



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
(GENDER & CHILD AFFAIRS)

***Comments on the Eleventh Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on
The Status of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Third Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity into the Treatment of Child Offenders.***

Foreword

The overarching objective of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), through the Child Affairs Division (CAD), is to manage, coordinate and develop policies and interventions that would enable child development in Trinidad and Tobago. In so doing, it is hoped that the CAD will accomplish Goal 7 of the OPM's Strategic Plan which is "to protect the rights and cater to the needs of children of Trinidad and Tobago while respecting the legally binding international and regional agreements." Thus, guided by the National Development Strategy, the OPM's Strategic Plan and in alignment with international agreements such as the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child, the CAD works assiduously to inform the public, empower children through educational programmes and ensure that policy and praxis work in the best interest of all children.

The OPM is in support of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity in achieving their mandate as outlined in Standing Orders 110(6) and 100 (6) of the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively. As such, the following document presents the comments of the OPM on the findings and recommendations of the Committee, specifically those recommendations related to the Office.

The OPM is of the view that the report captures the nuances and myriad challenges faced in ensuring that children in conflict with the law are afforded all of their rights—that they are heard, treated with dignity, treated fairly and have access to resources that will allow for their overall well-being. The OPM has taken notice of the recommendations and will make a concerted attempt to ensure that all action items that fall under the Office's remit will be pursued and completed.

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Objective 1: The Treatment of Child Offenders at the Youth Training Centre and St Jude's Interim Rehabilitation Centre for Young Female Offenders.

General Comments

The OPM is of the belief that there has been great effort to ensure that the recommendations of the Committee from the Third Report were given the requisite attention. In this regard, the OPM is delighted to note that several of the recommendations have been completed or are no longer applicable due to the decommissioning of the St Michael's School for Boys. With the cognizance of the importance of a robust child protection framework which includes several agencies, policies and interventions to ensure that children are safeguarded, the OPM will work toward identifying its shortfalls and to accelerate activities that guarantee and uphold children's rights in Trinidad and Tobago. One such intervention is the National Children's Registry which falls under the remit of the OPM and the National Child Policy.

Recommendation 4.16

It is imperative the Committee notes that the report lists the Registry as "CRDV" however, the correct title is the National Children's Registry (NCR). The CRDV is the Central Registry for Domestic Violence, which is also under the remit of the OPM, but as the name suggests, has an entirely different purpose.

The OPM wishes to state that it is estimated that the National Children's Registry will be operationalised by fiscal year 2022. The Registry, intended to serve as a national child data repository, aims to effectively monitor the developmental progress of children through data tracking, with such data being utilised in the development of child support interventions. It will also allow collating, sharing and archiving of essential information and report generation that will assist national planning. The benefits of this project are far-reaching and include, but is not limited to the following:

- a) Provision of a more efficient and effective method of monitoring child development, specifically aimed at reducing child abuse, neglect and exclusion in Trinidad and Tobago.
- b) Information to service providers to quickly identify a child with whom they have contact, and ensure that child is receiving the essential services (e.g. education, primary health care, etc.) to which they are entitled.
- c) Identification of child needs that will support the early and effective action to address these needs by providing a tool to identify who is involved with or has a concern about a child;

- d) Protection and monitoring of the growth, care and development of children throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

The OPM has noted that the Committee has stated an interest in having children in conflict with law monitored to ensure successful reintegration into society. With this in mind, the OPM has ensured that the Registry will allow for monitoring and requisite support of persons who were once children in conflict with the law up to age 25.

The OPM also wishes to state that the Registry is at the cusp of the build phase and the National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited (iGovTT) is in the process of contracting a consultant to build the Registry.

Office of the Prime Minister