



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
(GENDER & CHILD AFFAIRS)

Comments on the *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*

Foreword

The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), through the Gender and Child Affairs Division (GCA), is responsible for managing, coordinating and developing policies and interventions that enable child development in Trinidad and Tobago and leads the State's response to issues related to gender and development. 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 and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the OPM-GCA aims to empower men, women, boy and girls.

On consideration of the Report, the OPM is of the view that the findings and recommendations put forward during deliberations and by the Committee adequately explores the current social machinery that works to prevent teenage pregnancy and/or support the needs of teenage parents. With the objective to ensure that no child is left behind, the OPM has taken notice of all of the Committee's recommendations and will do all possible within its remit to address the current gaps that have been brought to the fore. In this regard, the following document presents the OPM's response to the recommendations of the Committee with focus on what has been requested of the OPM.

Furthermore, the OPM fully supports the work of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration. .

Response to the Recommendations of *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*

Questions for the OPM

That the OPM in response to the Committee provide an update on:

i. The implementation plan for the revised Adolescent Parenting Programme, including the estimated commencement date, activities completed to date, and timelines for future activities;

Background

The goal of the Adolescent Parenting Programme (APP) is to provide support for the well-being of teenaged parents and their children so as to mitigate the myriad negative effects of adolescent pregnancy. To achieve these goals, the wraparound model of care was chosen as the approach for the programme. Wraparound is an individualised care planning and management approach to serving young persons and their families through the delivery of holistic and high-quality services.

The APP will be made available to both adolescent mothers and fathers regardless of age, marital status, or history of pregnancy. Other groups of beneficiaries will include: teenaged girls and boys who are at risk of pregnancy, teenagers with special needs who are either pregnant, a parent or at risk of pregnancy, and those adolescent parents who have experienced miscarriage and abortion or who prefer adoption. It is important to note that the programme will not be dictated by strict age brackets, but rather by the developmental level of the client. Individualised care and care planning will be the major feature of the programme and will be based around the desired outcomes of the client.

It should also be noted that the OPM, in its proposal to Cabinet, recommended that the programme be managed and delivered by Non-Governmental Organisations or service providers in the field or related fields. It was recommended that NGOs be considered to manage the programme as they would have a better understanding of the ethos of the community and have more effective access to community resources and assets which will play a critical role in programme delivery. Thus, the OPM advised that the Central Tenders Board coordinate the procurement of an NGO to provide managerial services for the APP.

In its proposal to Cabinet, the OPM also discussed one of the major drawbacks that was echoed by several agencies, both Non-Governmental and Governmental in the Committee's Report—the lack of a coordinated or integrated response among social sector partners who work to address teenage pregnancy. This shortfall facilitates the emergence of several negative impacts, such as differences in data related to the target population, inadequate monitoring mechanisms and lack of law enforcement as it relates to perpetrators of sexual violence, to name a few. To address these challenges, the OPM also proposed that an Oversight Committee be established which will consist of representatives from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, and the OPM. It was recommended that two key functions of the Committee should be to monitor implementation and execution issues when the APP is operationalised; and to advocate for a multi-stakeholder national strategy that comprehensively addresses all of the nuances related to adolescent pregnancy from a preventive and responsive standpoint.

Approval

In November 2019 by Cabinet Minute No. 2329, approval was granted to the OPM for the establishment of the re-designed APP in north-west and south-west Trinidad for both boys and girls who are expectant parents and adolescent teenage parents. The Cabinet also agreed to pursue the establishment of additional centres subsequent to positive evaluation results of the first iteration of the programme. The Cabinet also approved that an NGO should be procured to manage the programme and to the establishment of the Oversight Committee.

Implementation Plan

In the OPM's proposal, the programme is to be implemented in four (4) locations, which covers the major areas where adolescent pregnancy is most prevalent based on the data from the Ministry of Health. The four (4) cities and corresponding health districts proposed, in descending order of prevalence, are: San Fernando (south-west), Chaguanas (north-central), Sangre Grande (east) and Belmont (north-west).

The Implementation Plan submitted to Cabinet includes the following activities and timelines shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Implementation Plan of the Adolescent Parenting Programme

Item No.	Activity	Timeframe
1.	Finalise Note for Cabinet	2 weeks
2.	Cabinet Approval	2 weeks
3.	Establish Oversight Committee	1 week
4.	Determine staffing structure and organisational framework	1 week
5.	Determine locations	1 week
6.	Conduct Site Visits	2 weeks
7.	Write to the Ministry of Education to confirm funds	1 week
8.	Write to Central Tenders Board to commence tendering procedure	1 week
9.	CTB Tendering Process	6 weeks
10.	Contract(s) Awarded	2 weeks
11.	Negotiation Meeting - OPM meet with NGO(s)	1 week
12.	Finalization of M&E Framework, Risk Assessment Plan and Operational Polices with NGO(s)	3 weeks
13.	NGO(s) submits request for start-up funds	1 week
14.	NGO(s) submits request for subvention	1 week
15.	Start-up funds and subvention approved by PS	1 week
16.	Processing and payment of Start-up funds	2 weeks
17.	Processing and payment of subvention	2 weeks
18.	Implementation of Communication Plan	6 weeks
	NGO	
19.	Purchasing of Start-up furniture and Equipment	3 weeks
20.	Recruitment and Selection of Staff	3 weeks

21.	Training of Staff	2 weeks
22.	Implementation of Communication Plan	6 weeks
23.	Registration of Clients	4 weeks

It should be noted that several of the activities outlined in **Table 1** will happen simultaneously. In this regard, it is envisaged that the implementation of the programme, from the establishment of the Oversight Committee to the registration of clients, will take six months. A gantt chart showcasing the roll out of the activities in Table 1 has been attached to this report as **Appendix I**.

Status and the Way Forward

At this juncture, the OPM has completed **Items 1 and 2** of the Implementation Plan outlined in **Table 1**. and **Item 3** is in progress. The OPM has also met with each of the agencies that is to be represented on the Committee to deliberate on ways that the social support system can be strengthened so as to address critical issues such as teenage pregnancy. The programme will be initiated next fiscal subject to funding.

ii. The implementation plan for the UN Foundations Programme

Background

The OPM-GCA in collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, (UNWOMEN) Multi Country Office-Barbados hosted a successful five day facilitators training in August 2018 for twenty-seven (27) persons from key Ministries, the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) and Faith Based Organisations. The programme is titled: “UN Women Foundations Programme: Strengthening Prevention Approaches to address Gender Based Violence in the Caribbean”. The main objective of the training was to equip participants with the skills and knowledge to replicate the training with young people.

The UN Foundations Programme is developed primarily for a Caribbean youth audience and addressed the gender-power relations which are at the root of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and discrimination. The Programme is participant-centered and invites young people to engage in ‘thinking through’ concepts such as gender, gender socialization, gender hierarchies and constructions of masculinity, femininity, sexuality and their impact on relationships with themselves and others.

Considering the foregoing, the intent of the programme is to make a signal contribution to the fields of GBV prevention education and also to develop Caribbean youth. The programme was piloted in Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas and in Trinidad and Tobago in 2019/2020.

The training curriculum is divided into modules of: twelve weekly sessions, six weekly sessions and a four-day intensive session. Each session is carded for 60-90 minutes and is conducted by two facilitators, a male and a female. The Curriculum is designed to be used with young people between the ages of 13 and 24 in school or community settings. The age groups for the programme will be 13-15 years, 16-18 years, 18-24 years.

The specific objectives of the Curriculum are to:

- Empower young people to understand GBV and its genesis in gender inequalities and gender-based discrimination.

- Promote an understanding of the consequences of GBV to partner(s), children, communities and societies in general.

Implementation Plan

Phase I (April- August 2019)

Following the five-day training programme, the Gender Affairs Division within the OPM coordinated and implemented the first phase of the programme in collaboration with UN Women, the Youth Training and Employment the Partnership Programme (YTEPP), the Trinidad and Tobago Retired Nurses (TTRN), St. Dominic's Children's Home, the St. Jude's School for Girls and Sunny Hill Homestead for Boys.

Prior to the implementation of the programme, the UN Women Masters Trainers and the Gender Training Officer facilitated a half day refresher session for UN trained facilitators on Monday April 8, 2019 at the OPM.

Four-Day intensive training

1. Fifteen (15) female adult students YTEPP in Tobago participated from April 30- May 3 2019
2. Ten (10) Male adult students of YTEPP in Valencia, Trinidad participated from June 25-28, 2019.
3. Fifty-five (55) prospective Care Givers participated in the UN Foundations programme as a component of the three months CARE Givers programme which was organized by TTRN on behalf of OPM. These sessions were from June 10-13 2019 and from July 22-25, 2019.
4. Thirty-one (31) Caregivers for Institutional Residences for children, participated from August 12-15 2019. These sessions were hosted by the OPM, Gender Affairs Division.

Twelve (12) weekly sessions/modules

1. Twelve (12) female students from the St. Dominic's Children's Home and St. Jude's School for Girls (merged sessions) and seven (7) Boys from Sunny Hill Homestead for Boys. These session ran from April- July and June - August 2019 respectively.

UN Trained Facilitators implemented the Programme:

Ms. Georgiana Richardson, Youth Affairs Division and Dr. Safeeya Mohammed, Muslim Women's Organisation of Trinidad and Tobago facilitated the sessions on Tuesdays at the St. Dominic's Children's Home, Vertis Centre. While Mr. Oren Henry (employee at the OPM) and Ms. Annalicia Barratt, Youth Affairs Division, facilitated the sessions with Sunny Hill Boys on Thursdays.

Ms. Ovida Franklin, Sport and Youth Division THA and UN Women Master Trainer facilitated the four (4) days intensive with YTEPP female students in Tobago. Mr. Rayshawn Mars, Youth Affairs Division and UN Women Master Trainers executed the four (4) days intensive with YTEPP Male Students in Valencia, Trinidad.

Mr. Bertrand Moses and UN Women Master Trainers facilitated the four-day intensive with Care Givers in July 2019. UN Women Master Trainers also facilitated the four days intensive with Care Givers in August 2019.

Phase II: 2020 Pilot

Prior to the commencement of the second phase of the programme, a two-day refresher session is being planned for UN trained facilitators who will be implementing the Programme. The main objective is to increase their skills sets of facilitation and delivery of the curriculum. These sessions are tentatively carded for May 5-6, 2020.

Presentation to stakeholders on the results of the UN Foundations Programme

- It is stipulated in the UN Operational Manual and Procedural Guidelines that OPM-GCA, must apprise key stakeholders of the pilot success and invite them to partner with OPM to implement the programme within their youth network. The presentation is tentatively carded for May 7/8 2020 and will include the following:
- The evaluation of the programme for the period April-August 2019, which is being done by the Policy Research and Planning Division at the OPM.
- Highlights of the reports of the Master Trainers who conducted five (4) four days intensive sessions.
- Supervision/observation of the facilitators who conducted the 12 weekly sessions.
- Facilitators will highlight some of the lessons learnt without breaching confidentiality of the participants. Pre and post implementation plan.

Six (6) weekly sessions/modules to be implemented in Secondary Schools

- The Gender Affairs Division shared the UN Foundations flyer and a narrative with Principals of four (4) secondary schools namely: Tunapuna, Valencia, Chaguanas and Gasparillo. They showed interest in partnering with the OPM to implement the programme. The principals for Valencia and Chaguanas indicated that the best time for the programme will be during the final school term May-July where there is more flexibility for extra curricula activities while the principals for Tunapuna and Gasparillo prefer the second term Jan-April 2020. It should be noted that this timeframe will have to be revisited and amended as a result of the current measures that have been implemented nationally in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Four-Day intensive modules/sessions

- OPM will collaborate with MILAT, YTEPP and Trinidad and Tobago Girl Guides Association to host three-four (4) days intensive modules with their groups. The dates to be decided following meetings with the Heads of the organizations.

iii. Any revision to the curricula of the CHOICES programme;

The OPM is not aware of any revision made to the CHOICES programme at this time.

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Office of the Prime Minister

Implementation Plan of the Adolescent Parenting Programme

Activities	Month 1				Month 2				Month 3				Month 4				Month 5				Month 6			
	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4
OPM	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Draft Proposal and Budget																								
Finalize Note to Cabinet																								
Cabinet Approval																								
Establish Oversight Committee																								
Determine staffing structure and organisational framework																								
Determine locations																								
Conduct Site Visits																								
Write to MoF to confirm funds																								
Write to CTB to commence tendering procedure																								
CTB Tendering Process																								
Contract(s) Awarded																								
Negotiation Meeting - OPM meet with NGO(s)																								
Finalization of M&E Framework, Risk Assessment Plan and Operational Polices with NGO(s)																								
NGO(s) submits request for start-up funds																								
NGO(s) submits request for subvention																								
Start-up funds annd subvention approved by PS																								
Processing and payment of Start-up funds																								
Processing and payment of subvention																								
Implementation of Communication Plan																								

