr. Huggins: So what specific challenges does the non-existence of that system pose to you at present?

Ms. Bascombe: Just in terms of monitoring and evaluating the expenditure of the corporations as it happens, instead of waiting on meetings and reports and budget preparations and achievement reports which are post facto.

Mr. Huggins: So what steps are being taken to remedy that though?

Ms. Bascombe: Well, that falls under the purview of the Ministry of Finance and I know they have restarted the conversation about implementing that system.

Mr. Huggins: So in terms of the integrated financial management system, what are the shortcomings you see in terms of what is identified in the *State Enterprise Performance Monitoring Manual*?

Ms. Bascombe: Okay. The state enterprise performance management system, it is a very robust monitoring and evaluation system, but as I explained in my submission, because of the decentralized nature of the Ministry where we have—something that came to 15 accounting officers, I am the chief accounting officer as the PS, but remember I told you that the CEOs

have a certain level of authority and autonomy and money to approve. So if in an ideal world we could get real time information, but to get around the shortcomings of the system, we usually meet with the CEOs; we try to meet with them on a regular basis. Both the Minister and I visit each statutory meeting of the corporations, the last Wednesday of each month, and because of the local government reform initiative, both members of the public and members of the media are invited to these stat meetings. And at these meetings the Minutes of all the meetings that took place within the corporation during the month are tabled, so we get first-hand information of what is happening in each corporation.

Mr. Huggins: Okay. So the 300,000 is per project?

Ms. Bascombe: Per project.

Mr. Huggins: And is there a limit on the number of projects these CEOs can approve?

Ms. Bascombe: No, it just depends on what their allocation was for that financial year. So if under disaster management they got 500,000 for the year then hopefully they would not do one and a half projects but they will break it up into small projects to better serve the needs of their burgesses.

Madam Chairman: Madam PS, just for my clarification. All the regional corporations have their statutory meetings on the same day?

Ms. Bascombe: Yes. The last Wednesday of each month.

Madam Chairman: So that, I heard you say that you and the Minister visit the regional corporations. This is on a cycle, a rotation or—

Ms. Bascombe: On a rotation cycle, yes.

Madam Chairman: So you do not go to all 14.

Ms. Bascombe: No, no, not all—

Madam Chairman: Because your submission gives that kind of impression, so that you would do it on a rotation basis.

Ms. Bascombe: And we do two each month. So one would be 10.00 a.m. in the morning and the other one would be at 1.30 p.m., so each month we would do two corporations.

Madam Chairman: So that, therefore, in the month of March, which would have been the corporations you all would have visited?

Ms. Bascombe: Unfortunately we did not visit any in March because we had another urgent matter to deal with.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so you visited in February?

Ms. Bascombe: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Which were the two?

Ms. Bascombe: We did Penal/Debe and Princes Town.

Madam Chairman: And therefore at the end of this month, you are carded to do whom?—or they do not know, you just turn up.

Ms. Bascombe: “Oh”, no, no, no.

Madam Chairman: Because if they could just turn up we do not want to know.

Ms. Bascombe: No, we do not just turn up. In fact, we inform the chair and CEO. We propose to do Couva and Chaguanas.

Madam Chairman: Couva and Chaguanas?

Ms. Bascombe: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Now, I also heard you in terms of, you know, sort of the oversight and the monitoring, speak about the members of the media and the members of the public being invited. What has been your experience with that in terms of attendance?

Ms. Bascombe: It varies by corporations. In the more rural corporations, we would see a greater attendance of members of the public to the stat meetings because it is a closer-knit community. In fact, when we visited Siparia the room was full and the media was well represented and persons actually asked questions because they wanted to know what is happening in their communities and what their corporation can do for them. In fact, before I came to this meeting today, we were in Princes Town looking at the PSIP, Public Sector Investment Programme projects that are currently in progress and that we plan to do for the rest of this fiscal.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but that was not a stat meeting?

Ms. Bascombe: No, that was not a stat meeting, but it was still a meeting and greeting with the public to keep them informed.

Madam Chairman: All right. So that your experience is that in the more urban centres and I guess the boroughs, you do not see that?

Ms. Bascombe: Not as much as in the rural communities.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So let us say, for instance, the last time you went to Diego Martin, how many people you would say for burgesses would have been present?

Ms. Bascombe: Only about 10 persons.

Madam Chairman: Only about 10. Okay. What you see in the rural communities, is that something desirable?

Ms. Bascombe: Definitely.

Madam Chairman: Are there any plans or programmes geared to target a greater, I do not want to say interest, but presence of persons in the more urban areas and the boroughs.

Ms. Bascombe: Okay, we plan to have some outreach seminars in each of the regional corporations to meet and treat with the burgesses. The Minister has also been encouraging the Councillors and Aldermen to go out and listen to what the residents and burgesses are requesting.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but I am not talk about going out. I am talking about coming to your statutory meetings. Going out is one sort of outreach, but we are talking now about bringing members of the public into their statutory meetings where they observe the working of their corporations, where according to you the very reports and so on are tabled. Are there any plans, not discussions, but plans targeted at corporations to get that greater participation by their burgesses?

Ms. Bascombe: It varies among the various corporations but, yes, some persons have been using social media as a means of advertising, when is their stat meetings and even filming part of the stat meetings to advertise what happened the month before. So there are plans but it varies among the various corporations.

Madam Chairman: I am asking from your level of the Ministry.

Ms. Bascombe: From our perspective? We have been lending support to the various chairmen and CEOs as best we could. We are making suggestions and asking them to do some things, sometimes simply as early advertisement of your stat meeting. Because as a member of a community that is not your first priority when your corporation would have your stat meeting. So with early advertisement, with the use of miking systems. You can plan your work life accordingly to get time off to attend a stat meeting, because it is during working hours, 10.00 a.m. and 1.30 p.m.

Madam Chairman: And have you seen any improvement or have you any method of evaluating and monitoring, whether this is taking place and the results.

Ms. Bascombe: I would like to look at that over a longer period of time to notice any trend.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so you give me a period of time so that when we bring you back here we could know what to ask you.

Ms. Bascombe: Seeing that we have, we visit two corporations per month and we have 14 corporations, we are looking at seven months there. So we can have this conversation same time next year.

Madam Chairman: Or less than seven months, in the next quarter?

Ms. Bascombe: Okay.

Madam Chairman: All right, let me ask you one other thing PS. In terms of your submission, you referred to your submission, we had asked a question: Are the municipal corporations financial report submitted to the Ministry in a timely manner? Provide the dates for the last report submission by each corporation. I think that your answer was that the expenditure statements are submitted to the Budget Division, Ministry of Finance on a monthly basis while financial reports are submitted on an annual basis. The dates for the last financial report submitted by the corporations I think shall be forwarded at a later date. Have we—

Ms. Bascombe: It was forwarded. Are you in receipt of it?

Madam Chairman: I will ask them to check.

Ms. Bascombe: It looks like this. [*Displays document to members of the Committee*]

Madam Chairman: It was forwarded how, electronically?

Ms. Bascombe: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: All right, so well maybe you could provide it to us again as you have a hard copy. Okay, thank you. Member Antoine.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of National Security is the accounting officer for the Ministry. I just need some clarification here. In your response you said there are no state agencies under the purview of the Ministry of National Security which are recipients of disbursements of disaster relief. What is your term limit for “state agencies”? Who you are speaking about when you say “state agencies”?

Ms. Shrikrisen-Singh: Well member, the question was asked whether we had state agencies, but we do not have state agencies under the Ministry of National Security. We have divisions of the Ministry.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: So that response was in terms of the specific question?

Ms. Shrikrisen-Singh: Yes.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Under the Ministry of National Security you have the fire service, you have the defence force and you are the accounting officer for these units?

Ms. Shrikrisen-Singh: Yes.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Are there any disbursements of disaster relief funding to these?

Ms. Shrikrisen-Singh: No.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: So then where do these institutions: defence force, the fire service, who are first responders, where do they get funding for the disaster relief?

Ms. Shrikrisen-Singh: It would be part of their regular routine to respond. The ODPM gets a subvention and from that they apportion part of their moneys for supplies, but that is the only thing that I know that—

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Let me turn it around in a different way. Part of the submission that you all give was in terms of shelters and you said that some relief items are prepositioned, there are no relief items in the shelters. You said that. But you said some relief items are prepositioned in suboffices of the regional corporations, UWI, community-based organizations, some police stations. Who determines what relief items are needed throughout Trinidad and Tobago and who determines what items are stored where and in what quantities? Who determines that?

Ms. Shrikrisen-Singh: I shall ask the ODPM to respond to that, member.

Mr. Marcelle: Member, with respect to shelters, I would probably ask Mr. Siew if he could provide some more information on that since the purview of the shelter and the stocking of the shelters initially would be part of rural development, that Ministry.

With respect to the ODPM, we do support the municipal corporations. We have done that in the past by providing relief items to them so that they can get response quicker to persons who have been impacted and there is a level of relief supplies that the ODPM will keep in its warehouse.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: So—[*Inaudible*—]—to rural development then. What relief items are prepositioned in your suboffices and who stocks them? Where is the funding coming from for the stocking of these items in the regional corporations, et cetera?

Mr. Siew: All right, member, pleasant good day again. Each of the 14 corporations Disaster Management Unit has a recurrent fund that they would use to purchase these items. The items are positioned in different areas, for example, in one corporation we have in a rural area, up at the Maracas area, some we have in Moruga, other areas as well in Point Fortin. These items

were positioned in accordance with historical data. For example, we knew what would take place in—let us say, for example, Diego Martin. We know exactly where it is going to get flood. From the time the rain starts we know where is going to be impacted. So we know the amount of persons that reside there. We have an idea of how much they would need, what they would need. So we use this historical data to provide the list of items that would be positioned at the different locations.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Is anybody responsible for checking to make sure that in truth and in fact if they say that they have X in so place that X is there? Is it done on a regular basis? Is it done seasonal as the case may be?

Mr. Siew: It is done regularly, as regular as quarterly and each of the regional corporations Disaster Management Coordinator has to supply me with a list, a checklist, signed off by the field officers as well as the coordinators as to the quantity. There is a drawdown system which we have in place. It is called the bin card. So when you go into the sub office or you go into one of the containers you will use the drawdown system and the card system to take away from what you have. So it is monitored on a quarterly basis by the Ministry.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: And apart from the relief supplies now in the regional corporation, does the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government have its own warehouse, with its own supplies so that it can refill the regional corporations if, for whatever disaster takes place, they need to get additional supplies? Is that available at this point in time?

Mr. Siew: It is not available at this time. However, the discussions have been going on and the plans are being put in place to set up two systems. One is a virtual warehousing and the other one is a warehouse that will actually stock tangible items. All right. The Ministry as well, and through discussions and plans, we are looking at setting up a fund called the DREF fund.

Madam Chairman: The what fund?

Mr. Siew: A DREF fund. It is a discussion that we have been having amongst the PS, the Minister, as well as our financial person in terms of putting. We just need to work out the logistics for that and that DREF fund is a Disaster Response Emergency Fund. So we are looking at that as well. In terms of the tangible things that we have within the corporation, we do not have an actual warehouse at this time.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Can you give me a time frame when this DREF fund or whether, when a

warehouse would come—

Mr. Siew: We have the facility in terms of storing. However, we are in the process of getting three quotations for different items.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Siew, I just wanted to find out, just going back a bit. In terms of—I had heard you mention that the National Response Framework was updated by the Sendai framework. So is there a document showing the changes that were made to incorporate—

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Yes, and is that available?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Could that be made available to us please.

Mr. Siew: Definitely, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: And seeing that we are talking about the Sendai framework, to me one of the important pillars of it is recovery better. And in terms of the discussion we were just having, in terms of providing the relief to say flood-prone victims and so on, and the drawdown system you have, is there in your whole system of providing relief any factor for building in risk and recovering better? So, for instance, I want to specifically know, if I were flooded last year and I was able to get relief, mattress whatever, whatever, and I am flooded again this year, do I qualify?

Mr. Siew: No. That would have to come under the purview of Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. However, we have been told that there is a three-year period where you can claim. In terms of building back better and more resilient communities, the Ministry has embarked on a project called the Hurricane Strap Project. This project goes into the communities that are—persons who have lost their roofs and instead of just putting back on a roof, we now show these persons and they will actually do it together with us, how to install the hurricane straps on to the homes, building back better as we would say.

Madam Chairman: Okay. But you have sent me to the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. But in term of the relief that the Disaster Management Units in the 14 corporations which are under you, what factors have you all built-in for risk, apart from the hurricane, in terms of whatever relief you all give out to people? So, for instance, would your unit deal with—what you call those things, like flood bags?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So let us take something that is under you, my mattress, for example, might have been incorrect. Something that is under you. How do you all build in the factor of risk and recovering better?

Mr. Siew: All right. The Disaster Management Unit, the field officers will go into the communities and they would start working with the community members or the burgesses to, for example, build back better or probably if they can relocate. A lot of these cases we have are persons who have built on river banks, who have been affected. We face the fact at the end of the day. We have persons being affected. They have something that we would call “acceptable risk”, where they know if they build on the river bank they are going to be affected. So what we try to do is help these persons now to position themselves, probably build the houses on stilts. For example, before the rainy season starts, we go into the communities with the sand bags and we start distributing to the homes that we know that would be impacted. So this is one of the mitigation drives that they have at the regional corporations.

Madam Chairman: And can I find out then, in terms of, say, you say the wet season begins the 5th of June. Do you have a cycle for going into the communities that you know are flood prone?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman: And could you therefore provide us—

Mr. Siew: The scheme of works for the—

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman: Please. And I have one last question which is my pet question. The blue structure in Diego Martin—

Mr. Siew: The early warning system.

Madam Chairman: That is it. The early warning system. When last was that tested?

Mr. Siew: That was tested two months ago. However, we have a test coming up that is going to be done with the regional corporation as well as MET Office. What we are trying to do is integrate the early warning system with MET Service now. So there is a meeting that we had a couple of days ago, that we are now looking at putting that in place.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and therefore you have brought me to a place I wanted to be, in that I had seen in the newspaper, Wednesday, in March, 2018. This was around World Met Day, where the Minister of Public Utilities was quoting with respect to MET Services working

more closely with other agencies like, ODPM and yourselves in terms of disaster reduction risk. So that one of these initiatives is what you are talking about, which is the common alert protocol?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Has that initiative begun to operate?

Mr. Siew: That was launched on Monday the 16th, which was day before yesterday. That project was launched throughout the island.

Madam Chairman: That is what we are seeing on TV?

Mr. Siew: Pardon.

Madam Chairman: Is that what we are seeing on television?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Siew: Before that, prior to that what would have happened is that the MET Service would have come in to us and we would have had a sat down meeting with all 14 regional corporations, field officers, so that they can understand the gist and understand the rudiments and reading of the early warning system. They have changed the codes a bit and they have now changed the format a bit and we needed to understand that. Because at the end of the day, the 14 regional coordinators depend on the early warning and the alerting system of the MET Office so that we can now put things in place for the event.

Madam Chairman: Right, and just to remind me, what date again is the testing for the early warning system in the Diego Martin?

Mr. Siew: I was told by Diego Martin that the testing would be done in the last week in April.

Madam Chairman: Last week in April?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you to Mr. Siew, you noted that the Disaster Management Unit coordinators would have quarterly meetings. That was correct?

Mr. Siew: We would have meetings ongoing, but which one of the meetings are we talking about?

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Where the Disaster Management Unit will meet with stakeholders.

Mr. Siew: Yes, we have stakeholder meetings that are done quarterly, where each of the

regional corporations Disaster Management Units will bring their stakeholder partners into the room to discuss.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: And that is—

Mr. Siew: Apart and separate from the normal coordinators meetings at the regional corporation.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay. Who monitors to ensure that those meetings actually happen?

Mr. Siew: That would fall under me.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay, and what reporting mechanism do you have in place?

Mr. Siew: We have the reporting mechanism at the Ministry where we have the files set up for each of the 14 regional corporations. At the end of the meeting they will submit to us via email or whatever means the reporting on that meeting and we will follow through.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Is there a standard in terms of what you expect from a report so there is consistency across the different corporations.

Mr. Siew: We utilize the exact same format that would be used in the standing committee meetings at the regional corporations. So that format is kept. So we have a tag and a handle on what takes place in that meeting.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: In terms of the field officers, who would monitor to ensure field officers actually go out, engage the communities and the stakeholders and then bring the information back to the corporation?

Mr. Siew: That would be the Disaster Management Coordinator at each of the corporations.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: And that information would be fed back at the stakeholder meetings or directly to you?

Mr. Siew: Directed to the coordinator who would then send it off to me.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay. In terms of the early warning system that you had mentioned previously, I know when we have early warning system testing in Tobago you usually get a notification in the papers to tell you on such and such date and time expect. Is that the same procedure here?

Mr. Siew: It is not fully implemented. We have just gotten a company on board in terms of doing that, where we can send out these mass messages at any one given time. So we are now looking at putting that in place.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: So this early warning system that you are going to test, describe it to me

because I am trying to understand how it works. I am trying to compare with what happens—

Mr. Siew: The early warning system at Diego Martin, for example, is based within the Water Basin of Diego Martin. So that water course that runs parallel along the highway, there, is a triggering mechanism. As long as the water level reaches a certain level, it triggers that and it sets off the alarm that sends it to the Disaster Management Coordinator, the CEO, the chairman, as well as the Ministry as well. So we will get that coming into us. From there the regional corporations will take action as to what areas would be affected.

Madam Chairman: So it is an electronic alarm that is sent to certain people.

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: So if I were living near there I will not know it.

Mr. Siew: No.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: That was going to be my other question.

Madam Chairman: Member Antoine.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: The Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, Management Disaster Unit says that you utilize the dry season, it is from January to June, 5th of June, which just gives us over a month before the rainy season begins for the mitigation, preparedness, outreach programme, drill simulations and other activities. Given the fact that last year we had two level 2 disaster events in October and December, can you tell me: How many drills were conducted this dry season? If they were conducted where were they conducted? How many regional corporations participated? And what was the response from the communities to these drills?

Mr. Siew: All right. Up to today, we have not had any drills within the 14 regional corporations. Reason being is that we have experienced a longer than usual or average wet season. We have been involved in a lot of other programmes as opposed to just doing the drills as we would have liked to. The drills are there in terms of the script and what has to be done, but the execution has not taken place yet.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Do you intend to do any drills before the onset of the rainy season?

Mr. Siew: We do have drills carded for April. We have drills for May and we also have drills for June— so different corporations; Diego Martin being one of the corporations in the Carenage area, that will be conducting a stimulation as well.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Can you give us, the Committee, a time frame of when and where these drills will be?

Mr. Siew: I can submit that via email as to the dates and the locations of these drills so that the Committee could probably pay a visit and witness first-hand as to what we do.

Madam Chairman: Member, if you would just permit me. Have these dates been fixed in collaboration with the MET Services, because for us and the listening national public, I do not think that this wet/dry season is strange to us based on what MET Services published. So that I understand you to be saying, look, your programme has been interrupted because we have not had a dry season. You are now telling us programme dates. Have you done that in collaboration with the information coming off from the MET Services?

Mr. Siew: No, Ma'am. We have gone ahead and positioned the dates, whether rain or sun, the drills are going to continue, because at the end of the day we are not sure what kind of weather we are going to get.

Madam Chairman: So there was no reason then for putting off the drills.

Mr. Siew: There was because there was a time that we had some response mechanism taking place in times for the drills. We had to respond to emergencies.

Madam Chairman: Oh, so the drills were really postponed because you were responding to something else and not because of the rain?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Oh, I did not understand that before.

Mr. Siew: Sorry.

Madam Chairman: Okay, thank you. Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: I just want to go back to that early warning system, right? You said that an alarm would trigger or send some information to certain people. But I am thinking that an early warning system would be to inform everybody who might be affected. So if it only goes to a few people, then how would—say, for example, if I live along the water course, how would I be able to prepare?

Mr. Siew: Again, the regional corporation, the DMUs have their mechanisms in terms of alerting through the members, through the PA systems as well. But it is a gap that was identified and we see the need for having a loud speaker, so when persons hear this loud siren or whatever, they will understand what they need to do. So we have identified that.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: So you have identified the gap, but what measures have you put in place to ensure that that gap is filled?

Mr. Siew: Again, the collaboration with MET Service so that we can actually set this system up is what we have in place.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: And how far are you in terms of your negotiations or discussions with the MET Service?

Mr. Siew: The Disaster Management Coordinator from Diego Martin will be meeting with the MET Service to work out the nitty-gritty of that.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Do we have any other early warning systems around Trinidad?

Mr. Siew: Yes Ma'am, we do. We have in the water courses in the Caroni Basin; we have in the Moruga area; we have one in the Blanchisseuse area. We have a couple others, yes.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: And it is the same system where it would go to certain persons, the information? The early warning?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay. And we are looking to expand or improve the system throughout?

Mr. Siew: We need to and we are looking at it. Yes.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Could you comfort me with some timelines?

Mr. Siew: I am working on that as we speak. That is one of the projects I am doing, so we are saying probably by next two months we would have that operational.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay. Thank you.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: In your submission, you speak about the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government disaster management plan. You said it should have been completed and reviewed by the end of March 2018. Was that completed?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Sir, it was. It was given to our planning section. Our planning section looked at it. The Deputy Permanent Secretary as well, she went through the document with a fine-tooth comb. We identified some gaps and some issues. We have since rectified that and it has gone back to her again.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: This disaster management plan, what role does the regional corporations play in this? And, if so, when would the plan become available for them?

Mr. Siew: The 14 Disaster Management Coordinators sat in a room a couple weeks ago to view this plan. They identified the gaps, again, that we would need to rectify in the plan. We

have identified some issues where we would have to bring them in. In the response mechanism we saw where we would have some issues with that. So we fixed it and we sent it back to the Deputy Permanent Secretary to view it again for us. But there are positions in place for the response mechanisms of the 14 regional corporations and other state agencies and entities to respond in that plan.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: I am the Member of Parliament for D'Abadie/O'Meara. At what point in time would the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government include Members of Parliament in your disaster management plan? Because as soon as a little rain falls and somebody galvanize on the roof gets blown off, I am consulted.

Mr. Siew: All right. Again, the reporting mechanism is a bit off, if I am permitted to say so. The reason being is that we have councillors in the area who are responsible for these types of things. Allow the councillors to take these reports and run with them and not burden the MP or the Member of Parliament with these reports.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: It is not the councillors that are burdening me.

Mr. Siew: The burgesses. It is something that we could look at, as long as we get buy-in from all Members of Parliament we can bring you in. There is a training called "the incident command system training" that we would be more than willing to give to you. We have the 14 CEOs, as well as the chairman for the disaster committees in each of the corporations coming in to do this training on Wednesday with us. It is going to give you the rudiments and the fundamentals of running an operation in time of disaster. So we would be more than happy to give you this training and if you would make yourself available, honourable, we would be more than willing to give you that. It is on the 25th of next month at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, Sir.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: I laughed, because you did not look at my designation.

Mr. Siew: I do apologize, Sir.

3.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member Mark.

Mr. Mark: Thank you, Ma'am. I wanted to find out, through the Permanent Secretary, Madam Chair, what is the financial allocation to each of the regional corporation for purposes of disaster management and preparedness, given the role that you have to play at level 1 and level 2? Is there a budget? You talk about recurrent, but I do not know if you mean recurrent

on a general basis, or you are saying that there is a specific line item in the budget for each regional corporation that will deal specifically with the question of disaster and disaster management.

Ms. Ali: Yes, Sir. There is a line item for each corporation. It is the natural disasters vote. But I have to say, I guess it depends on the finances of the country that maybe these votes may not have as much money as might be required. But there is a vote that each corporation could access, and if they need to, they can transfer funds from other votes into that vote if it needs to be supplemented.

Mr. Mark: You see, the reason why I am raising this matter, we talk about early warning systems, which I want to come to in a short while, and all the good work that is being done by our colleague from the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, but those things are going to come to nought if you do not have the resources. And one of the complaints the people have been making is the painstakingly and frustratingly slow response by local government and central government in dealing with disaster in their particular communities, to the point that residents and good Samaritans from those communities have to come and feed people; have to come on makeshift boats to take people from one point to another point. So the question here is, we can be told all these beautiful plans and initiatives, but if in the natural disaster vote there is zero or limited resources, how are we going to translate that into reality and real activity when a disaster occurs, particularly when we know, based on what you have said a short while ago, the rainy season will start from the 5th? So could you tell us whether there is an attempt by the Ministry of Local Government to urge the Ministry of Finance to establish a more healthy allocation for these regional corporations, or 14 corporations? Madam Permanent Secretary?

Ms. Bascombe: I agree with you wholeheartedly, member. Local Government, as a Ministry, is under-funded and disaster management, unfortunately, is also under-funded. We will urge the Ministry of Finance to give us an increased allocation compared with what we received last year. But bearing in mind the economic situation, the strategy we have been using, we have been trying to use a whole-of-corporation approach. So if one corporation is impacted and does not have the required resources, we ask neighbouring corporations which have not been as severely impacted, to assist with manpower, machinery, equipment, resources. But I agree with you wholeheartedly. We need more money under Disaster Management for the Ministry of

Rural Development. And it is a good thing that this enquiry is happening in April, because our recurrent budget is to be submitted by the 30th of April. So it is timely.

Mr. Mark: So would you recommend that this Committee consider, very seriously, this whole issue of allocation of resources for disaster management and preparedness, particularly as it relates to the role of local government and rural development?

Ms. Bascombe: Definitely, and especially in light of the number of serious disasters or incidents we have had within the past year. We would really appreciate your intervention.

Mr. Mark: And may I also ask about the early warning system? This early warning system, does it only center around increasing water levels that would trigger some electronic activity and you will get some kind of siren going off at some point or some location? Is it only for, let us say, disaster management in terms of flooding? Or does it cover other areas of natural disasters?

Mr. Siew: Member, at this point in time the only event that we have covered is that of flooding, at this point in time. But we are looking at other events in terms of Met Service helping us with the response mechanism.

Mr. Mark: And may I also ask, how many areas have you all envisaged in terms of forward planning and given all the weak points in the system, that you consider to be crucial and vital for coverage in terms of early warning systems? And how many we have in the entire country at this time and how many we ought to have, given the weak points, or the, you know, flash points within the landscape of T&T?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Member. At this point in time each of the 14 regional corporations are unique in terms of what they would be impacted by. Some of the regional corporations that would be impacted by floods would be that of Diego Martin, Penal, Debe and surrounding areas, for example, Siparia, probably Barrackpore as well, Princes Town. We are looking at the Tunapuna/Piarco as well. These areas would be impacted by floods. Early warning systems have been installed in Diego Martin and the Moruga area thus far. For sea surges and Tsunamis, it has been done in the Blanchisseuse area. That was recently done, probably a couple weeks ago. It slipped me to mention that one as well, when I said it is just for flooding. That one is done to trigger for the boatmen to understand that, “Ay, we need to get the boats and the engines off the water and on higher ground and you need to get up to the top.”

So we have a lot of work to do in terms of early warning systems to position—I am not too

sure if the member is aware or familiar with the Trantrail Road at the back of St. Augustine there. Water comes up to probably about five feet and more and we have persons who are making attempts to go through this water. That early warning system is going to be positioned there with a flick—the red light that is flickering—and a draw bridge that will be drawn; a rod that will come down and block persons from going into that area as long as the water level reaches. So that is one of the things that we have the three quotations on and we are looking at putting that in place, Sir.

Mr. Mark: And my final point I would like to raise at this time. The volunteers that you mentioned, and you want to expand the network, how are we going to do this? Do you have a plan for each of the 14 corporations as it deals, or looks at the whole issue of volunteers? And do you have, for instance, a threshold that you would like to reach, so you have like a—almost like a mini army within each region responding rapidly, well-trained to any disaster when they occur? Do you have a plan in that regard for the 14 corporations?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Member, there is a plan and it is nice that you are actually looking at it from that angle. The plan came about through the volunteer network system that the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government implemented a couple months ago. It started with the San Fernando Regional Corporation and then it branched off into other corporations going into Diego Martin, going into Sangre Grande. Each of the 14 corporations are utilizing the person from the ministry to develop this scope of works for them, so that they can now bring in volunteers into the corporations, train them and have them there. So there is a plan, Sir.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Thanks so much. Mr. Siew, I just want to find out again a little more about these volunteers. So it means they exist or they do not exist? This group of volunteers per regional corporation, I think they are supposed to be CERT qualified or certified. Do they exist or they do not exist?

Mr. Siew: They exist, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: They exist?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: All right. Now, would these be the same volunteers that would be relied upon to do like initial damage assessment?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Yes? Okay. So if maybe—and maybe ODPM could come in here to give

us some sort of clarification. In ODPM's submission they had pointed out that in July 2017 they embarked on a pilot programme in Diego Martin with respect to training people with this Incident Command System 100 basic workshop, and which would have involved training in initial damage assessment. Only six people attended. I do not know if that is good or if that is bad. ODPM will tell us. Then they went on to say that they repeated the workshop in San Fernando, which was about September 2017. Sixteen people attended and—this is what we have—“The expectation of a large turnout by council members was disappointing. However, the programme was well received by those in attendance. It should be noted, though, that the follow-up action to complete the programme was not forthcoming by council members. As to date, none have submitted their list of candidates to receive the training.”

So my question is, on the one hand, I am hearing from the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government that there is this body of volunteers that exists per regional corporation which will be—I think it is supposed to be at least 14?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman:—fourteen people, known identifiable people, trained to do certain things, and on the other hand, I seem to be understanding a different picture being painted by ODPM. So how do you respond to that?

Mr. Siew: All right, Ma'am. The 14 regional corporations disaster coordinators is responsible for getting the persons enrolled in the training programmes. What they would do is identify five persons from each of the councillors and they will bring these persons in so that they would be trained. This is one step that we take. We also go into the faith-based organizations and we train them as well. We go into the schools through the school supervisory system and we get the teachers on board in terms of training. So we now send this training into the school system. So this is what we use to get these volunteers enrolled.

Madam Chairman: So your system of volunteers is different to what ODPM is talking about that I just read?

Mr. Siew: It is basically the same, but there are some discrepancies with it, yes.

Madam Chairman: Now, I am lost.

Mr. Siew: There are some differences with it, yes.

Madam Chairman: So you all have two different groupings of people? Is that what my understanding is?

Mr. Siew: The target approach, I would say, would be a bit different. We would go straight to the source in terms of getting to the councillors and the councillors will provide the five names for us to train.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Siew: It is different for the ODPM. They would have to go in and they would try to recruit, and it is a bit different for them.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So let me ask ODPM—and thank you very much, Mr. Siew—

Mr. Siew: No problem.

Madam Chairman:—to give me some clarification about this statement, because I understood your approach to also be going through the councillors. That I what I understood from what I read, but maybe I am mistaken.

Mr. Marcelle: No, Madam Chair. I think for this particular programme, the one you just read, I believe that is a programme that the ODPM partnered with the Diego Martin Regional Corporation Disaster Management Unit, to train the councillors in the initial of basic ICS. I think for that particular programme, the response, or the attendance, was low. I think the follow-up to that programme was the councillors who attended were supposed to provide names for persons in their area to do additional training. So the councillors were supposed to recruit persons from within their communities and additional training was supposed to be done. That was—if I remember the programme correctly, that is the pilot programme, but it did not have a good response.

Madam Chairman: All right. So is the approach not the same? Through the councillors, these volunteers—right?—are supposed to be identified? That is what I am hearing both of you all are saying. On the one hand, one entity is saying “it working” well, on the other hand, the other entity is saying it is not working well. So I am asking—because the Disaster Management Unit in every regional corporation, my understanding, from what I have heard here, comes under Mr. Siew. So even if you partnered with Diego Martin, I would expect that there is some sort of communication. I would not even put it as collaboration—some sort of communication going on with the senior disaster management unit coordinator.

So I get the impression that things are happening in silos and, you know, I am not getting this comfort about these certificated, competent, definable, existing group of volunteers. So maybe I should ask, Mr. Siew, these programmes with respect to which Mr. Marcelle spoke of, was that

known to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government?

Mr. Siew: Madam Chair, at the time of that training, I was not installed in the position as a disaster coordinator for the Ministry, so that is why he would not have gotten the support, because there was no forwarding entity at the end of it at the Ministry so that they could have streamlined the entire thing.

Madam Chairman: So that the position in the Ministry—

Mr. Siew: Was vacant.

Madam Chairman:—was vacant.

Mr. Siew: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So they had nobody at all heading that unit?

Mr. Siew: No, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: So that in terms of ODPM and in terms of the Ministry, has there been any revival, revisit of this? Because I understand ODPM to be saying, "a proposal for council members training is currently being prepared for the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Local Government Authorities for further action." Has that reached you all as yet?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: And what—

Mr. Siew: We are working together with the agency to make this happen.

Madam Chairman: And as of when?

Mr. Siew: The days have not been finalized just yet.

Madam Chairman: So it is just a conversation.

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: So can I put you to a date?

Mr. Siew: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Can I put you to a date? Can I get an idea of when?

Mr. Siew: I will have to have discussions with Captain Wint as to the dates, and Mr. Marcelle, and we will draw down and drill down on a date for this.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Mr. Marcelle, from your end, do you all have an idea of a date that you are working with? You see, I am not seeing Captain Wint here, so I "doh" feel any comfort

with the conversation to happen with him. Mr. Marcelle is here and other people, I expect somebody knows.

Mr. Marcelle: Ma'am, Captain Wint is currently on assignment out of the country, so—

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Marcelle:—I am not totally familiar with the programme but I would speak to Mr. Siew after to get some more information and then we could—

Madam Chairman: So can I ask, then—and I am putting it to Mr. Siew—that in two weeks from today, if you can then present to the Committee, in writing, further submissions on this with timelines, please?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Member Mark.

Mr. Mark: ODPM and Local Government—I just want to follow up on what the Chairman raised a short while ago. Is there a coordinating mechanism established between Rural Development and the ODPM to deal with disaster management preparedness and training in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago? Do we have a solidified mechanism for coordinating national disasters involving these entities: National Security, ODPM and the Ministry of Local and Rural Development? Is there such a mechanism or coordinating organization, or body? Or as the hon. Chairman said, do we operate in silos?

Ms. Anderson: Through you, Madam Chairman, yes, there is. Based on disaster management and the preparedness aspect of the disaster management cycle, we would liaise with the Ministry of Rural Development through the position of the Chief Disaster Management Coordinator, which is presently vacant, and the Senior Disaster Management Coordinator. So the Senior Disaster Management Coordinator would liaise with the Operations Manager at the office and then below that there is a tier where the regional coordinator will engage the assigned disaster management units and, by extension, the corporation. However, the system is not perfect. We appreciate the efforts of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, but as you would have pointed out yourself, it is not a matter of outing fires, there must be a structured plan upon which we could build a foundation and have resiliency at the end.

So we have tried to engage the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government on a regular and a consistent basis. However, what I would like to recommend is that there be

added robustness to the structure of inter-ministerial engagement, that is, what has been our experience is, yes, you will have at least the interference of political systems and administrative wills of the corporation so that there is not that whole-of-corporation approach that you would like to appreciate, but our work is one. So where we have difficulty in terms of getting reports, getting data and information to provide us with the baseline statistics that we need to ensure that the shelters are at least stocked to the carrying capacity—the maximum carrying capacity—of the shelters where we are hoping at least to have that cooperation be made more fluid with the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government executives, that can be improved.

In 2017, I know we would have received a correspondence from the Ministry that would have facilitated communication between the office and the Ministry. However, reporting is still lacking, if we are asking for data, if we are asking to engage them on plan development; we are dealing with the hydro meteorological event that we are currently facing, and, of course, you are right, an all-of-hazard approach. We have been knocking on doors trying to develop a comprehensive emergency disaster management plan with the Disaster Management Units that would speak to that hazard-specific section and, of course, would include some plan for the hurricane 2018 season and beyond that.

Presently, the plan of the Disaster Management Unit is an emergency operation plan that, in a word, is response-centric and we can no longer—should not be working with a plan like that at all. Other preparedness activities that we have tried to engage them in, I know the matter of stakeholder meetings were brought up. You see, the statutory meetings that are held at the corporation level and the monthly meetings, the discussion there is primarily based on more the needs of the burgesses as it relates to outside the parameters of emergency disaster management, and it is not targeted enough to be effective.

So in our work we are trying to knock on those doors. We have deliverables that we have identified. One of those is, of course, having disaster management unit stakeholder meetings that are more comprehensive and effective in design. So, yes—and in all the operations of the ODPM, we do not work in silos. We realize that we depend on the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government to be—they are our support, our founding support.

I will just wrap up quickly. So where it is appreciated that they have a founding role in level one and level two emergencies, they have a substantial contribution to make at a level three. So

while we are having that national coordination effort and we are activated at a level three, we still need people on the ground and we still need the activation of the Municipal Emergency Operation Centres to fulfil particular functions.

What about vulnerability capacity assessments of the communities that would give us a more evidence-based idea as to how many early warning systems, as Madam Chairman would have expressed, that we need? So everything cannot be ad hoc. So I am very much appreciative that you are highlighting the need for emergency disaster preparedness and it needs to be improved, and we have made our efforts.

Mr. Mark: I understand your—you know, I get the impression that you are really making a plea, in an indirect way, to our Committee, if I get from what you were saying. I want to just ask, therefore, the following: Would you recommend to this Committee the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee that would incorporate, as a coordinating mechanism, all those agencies that are here and those that are not here, as a first step to move away from what I would describe as the ad hoc responses to national disasters in our country, including natural disasters? And/or, would you recommend for our consideration, or would you suggest for our consideration, the formulation of legislation that would bring together, you know, in that format and framework, that kind of arrangement where there will be no “ifs” and “buts”, but there will be a policy established in law that would give, for instance, all these bodies that coordinating mechanism on a comprehensive basis to respond very effectively and efficiently to disaster management? I want to get your response to this.

Ms. Anderson: Wholeheartedly, I definitely agree. At a response level, we do appreciate that high level, if I want to use that word in place of inter-ministerial engagement that occurs. In terms of that structured approach at peace time, it is not particularly there, but it is proposed in the Comprehensive Disaster Management Policy Framework of 2010 that, based on my understanding, it has been approved by Cabinet. It is a matter of making it operational. Yes, because while the Disaster Management Units are very willing to facilitate our efforts, to just use this analogy, the control is not all the way zipped up to that higher level. So, yes, it is definitely a recommendation that will be taken on board. But before we try to re-invent the wheel, I know that you are getting our views, of course, there will be some sort of further exploration that would be done, and we could look at the existing systems that exist. We have an idea as to what is wrong and we definitely can fix it.

I mean, just getting—the issue of incident or damage assessment forms that was brought up—so in a matter of just getting reports to cost—how much it is costing us financially to issue disaster relief items every year, especially in this financially constrained time, that is something that we need to look at. So yes, if you all could keep the pulse, or have like a firm hand on that to make sure that there is that level of control for preparedness, Sendai framework, priority number four, as Madam Chairman would have highlighted—and I am glad that she highlighted that—it is preparedness for response, and added to that is building back better, and good mitigation starts at the recovery point.

Mr. Mark: May I just, Madam Chair, for this matter, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, with all its attendant elements housed within that agreement that we have just ratified recently—and then you made reference to the comprehensive framework plan that the Cabinet approved way back in 2010, can we have a copy through your ministry—a copy of that comprehensive report that can be—do we have a copy of it here, with us?

Madam Chairman: No, but direct it to the PS.

Mr. Mark: Who to direct it to?

Madam Chairman: To the PS.

Mr. Mark: Madam PS, can you make a copy of that comprehensive report or plan that was—
[*Document handed to Mr. Mark*] Is that 2010? Is that another plan? We have a plan here, I do not know if it is the same—

Mr. Marcelle: That is a response framework—

Mr. Mark: Mr. Marcelle?

Mr. Marcelle: Yes. What Ms. Anderson referred to was the CDM policy framework that was one of the approved documents in 2010. This is not part of what you have. What you would have is the National Response Framework of 2010.

Mr. Mark: Right. Well, through the Permanent Secretary, could we have access to a copy of that?

Ms. Shrikrisen-Singh: Certainly, Member, we will provide it.

Mr. Mark: And then I just also wanted to ask, Ma'am, through the Chair, in light of the Paris Agreement and with all that is taking place, what would be required of you and the various organizations to tweak this plan to reflect the reality of this Paris Agreement so that, overall, Trinidad and Tobago would be addressing, you know, seriously, this whole question of

resilience and prepare ourselves for climate changes, and so on? Because part of the challenges, as you know, is the flooding, the rising tide, global warming, that kind of thing. So I am just wondering if that would not be considered as you seek to update that plan that was approved by Cabinet in 2010.

Ms. Shrikrisen-Singh: Madam Chair, I will ask the ODPM since they are more au courant with all the tenets of the policy, to respond.

Mr. Marcelle: Madam Chair, just to note that the ODPM has submitted, through the Ministry, some other documents for approval, which is, one, the Sendai framework, for adoption, through the Cabinet. It has to go through that route.

4.10 p.m.

The CDM Policy Framework is one of the documents that has to be updated, but I just want to go back to one of the points you made earlier in terms of legislation, and that was something that Capt. Wint did highlight at the last sitting and it is something that we are actively looking at, and that would cover a lot of the areas that were discussed earlier and it is also part of, I think No. 2, under sendai, the governance aspect of it. So those are some of the things currently in the pipeline from the ODPM that we would be sending through the Ministry of National Security, forward to Cabinet, or wherever it needs to go for its necessary approval. I do not know if that would have assisted.

Ms. Anderson: Through you, Madam Chair, to answer your question, it would not require much tweaking at all because by the very name comprehensive, we look at an all hazard approach, as I know Capt. Retired Neville Wint would have expressed. Even as mentioned in our mission statement, it is not only about disaster risk management, but about climate change adaptation. So it is already there. In terms of probably articulating it further perhaps we can do that, but where it comes from taking the framework and drilling it down to streamline it into action, I know there is where the rubber would meet the road and we will definitely need to articulate and document how we are going to make this concept a reality for Trinidad and Tobago and, of course, you know, we want to be the premier Disaster Risk Management Agency of the Caribbean, so with the Caribbean by extension.

Madam Chairman: But the framework already has a matrix attached to it, which is almost like a template that needs to be just adapted for your country. So that even in drilling down, the matrix already exists.

Ms. Anderson: Yes. Now I believe that you are directing your attention to the Sendai framework where—

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Ms. Anderson: Yes. We do have a matrix that we created for each particular pillar, what could be done at a national and local level. I am just answering the member's question as pertains to the Comprehensive Disaster Management Policy Framework, but I see the slightly confused expression on your face. So just allow me to clarify some things that popped up that I had a bit of an issue with. So you have at the international level the Sendai framework. At a regional level you have the CDEMA's guiding document 2014—2024. When you drill further, at a national level you have our Comprehensive Disaster Management Policy Framework, the Critical Facilities Policy Framework 2010, also Cabinet approved the national response framework. And yes, you are right, in terms of taking that aspect of Sendai, drilling it through those different expressions, that bring us back to the man on the ground, which you are mentioning, so this becomes a reality for him, for her as well.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Member Huggins.

Mr. Huggins: To the ODPM, through you, Madam Chair. Is the ODPM fully comfortable that the key response agencies fully understand their roles and functions in terms of what happens before, during and after an incident?

Mr. Marcelle: Through you, Madam Chair, member, I would not say that we are fully comfortable. We always have changes in the emergency support functions, and those are the persons who are required to do a level of administration, and command and control at their respective Ministries. So what we always try to do is do ongoing training and refresher courses so that we do not get in a state of—what is the correct term? So we do not get stagnated and we do not get comfortable, stating okay, we trained this Ministry six months, et cetera, but we always try to keep ongoing training and we always try to keep them up to date with the current terminology and trends within the response aspect of disaster management, or the coordination aspect as well.

Mr. Huggins: I am speaking specifically about the key response agencies.

Mr. Marcelle: So those key response agencies are all part of that structure. So, yes, but I do not know if that fully addresses your question.

Mr. Huggins: Because in the submission I noted that there was a concern expressed about the

full understanding of some of these agencies in terms of roles and functions before, during and after incidents as expressed by the ODPM in their submission, and then there is also the identification of information gaps that existed. So in terms of those gaps what— Well, you all identified that you all have some initiatives ongoing to identify those gaps in terms of the information among the agencies and remedy those problem, how successful have you all been in terms of those initiatives to identify and remedy those information gaps that you identified?

Mr. Marcelle: So in terms of the initiatives, some are still in the very early stages. So we are ongoing in terms of still reviewing some of the After Action Review Reports coming out of 2017, still doing some training or formulating some training to be done with the new SS in the next coming weeks. Just to go back to the first part of your question, I do not think I fully understand it. So could you repeat so I could probably just give you a better response?

Mr. Huggins: All right. Let me quote, and this is a submission from the ODPM, “Key response agencies do not fully understand their roles and functions before, during and after an incident”.

Mr. Marcelle: Okay. So we are looking at the implementation of the all-of-government approach which would address some of those agencies. So the answer is yes, there are gaps and there are agencies who do not understand their role before, during and after. Some are still response-centric, so when an incident takes place they will think that this is what I have to do, I respond. But agencies do have a role before an incident. So we have the mitigation work to be done by many Ministries which is not always done in a timely manner. So yes, the answer is yes, there are gaps. And part of the legislation and some of the documentation we mentioned before, especially Sendai, would assist in addressing that through all-of-government.

Mr. Huggins: What is the impact of those gaps in terms of the ODPM carrying out its functions?

Mr. Marcelle: So I will give you a simple sample. If the watercourses are not cleaned properly during the dry season or they are not cleaned properly at all, you will get an impact of flooding. If the hillsides are not properly cleared, if you have a bad dry season, et cetera, you have bushfires, we will have a high area of run offs. So all of these things work hand in hand and they are all responsibilities of different Ministries. So if the mitigation aspect is not done, and the preparedness is not done, then you will have a higher impact when a hazard takes place. So that affects our functions, it affects the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

as well, and all other first responders. So that is the cause and effect.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: I was present at the level 2 events in October and December last year, I was present at the Arima Borough Corporation Disaster Management Unit, I was also present at the ODPM during this event, part of the problem was in the reporting from the areas affected by the events. So at Arima Borough Corporation you had a certain set of data in terms of people affected, people's houses flooded, roofs blown off, as the case may be, but that information was not being transmitted in its totality to the ODPM.

The ODPM was the unit that was engaging the national community in terms of disaster, and they were engaging the national community, from my perspective because I was in the Arima borough, with faulty information because a lot of the councillors, a lot of the first responders were not passing on the extent of the event to the disaster unit and hence to the ODPM; and into the mix you had the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government as well. How do we solve these issues for 2018 that is coming up? The rainy season is on the way, from all reports it is going to be an active season, how are we dealing with these gaps? Where does the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government fit in in terms of the passage of data and information from the field, which is the disaster unit in the corporation, the municipalities, to the ODPM? How are we going to solve that problem so we would not have the population not being given the correct information in terms of disaster?

Ms. Anderson: Firstly, in terms of peace time and for preparation, definitely training and also having exercises of the operations of the Emergency Operation Centre. During war time, to put it like that, you have the Emergency Operation Centre. However, what has been our observation when we do visit the Disaster Management Units when you activate, is that they fail to fully demonstrate what Emergency Operation Centre activation is. There is not the discipline in terms of that battle rhythm, and I am going to explain that term for consistent and regular reporting to the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management.

So as I mentioned earlier in terms of our existing relationship and challenges in engaging the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government fully as much as we would like, the reporting line stands that the information from the Disaster Management Unit, or the activated emergency operation—well sorry. The Disaster Management Unit goes to the Senior Disaster Management Coordinator and he then provides that information to the office—sure.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: He is at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government?

Ms. Anderson: Yes, Sir. Now it is one and the same. So if we are speaking high level we are dealing with the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government; if we drill down to your experience observed it is the corporation and within the corporation the Disaster Management Unit. So if the Disaster Management Unit is not activated, then the information flows from the Disaster Management Unit. It should be accurate, training has been provided. Like I pointed out, there is the need for refresher courses as well as further training because as you would have heard, the staff members are new. So that information goes to the Senior Disaster Management Coordinator, who is at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, and that information is supposed to be provided to the ODPM. If it is provided to the ODPM it needs to be done on a timely basis. We hope that there could be a proactive manner in terms of providing that information to us, rather than us pursuing it, but, of course, due diligence, we would, of course, engage the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government for that data and information.

When the Emergency Operations Centre at Arima is activated and the National Emergency Operations Centre is virtually activated or it is activated to the extent that it does not require the Senior Disaster Management Coordinator occupy the position of emergency support—I do not want to get into the technical aspects of it, but emergency support function representative No. 6A, then that flow would continue to be maintained from the Disaster Management Unit to the Senior Disaster Management Coordinator, and through to the ODPM, and I mentioned the challenges previously. When the Arima Emergency Operation Centre is activated and it does require that the Senior Disaster Management Coordinator occupy a place in our Emergency Operations Centre, that information flows from the Arima Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) directly to us, through that activated mechanism.

So to deal with those challenges, just to conclude, and summarize, and restate what has been noted, training, exercising, and observation or the practice of what has been taught in terms of the activation of the Emergency Operations Centre.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Do we have electronic boards at the Arima disaster unit, and at the ODPM, that there can be a seamless transfer of the information coming from the disaster units?

Mr. Marcelle: Through you, Madam Chair, yes member, we do. We utilize a system called

WebEOC. Currently, there are some challenges with the software, but we are currently addressing that and hope to have that rectified in the shortest possible time., But yes, there are electronic boards, so if the information is entered at the EOC, it would be displayed at the ODPM, and other persons around the country who have a role in disaster management can see, with the right permission, entries that are made.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Would this system be ready for June 5th when the rainy season begins?

Mr. Marcelle: Based on what we are currently doing, yes, it should be ready.

Mr. Mark: I just would like to ask, Madam Chair, through you, to the ODPM: I think it was last year, if I recall, we were threatened with a possible hit from I think it was Hurricane Bret if I am mistaken, some one of those hurricanes that were visiting the region, and schools had to be closed very early that day, and I recall in Port of Spain there was a literal disaster as everybody tried to rush out of the city in a state of panic and fear, everybody heading home of course. What I wanted to ask the ODPM, is there a well-organized and coordinated evacuation plan for major cities of this Republic, be it Port of Spain, be it Scarborough—well, I know Scarborough has their own TEMA—Arima, Chaguanas, San Fernando, Point Fortin? But most importantly Port of Spain, because what I witnessed last year when this threat to Port of Spain occurred was not pleasant and the traffic piled up as a result of the rush of everyone to leave Port of Spain to get out, to get safety under their roofs. I just wanted to know, is there a well-organized evacuation plan for the major cities of Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Marcelle: Member, with respect to Port of Spain, yes, there is an egress plan. That falls under the Port of Spain City Corporation. So if I may ask my colleague to probably comment further, he would be more familiar than I am.

Mr. Siew: Okay, member, yes, there is an egress plan based at the City Corporation in Port of Spain. Presently, the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation is working on theirs and the San Fernando City Corporation is working on their egress plan as well.

Mr. Mark: Yeah, they may have a plan, but in terms of effecting, operationalizing that plan, that is what the question is all about because what we witnessed last year was not a good episode of the operationalization of that plan. So yes, the City of Port of Spain, or corporation in Port of Spain has a plan, but who is responsible for triggering and ensuring that it is done in a way, on a phased basis? So, schools are supposed to close or close early, people start to leave at 10.00 a.m., a next group leaves at 11.30 a.m. or at 1.00 p.m. But everybody left at 10 o'clock

or 11 o'clock. So I am asking: How is this plan operationalized? Do you know as local government, rural government?

Mr. Siew: Yes, we have had the opportunity to peruse the plan. The plan had a lot of flaws in it. We went back to them with the plan again. Again, the timing of the evacuation of different entities and different organizations within the city created a bit of a problem. Traffic management as well created a bit of a problem in terms of the highways and the utilization of the priority bus route and different exits out of the city. So yes, the problems were identified and we are working on that. We have meetings that are geared towards fixing this. How soon it will be rectified? Member, I will not be able to say.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Thanks, Mr. Siew, and I just want a follow-up on this conversation. I had seen a City of Port of Spain Mass Egress Plan 2011. Now I had seen in terms of the terms. When I looked at that and compared it with the Scarborough emergency evacuation plan, one is words like a template—words. When I looked at Scarborough, there is a map with roads. Port of Spain what you see is an Executive Summary 2011, and what is amazing is that in the summary itself it says something to the effect that it should be revisited annually and post incidentally for plan maintenance, but where is that?

So that on ODPM's website there is a City of Port of Spain Mass Egress Plan, a two-page Executive Summary that is in words. As I say, it is a template. I could take that if I read it and apply it to anywhere and not Port of Spain. So in terms of we are now in 2018, member Mark referred to something that happened in 2017, and we are still hearing about tweaking, or the ordinary man in the street does not have a visual to know if we have to evacuate, what are the roads. So what is this plan; where is this plan, or do we not think that what we have seen in Scarborough is something that is desirable for Port of Spain, or Sangre Grande, or anywhere else?

Mr. Siew: Madam Chairman, the plan does exist with all the different maps and the exit routes laid out within the mapping system. I would assume what you have seen on the site was just the front pages of it, but there are maps that are installed into the plan.

Madam Chairman: But for whom to know? That is the point.

Mr. Siew: For the general public. Again, a plan is as good as how many people will know the plan. The problem is that not many people will be aware of the plan.

Madam Chairman: So then, I can then say there is no plan.

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: So how do we rectify that? I mean, if Tobago has it—and I do not know right— but in terms of communicating it, I could sit in Trinidad and know how to evacuate from Scarborough. What am I hearing? And we have all the major players here. So when are we getting a plan on the sites that could help us? Let me ask another question and just give me an answer. The incident in Lady Young recently, was the plan triggered?

Mr. Siew: You mean the landslide?

Madam Chairman: Ah ha.

Mr. Siew: Yes, it was. There were some— [*Inaudible*] —with traffic issues, but they implemented traffic management, the highway patrol, different entities came on board and were supportive.

Madam Chairman: Would you say part of the problem was that—because generally people who are driving cars do not know what the plan is.

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am. What we would have seen in the Point Fortin area, Madam Chairman, is that they have now identified via signage the exit routes that you would have to take to get out of the different areas.

Madam Chairman: Have there been a post incidental plan maintenance for Port of Spain since Lady Young?

Mr. Siew: No.

Madam Chairman: When is that likely to take place?

Mr. Siew: That would have been the plans that would have—

Madam Chairman: So that can I ask you then, by the end of May to report to this Committee where you all have reached with that? Okay. And if you all would just bear with me one minute.

ODPM, referring to your submissions, hazard plans, landslide and flood susceptibility and all of these lovely plans, in terms of your hazard plan, would that include things like the landslips; or let me ask: Was Lady Young identified as a vulnerable area?

Mr. Marcelle: Madam Chair, off the top of my head, I would not be able to answer that question.

Madam Chairman: Was Cedros identified in that hazard plan?

Mr. Marcelle: I would not be able to share that off the top of my head. I could provide a

written response if the Committee requires, but I cannot say off the top of my head.

Madam Chairman: All right. Let me ask anyone of you all. Since these occurrences, has anybody looked at the hazard plan, or plans that exist to see whether they need updating in terms of areas that are vulnerable?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am. The 14 disaster management plans were updated and looked at in terms of the vulnerable areas as well as the critical infrastructure in each area that was newly implemented and newly installed. So the disaster management plans at the 14 corporations were updated for this year.

Madam Chairman: Was that shared with ODPM?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am. It went to ODPM for their perusal in terms of looking over the document and making sure that everything was in accordance with their plans so that we will fit into the scheme inputs.

Madam Chairman: Whose website it is on?

Mr. Siew: Each one of the 14 corporations the disaster management plans are posted, however, if the Committee requires we can have that provided to them.

Madam Chairman: And ODPM, when is it then that your hazard maps—now let me just ask something? Mr. Siew, your plan is a hazard map like ODPM's?

Mr. Siew: It is an ongoing hazard map, yes.

Madam Chairman: So if I went into any one of the regional corporations, I would see a hazard map—

Mr. Siew: Yes.

Madam Chairman:—and it would be updated? So if I went to the area with Cedros, I would see what happened at that coastal?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: And if I went to Port of Spain, I would see what happen—

Mr. Siew: All the vulnerable areas as well as the impacted areas within the last year, yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So ODPM, therefore it should not be any issue in you updating your plan, because it exists?

Mr. Marcelle: Madam Chair, that aspect of the plan, review and development, is not really my area within the organization. So I could get that information for you and respond in writing.

Madam Chairman: But I see, are you not ICT?

Mr. Marcelle: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Okay. What I am saying is this, I am not ODPM, but I could tell you it is not on your map. So all I want to know is when would your map become current?

Mr. Marcelle: So what we do at the ODPM, after every hazard incident we produce maps and that map is stored within our GIS solution. So the production of current maps can be done because of how the system operates. So we would have maps. I do not know if we have published those maps recently. I know we are challenged with our GIS personnel at this time due to staffing issues, but we would have updated and that it is a process ongoing to make sure we have captured the latter part of 2017 and 2018 into our GIS system. So I could find out if all of the incidents that we have, that have been reported to us, have been updated and those maps are current.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and you would provide that to us in writing?

Mr. Marcelle: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: And I want to ask one other thing. What is meant by ODPM makes no warranties, guarantees, et cetera, that is published alongside those maps?

Mr. Marcelle: I think you are referring to the disclaimer on the maps? All right. I would attempt to answer the question from the knowledge I have. Because most of the information is not generated within the ODPM, we get the reports through either the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, or other supporting agencies, I think the practice within the GIS aspect is if you do not go out and verify, or produce that data in-house and you take external data to produce a map, there is a disclaimer. But that again can be verified to you in writing.

Madam Chairman: But in publishing it you are certain you are not publishing fake news?

Mr. Marcelle: To the best of our process, I believe not, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member Mark.

Mr. Mark: Just again I want to ask both local government and ODPM. In Cuba—and we would be aware of the experiences of Cuba—there is a week in each year that is allocated for national drilling, or national drills to prepare the population, and they have a population of 12 million people. We have 1.4. Can you tell this Committee whether the ODPM along with the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government have ever considered allocating one day

for the people of T&T to prepare themselves through a day, national drills, that would focus so that there can be a state of preparedness in the event of a disaster? So every year that period set aside for drills and for people to be in a state of readiness in the event of any natural disaster as is done in the whole of Cuba.

4.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Sorry. Mr. Marcelle.

Mr. Marcelle: Yes, Ma'am. Yes, member, the ODPM has previously had a national day for exercising and that would have been around the specific tsunami warning centre, the Caribe Wave project which happens in March of every year. So traditionally, for the last six to seven years, we would have done exercises around that, and previously we would have done different types of national exercises. The tsunami, the exercises we did that particular day would have invited businesses, households, government agencies, to drill during the day because it is normally a weekday, and invite them to test their plans, do evacuations within their businesses, ask homeowners to do projects with their build kit, they submit to us pictures, et cetera. We have had small competitions around that as well. So that has been part of the exercise regimen of the ODPM for a number of years.

Mr. Mark: Yeah, but these things are advertised? People do not know about these things. I cannot recall. For example, in Tobago, I know that they have what is called a national emergency exercise that they engage in on almost like a yearly basis and they had one just recently.

Mr. Marcelle: Well, that is the same exercise. Tobago—well, in the last two years, we have dubbed the term NEED, National Emergency Exercise Day, so it is the same exercise in question. It is around the 25th, 23rd of March, depending on when the tsunami exercise takes place, so it is the same exercise. What you may have found over the last two years with the rebranding with the NEED acronym, Tobago went on a very vigorous media campaign in the rebranding of the exercise. So you may have seen a lot more advertisements from Tobago or their presence would have been more to advertise the exercise than you would have seen in Trinidad.

Mr. Mark: So when are we going to learn from Tobago in terms of, you know, upping that particular level of preparedness and consciousness and awareness so the population would be aware that this thing is taking place on an annual basis? I, for one, am not aware of this

national emergency exercise that is supposed to take place, as you said, for almost every year in Trinidad. Where is this? When does it take place? I do not know about it. I do not read about it in the papers. I do not see—maybe it is happening but it has slipped me, it has missed me.

But in Tobago, as you have said, they have rebranded this thing and the people of Tobago are aware so why can we not in Trinidad be aware of these emergency exercises that are being held on a yearly basis? Do you think it is not time for us to really improve on the communication so that the people will be aware of these developments that are taking place?

Mr. Marcelle: What I could contribute to your comment, member, is that yes, Tobago does do a different type of branding or level of branding and that is based on their relationship within the island. I would say for the last two to three years in terms of the ability for us to—not the ability, for what we normally would have done in terms of advertising the exercise, we were not able to do that for the last two to three years due to some external constraints.

Madam Chairman: But Mr. Marcelle, you know, I keep hearing constraints. We know of NEED in Tobago, it was the 15th of March, 2018, because it was on their website, but we see no similar thing. So we may have escaped it, “we doh live in Tobago” so we did not participate, it may not have been in the newspaper, but we were able to go on a website and find it. ODPM has an ICT specialist. These are the things we cannot understand.

Mr. Marcelle: With respect to what took place this year for the exercise, our normal involvement specifically to 2018 was a lot less because of what is taking place now which is the Fused Response. So the focus for us, as an agency, moved away from having that as the centre exercise for the ODPM for this year into the Fused Response, and that was, to put nicely, beyond our level; that was an instruction for us. So in this particular year, that is why we would not have had that level of advertising around that exercise but there was activity for the exercise just not as in the same scale as we would have done in the past.

Mr. Mark: May I ask? This is my final question, Madam Chair. Can I ask, both local government and your good self, how can we help? How can we help the ODPM and the Ministry of Local Government? Can you provide us with some tight recommendations for consideration? Because you seem to be crying out, you seem to be under some severe pressure and stresses. And how can we be of assistance as a parliamentary committee that will be submitting a report to the Parliament, right, on this exercise that we are engaging in? Could

you share with us some of your concerns, some of your challenges and so that we can take note of those challenges and see what we can do as a Committee to deal with this whole question about natural disasters and national management disasters in the Republic of T&T? May I ask, first of all, the Permanent Secretary and then maybe, our colleague from the ODPM?

Ms. Bascombe: Member, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government recognizes that we have a very powerful Committee before us who would be in a position to lobby the relevant authorities. From my perspective as Permanent Secretary, our critical shortcoming is that of funding. So I would be requesting—we will give you other information at a later date, but from my perspective, our critical shortcoming is funding and we would be asking this august body to assist us in that regard.

Mr. Mark: And may I ask my colleague from ODPM to share with us some of your challenges and maybe, like the Permanent Secretary, you can always place the rest in writing. You do not have to give us everything but what you consider to be the key elements or key factors that are challenging your ability to perform more efficiently and effectively in dealing with the whole question about national disasters in this country.

Mr. Marcelle: Member, thank you for the offer and we will be providing written recommendations to the Committee. What I could say, though, I think one of the key aspects is legislation, which would, as you mentioned before, tie in all the aspects of disaster management within Trinidad and Tobago to make sure that we are all operating on the same page under the same guidance, same structure. I think also we are challenged, like our friends at Rural Development, with funding. And I think the last one, I would recommend or mention at this time is the staffing which I know Ministry is trying to address as quickly as possible, but that is a big factor for us to producing the type of work that we would like to produce.

Madam Chairman: Member Huggins.

Mr. Huggins: At the last enquiry, we spoke about the ODPM app. Has any further work gone into fully activating the app?

Ms. Peters: Madam Chairman, the ODPM app was actually developed for disaster preparedness activities which is different from TEMA. So the idea behind the app would have been to present information as it relates to various hazards—what should someone do before, during and after that particular hazard. It also would have features as it relates to emergency preparedness such as what should be an emergency kit and a checklist of items that someone

should have in an emergency kit. So, at this time, the app is used for preparedness and to build resilience of our population so that they can have at their fingertips. That was the idea behind the app.

But to also add on in terms of what is needed in the ODPM would be a customer care centre. We continue to advocate for that in the ODPM at this time. We have made recommendations for a customer care centre where persons can report their incidents. Persons may know it as the 511 system that existed previously. The Ministry transitioned this to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Command Centre and at this time, we do not have a customer care centre and any discussion as it relates to that, it also affects our social media response. Because a part of the customer care centre included social media monitoring so that we can maintain an operational picture of what is happening through social media. Many persons would actually report what is happening on social media rather than reporting it to an agency sometimes. We may learn about a landslide or flooding through social media and we need to keep an eye on what is happening through that and that is where the customer care centre comes in.

We have submitted a proposal with four phases to the Ministry of National Security and we continue to advocate for a customer care centre. It is beyond reporting incidents. If we submit an advisory, if we actually publish an advisory, the population can actually call that call centre for additional information and for support. It is beyond reporting an incident, it is about customer care and we continue to advocate for that, especially the social media component of it. We need the call centre but we also need the social media monitoring component and we continue to advocate for a customer care centre.

Mr. Huggins: So do you have any resources in terms of human resources dedicated to social media at present?

Ms. Peters: I continue to support social media, however, my main function is not limited to social media. We need a person or persons who are actually dedicated to that function. We made recommendations for four social media persons to be added to the customer care centre so that they can maintain a constant presence as it relates to monitoring social media. At this time, what happens is that it is an additional function to an officer and it is not the sole responsibility of an officer at this time.

Mr. Huggins: Well, it is a separate function and especially in terms of information sharing and gathering because I see on your page, you have like 53,000 persons. Yeah? The content

generation is okay because you generate content but again, resources are needed to be allocated, especially in terms of this social media activity here because with 53,000 followers and disseminating this type of information—because there are three components to social media as you would know: the content generation, which you all are fairly okay with, and the engagement.

Now, I have noticed that persons would have been asking questions and they would not have been getting responses and if you do not have that engagement, eventually persons just treat it as a poster as opposed to somewhere where they could give and get active feedback. So in terms of the engagement—because you have a portal here on Facebook where you can be very effective in terms of disseminating information and it would probably help to fill the gap of that larger resource that is needed to fund a call centre or 24-hour operation.

So the third element—so you have the content fairly fine, the engagement, of course, you need persons who could actually engage persons; and then there is actually disseminating information. Because I see some very important notices here from yourself, from the Ministry of Works but you have nine likes and you have 11 shares. I am talking about emergency media releases and so forth so that also needs to be managed. Because these posts cannot just be added on a page, they have to be sponsored, they have to be boosted. You have to work with your demographics to make sure that the message gets out there. But I am saying that you all have a platform here on Facebook that you all can build on to engage people. Because at the last enquiry, we were talking about the whole sensitization issue and how much people really know about what is going on and the function of the ODPM. So that is a point to note there. Right?

Also, can you give us a little more information because I see you have it as your profile pic here, this Fused Response initiative, this crisis response exercise—well it is ongoing now, it is between 16th and the 27th. Could you give us a little more details on what that is about and how is the ODPM involved?

Ms. Peters: Well, hon. member and Chairperson, there are various components to it. What I can speak of as it relates to the crisis communications component of the exercise. However, it is an activity that includes the entire Government and the entire Ministry of National Security. All of the agencies within the Ministry of National Security are engaged in the Fused Response exercise. Various agencies would have been exposed to different levels of information as it

relates to the Fused Response exercise. What I can say for the ODPM, we intend to engage in a table-top exercise where we would actually execute our plans through a table top and to identify gaps in our system. That is from the ODPM perspective for the Fused Response. It is not an actual drill but a table-top exercise that we have carded for Fused Response.

Mr. Huggins: So you all have persons from the ODPM actively involved in this exercise?

Ms. Peters: Correct, member.

Mr. Huggins: Okay.

Mr. Marcelle: If I may, Madam Chair?

Madam Chairman: Yes, please, Mr. Marcelle.

Mr. Marcelle: All right, so exercise Fused Response is a collaboration between the US military and—well, US Government through the military and Trinidad and Tobago Government through our military as well—well, the Ministry of National Security. So there are multiple phases to this exercises. Some have already started and some are yet to come. They would be testing different scenarios throughout the country and in Tobago. Some would be military-type exercises, some will be based on scenarios for emergency management and response. And one of the main takeaways from this exercise is to look at, on a very high scale, national level, the aspect of crisis communication.

So it is a number of moving parts to this exercise; that is why you have the duration for the exercise. As Ms. Peters indicated, the ODPM will be doing our part of this exercise to support the bigger component and that would take place on Monday, and we do have persons who are part of the whole planning team, the whole exercise response activity and more will come to us as the exercise evolves.

Mr. Huggins: Just one more question. Where are these exercises taking place?

Mr. Marcelle: I do not have all the locations. I know some are in—well Tobago south-east, I think one is in Macqueripe and in the Couva area. I think that there is a public release out so I think we can share that. It was released by the Ministry of National Security and they have identified the different locations as to where the actual field components would be taking place. So in that aspect of it, the Ministry did go on a public campaign to inform the residents in the area that between a particular day and time, you would see movement of military vehicles and response personnel, et cetera, and to be aware, it is only an exercise. So that component is already out there.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member Antoine.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: By the response from the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and ODPM, the 6th of June, we would see the beginning of the rainy season. From all projections, it is going to be an active hurricane season that would be upon us. How prepared are we for a hurricane event for 2018/2019? And I am asking this question in terms of shelters, in terms of relief supplies, in terms of the first responders: the fire service, the defence force. In terms of communication, because we have already identified that there are communication problems between the disaster management unit, at the regional corporations, the Ministry of Rural Development and the ODPM and of course, with the first responders: the defence force, the fire service. There are always communication problems.

But also, how prepared are we for sensitizing the population? When are we going to start to put out notices to the population that look, the hurricane season is upon us, you need to have this, you need to have that, you need to put together your home packages, et cetera? How prepared are we for the hurricane season that is coming and if we have a hurricane event?

Madam Chairman: Maybe we could direct that to the senior coordinator in the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government because the disaster management units that reside in the 14 corporations come under that office.

Mr. Siew: Thank you, Madam Chair, member. The inspections of the disaster management unit shelters that are positioned within the regions have been completed by the regional corporations. It was done in collaboration with the fire service, the engineer of the corporation and the disaster management units together with the building inspectors of each of the 14 regions. These inspections were completed. Some issues were identified with some shelters as to the positions and structural integrity and all these things. So we have since changed around a little bit as to where we would put persons in the event of an emergency. We had some issues with schools as well being available during school time, if there is an emergency. We have now worked that out with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.

Allocations in terms of resources have been positioned throughout. The 14 corporations, again, as we have been clamouring, funding seems to be a problem where we can now purchase items and have in stock. So we are working with that, we are working with other agencies and other entities. For example, in Point Fortin, they are working with a lot of the agencies down there, the NGOs linked, to have these items to assist burgesses in the event.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: What is the preparation of the population?

Mr. Siew: Preparation of the population, we have on our web page a lot of issues just like the ODPM would be doing. We have the regional corporation disaster units going into the schools, going into the communities, constant outreach programmes. One of the things that is taking place is that the Ministry is now taking, as we spoke about the stat meetings; the stat meetings to the community. We cannot get the community to come to us for the stat meetings, we are now taking these meetings to them. We are using this as an opportunity now to spread the word of disaster management and preparedness throughout the country as well as through the schools.

Madam Chairman: Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you. How are you taking the stat meetings to the communities?

Mr. Siew: All right. We would take the stat meetings, for example, into a community centre. It was done in the East-West Corridor where the stat meeting is now being held in community centres, in public places where we can have it. It takes a lot of logistics and planning but it is done. Therefore, we see a lot more turnout in terms of persons and we take advantage of this to spread the word of disaster management.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Sorry, I cannot reconcile that with your earlier submission where you said that because of the—maybe it was the Permanent Secretary who said—because of the time of the stat meetings, the turnout was poor. So even though you take it to a community centre and you take it at 10.00 a.m. in the morning, you still would not get the support because people will be at work or school. If you start for half past one—so how are you taking it to the community?

Mr. Siew: Again, we are taking the meetings to the community in terms of going to the community centres, inviting the public via the miking system, social media, to get them involved.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: No, no, no.

Mr. Siew: Explain to me, please.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: You are taking the meeting to a place in the community but you are still not reaching the people. I am saying you have to change your strategy. If you are taking it into the communities and using a community centre, maybe you have to look at the time of the meeting so you get more people when they are home. So even though you go to the

community centre at 10.00 a.m., you will still get the faithful few who may be home and usually turn up if it was at the—where do you usually have that? At the corporation building? So that is what I am trying to—you understand?

Mr. Siew: All right, member. A lot of persons within the community have issues in terms of transport, getting to the regional corporation. What makes it a lot easier is that these persons reside in the community that we carry the meetings to so it is easier for them to attend the meetings.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: He is not understanding where I am coming from.

Mr. Mark: I understand what is being asked. The timing of those meetings is critical if you want to get that mass to carry the message. And I think what my colleague is asking is that if you go in the morning time, you might get, for instance, a small group of persons in attendance whereas if it is advertised for a little later on in the evening between, let us say 5.00 and 7.00, you may have a greater turnout of personnel. So I get the impression that that is an area that you may want to look at.

Mr. Siew: Be able to look at, yes.

Mr. Mark: And as I am on my legs here—

Madam Chairman: Member Mark, if you would please allow member Webster-Roy to—

Mr. Mark: Oh, sorry.

Madam Chairman: Thanks for your assistance though. Member Webster-Roy.

5.05 p.m.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: This other question is to everybody here. The last time we had the enquiry, we had TEMA here, and coming out of examination of TEMA we would have seen a number of best practice. It is Trinidad and Tobago, we are in a time where we have resource constraints. Was any attempts made to meaningfully engage TEMA so you could get, maybe, technical support or advice, so we could implement some of the best practice here to improve our response and our preparedness? Because I often say to people: God forbid if something should happen, I want to be in Tobago. Because I would know exactly—I would know what is going to happen. I would get constant feedback. I would know if I call 211 and I say if it is an emergency or non-emergency. I will be connected to the right agency. I know that TEMA would consistently engage the people of Tobago. So I know that, okay, where the shelters are. I know if I go to a place, how to evacuate because we have the maps up and they would

constantly engage the public. So there is always public education and sensitization. I get the feeling that it is not the same here. And we want the best for all our citizens, Trinidad and Tobago. Was any attempt made to meaningfully engage TEMA so you can learn from them?

Mr. Siew: Yes, Ma'am. We have since been working with TEMA, in terms of the different entities, to try and develop what we have here. We have been working with them. They have been guiding us accordingly in the Ministry.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: When was the last time you all spoke?

Mr. Siew: I spoke with Mr. Allan on Thursday of last week, when we visited, no Thursday of week before. That is when we visited the programme that had to do with Fuse response at the Fusion Centre.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: No, no, no.

Mr. Siew: And we had a meeting after that.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Outside of Fuse response, when was the last time you met with Mr. Allan or anybody from TEMA in a structured meeting where there was idea-sharing, technical support? Not an informal or on the phone chat or "we are in Fuse and by the way, Mr. Allan..." No, a meaningful meeting.

Mr. Siew: That would have been probably about four months ago.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Four months ago?

Mr. Siew: Four months ago. He guided me, in terms of the disaster management plan and policies.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: And ODPM?

Mr. Marcelle: With respect to that level of engagement, there is always that reporting and sharing of information between the ODPM and TEMA. Specifically to adopt best practices, you would have the technical officers at the ODPM liaising with the technical officers at TEMA and you would have Captain Wint liaising with either Mr. Stewart or the other senior personnel at TEMA, to look at the all-of-government approach and what can be adopted. What we have that we are doing, that might be somewhat better than what they are doing and then vice versa.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay. Another question. I remember there was an issue the last time when we discussed the app and there was an example. The TEMA app was able to do different things, but you said you did not have the—you were unable to do it at ODPM and the financial

resources, when we examined TEMA we saw it was costing TEMA way less than what you were paying. Have you then engaged TEMA again to see how you could update your app, and also have the cost benefit from whatever approach they would have used?

Mr. Marcelle: Specifically, I do not believe so, but I could verify that with Captain Wint. From my interaction, no.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I just want to ask the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, coming back to the submission of the information regarding the financial reports, and to let you know, yes, we have since got a copy of it, and thank you.

I just want to ask one question, in terms of, you had indicated in your submission that monitoring the regional corporations is a bit problematic and I think you sort of developed that here, by saying you cannot monitor real time. Therefore, I will expect monitoring through the reporting system post facto, becomes more important.

You said that they do it through, on a monthly basis with financial reports and on an annual basis with the annual financial statements. Okay? When I look at the submission, I see that most of the regional corporations, maybe save and except Port of Spain and San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, at least up to 2016/2017, with their unaudited financial statements.

In terms of Diego Martin, I see that information is outstanding. I do not know for what period. And then in others, I am seeing that their most recent audited financial statement, let us say for San Fernando, is 2003/2004. Let us say for Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, 2004/2005. And I want to ask: What do you see as your role as Permanent Secretary in getting the accounting officers who are under you to ensure that these audited financial statements and unaudited financial statements are produced in a timely manner, because this must be an important monitoring tool for you?

Ms. Bascombe: Madam Chair, it certainly is an important monitoring tool and a critical public document, because we are talking about expenditure of government funds and accounting for such. What we have started doing at head office, in the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, is our accounting staff are now liaising more closely with the accounting staff in the corporations, both the financial officers and the regular established accounting

officers, with a view to creating greater awareness of the importance of this kind of reporting. And then assisting them with whatever shortcomings they may have in completing and presenting the reports to the relevant agencies.

It is a work in progress, because, as can you can see from the table, some corporations are 10 years in the past. So we are doing a lot of work, within recent times, to bring them up to current status.

Madam Chairman: Just a minute, do you have any timelines from any of them? Have you demanded or obtained from them any timelines, with respect to coming to date? Apart from the persuasion and the moral suasion, are there any firm timelines coming from any of them, with respect to coming to date?

Ms. Bascombe: They have all promised to come up-to-date. But I am taking your suggestion, and we will give them timelines, even if it is simply submitting the unaudited financial statements.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so could we get from you by, let us say, the 15th of May, some further response, with respect to a scheduling that you would have obtained from our corporations?

Ms. Bascombe: All right.

Madam Chairman: Then this is for the Ministry of National Security, the PS there. I have seen that the ODPM had submitted a proposal for risk reduction management centres. And in your submission, you all had said due to administrative constraints, at the time, you all were unable to action the proposal, but that the proposal is being revisited and consideration is given to the initiative. What I want to ask: Have you all determined that the initiative has merit?

Ms. Singh: Madam Chairman, it is still being reviewed.

Madam Chairman: So that you have not determined that it has merit?

Ms. Singh: No.

Madam Chairman: No. Can you say how long this review will continue?

Ms. Singh: I would say within the next three weeks we would be able to complete.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So could you—therefore that will take us at the end of May—give us some report with respect to that? And therefore, I want to ask: What is this loan agreement that is being drafted? That has nothing to do with the risk reduction management centres, does it? This is coming from the Ministry of National Security, some loan agreement.

Ms. Singh: It is my understanding that there was a loan from the UNDP? Yes, from the UNDP for this project.

Madam Chairman: This would be the risk reduction management crisis?

Ms. Singh: That is correct.

Madam Chairman: So, if there is a loan and an agreement—

Ms. Singh: Well, I think we have to liaise with—my understanding is that we have to liaise with the Ministry of Planning in order to activate that loan.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but, and maybe PS, you could therefore clarify for me. I would want to know, if we have not reviewed and determined that the proposal has merit, how come we have reached to the stage of a loan agreement being drafted?

Ms. Singh: I will have to provide you that in writing, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay, thank you very much. I would want to say that I want to thank you all. I am sure the listening public has learnt a lot. We certainly have. I guess we could continue this conversation for another two/three hours. But we are mindful of the time. And, therefore, I want to bring this segment of our meeting to a close.

I want to thank also the listening public and the viewing public who have remained with us, and the members of the media. I want to wish you all well. I await the further submissions as submitted. Our Secretariat would liaise with the various entities, in terms of reminding what is required and the timelines. I want to thank you all and wish you all a safe journey home. This meeting is now suspended. Thank you very much.

5.16 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*