



The Eight Report of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament
on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity
on an Examination of the Perceived Inequality Faced by Single Fathers in
Trinidad and Tobago with Specific Focus on custody Matters, Policies and Access
to Programmes and Services
Response to Recommendations
Date: November 27th, 2018

Recommendation #4.13

Given the challenges single fathers outlined in Table 5, the Committee recommends that the OPM, MSDFS and VWSU adjust its outreach public sensitization strategies for programmes/services to target male single parents as one of its audiences.

Update

As part of its mandate, the VWSU in its public sensitization strategies delivers information to persons on various aspects of victim services and issues of homicidal trauma, poly-victimization family dynamics, domestic violence and trauma management. Persons of various demographics are usually targeting with particular emphasis on the dynamics of the adult male victim in the context of parenting as well as other roles. The Unit has coordinated projects targeting fathers in collaboration with other social stakeholders, these initiatives continue.

Recommendation #4.15

The Committee recommends that the MSD, OPM and VWSU review the recommendations proposed by the CATT in Appendix IV.

Update – Children Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (CATT) Recommendations

- **CATT Recommendation #1**

Parenting training and skills enhancement for single fathers.

The Victim and Witness Support Unit (VWSU) coordinates parent support groups that address issues faced by single fathers, as well as other family types. The Victim and Witness Support Officers (VWSO) also provide avenues for empowerment and collective development. One such group currently services residents in San Fernando and neighbouring communities.

- **CATT Recommendation #2**

There is the need for targeted research on single father parenthood and child development. Such research should inform the design of programmes that specifically meet the needs and address the challenges faced by single fathers.

The VWSU supports the need for targeted national research on this issue of single father parenthood, so as to provide empirical data relevant to the context of Trinidad and Tobago. The Unit's initiatives are informed by evidence-based approaches of the international arena as well as data from the Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) Branch of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS).

- **CATT Recommendation #3**

A deficit in key resources to target areas such as empowerment of single fathers, support circles, specialized training for single fathers, remedial services for children, subsidized day care centres and mentorship programmes for children. These programmes, referrals and interventions, can be extremely beneficial to single fathers and can enhance their ability to meet their roles and responsibilities as sole caregivers.

In conducting empowerment initiatives for victims and persons, the VWSU also has programmes targeting fathers with the aim of building, restoring, empowering and supporting towards fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as caregivers and mentors.

- **CATT Recommendation #4**

Awareness of state programmes such as National Family Services, Social Welfare and Student Support Services Division, for example, will benefit many single fathers who may fit the criteria for assistance and can be encouraged to apply.

The VWSU participates in several sensitization initiatives, with private and public agencies, schools and communities so as to share the services available to persons of any demographic that is impacted by crime.

Recommendation #4.21

The Committee recommends that the MSDFS, OPM and VWSU review the policies which guide the distribution of their programmes and services to ensure it is equitable for male and female single parents.

Update

The VWSU executes programmes and deliver holistic support to persons of all demographics that may be affected by crime victimization. These initiative are provided equitably to male and female victims, inclusive of male and female single parents. For the period January to 30th September, 2018, the VWSU has provided services to at least two thousand, six hundred and fourteen (2,614) persons. Of these clients, over six hundred (600) were adult males inclusive of male single parents. Providing an unbiased, non-judgmental intervention, is a key component of the menu of services we provide. Clients, inclusive of our male single parents have expressed appreciation on the range and extent of services received. However, in compliance with best practices of victim services, the Unit continuously reviews its operations to ensure efficiency and equity in the delivery of our services.

Recommendation #4.31

Given the unique challenges faced by single parents in comparison to a nuclear family unit, the Committee recommends that the OPM, MSDFS, and the VWSU develop programmes or revise existing programmes and services to address the unique needs of single parents.

Update

The Unit has executed programmes that are tailored to multiple demographics inclusive of single parents. In tandem with the mandate of the VWSU to provide holistic victims services, the Unit currently caters to single parents in our parent support groups, grief support groups, domestic violence workshops, fatherhood workshops as well as our trauma management interventions. These workshops are designed to empower persons cope with various life and family crises.

The response to the recommendation to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) is below.

Recommendation #4.43

The Committee recommends that the Courts and the TTPS employ the option highlighted in Section 27 (2)(a) of the Family Law (Guardianship of Minors, Domicile and Maintenance) Act, Chap. 46:08, which states '*(2) Where the defendant neglects or refuses to make payment of the sums due from him or her under the order or since any commitment for disobedience to the order as hereinafter provided together with the costs attending the warrant, apprehension and bringing up of the defendant the Magistrate may— (a) by warrant under his hand, direct the sum which appears to be due, together with the costs attending such warrant, to be recovered by distress and sale of the goods and chattels of the defendant...*' before committing the individual to prison.

Update

The Judiciary has the power to make orders that are either civil or criminal. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) acts on the orders of the Court in criminal matters, not in civil matters. Family Law (Guardianship of Minors, Domicile and Maintenance) Act, Chap. 46:08, Section 27(2)(a) falls under civil law which is not the purview of the TTPS.