



TTPS Response – Thirteenth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on an inquiry into the prevalence of Teenage Pregnancy and the State’s capacity to minimise the occurrence of teenage pregnancy and provide services and assistance to teenage parents

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE

Response to

Thirteenth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on an inquiry into the prevalence of Teenage Pregnancy and the State’s capacity to minimise the occurrence of teenage pregnancy and provide services and assistance to teenage parents

Narrative/ Findings of Concern to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service:

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v. During the period 2014 to 2018, the NWRHA recorded the highest prevalence statistics, followed by the SWRHA and ERHA.

Reporting trends by region appeared to be similar in cases received by the TTPS;

vi. Despite the legal reporting requirements of medical personnel, the Committee noted a large difference between the number teenage pregnancies recorded in the public health system and the cases recorded by the TTPS.

The MoH recorded 4,145 cases compared to 606 reports made to the TTPS between 2014/15 and 2019;

viii. The TTPS acknowledged challenges to data collection on the males involved in teenage pregnancies.

For example, for the 592 perpetrators reported to the TTPS, approximately 46% of perpetrators could not be identified by age.

ix. A miniscule fraction (2.48%) of teenage pregnancy cases resulted in arrest and prosecution of perpetrators between 2015 and 2019 (15 out of 606 cases of teenage pregnancy reported to the TTPS);

xi. At least 6 stakeholders acknowledged the need to increase and enhance national data collection related to teenage pregnancy (MoH, MoE, FPATT, SFATT, MSDFS, and TTPS).

If not improved, this may hinder the Ministry’s capacity to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programmes;



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Recommendation/ Comment by the JSC:

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A. Given that accurate, reliable and comprehensive data is essential for informing policy and targeted interventions to combat teenage pregnancy, the MoH, MoE, TTPS, and CATT should give priority to strengthening their capacity to collect data from pregnant teenagers, teenage mothers and the male partners/perpetrators, as well as develop systems to share this data among the four entities.

To this end, the following strategy should be explored:

i. The TTPS should act with urgency to implement an efficient database/reporting tool to record the cases of teenage pregnancy reported by medical professionals and the CATT.

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service’s Response:

The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) records data on a regular basis to ensure it is timely, reliable and accurate at all times.

The reports captured by the Child Protection Unit (CPU), and by extension the TTPS, should rely heavily upon mandatory reporting as currently the TTPS can only capture what is actually reported at its stations.

There are currently various platforms in place to ensure statistics are collated. These platforms and frequency of reporting are as follows:

- i. On a daily basis, the TTPS shares with Children’s Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (CATT), all reports made to the CPU, including reports as it relates to pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers;
- ii. Data collected by CPU is sent on a weekly basis to the TTPS Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) which is the hub of all data gathered by the TTPS;
- iii. The TTPS records and investigates all reports received/made by various medical professionals and the CATT.

With regards to males involved in teenage pregnancies, there are various challenges that exist which include instances where females are unable to supply information, such as the name of the male involved in the situation. This can be curbed by a discourse being recommended on possible culpability



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for persons unwilling to disclose information, particularly parents and relatives of the pregnant teen, as well as that of the suspected perpetrator.

Further to this, it is recommended that a specific “Interagency Mechanism” for measurement be identified and reinforced in order to address variances in data required by the TTPS. This will assist in improving the overall response to investigating and deterring instances of teenage pregnancy. It will also make it mandatory that monthly reports of pregnant teenagers treated at various health institutions, as guided by the Sexual Offences Act of Trinidad and Tobago, be submitted to the TTPS and the CATT thus reducing instances of under-reporting and improving data collection.

Recommendation/ Comment:

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D. That the MoH review its patient screening procedures at the RHAs with the aim of ensuring that cases of teenage pregnancies are referred to the TTPS and CATT within a timely manner;

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service’s Response:

The Sexual Offences Act Chapter 11:28 and Section 31 (1) it states in part:

Any person who has the actual custody, control or temporary care of a minor for a special purpose, as his teacher or a medical practitioner and who has reasonable grounds for believing that a sexual offence has been committed in respect of that minor, under this Act or Section 9, 10, 18 or 19 of the Children Act, shall report the grounds for his belief to a police officer as soon as reasonably practicable.

As such, the TTPS recommends re-sensitisation programmes for health professionals and other stakeholders on the need for adherence to the already existing law of reporting sexual abuse of minors as it relates to teenage pregnancy in Trinidad and Tobago. This would be key in minimising the widespread adverse effects of teenage pregnancy across investigations and prosecution or lack of reporting by stakeholders and individuals.

Further to this, the arrests of perpetrators of teenage pregnancy rely on several legal factors. In a considerable amount of cases the relationship between the victim and perpetrator was decriminalised due to it falling under the Section 20 of the Children’s Act 12 of 2012.



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Additionally, the victims are not always forthcoming with information about the perpetrators. Basic details such as a full name, age and address are not submitted and this leaves little possibility of locating or apprehending said perpetrators therefore requiring that measures be put in place to ensure such.

Narrative/ Findings of Concern to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service:

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- i. Each ministerial stakeholder had established preventative and/or intervention programmes aimed at treating with the determinants or implications of teenage pregnancy;
- ii. All stakeholders acknowledged that there is a need for greater inter-sectorial collaboration on existing initiatives;
- iii. The TTPS also has structured procedures for the investigation and intervention of teenage pregnancy cases, and employs networking and referrals to the CATT and other community agencies.

However, there appeared to be some overlap in the investigation and intervention services offered by the two entities.

Recommendation/ Comment by the JSC:

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A. The Committee endorses the Integrated Strategic Plan for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy. In working towards the goals of the plan, all ministerial stakeholders should give urgent attention to developing an inter-sectorial strategy, including a cross-departmental ministerial task force.

Notwithstanding the existing, separate programmes delivered by each ministry/agency, collaboration should be enhanced to align separate interventions in the following areas:

- i. Sexual and reproductive health education and awareness;
- ii. Adolescents’ access to contraception;
- iii. Education and awareness surrounding child sexual abuse; and
- iv. Ongoing monitoring and support of these interventions.



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Best practices, such as the strategies employed by the United Kingdom⁴⁶, and recommendations from WHO can also be considered, with consideration for their cultural relevance

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service’s Response:

The TTPS, via the Child Protection Unit, does monthly outreach sessions whereby offences such as sexual penetration and teenage pregnancies are addressed. The CPU works with several stakeholders including CATT, Family Planning, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and others.

The increased percentage of reports between May 2019 to March 2020, compared to the overall number of reports from 2015 to April 2019, illustrates the efficacy of the collaboration between the TTPS, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education; as a significant number of reports are now made by medical practitioners, teachers and other school staff members.

Additionally, the TTPS, through the Victim and Witness Support Unit (VWSU), has supported some pregnancies through interventions tailored to meet the physical, emotional and developmental needs of the victims during and after delivery of their babies. It should be noted that teenagers are often referred to CATT with a smaller amount being referred to the VWSU for such interventions.

The TTPS has adopted a proactive involvement to the issues with strategies being implemented by various units within the Service.

1. The VWSU and CPU have undertaken activities such as:
 - i. Educating persons on Teen Sexuality, Healthy Relationships, Recognising Unhealthy Relationships, Body Image, Sexting and Online Profiles at secondary schools.
 - ii. “The Eye in Me”, a female crime prevention and empowerment programme designed to target issues of sex and sexuality, self-esteem and all forms of trauma impacting teen females. The programme thus far has attracted one hundred and forty (140) teenagers.
 - iii. “Who is writing your story- from victim to victor”, a male empowerment programme which served to address topics on emotional intelligence and safety to reduce their chances of involvement in teenage pregnancy and other crisis situations. The programme engaged 75 teen males.
 - iv. A Stress Management programme, which is a coping initiative focussed on SEA students and managing depressive emotions. These included managing examination stress, possible sexual abuse and other life crisis.



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- v. Empowerment Series – a series which provided education and sensitisation to equip senior students of secondary schools on topics such as, Human Trafficking, Pornography, Sexuality, Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation, Domestic Violence and various aspects of family violence that impact adolescence.

These initiatives served to build resilience while raising self-awareness and self-esteem and empowering adolescents so as to minimise their involvement in crime and criminal activity.

2. Inter-sectorial strategies implemented within the Police Youth Clubs (PYCs) focus on information sharing and education to reduce teenage pregnancy. Programmes cover a range of issues such as:

- a. Information sharing through lecture sessions to the students at the primary and secondary schools within the various Divisions. There has also been lecture sessions held with the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) of primary and secondary schools. Topics of lecture sessions Sexual and reproductive health education and awareness]

- b. Sexual and reproductive health education and awareness which is covered in material provided from the Child Protection Unit, the Family Planning Association and the Children’s Authority and utilised during school visits and lectures.

- c. The Ministry of Education has partnered with the Police Youth Clubs and have been sending suspended children to these Clubs for the period of suspension (St James, Sangre Grande and Bagatelle/Blue Basin). During this time lectures, role plays, modelling, mediation and counselling takes place with these children, both male and female, relative to Teenage Pregnancy and the consequences of same. This is not the only discussion held with them as the TTPS has recognised that the children come with a host of varying challenges. Reports are submitted at the end of the periods to the Ministry of Education.

- d. The MoE has allocated Social Workers and Psychologist to work with some of these clubs (St James, Sangre Grande and Bagatelle/Blue Basin).

- e. The Bagatelle Blue Basin Police Youth Club recently spearheaded one of these initiative relative to the challenges at the Diego Martin North Secondary School. There were other agencies that got involved as well.

- f. The Community Relations Department, Police Youth Club Liaison Officers, School Liaison Officers and Community Policing Units also continuously visit the primary schools, secondary schools, PTAs



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and some preschools conveying the message of Sexuality, Sexual Inappropriateness, Sexual Offenses and the repercussions of same. [Education and awareness surrounding child sexual abuse]

g. The Ministry of Health, RAPPORT are utilised in Career Days and demonstrations are done and condoms both male and female are distributed. [Adolescents’ access to contraception]

h. The Ministry of Community Development has partnered with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and has conducted several training programmes in the Community Policing Units, Police Youth Club Leaders in Youth Engagement and other courses re-communications.

Recommendation/ Comment by JSC:

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L. That inter-agency discussions be held between the CATT and the CPU of the TTPS with a view to streamlining the efforts involved in protecting minors.

The ultimate aim being to eliminate any duplication of efforts among these stakeholders and to establish a more coordinated response to the issue at hand.

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service’s Response:

The CPU and CATT continue to coordinate their efforts in reference to investigation and intervention while the VWSU, given its mandate toward assisting with deterrence, investigation and prosecution of crime related matters, continue to design preventative programmes on the said issues.

The CPU conducts criminal investigations as it relates to all reports made to the unit. It relies on the CATT to conduct some medical examinations, forensic interviews (depending on the victim’s age) and social investigations such as the appropriate location for the victim, which includes home visits.

- i. Reports of a sexual nature can be made at all the various police stations;
- ii. These victims are immediately referred to the CPU;
- iii. CPU contacts the Children’s Authority and an investigation is initiated;
- iv. Once these reports are presented the Heads of these departments are made aware and decisions made on a way forward.



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There are clear guidelines relative to the duties and functions along with several Police Service press briefings giving statistics of these issues bringing much needed information to the public.