



TWENTY-NINTH REPORT OF THE

THE COMMITTEE ON

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS

FIFTH SESSION OF THE 11TH PARLIAMENT

INQUIRY

An examination into the delivery of projects and programmes by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services.



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:

- (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 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 improvement of public administration.*

Current membership

Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George	Chairman
Dr. Lackram Bodoë	Vice-Chairman
Ms. Nicole Olivierre	Member
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Mr. Clarence Rambharat	Member
Mr. Daniel Dookie	Member
Mr. Wade Mark	Member
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine	Member
Ms. Amrita Deonarine	Member
Mr. Foster Cummings	Member

Committee Staff

The current staff members serving the Committee are:

Ms. Keiba Jacob	Secretary to the Committee
Ms. Sheranne Samuel	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Hema Bhagalloo	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Rachel Nunes	Graduate Research Assistant
Ms. Ashaki Alexis	Graduate Research Assistant
Ms. Anesha James	Administrative Support
Ms. Natoya O'Neil	Administrative Support

Publication

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Members of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee



Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-
George
Chairman



Dr. Lackram Bodoe
Vice-Chairman



Mr. Wade Mark
Member



Mr. Clarence Rambharat
Member



Mrs. Ayanna
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Ms. Amrita Deonarine
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Mr. Daniel Dookie
Member



Ms. Nicole Olivierre
Member



Mr. Foster Cummings
Member

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report of the PAAC for the Eleventh Parliament contains the details of the examination of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services.

The objective of the examination was to examine the following:

- Accountability and Transparency;
- Efficiency in the management of Projects and Programmes;
- Capability in the delivery of projects and programmes on time and within budget; and
- The oversight mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate projects and programmes.

The Committee, in undertaking this examination employed two (2) mechanisms:

- Written Submissions; and
- A Public Hearing.

The Committee requested written submissions from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) and thereafter focused on a review and analysis of the written submissions submitted. Subsequently, the Committee conducted a Public Hearing with the MSDFS. The approach adopted by the Committee took into account issues identified from responses received and reports in the media.

The Committee made recommendations related to the issues identified. Observations and recommendations are presented in Chapter 3.

1. INTRODUCTION

THE COMMITTEE

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

- examine the 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.

Change in 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 Senate on November 3, 2017, Ms. Jennifer Raffoul was appointed as a Member of the Committee in lieu of Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir.
3. 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.
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 of 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.
7. By resolution of the Senate on October 25, 2019, Mr. Foster Cummings was appointed as a Member of the Committee in lieu of Mr. Garvin Simonette.

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 Bodoë was elected as the Vice-Chairman.

Quorum

Additionally, 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.

2. METHODOLOGY

Determination of the Committee's Work Programme

At an in-camera meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday, September 18, 2019, the Committee agreed to conduct an inquiry into the examination of the delivery of projects and programmes by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services.

Review of Documents

The Committee deliberated on the following documents, namely:

- i. Budget Documents; and
- ii. Current news.

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process outlines steps to be 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 examination of the delivery of projects and programmes by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services:

- i. Identification of entity to be examined: MSDFS;
- ii. Preparation of Inquiry Proposal for the MSDFS.
- iii. The Inquiry Proposal outlines:
 - Description
 - The objective of Inquiry; and
 - Proposed Questions.
- iv. Request for a written response was sent to the MSDFS on January 30, 2020. Responses were received on February 20, 2020.
- v. Preparation of an Issues Paper which identified and summarised matters of concern in the responses provided by the MSDFS;
- 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 March 11, 2020.

- vii. Following the Public Hearing, a request for further details was sent to the MSDFS on May 15, 2020, and was received on June 22, 2020.
- viii. Report Committee's findings and recommendations to Parliament upon conclusion of the inquiry.
- ix. Request for Ministerial Responses. Review responses.
- x. Engage in follow-up

3. ISSUES, OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ISSUES

1. Capturing Client Information

In written responses received, the MSDFS informed the Committee that a Social Services Client Management System (SSCMS) was developed and implemented to capture all client information to manage the issuance of grants and services. This system was developed in-house as an interim solution. In the long term, the MSDFS explained of plans to implement an Integrated Social Enterprise Management System (ISEMS). At the time of the hearing (March, 2020) the Ministry informed the Committee that the tendering process had commenced and negotiations were to begin soon with the vendor who was recommended for the job the Ministry that that implementation of the ISEMS will directly address:

- Inefficient caseload management;
- Slow intake and application processing;
- Impaired ability to collaborate on cases across programmes;
- Fragmented service delivery;
- Lack of information to guide decisions;
- Elevated levels of staff frustration;
- Elevated levels of citizen dissatisfaction; and
- Abuse and fraud within the system.

ISEMS is expected to accrue the several benefits including:

- timely assistance to persons who are deemed to be in need;
- value for money;
- transparency and accountability in the administration of state resources
- efficiency and effectiveness;
- high-quality customer care;
- positive financial, operational and stakeholder impacts;
- increased data security; and
- data collaboration and sharing amongst relevant stakeholders.

The Committee enquired when the ISEMS can be expected to be fully integrated, officials stated that a timeline of nine months was anticipated. At the time of the hearing the Ministry was conducting negotiations with vendors and were hoping to finalise contracts within a month.

Recommendations:

- *The MSDFS should conduct a comparative assessment of the ISEMS and the SSCMS and submit a report to Parliament by December 31, 2020.*
- *With regard to the Social Services Client Management System, in the short term the Ministry should;*
 - a. conduct an evaluation of the system detailing its strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation should also give an indication of any challenges related to the prolonged use of the system;*
 - b. conduct an audit to determine any gaps and provide solutions to the gaps identified;*

The findings of the evaluation and audit should be submitted to Parliament by December 31, 2020;

- *The MSDFS should submit to Parliament a status update on the development and implementation of the Integrated Social Enterprise Management System (ISEMS) by December 31, 2020; and*
- *Notwithstanding the benefits which may be derived from the ISEMS and given possible economic and financial constraints the MSDFS should seek to maximise the use of SSCMS in the event that the system may be required for a longer than anticipated timeframe.*

1. Staffing and efficiency of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Team

The Ministry stated that it has strengthened its ICT team. Most positions have been filled and the recruitment process is ongoing to fill the remaining positions. This will improve the service to internal clients in terms of response times, resolution times and overall ICT quality of service. The Ministry stated that applications were also being developed that will increase efficiency and productivity. ICT team members were also stationed at key external offices to improve on the response and resolution times to requests for assistance from

internal and external clients. The ICT Division was also working to assess and re-develop the business processes of core Divisions and Departments so as to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of the Ministry's critical services. Officials informed the Committee that a data centre was being established at the Ministry's Couva Location to house critical ICT infrastructure whilst a backup system will be housed at a Penal location. The Ministry explained that these measures will ensure that there would be data redundancy, business continuity, and data backup and restoration in the event of any failure or loss/misuse of data. The Ministry also stated that plans to upgrade the entire Wide Area Network (WAN) infrastructure was being developed, which when completed will increase network reliability and response times.

In addition, strengthening its ICT Team the Committee also learnt that the Ministry maintains a strong online presence through its website, social media (Facebook, etc.) and the usage of iGovTT's TTConnect platform. The Ministry utilises these mediums to interact with its clientele and to inform and educate on the services provided. The Ministry also undertakes several community outreaches in partnership with a number of other Ministries and agencies to bring services to the general population. The Committee learnt that mechanisms for customer feedback were implemented in all Ministry's offices and work is in train with the Ministry of Public Utilities to enhance this feature. The Ministry stated that additional customer service personnel for all offices will be soon recruited. The report on a recent Service Improvement Project for the Social Welfare Division undertaken in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Administration will soon be completed and the recommendations will be implemented to improve services to the clients.

Observation:

- ***The Committee commends the strong online presence by the MSDFS as a means to inform and educate its clientele.***

Recommendations:

- ***The MSDFS should provide a status update on the following:***
 - ***filling of the vacancies in the ICT Team;***
 - ***the applications being developed that will increase efficiency and productivity; and***

- *the data centre being established at the Ministry's Couva location that will house critical ICT infrastructure.*
- *This should be submitted to the Parliament by December 31, 2020.*

2. Accountability and Transparency

The Ministry indicated that its Internal Audit Unit provides some level of effectiveness and efficiency analysis in the auditing of its Units and programmes. These audits assist the Ministry in determining whether projects and programmes are being delivered effectively and efficiently. The Ministry explained the processes in place to facilitate the effective oversight and implementation of the budgetary allocation for projects and programmes to ensure that public funds are spent to the best advantage. The Ministry indicated that apart from the Financial and Regulatory frameworks that govern public sector expenditure, there was a Permanent Secretary Procurement Evaluations Committee in conjunction with the Internal Audit Unit which assists with monitoring of project/programmes. Project/Programme leads are also called to account for expenditures associated with programmes/projects prior to approvals.

i. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

In written submissions received the MSDFS stated that it had a Monitoring and Evaluation Division which develop monthly status report templates to capture data from all units/divisions. The Ministry also stated that one of its strengths when measuring the success in the delivery of its objectives is the existence of its M&E Unit which has the responsibility for analyzing data and reporting. When questioned on the ways to continue to improve and create value, one of these ways was the implementation of a robust M&E Framework. This framework will provide the Ministry with information on challenges and hindrances to enable programme improvements. When asked whether any qualitative/quantitative research was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the programmes and projects administered by the Ministry, the Ministry explained that the M&E Unit was responsible for such and periodically monitor and evaluate its programmes and projects to ensure that they are achieving the desired results.

Observations:

- *The Committee notes the measures implemented to ensure accountability and transparency within the delivery of MSDFS projects and programmes; and*
- *The Committee also notes that despite the existence of a Monitoring and Evaluation Division there appeared to be no role in ensuring accountability and transparency from its submission.*

Recommendation:

- *The Ministry should provide clarification on the Unit responsible for monitoring and evaluation as well as a detailed description on its role at the Ministry.*

3. Staffing Issues

The Committee requested an update on the filling of vacancies at the Ministry. The Ministry stated that regarding contract employment, there was 814 contract positions. As at the time of the hearing 159 of those positions were filled, and 655 were vacant. The Ministry explained that the Human Resource Department was working assiduously to have interviews conducted and the vacancies filled. The Committee questioned the effectiveness of Divisions in the implementation of programmes to the socially displaced given the 655 outstanding vacancies. The Ministry explained that although there were 814 vacancies, the Ministry was going through a restructuring exercise where three or four of its Units were no longer operating. The positions in those units will not be filled therefore decreasing the number of vacant positions. The Ministry further explained that it was working with the Ministry of Public Administration on the restructuring in terms of the Ministry's Units. As a result the Ministry was recruiting some critical areas however, were awaiting the report from the Ministry of Public Administration with respect to the restructuring of the Ministry which was a mandate of the Cabinet for the MSDFS and three other Ministries. Further details on critical Units that were experiencing shortages are as follows:

ii. Internal Audit Unit

In written submissions received, the MSDFS indicated as at February 2020, there were twelve persons employed in the Internal Audit Unit which were as follows:

- 1 Auditor II;
- 2 Auditors I;
- 6 Auditing Assistants;
- 2 Clerk II; and
- 1 Clerk Typist.

Despite this complement, the Ministry indicated that two (2) Auditors I and two (2) Auditing Assistants posts were vacant. At the time of the hearing these posts were filled with temporary officers. When asked whether the Service Commissions Department was contacted to fill these positions with the substantive officers, the Ministry stated that the Department was contacted to fill one of the Auditor I posts when it became vacant in November 2019. The Ministry indicated plans would be made to request the filling of the other posts.

iii. The Project Implementation Unit (PIU)

Project Implementation Unit (PIU) of the Ministry is responsible for the management and implementation of all Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) Projects. The Unit makes recommendations on the financial management of capital funds within the PSIP to the Permanent Secretary and/or the Deputy Permanent Secretary. The PIU manages the relationships among and between internal/external stakeholders of the various projects. As such, the Unit operates as both an agent of the Ministry and as a client to the various Units and Departments within the Ministry, these include:

- The National Family Services Division;
- The Social Welfare Division; and
- The National Social Development Programme.

However, the Committee learnt that the PIU was not adequately staffed. Some key positions were not filled and as a result, most of the technical responsibilities (civil construction works) were undertaken by the one (1) Quantity Surveying Technician employed in the PIU.

iii. Ministry Divisions

The Ministry indicated that the Social Welfare and the National Family Services Division was not adequately staffed and the Ministry was addressing this matter with the Director of Personnel Administration (DPA) for substantive public service positions; undertaking a recruitment drive for the contract positions and working with the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) on the structure of the Ministry. With regard to NSDP, the Unit has most of its staff and the Ministry recently conducted interviews for the recruitment of some of the outstanding staff.

Recommendations:

- ***The Ministry should seek to fill the key positions in the Project Implementation Unit to ensure the efficient oversight of its projects. A status update on this should be submitted to Parliament by December 31, 2020; and***
- ***The MSDFS should provide a status update on the following by December 31, 2020:***
 - i. ***The filling of the Auditor I and Auditng Assistant positions in the Internal Audit Unit;***
 - ii. ***The request for substantive public service positions to the DPA for the Social Welfare Division and the National Family Services Division;***
 - iii. ***The restructuring exercise as mandated by Cabinet; and***
 - iv. ***The recruitment drive undertaken by the Ministry.***

4. Challenges faced by the Ministry regarding the management of projects

In written submissions received the MSDFS indicated that some of the challenges faced with regard to the management of projects and the steps taken to rectify the following:

- i. The quantity and quality of human resources also a constraint for in-house development. Action taken to supplement staff with short term contract arrangements;
- ii. Funding for projects.
- iii. Approaches taken to obtain technical assistance from other countries and from International Development Agencies;
- iv. Project Management Training; and

- v. Performance Management. Work still ongoing on the improvement and application of the performance management systems.

Recommendation:

- *An action plan addressing the challenges highlighted, with timelines for implementation of the plan to address these challenges should be submitted to the Parliament by December 31, 2020*

CONCLUSION

During the Fifth Session of the Eleventh Parliament, the PAAC conducted an examination into the delivery of projects and programmes by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. During the course of the examination which consisted of written submissions and a Public Hearing, the Committee followed up on several issues from the written responses received from the MSDFS. Issues surrounding the Social Services Client Management System, Information and Communications Technology, staffing issues in various Units, accountability and transparency and the challenges faced with the management of projects and programmes were examined.

The Committee is of the view that the adoption of its proposed recommendations will lead to greater accountability, transparency and value for money in the use of public funds by the THA. 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.
Dr. Lackram Bodoë
Vice-Chairman

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Appendix I

Questions to the MSDFS

Questions to the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

General questions

1. What is the status of the Ministry's Strategic Plan? Provide a copy of the Strategic Plan.
2. How was the implementation of the plans and proposals outlined in the strategic plan tracked and monitored?
3. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges experienced by the Ministry in measuring its success in the delivery of its objectives?
4. What measures were implemented to enhance the Ministry's strategic goals for the immediate and long-term future (with regard to continuous improvement, re-engineering, development of human resources, information management strategies and business continuity management)?
5. With regard to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No.1: No Poverty:
 - i. Has the Ministry noted a reduction in the poverty rate? Provide statistics for the years 2016 to 2019.
 - ii. What steps are in place to ensure the needs of the most vulnerable are met?
 - iii. What measures are in place to attain the SDG No. 1?
 - iv. How does the Ministry measure the success of attaining SDG No. 1?

Objective 1: Accountability and Transparency

1. How does the Accounting Officer (AO) test whether major projects and programmes administered by the Ministry are feasible and provide value for money throughout the project life cycle?
2. How does the Ministry measure whether projects and programmes are being delivered effectively and efficiently?
3. What processes are in place to ensure accountability to Parliament?
4. What processes are in place to facilitate the effective oversight and implementation of the budgetary allocation for projects and programmes to ensure that public funds are spent to the best advantage?

5. What indicators are used to scrutinise all items of expenditure to ensure the lowest cost possible and to measure outcomes, evaluate performance and demonstrate value for money?
6. Is there a framework governing conflict of interest? If yes, describe the framework.
7. What measures are in place to address conflicts of interest once identified?

Objective 2: Efficiency in the management of Projects and Programme

1. Explain the process by which projects/programmes administered by the Ministry are selected?
2. Provide a table with the following:
 - the major projects and programmes;
 - the relevant development themes (*• Putting People First: Nurturing Our Greatest Asset; • Delivering Good Governance and Service Excellence; • Improving Productivity Through Quality Infrastructure and Transportation; • Building Globally Competitive Business; and • Placing the Environment at the Centre of Social and Economic Development.*)
 - allocation received;
 - expenditure to date;
 - percentage of the project completed;
 - key performance indicators used to measure the success of the strategic/ corporate objectives;
 - target set for all aspects of performance; and
 - actual outcomes.
2. What processes should the Ministry excel at to achieve its objectives?
3. What are the major challenges faced by the Ministry with regard to managing projects? State how these challenges were rectified?
4. What oversight mechanisms were used by the Ministry to monitor and manage projects?
5. How can the Ministry continue to improve and create value?
6. With regard to ensuring that there is continuous improvement and the alignment of service delivery to the allocation received:
 - a) How frequent were evaluations of the delivery of programme and projects conducted by the Ministry; and

- b) What were the lessons learned?

Objective 3: Capability in the delivery of projects and programmes on time and within budget

1. What Division or Unit within the Ministry is responsible for administering projects and programmes?
2. Is this Division or Unit adequately staffed?
3. Provide the following :
 - i. the number of persons employed in this Division or Unit as of December 30, 2019
 - ii. a list of the established posts on the approved organizational structure;
 - iii. the number of persons required for those posts;
 - iv. a breakdown of the category of workers employed in this Division or Unit short term, contract, permanent)?
 - v. Are there any vacant positions? If yes, provide a breakdown of the category of vacant positions.
 - vi. What attempts have been made by the Ministry to fill these positions?
4. Are the person employed in this Division or Unit properly trained and possess the capacity and skills to administer projects and programmes?
 - i. What training has been offered to the staff of the Division or Unit thus far for the fiscal year 2020? Provide details on the training administered such as type of training, date, the agency used and cost.
 - ii. Is further training scheduled for the fiscal year 2020? Provide details on the training administered such as type of training, date, the agency that would be used and cost.
5. Explain the process by which persons are selected for programmes administered by the Ministry?
6. How does the Ministry determine hindrances to efficiency and the solution to rectify hindrances in the delivery of projects and programmes administered by the Ministry?

Objective 4: The oversight mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate projects and programme

Project Risk Management

Risk management contributes to the objective and improvement of performance in human health and safety, security, legal and regulatory compliance, public acceptance, environmental protection, product quality, project management, efficiency in operations, governance and reputation. It accounts for uncertainty, the nature of that uncertainty and how it can be addressed.

Questions:

1. Does the Ministry have a project risk management policy/ project risk management guidelines? If yes, provide a copy.
2. How often does the Ministry conduct an analysis of its project risk management processes?
3. Has the Ministry assessed whether identified risks are mitigated by existing internal controls and evaluated the design and effectiveness of those controls?
4. What is the Ministry's risk management process and how does this process seek to minimise potential adverse effects on project delivery and performance?
5. What strategies have been implemented by the Ministry to monitor its project risk management procedures to facilitate the investigation, review and mitigation of risk?
6. Provide a copy of the last internal audit risk review report.

Internal audit

Questions:

1. What is the role of the Internal Audit Unit regarding projects and programmes?
2. What is the total number of persons employed at the Internal Audit Unit? Provide a breakdown of the category of workers in this Unit.
3. Is the Internal Audit Unit adequately staffed to carry out its responsibilities? If no, provide the following:
 - a) the current number of vacant positions; and
 - b) the title of these vacant positions.
4. Has the Ministry communicated with the Service Commissions Department to fill the vacant positions?

- a) If yes, what was the result?
 - b) If no, what were the reasons?
- 5. How many persons are qualified to perform internal audits?
- 6. Is the staff of the Internal Audit Unit adequately trained?
 - a) What training has been offered to the staff of the Internal Audit Unit thus far for the fiscal year 2020? Provide details on the training administered such as type of training, date, the agency used and cost.
 - b) Was the Public Service Academy engaged to provide training?
- 7. Does the Ministry have a framework for executing internal audits?
- 8. How often are audit investigations with regard to projects and programmes conducted by the Unit? When was the last investigation conducted? Provide a copy of the latest report.
- 9. What systems are in place to address issues identified by the Internal Auditor?
- 10. Did the Internal Auditor provide any recommendations for the improvement of internal controls? Provide a copy of the report.
- 11. How has the internal audit activity contributed to improving value for money, accountability, transparency, risk management and internal control processes of the Ministry and the projects and programmes administered by the Ministry?
- 12. At what point during the financial year is an internal audit performed?
- 13. What impediments have Internal Auditors experienced?
- 14. Who are Internal Audit Reports submitted to?
- 15. Has the Ministry experienced any challenges in the performance of the internal audit function?

Objective 5: The benefits of projects and programmes across Trinidad and Tobago

- 1. How many persons have utilised each programme administered by the Ministry for the period September 2018 - January 2020?
- 2. When last was a Social Impact Study on all projects and programmes administered by the Ministry conducted?
 - i. Who were the persons involved in the conduct of this study?
 - ii. How was the Social Impact Study conducted?

- iii. What was the outcome of that study? Provide details.
- iv. What were the lessons learned?
- v. Was the Ministry able to determine how these projects and programs have improved people's lives and economic wellbeing?

Gender Responsive Budgeting Practices

1. Are there any specific programmes and projects administered by the Ministry to address gender equality between men and women/ boys and girls?
 - i. If yes, provide a list of these programmes and projects.
2. What measures are in place to ensure that programmes and projects administered by the Ministry met the needs of different groups of men and women?
3. Are gender equality programmes and projects which support equality between men and women/ boys and girls sufficiently funded?
4. Did the Ministry undertake any qualitative/ quantitative research to assess the effectiveness of the programmes and projects administered by the Ministry, met the needs of different groups of men and women/boys and girls? What was the outcome of the research?
5. Does the Ministry have any policy or guideline with regard to sex-disaggregated data on programmes and projects administered by the Ministry? If yes, what are the benefits of collecting this data?

APPENDIX II

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process outlines steps to be taken by the Committee when conducting an inquiry into an entity or issue. The following steps outlines the Inquiry process followed by the PAAC:

1. Identification of entity to be examined;
2. Preparation of Inquiry Proposal for the selected entity. The Inquiry Proposal outlines:
 - Description
 - Background;
 - Overview of Expenditure
 - Rationale/Objective of Inquiry; and
 - Proposed Questions.
3. Consideration and approval of Inquiry Proposals by the Committee and when approved, questions are forwarded to the entity for written responses;
4. Issue of requests for written comment from the public are made via Parliament's website, social media accounts, newspaper and advertisements;
5. Preparation of an Issues Paper by the Secretariat for the Committee's consideration, based on written responses received from the entities. 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;
6. Review of the responses provided and the Issues Paper by the Committee;
7. Conduct of a site visit to obtain a first-hand perspective of the implementation of a project (optional);
8. 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 the Committee believes the issues have little public interest or the Committee believes that the written responses provided are sufficient and no further explanation is necessary.
9. Issue of written request to the entity for further details should the Committee require any additional information after the public hearing.

10. Report Committee's findings and recommendations to Parliament upon conclusion of the inquiry.
11. Engage in follow-up.

APPENDIX III

Minutes of Meetings

**THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FIFTH
SESSION, ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT MINUTES OF THE FIFTY-THIRD
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY MARCH 11, 2020 AT 1:30 P.M.
IN THE LINDA BABOOLAL COMMITTEE MEETING ROOM, GROUND FLOOR,
CABILDO BUILDING, PARLIAMENTARY COMPLEX, ST. VINCENT STREET,
PORT OF SPAIN.**

Present were:

Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George	-	Chairman
Dr. Lackram Bodoë	-	Vice-Chairman
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine	-	Member
Ms. Amrita Deonarine	-	Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	-	Member (Afternoon session)
Ms. Keiba Jacob	-	Secretary
Ms. Sheranne Samuel	-	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Rachel Nunes	-	Graduate Research Assistant
Mr. Justin Jarrette	-	Graduate Research Assistant
Ms. Ashaki Alexis	-	Graduate Research Assistant

Absent were:

Mr. Foster Cummings	-	Member (Excused)
Mr. Clarence Rambharat	-	Member
Mr. Daniel Dookie	-	Member
Ms. Nicole Olivierre	-	Member
Mr. Wade Mark	-	Member

COMMENCEMENT

1.1 At 9:57 a.m. the Chairman called the meeting to order.

1.2 The Chairman indicated that Mr. Foster Cummings and Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy (morning session) asked to be excused from the meeting.

EXAMINATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE FIFTY-SECOND MEETING

- 2.1 The Committee examined the Minutes of the Fifty-Second (52nd) Meeting held on February 12, 2020.
- 2.2 There being no omissions or corrections, the Minutes of the 52nd meeting was confirmed on a motion moved by Ms. Deonarine and seconded by Dr. Bodoë.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE FIFTY-SECOND MEETING

- 3.1 As per item 3.3, the Chairman informed Members that questions were sent to the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC) re: the examination of the internal controls and expenditure of the EBC (002-Election Expenses) on February 17, 2020 with a deadline for submission of March 03, 2020. The Chairman indicated that the EBC requested and received an extension to March 13, 2020.
- 3.2 As per item 3.4, the Chairman informed Members that the additional responses from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Development re the examination into the implementation of the budget for fiscal year 2019/2020, were circulated via email.
- 3.3 As per item 4.1, the Chairman indicated that the response from the Ministry of Education re the request for Statements of Expenditure for the first quarter of fiscal 2020, remained outstanding. The Committee agreed that if the response remained outstanding by March 25, 2020, the Ministry would be invited to explain the non-submission or deliver the response in public.
- 3.4 As per item 6.5, the Chairman informed Members that arising from the inquiry into the maintenance of community pools by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, additional questions were dispatched to the Ministry with a deadline for response of March 13, 2020.

OTHER BUSINESS

- 4.1 The Secretariat was directed to circulate draft reports to Members for feedback by March 16, 2020.
- 4.2 The Committee agreed to conduct a site visit to both the Caura and Couva Hospitals, details surrounding the date(s) and time(s) were to be finalised.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSION: CONTINUATION OF INQUIRY INTO THE PREPAREDNESS OF PUBLIC AUTHORITIES FOR THE POTENTIAL SPREAD OF

COVID-19 IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

5.1 The Chairman informed Members that the following stakeholders – who were present at the first hearing on T&T’s COVID-19 preparedness on February 5, 2020 – would be appearing before the Committee once again:

- Ministry of Health;
- Ministry of Finance;
- Ministry of National Security;
- Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago; and - Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago.

5.2 The Chairman invited Members to review the Issues Paper based on written submissions received from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance, the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago and the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago.

5.3 The Chairman invited Members to raise any issues or questions as well as any specific areas they wished to focus on as the Committee continued its the examination into the preparedness of public authorities for the potential spread of COVID-19 in Trinidad and Tobago. A discussion ensued.

SUSPENSION

6.1 There being no further business for discussion *in camera*, the Chairman suspended the meeting at 10:30 a.m. to be reconvened in public.

INQUIRY INTO THE DELIVERY OF PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES BY THE

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES

12.1 The Chairman reconvened the public meeting at 2:35 p.m.

12.2 The following officials joined the meeting:

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Mrs. Jacinta Bailey Sobers	-	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Shelia Seecharan	-	Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Mr. Vijay Gangapersad	-	Deputy Permanent Secretary
Ms. June Belle	-	Deputy Permanent Secretary
Ms. Carla Mc kie	-	Auditor II
Mr. Paul Kanneh	-	Manager, Information Technology

12.3 Key Issues Discussed:

General issues

1. The Ministry's role in enhancing the quality of life of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and meeting the needs of the vulnerable groups through its services;
2. The Ministry's Strategic Plan and its Four (4) key objectives;
3. The MSDFS providing twenty-one (21) grants and six (6) social programmes to vulnerable groups;
4. One hundred and seventy thousand (170,000) persons receiving grants from the Ministry;
5. Twenty-five (25) Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that provide services to vulnerable groups, receiving subventions from the MSDFS;
6. Forty-one (41) million dollars in annual subventions to NGOs and Statuary Boards under the Ministry's purview;
7. Twenty-five (25) Divisions and Units within the MSDFS;
8. The challenges/issues affecting the MSDFS ability to achieve its mandate;
9. The steps being undertaken to address the challenges/issues facing the MSDFS;
10. The key target population identified by the MSDFS;
11. The MSDFS not undertaking an impact and risk assessment of the grants and services administered;
12. The Ministry's collaboration with the World Bank to assess the Disability Grant;
13. The status of the National Policy on Persons with Disability; and
14. The absence of a programme that targets teenage parents.

The Ministry's National Social Mitigation Plan (NSMP) 2017-2022 and Ministry's Strategic Plan

1. The MSDFS embarking on several partnerships with various Inter-Ministerial and InterAgency Committees appointed by Cabinet to achieve the objectives of both plans;
2. The establishment of Service Empowerment Unit in the Ministry; and
3. The MSDFS to engage a consultant to assist in the implementation of the its Social Mitigation Plan.

Social Service Client Management System (SSCMS)

1. The details surrounding the Social Service Client Management System; and
2. The limitations surrounding the partially implemented SSCMS.

Intergrated Social Enterprise Management System (ISEMS)

1. The status of the implementation of the ISEMS; and
2. Negotiations to be undertaken between the MSDFS with the vendor recommended to develop and implement the ISEMS.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

1. Outdated data on poverty in Trinidad and Tobago;
2. The MSDFS utilising the 2005 Survey of Living Conditions (SLC) poverty line of 16.5% to measure poverty;
3. The Sangre Grande Region identified in the 2005 SLC with the highest level of poverty;
4. The details surrounding the non publication of the 2014 SLC;
5. The Central Statistical Office (CSO) to commence an SLC for fiscal year 2020;
6. The development of a poverty strategy by the Ministry;
7. Measures used by the Ministry in the absence of an updated SLC to measure poverty in Trinidad and Tobago;
8. The revision of the Standard Means Test by the MSDFS in March 2018 and a review of the test in December 2019;
9. The submission of a note to Cabinet for the revision of the Standard Means Test by the MSDFS for the fiscal year 2020;
10. The MSDFS to submit the report on the review of the Standard Means Test to United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); and
11. The Ministry's collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to achieve the SDG No. 1 and the development of the Poverty Strategy.

Management of Projects and programmes

1. Details on project-selection criteria;
2. The effect of staff constraints on the management of projects administered by the MSDFS; 3. Hindrances to the delivery of projects and programmes administered by the MSDFS;
4. The development of new programmes and projects under the Policy and Development Division; and
5. The Project Implementation Unit being responsible for the management and implementation of all Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) Projects.

Staff structure of the Ministry

1. Staff total of four hundred and eighty-four (484);
2. Three hundred and eighty (380) established public service positions at the MSDFS with one hundred and eighty (180) vacant positions and two hundred (200) filled;
3. Six hundred and fifty-five (655) contract positions with one hundred and fifty-nine (159) filled;
4. One hundred and twenty-five (125) persons on short-term contracts;

5. The MSDFS undertaking a restructuring exercise;
6. The role of the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) in the restructuring exercise;
7. A report on the restructuring of the MSDFS to be completed at the end of March 2020 by the MPA;
8. The restructuring of the MSDFS to be undertaken in the next six (6) months; and
9. The Poverty and Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP) Unit being absorbed by the Policy and Research Unit.

Disability Assistance Grant for Children (DAGC)

1. The different levels of disability;
2. The implementation of the Disability Assistance Grant for Children in January 2019;
3. The criteria to qualify for the DAGC;
4. The process of approval for the DAGC;
5. Stakeholder consultations being undertaken for this project; and
6. The qualifications of persons to assess children for this grant.

Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme (GAPP) and Retiree Adolescent Partnership Programme (RAPP)

1. Details surrounding both programmes;
2. Annual allocations to GAPP and RAPP;
3. Eight hundred (800) participants in the GAPP as at March 2020;
4. Challenges in the timely payments of stipends to participants of the GAPP;
5. Challenges being faced in the administration of the GAPP;
6. Recent of evaluation of the GAPP and the report and recommendations being submitted to Cabinet;
7. The criteria to become a participant of the RAPP; and
8. Plans to expand the RAPP centers.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention

1. Piparo Empowerment that is under the purview of the MSDFS and New Horizon addressing issues of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention;
2. The New Horizon facility now under the Ministry of Health (MoH);
3. National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme (NADAPP) no longer administered by the MSDFS and is now being administered by the MoH; and
4. The Ministry's collaboration with the MoH to ensure that qualified persons are employed in the Piparo Empowerment Centre and New Horizon facility.

Monitoring and Evaluation Unit 32we

1. The Unit's continuous assessment of projects and programmes administered by the MSDFS;
2. A recent assessment of the GAPP;
3. The staff complement of the Unit;
4. The MSDFS having its full complement of technical staff in the Unit;
5. The human resource constraints facing the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit and its impact;
6. The number of vacancies in the Unit;
7. Attempts to fill vacant positions in the Unit;
8. The recent recruitment of the Director of the Unit;
9. The need for training on impact assessment to ensure the effective and efficient monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes;
10. The submittal of monthly status reports on programmes and projects. The most recent report submitted was in January 2020;
11. The status of the Ministry's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework; and
12. The reliance on monthly reports and assessments conducted by the Unit of projects and programmes to determine effectiveness, efficiency and value for money.

Social Investigation Unit

1. The staff complement of the Unit;
2. The staff complement of the Unit being primarily contract staff;
3. The number of vacancies in the Unit;
4. The approved organisational structure of the Social Investigation Unit; and
5. Attempts made the Ministry to fill key vacant positions in the Unit.

Internal Audit Unit

1. The staff complement of the Unit;
2. The number of vacancies in the Unit;
3. The Unit's Annual Internal Audit Work Plan;
4. Details surrounding the Unit's Monthly Internal Audit Work Plan;
5. The last Internal Audit conducted by the Unit in February 2020 into the Trinidad and Tobago Association for the Hearing Impaired; and
6. The findings and recommendations of the last Internal Audit Report.

Permanent Secretary Procurement Evaluations Committee

1. The mandate of the Permanent Secretary Procurement Evaluations Committee; and
2. The persons that comprise the Permanent Secretary Procurement Evaluations Committee.

The Procurement Unit

1. The Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act 2015 not being fully proclaimed;
2. The Procurement Plan utilised by the Ministry;
3. The staff complement of the Unit being public servants;
4. Staff of the Unit being members of the Permanent Secretary Procurement Evaluations Committee;
5. The approved structure of the Unit; and
6. The status of the full establishment of the Unit.

The Social Displacement Division

1. The role and responsibility of the Division regarding socially displaced persons in Trinidad and Tobago;
2. The staff complement of the Social Displacement Division;
3. Staff constraints facing the Division;
4. Attempts made by the Ministry to fill vacant positions in this Division;
5. The services provided by the MSDFS for socially displaced persons;
6. The last report on the street count of socially displaced persons done by the Division;
7. The number of socially displaced persons in Trinidad and Tobago;
8. The challenges faced by the Division in the removal of socially displaced persons from the streets;
9. The MSDFS collaborating with other Ministries to remove socially displaced persons from the streets;
10. The Port of Spain area having the highest percentage of socially displaced persons; and
11. The challenge of acquiring social housing for socially displaced persons.

The Division of Ageing

1. The aging population of Trinidad and Tobago;
2. The Ministry's definition of old age persons, which is sixty (60) years and over;
3. The status of the proclamation of the Homes for Older Persons Act No. 20 of 2007
4. The status of the Division of Ageing;
5. The status of the Operating the Older Persons Information Centre (OPIC) which serves as a Help Desk;
6. Types of elder abuse reported to the Division;
7. Details surrounding the process of reporting elder abuse;
8. The closing of two (2) Old Age Homes that were under the purview of the MSDFS;
9. Currently seven (7) Old Age Homes under the purview of the MSDFS;
10. Old Age Homes under the purview of the Ministry receiving monthly subventions;
11. Two-hundred and twelve (212) Old Age Homes under the purview of the MoH;
12. Old Age Homes being regulated under the Private Hospitals Act 1960 Chapter 29:03; and

13. The number of centers that provides old age activities and the locations in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Inter-Ministerial Research Council (IMRC) and the Inter-Ministerial Social Policy Committee (IMSPC)

1. The mandate of both the Inter-Ministerial Research Council (IMRC) and the InterMinisterial Social Policy Committee (IMSPC); and
2. The skills set of members of the IMRC and IMSPC.

National Social Development Programme

1. The services administered under this programme;
2. The number of applicants under this programme; and
3. Details surrounding the application process for this programme.

Project Risk Management

1. Absence of a Project Risk Management Policy at the MSDFS; and
2. The MSDFS utilising the Project Risk Management Policy administered by the MPA.

Social Impact Study

1. No Social Impact Study on projects and programmes administered by the MSDFS;
2. The absence of technical staff to conduct a Social Impact Study;
3. The need for training in conducting a Social Impact Study;
4. The high cost associated with training persons in conducting a Social Impact Study;
5. The cost associated with conducting a Social Impact Study;
6. The financial constraints facing the MSDFS in conducting a Social Impact Study of all projects and programmes administered;
7. Limited access to institutions that provide training in Social Impact Studies;
8. Impact assessment of projects and programmes conducted by the Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD); and
9. The MPD facing constraints in assisting the MSDFS in conducting a Social Impact Study of programmes and projects.

Gender Responsive Budgeting

1. The absence of a Gender Responsive Budgeting Policy at the MSDFS;
2. All programmes and projects of the MSDFS being gender-neutral;
3. Staff is exposed to training in Gender Responsive Budgeting offered by the Gender Affairs Division of the Office of the Prime Minister;

4. The number of males that access grants and programmes administered by the MSDFS annually; and
5. The Ministry undertaking sex-disaggregated reporting.

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

12.4 The Chairman thanked the representatives of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services for attending and they were excused. The Chairman also thanked the media for attending and viewing and listening for tuning in.

SUSPENSION

13.1 There being no further business for discussion in public, the Chairman suspended the meeting at 5:46 p.m. to be resumed *in camera*.

RESUMPTION

14.1 At 5:48 p.m. the Chairman reconvened the meeting.

POST MORTEM DISCUSSION

15.1 The Committee engaged in a discussion of the morning session re preparedness for the potential spread of COVID-19 and the afternoon session re the delivery of projects and programmes by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services.

15.2 The Committee agreed that additional questions would be sent to the entities that appeared.

[Please see the Appendix I and II]

ADJOURNMENT

16.1 There being no other business, the Chairman thanked Members for their attendance and the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday March 25, 2020, when the Committee would examine the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

16.2 The adjournment was taken at 6:07 p.m.

We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

May 18, 2020

APPENDIX V

Additional Information Requested

Questions for Additional Information – Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 1: No Poverty

1. Provide the qualifications of members of the Inter-Ministerial Research Council (IMRC) and the Inter-Ministerial Social Policy Committee (IMSPC).
2. Provide the total number of staff that were a part of the training in mainstreaming multidimensional approach to poverty measurement through an MPI regional course conducted by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and their positions.
 - i. What were the tangible results of the training?
 - ii. What was the cost incurred by the Ministry for this training?
 - iii. Since 2018, have staff received training in the measurement of poverty for the fiscal year 2019? If yes, provide the date, cost, and organisation that conducted the training.
 - iv. Is there any training in the measurement of poverty scheduled to be undertaken for the fiscal year 2020? If yes, provide the date and cost.
3. When was the last report on the MSDFS success of attaining SDG 1: End Poverty in All its Form Everywhere submitted to the Ministry of Planning and Development?
 - i. What were the outcomes of this report?

Conflict of interest

1. Was the MSDFS provided with a status update from the Ministry of Public Administration on the development and implementation of the formalised framework governing conflict of interest in all Ministries?
2. In the absence of a formalised framework, what mechanisms are in place to ensure compliance and ethics?

3. Have there been any instances of conflict of interest within the Ministry?
 - i. If yes, please state the issue and the course of action taken.
 - ii. What corrective action or disciplinary procedures are enforced if an employee is in breach of conflict of interest?

The Ministry's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges experienced in measuring its success in the delivery of its objectives

1. What is the estimated timeframe for the Ministry's IT system to be fully developed and implemented?
2. How is the efficiency of the services provided by the Ministry measured?
3. Based on the data collected and analysed on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges experienced in measuring its success in the delivery of its objectives, are stakeholders needs being satisfied and met?
4. How does the Ministry measure stakeholder satisfaction?
5. How often is the recording keeping of the Ministry updated?
6. What is the status of the Integrated Social Enterprise Management System?
7. State the challenges with regard to change in management?
8. What are the other challenges being experienced by the Ministry?

Social Services Client Management System (SSCMS)

1. When was the last community outreach initiatives undertaken by the Ministry and the locations?
2. Provide a list of Ministries and agencies that the MSDFS partner with to bring services to the general population.
3. What does the implemented mechanism for customer feedback entail?
4. How many additional Customer Service Personnel will be recruited by the Ministry and when?
5. When does the Ministry expect the report on the recent Service Improvement Project for the Social Welfare Division to be completed and the recommendations to be implemented?

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Division

1. What is the ideal staff complement for the ICT Division to function effectively and efficiently?
2. How many positions have been filled to date?
3. When does the Ministry expect the recruitment process to fill the remaining positions in the ICT Division to be completed?
4. What is the expected completion date for the establishment of a data centre at the Ministry's Couva location that will house critical ICT infrastructure?
5. What is the cost to date of the ICT infrastructure?
6. What is the timeframe for the upgrade of the entire wide area network (WAN) infrastructure to be completed?

Efficiency in the management of Projects and Programmes

1. State the last date a new programme was implemented?
2. What measures are in place to identify whether the programmes currently administered by the Ministry have been effective in achieving SDG 1: End Poverty in All its Form Everywhere?
3. Does the Ministry intend to develop new programmes that would assist the Ministry in achieving SDG 1: End Poverty in All its Form Everywhere?
4. Provide a copy of the project selection criteria.
5. Has the Ministry received project proposals from NGOs and CBOs for the implementation of projects during the period September 2019 to January 31, 2020?
 - i. When were the proposals received?
 - ii. Provide a list of these proposed projects.
 - iii. Have any of these proposals been approved and included in the Ministry's 2020 budget?

Challenges faced by the Ministry concerning managing projects

1. State the number of persons engaged in short term contracts in a bid to supplement the quantity and quality of human resources?

- a. Did this arrangement assist in rectifying the human resource challenges faced by the Ministry?
2. Which countries and International Development Agencies were approached by the Ministry to provide technical assistance?
3. When was the Project Management Training conducted?
 - a. How many staff members were exposed to this type of training?
 - b. What was the cost incurred by the Ministry to facilitate this training?
 - c. What were the tangible results of the training?
4. What is the expected timeframe for the completion of the work on the improvement and application of the performance management systems?

The continuous improvement and the alignment of service delivery to the allocations received

1. The Ministry indicated that the following was lessons learned during evaluations of the delivery of programme and projects:
 - b. Need for Monitoring and Evaluation components in programme development;
 - c. Need for robust programme designs to allow for measurement;
 - d. Reporting mechanisms need to be formalized and adhered to by programme managers/organization; and
 - e. There were reports that programmes were relevant and were making a difference.

What steps have been taken by the Ministry to address the lessons learned during?

Capability in the delivery of projects and programmes on time and within budget

1. When does the Ministry expect to acquire the staff complement needed of the Social Welfare and the National Family Services Division?

Hindrances in the delivery of projects and programmes administered by the Ministry

1. What corrective actions or disciplinary procedures are taken for the untimely submission of monthly status reports, quarterly performance reports, and the annual achievement report by a division/unit?

Project Risk Management

1. Provide reasons for the absence of a project risk management policy/project risk management guidelines.
2. Does the Ministry intend to develop a project risk management policy/project risk management guideline?
3. When was the last site conducted to a project site to ensure compliance with Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) guidelines?
 - i. Were any issues identified during the site visit?
 - ii. What actions or steps were taken by the Ministry to rectify these issues identified?
4. Have there been instances where projects were not completed on time?
 - i. If yes, what was the rationale for the delay in the completion of the project?
 - ii. Were there any penalties involved?
5. What are some of the recurring issues identified after the administering of projects by the Ministry?

Audit investigations

1. What were the findings and recommendations made in the outcome Report dated 02/01/2020 Audit of Golden Valley Care Services?
2. Provide a copy of the latest Audited Investigation Report?
3. Has a follow-up audit been conducted to date regarding the audit of the Golden Valley Care Services?

Challenges in the performance of the internal audit function

1. How are the challenges experienced in the performance of the internal audit function were inadequate human resources and limited training in some specialist areas such as IT auditing, value for money auditing and risk mitigation are being addressed by the Ministry?

The benefits of projects and programmes across Trinidad and Tobago

1. Why is there is no data on the number of minors that receive the Disability Assistance Grant for the period September 2018 to August 2019?
2. What accounts for the increase in the recipients of the Disability Assistance Grant Minor between the period September 2019 to January 2020?
3. Given the decrease in persons under the Street Outreach Programme, what initiatives have been implemented to realise a decrease in these numbers?
4. Does the Ministry conduct site visits to the homes of the applicants receiving grants for Minor House Repairs?
5. What oversight mechanisms are employed to ensure that applicants are truthful in their requests for assistance?
6. How does the Ministry measure the success rate of the Sowing Empowerment through Entrepreneurial Development programme?

Provide the following:

1. Details surrounding the Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme (GAPP) and Retirees Adolescent Partnership Programme (RAPP);
2. The criteria for persons to participate in the Retirees Adolescent Partnership Programme (RAPP);
3. The template for the Monitoring and Evaluation Division monthly status reports;
4. The criteria for Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) to receive subventions from the Ministry;
5. The Ministry's report on socially displaced persons;
6. The number of socially displaced throughout person in Trinidad and Tobago as of February 2020;
7. The Development Bank report on the Disability Assistance Grant;
8. The number of retirees participating in the Retirees Adolescent Partnership Programme (RAPP) as of February 2020;
9. The address of the five (5) RAPP Centres in Couva, Belmont, La Horquetta, Valencia and Laventille;
10. A status report on the expansion of RAPP Centres;

11. The process of how the Ministry treats with reports of elderly abuse;
12. The number of Senior Activity Centres in Trinidad and Tobago, the location and the number of participants in each centre for the period September 2019-February 2020;
13. The name of the Senior Activity Centres that charge fees and the fees charged;
14. The monthly subvention to the seven (7) homes for older persons under the Ministry's preview;
15. The recommendations from the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) on the report on the review of the Ministry's Standard Means Test; and
16. The number of males accessing grants administered by the Ministry as of February 2020.

Appendix VI

Verbatim

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE FIFTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE (IN PUBLIC) HELD IN LINDA BABOOLAL COMMITTEE MEETING ROOM, GROUND FLOOR, CABILDO BUILDING, PARLIAMENTARY COMPLEX, ST. VINCENT STREET, PORT OF SPAIN ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2020, AT 1.30 P.M.

PRESENT

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Dr. Lackram Bodoë	Vice-Chairman
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	Member
Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine	Member
Ms. Amrita Deonarine	Member
Ms. Keiba Jacob-Mottley	Secretary
Ms. Sheranne Samuel	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Ashaki Alexis	Graduate Research Officer

ABSENT

Mr. Daniel Dookie	Member
Ms. Nicole Olivierre	Member
Mr. Clarence Rambharat	Member
Mr. Foster Cummings	Member

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mrs. Jacinta Bailey Sobers	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Shelia Seecharan	Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Mr. Vijay Gangapersad	Deputy Permanent Secretary
Ms. June Belle	Deputy Permanent Secretary
Ms. Carla Mc Kie	Auditor II
Mr. Paul Kanneh	Manager, Information Technology

Madam Chairman: Good afternoon everyone, and I welcome the representatives from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. This meeting is to examine delivery of projects and programmes by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services.

I will now invite the Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services to introduce herself and the members of her team, and then I will invite the members of the Committee to introduce themselves to members of the public.

[Introductions made]

Madam Chairman: Might I ask the members of the Committee, starting with my immediate right, to introduce themselves.

[Introductions made]

Madam Chairman: Thank you. The Committee is ably assisted this afternoon by Ms. Keiba

Jacob, its Secretary, Ms. Sheranne Samuel, its Assistant Secretary and Ms. Ashaki Alexis, its Graduate Assistant.

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

The purpose of this meeting is to examine the delivery of projects and programmes by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services.

The Committee is desirous of hearing from Ministry officials to discover the challenges being faced and determine possible solutions to these challenges. The role of the Committee is to assist the Ministry in achieving efficient delivery of services while ensuring that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval.

This meeting is being held in public and is being broadcast live on Parliament's Channel 11 and Radio 105.5 FM, and the Parliament YouTube's channel, *ParlView*.

I therefore at this stage will want to invite the Permanent Secretary to make an opening statement if she so pleases

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Thank you again, Chair, and good afternoon to members and those tuned into the hearing. The Ministry welcomes this opportunity to provide information on its operations and to bring clarity where necessary.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services has as its key responsibility the provision and maintenance of a robust social safety net for the population. The Ministry is also charged with obtaining the social development objectives of Government and provides leadership and direction for the social sector by focusing on research, policymaking, planning and to some extent assessment and monitoring and evaluation.

The Ministry's mission is to enhance the quality of life of the general population, with emphasis on the vulnerable, through a network of integrated accessible social services. In alignment with *Vision 2030* the Ministry focuses on four key areas as it relates to its strategic objectives. These are: promoting resilience for all, protecting empowering and transforming families;

reducing and preventing poverty; vulnerability and inequality; and ensuring a modern client-centred, high-performance organization.

The Ministry provides a suite of 21 grants to vulnerable persons on an annual basis, and operates six social programmes as well as provide seven types of social services. On average the Ministry receives an annual budget of about \$5 billion to implement its mandate. On a monthly basis, approximately 170,000 persons are provided with social grants through our major transfers. This would be: the senior citizen pension, the disability and public assistance grants and the food card, at an approximate cost of \$404.2 million. That is on a monthly basis, the expenditure.

When one considers the average household size according to the last population census of 3.1 persons in a household, one can conclude that on a monthly basis the Ministry impacts more than 527,000 citizens, almost 40.5 per cent of the population. Accordingly, the Ministry is keenly aware of its significance to the overall sustainability and development of the country.

The Ministry also has responsibility for promoting NGO/Government relationships and provides annual subventions to more than 25 NGOs which provide social services to various groups of vulnerable persons.

In fiscal 2019 approximately \$41 million was expended in the provision of subventions to NGOs, including the statutory boards under the Ministry's purview.

In order to achieve these objectives, Madam Chair, the Ministry functions through the work of 25 divisions and units; 11 are service delivery, nine support and five policy type divisions. As at March 2020, of the 380 established public service positions there were 180 vacant and 200 were filled, and of the 655 contract positions, we had 159 filled and we supplemented with 125 persons on a short-term basis. So we have around 484, close to 500, persons on board in the Ministry providing the necessary support for what we do.

We do also have some valuable OJTs on staff that we are happy to have, and associate professionals from the Ministry of Education. But despite operating below the optimal staff complement, Chair, the Ministry has been able to carry out its mandate and provide quality social services to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Ministry in delivering its mandate has identified some specific target populations. These groups include persons and families living in poverty, the indigent, persons with disabilities, senior citizens, people living with HIV/AIDs, victims of domestic violence, violent crime

human trafficking, substance abusers, street dwellers and the homeless, because there are some homeless persons not on the streets, ex-prisoners, deportees, displaced youth, persons who experience situations of disaster and single parents. So these are our key target groups.

In terms of challenges, I think we would speak to some of that as we discuss with the Committee this afternoon, but of course we have issues of human resources that are inadequate, the lack of structured data collection and minding, outdated data on poverty, limited impact assessment of programmes and risk management, a siloed approach to delivery of our services and a lack of a robust customer service management system.

So we are taking action on some of these areas, and I am sure we will share some of that with you. But to say the Ministry is certainly committed, Chair, to the attainment of its mandate and will continue to improve and create value through evidence-based project/programme implementation, and also improving on our monitoring and evaluation frame work.

The Ministry looks forward to the discussions this afternoon with the Committee and to the opportunity to share and to receive recommendations also from you.

Thanks so much.

2.45p.m.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Madam PS. And I would want to start off the conversation with your submission regarding your strategic plan. I had observed that “Goal Four” of your strategic plan refers to the achievement of a modern client centered organization, and to achieve that, one of the aspects you were looking at is improving your administrative systems, particularly through the benefits of information technology. So I had seen that you had spoken about an initiative called the Social Services Client Management System, which you intend to introduce and I want to know, if you could expand on that a bit and let us know where you all have reached with that?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Sure. So, I will speak to the Client Management System, but one of the critical systems we are putting in place is the “Integrated Social Enterprise Management System”. And I will ask the ICT Director just to speak to that system which we will actually be negotiating next week, with respect to the supplier and so he will explain how it would work. Mr. Kanneh.

Mr. Kanneh: Good afternoon. So the social enterprise management system fondly called ISEMS is an enterprise resource planning system that would be implemented throughout the

Ministry and it will also have a facing to our clients. So the both sets of customers will be internal customers and external customers. The aim of the system is really to automate the work that is currently done by our manual system and we have a partial automated system, an in-house built system, which is the social services client management system. So that was built in-house.

So the ISEMS will incorporate both the manual and that aspect of the automation that we built. It is planned to be an end to end in terms of it will incorporate all the work done by the Ministry from intake interviews to actually the processing of grants and the payment of grants.

Madam Chairman: And could you just remind me when you expect that this system will be fully integrated.

Mr. Kanneh: We have a time line of nine months, as the PS noted, we are going negotiations next week with the vendors and we are hoping that we will take about a month to finalize the contracts with the vendor. So we are seeing around September/October of this year. Just keeping in mind the risk of the coronavirus and those things we have to keep in mind in terms of our risk assessment. But the application is not a complicated one in terms of the vendors and the experience in building similar applications.

Madam Chairman: So this is still a little way off—

Mr. Kanneh: Yes.

Madam Chairman:—and that is why I had really started with what exists.

Mr. Kanneh: Yes, what exists.

Madam Chairman: The one that you built which is partially automated from what I understood from what you said. If you could tell me what are the limitations, apart from it not being fully automated. What are the limitations? Because if I listen very carefully to the caveats you put there, it means one or two things: Either you will be operating your partially automated system from now till October/November. You say September, but I count nine months from now—so we might be a little different in the months, but it does not matter. Either you will be operating it till then which means it carries you into the next fiscal. Or having regard to the caveats, you might be operating it for an unknown time. So I wanted to get an appreciation of what it was, what the limitations are, and how it affects your service delivery.

Mr. Kanneh: Well, the limitations are basically resource constraints, in terms of the staffing,

the development, and the solution development team. We are limited in that HR actually is working in terms of trying to recruit persons but, you know, there are some challenges sometimes in getting the type of quality of persons that you are looking for. So that is the major constraint in terms of in-house development, then to compete with the other activities that IPT has to deal with. So the process of building it out and maintaining it, because once something is in high production there is a factor of maintenance of that said solution. So because of that constraint, there is a challenge in taking it from end to end process as what the ideal would be.

So while we are working with it and we have some aspects of the business that fully utilize it, the challenge is to make it a single stream system so that we can incorporate all the services and have a bird's eye view of everything. And it is really a challenge in trying to put resources to get there to meet the business and the business needs.

Madam Chairman: So within this fiscal year, you would have a budgetary allocation for ISEMS?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes we do.

Madam Chairman: Yes, you do. I guess it may be that there have been no releases as yet, because you are now going into the negotiations, or do you have releases?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Not as yet.

Madam Chairman: Not as yet. All right. And might I ask what you had said is that you are also looking at inter-agency committees to help you achieve your national social mitigation plan. Could you identify which are these inter-agency committees and how do you expect they would further your national social mitigation plan?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Thanks again, Chair. We have two committees that were appointed by Cabinet. We have the committee that is looking at the macro level, at what is necessary to ensure that the plan is implemented and then we have the committee that is working at the programmatic level. All the committees would have representatives from Ministries, particularly the social sector, but we also do have representation from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Development which are the central agencies with respect to the development objectives of the country, and what we do is we ensure that both committees know what they are working on.

So the programmatic committee, and Mr. Gangapersad is actually the Chair of that committee,

they are working primarily on the roll out of what we call the Social Services Empowerment Unit, which is a new unit, well new, but we will actually be trying to ensure that what we have on board right now in the Ministry assimilated into that unit, so we do not have to go out looking for new bodies as such.

So we are looking at setting up that unit which is going to be like one—an integrated service delivery-type of unit where all the services will be provided across the board without having to do to different locations and different units to get the service that you are looking for.

That particular committee is also looking at all the various programmes that are identified in the social plan, in the various areas, because we have different areas of the plan and how we can ensure that what is in the plan for those programmes to improve, some already existing and to bring on new ones will be implemented.

The committee of which I am the Chair, which is the one looking at the macro level we are looking at, for example, how ISEMS will integrate with the rest of the social sector so that there is a seamless provision of services across the sector. So it would be those kinds of initiatives that the committee looking at the macro level would address. We are also looking at how Ministries can collaborate to ensure that we meet the objectives, the national objectives of *Vision 2030* as outlined in the social mitigation plan.

2.55 p.m.

So these are the two committees, and also we are working with a consultant which was also approved by Cabinet, and the consultant is expected to come on board in the next two weeks or so, I would think, before the end of this month to ensure also that we bring together and synergize all the elements between the two committees for the implementation of the plan. So their remit is the implementation of phase one of the plan which is outlined and which is also approved and includes a number of new programmes that will come on to bridge the gap right now in the provision of services.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Let me ask something. Would a delay, in a sense, would that affect the outcome of the social empowerment unit?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It will limit it, but we would be able to do some of what is necessary with the in-house solutions.

Madam Chairman: If you are to—partially automated system.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Now, in terms of these inter-ministerial committees, do you all have a timeline to achieve your mandate?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes. They all have timelines. So it leaves the SNMP committees, it is two years, I believe, two years. Yeah. We have other committees like the research inter-ministerial research council, they are three years or so, they all have timelines.

Madam Chairman: But the two major ones, the one at the macro level, I guess, this is the inter-agency committees, the one on the macro level and the one on the programmatic level.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Two years.

Madam Chairman: Two years. And those two years end when?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We started in 2019, I believe, so it will end somewhere next year.

Madam Chairman: And how regularly do you all meet?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Every month.

Madam Chairman: Every month. And do you all generate reports and so?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We generate minutes and so on.

Madam Chairman: Just minutes. Yes. All right. So I wanted just to talk a bit about your tying in what you all do with Sustainable Development Goal 1, and what we had observed is that you indicated that the poverty rate is 16.7 per cent mean. Could you expand a bit on what that means? How do you come by that and so on?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Okay. So that would have been a 2005 figure which is the last time we would have done the survey of living conditions which is the survey that we depend on to tell us what the poverty line is, the vulnerability line, the food poverty line and so on, who are the persons in poverty and so on, and we would have done one in 2014, but you would see that that was not accepted.

So the new SLC is actually being done this year by the CSO, they are starting the field work this year, and is expected to be complete in January 2021. So that survey usually tells, as I indicated, what is the poverty line, where the poverty is concentrated. So it would tell us, you know, the last survey would have told us that, I think, it was Sangre Grande had the highest level of poverty, so it would tell us where the concentration is highest and, of course, who as I said are the persons in poverty, whether there are some peculiarities in terms of male, female and so on, so those are the details that we would get in terms of the poverty report.

Madam Chairman: So how relevant is that 2005 information to today?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Well, it is outdated, so that is why it limits us in terms of our planning for poverty. So we also have a responsibility for developing a poverty strategy, and that is one of the main reasons why we have not yet gone forward with that strategy, although we are still working on other aspects of the strategy while we are awaiting on the data. However, we still have an approach that we could use where we can utilize the poverty lines and inflate it with the inflation rate so that we get a sense of what the poverty line is at, for example, 2019 and we could use that for planning.

So we have done that with respect to the introduction of our standard means test which we introduced in March 2018 using the three lines, the poverty line, the vulnerability, the food poverty line and inflating it to be able to tell us, you know, what the basket of goods would cost at any point in time whether it is 2016, which we used for the means test we had introduced in 2018, and we recently revised it again up to the end of 2019, in terms of what it will cost at December 2019 for the food basket.

Madam Chairman: So you are using that 2019 figure costing?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We have proposed to move with a revision of the standard means test using those new poverty lines.

Madam Chairman: Okay. When is that revision likely to take place?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Once it is approved, it would most likely be from, I would think, next month or within the next two months I think, in terms of implementation.

Madam Chairman: And it is approved by who?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It would have been proposed to Cabinet.

Madam Chairman: All right. And you sent, the Cabinet Notes and everything already. Okay. Thank you very much. Member Antoine.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Good afternoon once again. In your response you said that one of the challenges faced was in managing projects, and the quality and quantity of the human resource was one of the biggest factors. You also mentioned that you had gone on a recruitment drive to fill the vacant positions. Could you bring us up to date on the progress of this recruitment drive, and when it would be completed?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Okay. So, Ms. Belle, so could give a sense of what is happening with our contract positions and so on in terms of the recruitment drive?

Ms. Belle: Good afternoon. With respect to the contract employment, there are, so far, 814

contract positions, to date 159 of them have been filled, and 655 are vacant. There is a breakdown of the various areas within the Ministry where these contract positions have been filled, and right now HR is working assiduously to have interviews done and to get them filled so as to move forward. I do not know if you would like me to go through the different areas in the Ministry.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: You have number of divisions.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: I think you were particularly concerned with project management, that area, project management unit?

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Not project management, the various—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Oh, the various areas. Okay. Sure. We will give a sense of some of the areas that we are giving priority.

Ms. Belle: Priority has been given to the National Family Services, the Social Welfare Division, the National Social Development Programme, those are the main areas that have been prioritized; and IT, as well as the Public Implementation Unit.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: But with 655 vacancies still outstanding, how effective are these divisions in implementing the programmes that really go out to the socially displaced in our society?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Let me just say that, although we would have mentioned 800 and more contract positions, the Ministry is going through a restructuring exercise, there are about three or four units that are no longer operating so, of course, we would not fill those positions. And also, we are working with the Ministry of Public Administration for that restructuring in terms of the Ministry's units and so on. So at this point in time too, while we are recruiting some critical areas, we are also awaiting the report from the Ministry of Public Administration with respect to the restructuring of the Ministry which was a mandate of the Cabinet for four Ministries including ours.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: And would you be able to give us a time frame to the completion of this exercise?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: The restructuring, I believe, we would have the report within the next month, and it will mean a period of time for us to restructure which probably would take, I would think, no less than six months for the restructuring to take place.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: With contract employees, you have the fact that some of them would have come trained up, others would have done their training a while ago, whilst some of would

have done it recently. Do you have a programme in place to bring all of them on board with the work ethic of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and the programmes that you have in place?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Usually when we go out to recruit, when it is contract recruitment which is in the unit's remit, we would look for persons with the necessary skills and competencies so that we do not have to do any training. Obviously, there are some peculiarities of our Ministry so that when some persons come on board there is a period of training that must be undertaken in particular at Social Welfare Division and National Family Services, they would have to get some training in those areas.

So generally when we recruit persons, they have to come on with the competencies, but in those areas we have training, we have orientation, and even while persons come on board and are on the job, there is some on-the-job training with supervisors who are overseeing their welfare in the field and so on. This is a little challenge for the Ministry because usually when we go out, we are looking for some measure of experience and we do not always get it, so we have to take persons and train them up.

Madam Chairman: Member Bodoe.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. PS, if I could just take you to page 7 of your submission and look at the services for persons with disability specifically with regard to the disability assistance grant for children which, I believe, is a new grant combining two previous grants. Speaking with both constituents and medical colleagues, there seems to be a little issue in terms of meeting the qualifications. Would you care to maybe clarify or explain how exactly the assessment is made?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Sure. I will ask Mr. Gangapersad who is pretty familiar with these grants, having been working in the Social Welfare Division for many years, and who actually is the director of that division, although he is Acting DPS right now. Mr. Gangapersad.

Mr. Gangapersad: Sure. Thanks, PS. Chair, through you, this grant was actually implemented in January 2019, and the service is really a universal service in terms of criteria, all you have to be is a child with a disability. And in terms of the assessment to determine disability, that is done by a doctor assigned by the Chief Medical Officer for that purpose. So there is no other criteria other than the person must be under the age of 18 years, and that would really hinder children at this point in time. So I am unfamiliar really with challenges

being experienced in terms of meeting the criteria.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you. Just to clarify, the medical practitioner must specify “severe or complete disability”—

Mr. Gangapersad: Yes.

Dr. Bodoë:—to meet the requirement. And is it a list of only government medical practitioners that—

Mr. Gangapersad: No.

Dr. Bodoë:—can certify at this point in time?

Mr. Gangapersad: Madam Chair, through you, again, no this is not like the other grants. This one has been opened to private practitioners who are authorized, again, by the Chief Medical Officer for that purpose. So it is not only in the public health arena, you can go to a private practitioner and get the medical completed.

Dr. Bodoë: And how does a practitioner qualify to be authorized by the Chief Medical Officer?

Mr. Gangapersad: I think that is a question that might best be posed to the Chief Medical Officer. All we are required to do really is to get certification that the child is, in fact, a child with a disability. I think that there are doctors within the public health who are mainly paediatricians or paediatric specialists, and doctors in other areas who might be deemed eligible to pronounce on a matter like this, they are the ones who would fill the medical.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank. Good afternoon, again. I just wanted to follow up on member Bodoë’s questioning. Learning disabilities and developmental disorders, are they considered for this programme?

Mr. Gangapersad: Yes. Chair, again, through you, yes. It is a learning disability, physical, mental, they are all considered. In fact, the medical report went through a significant amount of consultation with key stakeholders. It was not really developed by us, but it was developed by the practitioners, they went through like social workers in the Ministry, as well as in the Ministry of Health, and several, I do not have a copy of the medical now, but several areas were considered including those that you indicated just know.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: You mentioned severe and complete disabilities only. The reason why I am asking is the fact that a number of persons would have reached out to me in my capacity as

Minister responsible for child affairs indicating that they would have tried to access the grant. The child might have had a learning disability or a developmental disorder, and they were told that they could not access it. The requirements, the parameters, are those communicated clearly to your staff in your outlying offices? And is the information shared with the public in terms of what different areas you consider as “disability”? And what would constitute “severe” or “total disability”?

Mr. Gangapersad: Chair, through you, again, in terms of communication the Ministry has been aggressively pursuing that area. We have had in the recent past, our education series, our PIES in, at least, every nook and cranny of the country, if you want to put it like that, and we are continuing to do so.

Currently, we are also in our outreach mode where information is provided, as well as we are also taking application, it is also in our Ministry’s website. And the staff as it relates to the staff, I am certain that they would have information, but the primary focus which is on the medical is really in the remit of the medical field, they are the ones who would really tell us. We would give the information as to what is required in terms of telling a person or being able to advise a person, well, “Hey, your disability is not so severe, we do not get involved in that”. We allow the assessment to be done by the practitioners, and we are guided by what they put in that document. We do not really question what is put in the document. If a person is dissatisfied with what the medical assessment was like, they have the right to appeal the decision. So in a case like that, it goes to the Chief Medical Officer for him to make a reassessment and determination.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: So if a person receives a letter from the doctor saying that the child has a specific disability, and they come to your office and then your staff says, well, “no”. Would that person—because the reason I am bringing it up is because this is the reality, it has been happening. Would that individual have the ability to appeal your decision?

Mr. Gangapersad: The medical assessment, I am saying this, once the medical is filled out in accordance with what is required, the staff has absolutely no right to turn an application down. So I am not certain if you are saying that that is happening, it should not be happening. And they have opportunities to go to a senior officer to ask someone to—because the appeal of the medical goes to the Chief Medical Officer. After that, once an application is opened, if a decision is taken not to grant, then the person has recourse in the Ministry where they can

appeal that decision to the central board, and further to that, they could also appeal to the Minister; that is their last line of appeal. But what you are describing there is someone bringing a medical, if I get you correct, properly and duly filled out, and someone is telling them, “no”. And in my mind here I am saying that, if there are staff members who are doing that, it is improper, it is not correct, it is not correct procedure.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: If I may, Chair, if they bring a report though from the medical officer, and remember there are categories, so the medical officer may have indicated that it is not a complete disability, it is a lower range, then the officer may tell them, “Well, you will not get through because it is a not complete”. I think that might be the clarity, because it is only if it is complete disability, you are permanent, that they will get it. And some of the assessments come saying, well it is a lower range because actually the form speaks to the different ranges. So if you come in and yours is not complete disability, the officer may very well say, “Well you will not get through with the grant because the assessment does not say complete disability”.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Just allow me. It is complete, total disability or permanent disability? Or is it total and permanent? I am not sure what the terms are, because I think the terms are different. Okay? So what I think we are trying to find out is, must somebody be a 100 per cent disabled and therefore there are no chances of recovery which will make it total and permanent? Or if it is permanent that, okay, you have some disability and there is no or little chance. What is the correct terminology?

Mr. Gangapersad: Chair, again, in terms of the ranges, what we have on that form is “mild, moderate, severe and complete”, so it must be along those continuum, mild, moderate, and each one is, the descriptor for that is based on your levels of functioning. Right? So I would imagine complete might be the 100 per cent that you are speaking about, severe may not be the 100 per cent, and what we are finding as well is that some conditions are coexisting.

So you may have someone with a mental condition that might be mild or moderate, and a physical condition that might be mild or moderate, but when you do the assessment, the overall assessment, that is “severe”. So in terms of the range, it is “mild, moderate and severe and complete”. And to answer your question, it must be “severe, complete and permanent”. So the mild, moderate and severe disability is one that is permanent.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Dr. Bodo.

Dr. Bodo: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Gangapersad, I just wanted you to clarify

something that you mentioned. So you are saying that there is the opportunity for a parent, for example, to challenge the medical diagnosis through the Chief Medical Officer. Is that what you are saying?

Mr. Gangapersad: Chair, through you, that is correct. If they are dissatisfied, they notify us, we are the conduit now. We would take the report, take the medical report and submit it to the Chief Medical Officer, and reassessment is done.

Dr. Bodoie: So the process is done through you, through your officers?

Mr. Gangapersad: Yeah. They do not go back, they come through us and we get it done for them.

Dr. Bodoie: Do your officers tell parents that they can do that? Are they aware that they can do that?

Mr. Gangapersad: Yes. The officers are aware that they can do that.

Dr. Bodoie: And they would tell the parents?

Mr. Gangapersad: They would tell the parents, and there is a process in place. We are trying to streamline that process right now by way of documentation, but the officers are required to tell them that and, as well as we have also notified the Ministry of Health through the practitioners who are doing it, that they can also advise the client of the right to appeal.

Dr. Bodoie: Is there any intention to review the form at any time in the future? The reason I ask, I am told the form is already complicated. I have not seen it myself, and if I can by way, through you, Chair, ask for a copy of the form to be sent to the Committee. But have you heard that? And based on that, is it your intention to review at any point in time?

Mr. Gangapersad: Right. In terms of a review, we would have gotten an approval to go forward, because we were trying this for quite a while. So rather than wait to get everything perfect, we did get approval to go forward so we could implement the initiative because there were people out there who were in need of it, and we were to do a review after one year of implementation, taking into consideration implementation challenges and issues. So, yes, the answer to your question, yes, it can be reviewed.

In terms of the design of the medical, as I indicated, the medical was designed in consultation with several social workers and primarily doctors who are in the field. So it can be an area, based on the review that can be addressed.

Dr. Bodoie: You are saying, there was wide stakeholder consultations in the design of the

form.

Mr. Gangapersad: Yes. We would have received comments, we submitted this to every one of the regional health authorities and received comments from all of the regional health authorities on this design and the content of the medical.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: And if I may, Chair, we have received a number of recommendations from persons out there, whether it is doctors or persons in the social work area with respect to this particular grant. So in the review we will be considering all of those recommendations.

Madam Chairman: Member Deonarine.

Ms. Deonarine: Thank you and good afternoon, again. Madam PS, in the beginning you said that, on an annual basis you all tend to spend around \$5billion on the social safety net, social protection.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: That is usually our allocation.

Ms. Deonarine: \$5billion. Right. And also based on an early question that was asked, the poverty rate that we are working with right now is 16.5 per cent which is based on a 2005 survey of living conditions. Right?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes.

Ms. Deonarine: Well, I understand that there has been some challenge with respect to the 2014 survey of living conditions. Right now, based on the programmes that you have and that you are executing and working on a daily basis, how exactly are you measuring your mandate or strategic objective of poverty reduction?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: So as we indicated in our report to you, it is pretty difficult for us to do that, given the fact that we have outdated data with respect to the poverty, but within the Ministry we do try to do some assessment of the programmes that we have, not necessarily the grant programmes, but the other types of programmes that we have targeting our vulnerable clients, we do assessments of those programmes to determine how they are working, but in terms of the poverty line, usually we could only depend on the survey of living conditions data to tell us how we are doing.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. So my first question then would be: What type of assessment of these programmes that you do that tend to indicate to you that it is sustainable, and is also achieving the results to encourage its sustainability and continuation?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: So we do have a monitoring and evaluation unit, and that unit, as I

indicated, is the unit that would be responsible for doing the assessments; so we do assessments. Like recently we would have done an assessment of the GAPP, Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme, in terms of the objectives of that programme whether it is meeting—and we were able to determine that certainly and even before the assessment, we knew that we needed more caregivers for that programme because the demand is so great, but the assessment would have also told us whether, you know, it was meeting the long-term objectives in terms of the well-being of older persons and all of that. And whether, in fact, we were meeting the objectives too in terms of the caregiving and the training, because there is a training component of that programme where we train up these young people to treat with the older persons, and whether it is helping them too, because usually the young people who would be in that programme would be persons who are vulnerable too. They most likely would not have a full certificate, so it was also helping poverty for that cohort of young persons.

So the assessment would have told us whether we are, in fact, bringing in those types of young people in the programme, and whether even after they get the training, they are able to get a full certificate after and move on to other types of training. Yeah.

3.25 p.m.

Ms. Deonarine: So—now, you would have said that—I want to go back to the survey of living conditions, because you said in response to the Chair that in 2014, a survey of living conditions was done but it was not approved or something was wrong with it. What was the challenge with—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: There were some technical issues with respect to the analysis, and so that the Cabinet rejected it totally, and requested that a new one be undertaken. So, this is why we have a new one being done right now by the CSO.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. Also, now you said that one aspect of your assessment has to do with the demand especially in that particular case that you gave an example of. Over all the social programmes that currently exist in the Ministry, over the past couple of years, would you say that there has been a general increase in the demand for social services in the country?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: In general there has been a demand, because usually it increases with respect to the state of the economy, and because the economy has been going through some difficult times you would find a higher demand for social services and we have seen that.

Ms. Deonarine: Which is why the survey of living conditions is so important to ensure that

we have a baseline against which we are executing these programmes. I would leave that for the time being. You also mentioned that there tends to be a lack of impact assessment. So, could you explain a little more about that for us please?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes. So, impact assessment is a little bit more a technical exercise, and in fact, having gone to a conference some years ago, while I was in Ministry of Planning and Development, in terms of impact assessments and monitoring and evaluation, I think the technical capacity for an impact assessment, we may not really have it here. That is the truth.

Ms. Deonarine: Now, when you are dealing with social safety nets and social programmes, impact assessments are critical. We already do not have an updated poverty figure that we are working with. I know you all are working on trying to inflate the existing figures using the inflation rate. And now, we are deficient in terms of our ability, our capacity, to conduct impact assessments. So, could you tell me what is being done to enhance the capacity of the Ministry to become qualified to conduct these impact assessments?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: So, the remit for monitoring and evaluation in the public service is in the Ministry of Planning and Development, the transformation unit there. While I was there, as I indicated, we sought to address the issue by having a monitoring and evaluation training within the University of the West Indies to set up a department, and we did not reach very far with that. At the point in time, financial constraints was identified as one of the main reasons why they could not really look at that at the point.

And also, usually we would send persons to train in Canada, and even in the training in Canada, impact assessment really, the level of training that is required, I do not think it was provided in that training. Actually, impact assessment training is very limited across the world. There are few people and a few universities that provide it. And it would require actually officers going for a lengthy period, sometimes a year or two years to get that training.

So for now, what we have done is to simply depend on the Canadian training and a number of officers have not been sent for a while on that training again, because of financial constraints. So, what we rely on really is consultancies. And it is also very difficult to get the type of consultant for that kind of impact assessment.

Ms. Deonarine: I understand the challenge, but interestingly though, you mentioned that the Ministry of Planning and Development has this National Transformation Unit, which I know is the unit that is in charge of impact assessment and most project evaluations. So, what has

been the extent of—because I also heard that you said that the two committees that you all have, the macro one and the one at the programme level, the Ministry of Planning and Development, they are represented, so—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, they are represented.

Ms. Deonarine: So, is it possible to reach out to that division to have them assist the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services with the impact assessment capacity and enhancing the capacity at the Ministry?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We have done so. So, we asked the Ministry to assist us in the past. They have done so. But also they have constraints, human resource constraints because they have the responsibility for the results-based management framework for the entire public service. So they are also constrained by what they could provide. But we have collaborated in the past and we do collaborate.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. A recommendation: there are a few online courses that you do not necessary have to pay for. You have staff that could audit these courses. edX offers them, Coursera offers them on an interim basis; that does impact assessment training. And I think it is through the organization J-PAL, so you could probably look into that. Or maybe even reach out to the organization directly. Just a suggestion for the Ministry. Now—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Sorry, could you tell me the name again? “J-PAL” is it?

Ms. Deonarine: J-PAL is the acronym. I will look up for the full name and I will let you know.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: No problem, thanks.

Ms. Deonarine: Also, I know that—Madam Chair, I have a next question—I also know that a public expenditure review was done recently, and it also looked at the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, and this was done by the World Bank I believe, and in their conclusion they indicated that the social safety net in Trinidad and Tobago is way higher than it is across the region, the Caribbean region. They said that 4 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago, 4 per cent of GDP in Trinidad and Tobago compared to 1.5 per cent in the rest of the region. So, could you give us some insights as to what came out of this public expenditure review? Any inefficiencies that were pointed out and what is being done within the Ministry to address these inefficiencies?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: I am aware of the report that you speak to, however, Cabinet had taken a decision with respect to that report. That the Ministries would review the report, however, no

decision or action would be taken until Cabinet itself reviews whatever recommendation comes forward. So, in most of the Ministries we have not gone forward with the recommendations, they still, I think, need to be reviewed again by Cabinet in terms of a final decision as to what should be done in the Ministries. I know with respect to the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, there were recommendations with respect to some units that should no longer be operated and so on. So there were far-reaching implications with respect to the recommendations, which is why Cabinet had indicated they had to give a final decision on what action is to be taken on those recommendations.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. Earlier on you would have mentioned that there are a few vacant post in the Ministry. Could you tell us how many of the public service posts remain vacant at this moment?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Ms. Belle. This is the public-service-type post, yes? Under Service Commission?

Ms. Belle: Okay, number of vacant positions, there are 200 vacant positions. Number of vacant positions with bodies that is 180.

Ms. Deonarine: With what sorry?

Ms. Belle: Vacant positions with bodies, and number of vacant positions without bodies, 122.

Ms. Deonarine: Thank you. And also, mention was made that there are some divisions that are currently being restructured?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, so some divisions—the Ministry is being restructured but there are some divisions that are no longer operating under the Ministry. This will be the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme, that unit, the poverty unit it was two units, the delivery side and the policy side, and the unit that dealt with people issues resolution.

Ms. Deonarine: Oh, well, that is interesting. How come the poverty unit has been dismantled and that is one of the strategic objectives of the Ministry?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: At that point in time there was some concern that—well, initially the life of the units because they were all contract positions came to an end. And when it came to an end there was a view that we should look again at the structure of the Ministry to determine whether the role of those divisions could actually be undertaken by the existing research unit, policy unit and M&E units of the Ministry.

Ms. Deonarine: So it is expected now that the responsibility of that strategic objective of

poverty reduction and vulnerability is now going to be absorbed into policy and research?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Those units, however, again, that would have been considered by the team looking at the restructuring in the Ministry of Public Administration. So, I am not sure what is in the report in terms of what they have decided with that.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: I was trying to find the line Item under which your programme where you provide caregivers for senior citizens, where is that?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: The GAPP or the senior citizens?

Mrs. Webster-Roy: The caregivers, where the caregivers are provided.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: GAPP, GAPP programme, yes. It is under the Item that says—

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Social programmes, ageing? Is that it?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: No.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: No.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It is under a strange heading: National Service.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: National Service. What has been your allocation and your releases to date?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: The allocation for fiscal, this fiscal is 20 million, and we would have used up at the end of February, 6.9 million.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: 6.9 million. How many caregivers you have in the programme?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Initially, we had 600, but we got approval for 200 additional, 800.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Eight hundred, okay. Do they receive a stipend or what is the arrangement?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, they receive a stipend.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: And the stipend is paid out on time every month?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We have some challenges with respect to paying them on time because of the nature of the programme. Usually, we cannot pay until we get all the time sheets in and so on. And even for the time sheets to be done, we have to get information from the carers, the persons who are being cared for, and so it takes some time to get in to the accounts division.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay. What do you think could be done to improve the process so that the stipends could be paid in a more timely fashion? Because I know sometimes if you do not

receive your stipend you might not be able to go to the home to care for the person, and then that will create a sort of dynamic where the person who is being cared for, you have to adjust to somebody filling in, or what if—and it could cause problems. What could be done to improve the processes?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We are aware and we have been looking at it. Even with the evaluation of the programme, we are considering how we could improve the process, because we know it could really be quite a burden on some of the caregivers.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: How far are you in terms of the evaluation?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We are finished with the evaluation. It is really just to take it to Cabinet and to begin to implement the recommendations, but we are not waiting. Some of the recommendations could be implemented right away, for example, we have increased the number, but we have to take it to Cabinet.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: You mind sharing some of the—or you have to wait until it goes to Cabinet before you share the information?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Generally, it has to do with what the objectives were of the programme, improving on the objectives, and also how the programme has actually been implemented. Because initially, the programme was supposed to train you and then you would get some on the job sort of experience for a period of six to nine months, and then you would exit the programme. But it has not been working like that. So for example, one of the recommendations would be that we have to get back to the programme and how it was supposed to be implemented. And also in terms of even the age category for that programme.

However, even in implementing it we would have had to change some things. For example, while we would have targeted young persons, going out in the field you would know that most of those persons, older persons, really do not want younger persons to work with them for different reasons. And so, we had to begin to bring on more mature persons to be able to really meet the needs.

So, the assessment speaks to those kind of issues on how, you know, we could really treat with them what bring the programme back to what the initial intent was.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Just one more question on that. You mentioned that initially you receive a certain length of training, I think it is a six to nine months OJT period and then you are supposed to transition out.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: You receive the training and then after the training you have a period to sort of work out there with an older person, and then after you exit. So, when you exit you would have had the experience and therefore, you could get a full-time job, because it was not intended to be a full-time job but it has more or less morphed into something like that.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: So it is expected that either the family or an agency recruit the person and not necessarily the Ministry?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: That is right, a home for older persons, or a hospital, or some one of those types of agency.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: And if a family decides to retain the individual, is it a practice for the Ministry to assist with the payment, or the family would have to absorb that full cost?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: The family would absorb.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay, thanks.

Madam Chairman: Member Bodoe.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam PS, this next question is tied in really to the rehabilitation services for substance abuse and the responsibility for the Piparo Empowerment Centre. But the question really is: Is your Ministry the only agency that is involved or responsible for these rehabilitation services for substance abuse?

And secondly, do we have an idea of the needs, the extent for this service? And if I may just add maybe two more questions so you can just respond. And the other would be whether the Ministry would engage private providers in this field. And if so, whether those providers will undergo some sort of certification or accreditation or quality assurance process.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: So, the Ministry is not the only Ministry responsible for this particular area. Some of these private organizations, well, primarily NGOs though, receive a subvention from the Ministry of Health. We run the Piparo Empowerment Centre. Actually, the staff belong to the Ministry and so on.

The needs, when we had NADAPP, that is the National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme, was under the Ministry, we would have a number of surveys undertaken in terms of alcoholism, use by youth and so on. And we had a sense of what the needs would be. But at this point in time because NADAPP is now in Ministry of Health, I mean, I am not too sure whether the surveys are still being done and so on. But through the Inter-Ministerial Research Council, we do get a sense of surveys that are being done and so on. But to say that we are

tracking the needs with respect to that particular service, not really.

The facility has a capacity for 50 persons and we have had challenges in terms of, in the last five years or so, with respect to having the facility filled. Prior to 2015, for example, there was an issue with respect to actually having enough accommodation at that facility. But it would seem that the whole dynamic with respect to drug use and abuse has changed. So that, you know, usually we do not even have half the capacity there anymore.

Obviously, what we have done is we have decided to work with Ministry of Health to see how we can ensure that we have more persons at the facility, and what is really happening in terms of, as I said, that particular service and the types of drugs that are being used right now, it is a little different it would seem.

Dr. Bodoë: It is a big social issue, Madam PS, I am sure you will agree. Do you feel the current arrangement is ideal or do you believe that the needs of these citizens will be best served by, you know, one oversight body or Ministry? I would just like to get your opinion on that.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We have considered it. We have had discussions with Ministry of Health. Recently, we had two facilities down at Piparo. We had the Piparo Empowerment Centre for alcohol and drug abuse and rehabilitation, and we also had the New Horizon Facility for strictly homeless persons with a mental health problem, and because of the discussions, we have now handed over that facility to health understanding that it is better placed there. We would have had the same discussion about Piparo Empowerment Centre, we are still having that discussion to determine what is best, where it is best located.

Madam Chairman: So, Madam PS, I just want to go back a bit to your strategic plan. And I had observed that your monitoring and evaluation division was responsible for tracking and monitoring their plans and their proposals. Now, in your opening submission and also some time along the discussions we were told about your human resource challenges, both in terms of the public service posts and your contract posts. So I wanted to find out, in terms of your monitoring and evaluation division, which is really important. It is almost your mechanism for tracking. What is your complement, your vacancies, and how has that affected the operation of your monitoring and evaluation unit?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Thank you, Chair. The monitoring and evaluation unit of the Ministry, actually, we were one of the first Ministries in the social sector to have an M&E unit because of

the nature of our work. And we have always had a very strong unit. However, there was a hiatus where we did not have anybody in the unit, it was just about one person or two persons. But recently we would have had the six officers at the lower level, because that is the structure, the lower level; the entry level, we have six officers and then we have a director, and we recently got a director. So, as far as I know, I think we have our full complement. Ms. Belle.

Ms. Belle: From what I am seeing according to the record there are six positions that are filled, five are vacant. There is a total of 11 positions. Recommendations have to be made for the filling of the other five remaining.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Okay, so the other five though may be support persons rather than technical persons. So the technical persons are on board. And I think the main issue there has to do with the training, as member Deonarine mentioned, the training to undertake the types of assessments that are necessary. So they can do the basic impact—not impact but assessments of the programmes and so on, rapid assessment and so on, but the impact assessment there is need for that type of training.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so you said there was a template that you have developed, and this allows for monthly status reports. So, I guess with having your six officers, have these reports been happening monthly? And when have you received the last report from this monitoring and evaluation division?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Okay, so the unit is responsible for providing monthly reports on all the programmes on all the services that the Ministry provides through the various divisions. And the most recent report would have been January.

Madam Chairman: And that would be for all the divisions?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: All the divisions.

Madam Chairman: All right, so the report—generally when is the report expected?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Usually, heads are asked to provide those reports by the second week of the following month.

Madam Chairman: All right, so I mean we are now approaching that time for your February report. And we were told about you developing a monitoring evaluation framework. Could you tell us the status of that?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We have not advanced on that one because as I indicated the director only came in recently, and that requires some technical work and some guidance by somebody

at that level. So, while we have would have been working with the results-based framework from the Ministry of Planning and Development which also is what we would use to do ours, because everybody has to be guided by that, there are some peculiarities for our framework because it would have to include our strategic plan elements, and also the National Social Mitigation Plan. So we are not very advanced with respect to that particular overarching M&E framework for the Ministry, but it is on the front burner for that particular unit.

Madam Chairman: Let me ask, when did the director come on board?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Last week.

Madam Chairman: So it is pretty recent?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Very recent.

Madam Chairman: Pretty recent. Okay, so I guess I might be a bit premature to ask if you can give me some sort of estimate of time when your framework would be developed but I guess that is something—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: End of fiscal 2020.

Madam Chairman: End of fiscal 2020, you think that that will be. So in terms of the vacant posts which are the five, as you say, the lower level people, would I be correct in saying that?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It is support, so it might be business operations persons, that kind of—

Madam Chairman: Those are contract? Or—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: All contract.

Madam Chairman: All contract.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: All contract.

Madam Chairman: All right. Have you advertised anything for them?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Not for those. We were concentrating mostly on the technical, like the Director.

Madam Chairman: All right, so that, can I ask then, when is it likely that you would begin the process of recruitment of the five? And when I say recruitment I am starting from advertisement.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Chair, for example, if it is a Business Operations Assistant position, what we do is we recruit across the Ministry, so that, the next time we are recruiting Business Operation Assistants we will bring on someone for that particular division, and I think if I recall, it is probably the next two months or so we may be doing the interviews for that

position.

3.55 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Okay? So, in terms of the five, what I would ask you is if you would submit in writing what level of people these are—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Sure.

Madam Chairman:—and your plan for recruitment of those positions. And I wanted also to enquire a bit into your Social Investigations Unit, because I see you have done your assessment of your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. So I wanted to find out, in terms of your human resource complement for your Social Investigations Unit, how many persons you have employed with that as of February 01, 2020 and, you know, while you are giving me that, if you could give me a list of the established posts and the approved organizational structure.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: For that particular division or as a Ministry?

Madam Chairman: No, the Social Investigations Unit.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Okay. So the Social Investigations Unit is entirely contract primarily. If there are any public service posts, it would be that we have reassigned some of the posts in another division that is relevant to research into that division. So we have a Director Social Investigations, which is currently vacant, but there is a body there. There is somebody that is in the position serving in that capacity.

We have a Senior Research Specialist which is a post that is supposed to be filled within the next month, because interviews were done and someone was selected, it is just to have the person come on board. We have a Research Specialist. Just to go back a bit, the Director's position, sorry, the person who is in the post, I think they are there for just a year, but they are on contract. It is not short term, they are on contract.

Madam Chairman: So the year will end when?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: The year will end probably in the next six months or so—six or seven months, because there were persons in the post but they resigned and so on, so this was just the residue. So the person has just gone for one year. So the Senior Research Specialist, that person will be on within the next month. We have three Research Specialists II positions and we have two persons; two are filled, one is vacant. Then we have Research Specialist Is, four posts; one filled, three vacant. We have a Statistical Specialist position. We recently had

someone in the post, but they resigned. So we have actually re-advertised that post recently. The Data Specialist post, we have one vacant post. We also have another Research Specialist post that is vacant. Research Technician, we have someone in that position and that is the complement.

Madam Chairman: So, you have shown that you place great reliance on the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit and also the Social Investigations Unit on analyzing and assessing your strengths and your weaknesses and so. So having regard to—as you told me there was a hiatus with respect to this strong Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, it appears that you, only as recently as maybe last two weeks been able to get back some of your strength in monitoring and evaluation, and I see you also have deficiencies in human resources in your Social Investigations Unit. How has that really impacted your measurement of the efficiency of the services which your Ministry provides?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Well it has impacted, because we did not have the resources to really go out and first collect the data. We have a lot of data in files which need to be mined. With the recruitment of our Director Social Investigations, that was the first remit that was given to the division for them to come up with the system to collect the data across the Ministry and to analyze the data to determine how we could improve what we do in terms of our programming and services and so on. They are still working on that. It involves an IT system also, and what I know is that we were having discussions with the CSO, because you would know that they are moving towards the Statistical Institute, and for the entire statistical system to work, whatever we are going to be using to send the information to the CSO to be able to say what is happening with social indicators across the country, we would have to make sure that it is compatible. So those discussions have been had and we are looking at what will be the best solution to bring on board. So there is the IT solution and then there is the part where we have to ensure that all the divisions are in sync with actually sending the data to that unit on a monthly basis and to institutionalize this whole arrangement.

So we have not advanced that as yet, but we are working on it and we are also working on the policy aspect too, because the Policy Division is the other important division in this whole arrangement in terms of determining what we do, how we do it and whether we are doing it well and then well the M&E. Actually, what we have done in the Ministry, we have an arrangement we call the nexus where those three divisions have to meet on a monthly basis to

be looking at these types of issues in the Ministry: how are we doing in particular areas with respect to policy and programming and so on and why we have not put the systems in place as yet, how can we actually improve what we do? So there is that nexus team that meets every month to look at those kinds of issues.

Madam Chairman: And what? They generate reports that guide you all forward?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: They have not generated any reports, because actually they have only started a few months ago meeting again, because of the mandate that was given to them.

Madam Chairman: So, you know, I get the impression that so many things are to be happening and, therefore, it leaves me to wonder, how you are managing, how you know how you are doing, how you know that you are reaching the target, how you know that your stakeholders, your customers are being satisfied. I mean, I heard you say that your appropriation is about \$5 billion, I take that to also include your recurrent or is that just on your programmes?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It is mainly the recurrent actually. It is because of the nature of the programmes, most of the money goes towards those grants.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and we know resources are never enough. What then—I mean, I hear all of these lovely plans to come into being, but what guides you now with respect to, are we being efficient, are we being effective? Can we rely—we have lovely programmes and we are spending money, are we getting value for money or is this a wastage of funds? Because in all I have heard so far, lots of things are planned and to be rolled out—committees, you know and so on—but I am not sure, until those things come to fruition, what is actually guiding us and by what we are using to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of what we do?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: At this point, it is simply the reports that we get on a monthly basis in terms of these programs: how many persons are coming on board, how many persons are leaving in terms of the programmes and for some of the ones where we do assessments, what the assessments are saying. So, for example, even like, for example, the Senior Centres Programme, we would have done an assessment of that to see if it is meeting its objectives.

So in the absence of a robust M&E framework, we depend on the monthly reports and the assessments, and we are trusting that we will get the data very soon for the SFC, because that is what we depend on to determine how we are doing.

Madam Chairman: All right. You have an internal audit unit?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, the Auditor is here.

Madam Chairman: Right. Could you let me know, in terms of operations of the Internal Audit Unit, the staffing, are reports generated by the internal audit on say programmes or divisions and how do you use those reports to guide and improve on the service delivery of your Ministry?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Ms. Mc Kie, you want to speak to the unit and what it does?

Ms. Mc Kie: The composition of the unit, the unit has an Auditor II, two Auditor Is, six Auditing Assistants and two Clerk IIs, which are checking officers and a Typist.

Madam Chairman: Is that your full complement?

Ms. Mc Kie: That is the full complement.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So in terms of, do you have an annual work programme?

Ms. Mc kie: Yes we do.

Madam Chairman: And have you been doing audits, you know, consistent with that?

Ms. Mc Kie: We have been.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Could you tell us like what was the last audit you did—whether it is a division or a programme—if there were any deficiencies or challenges that you have encountered?

Ms. Mc Kie: We have a monthly plan, and we would have a number of audits on that plan every month. I think the most recent one that I can think of was that we audited TTAHI and would have looked at their procurement of their contracts and the accounting, and looked at their internal controls and made recommendations on that.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So TTAHI is what may I ask?

Ms. Mc Kie: Trinidad and Tobago Association for Hearing Impaired.

Madam Chairman: And having done that that would have been in what month you did that audit?

Ms. Mc Kie: The report would have been placed last month. It would have been submitted last month.

Madam Chairman: All right. Has that report been shared as yet with the entity?

Ms. Mc Kie: TTAHI would have seen—they would have seen the report and they would have given their response. Our completed report had their responses to our findings and recommendations. So they would have known what was in it and they would have a copy.

Madam Chairman: All right. So is there any specific issue you would have identified that you would like to speak to and recommendations which you would have made in respect of that?

Ms. Mc Kie: Well, we did look at the way they dealt with their purchasing and their sales of their batteries. They sell batteries as one of their main means of outcome outside of our subvention and we looked at their stores records and the way they maintained those and made recommendation to those. That is what comes to mind immediately.

Madam Chairman: All right. And having done that and made the recommendations and you say they would have an opportunity to respond.

Ms. Mc Kie: The completed report—

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Ms. Mc Kie:—had their responses on it and timelines for when they would have made the improvements and made the changes that were necessary.

Madam Chairman: Right. And you would follow up on that?

Ms. Mc Kie: And then we would do a follow-up audit.

Madam Chairman: So, might I just ask the Permanent Secretary, you had spoken to a Permanent Secretary Procurement Evaluations Committee, could you share with us what that is? Who comprises—well, I expect from the name is the Permanent Secretary, but who else comprises of that committee.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: This committee would actually treat with procurement that is within the remit of the Permanent Secretary which is under a million, yes. It would comprise of different persons depending on what is being procured, but generally it would have somebody from the general administration division. Sometimes the Project Management Division and one other person depending, as I said, which division the procurement is being undertaken for. And this committee would usually sit on what is received from the various suppliers and make a decision—well not make a decision, but make a recommendation to the Permanent Secretary, and then I would determine and give the approval based on what is recommended.

Madam Chairman: All right. So this committee, this would be in addition to your Procurement Unit according to the procurement legislation?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, this is a committee separate and apart. The Procurement Unit would usually, you known, undertake all that is required right now under the Act although it is not proclaimed, putting things in place in readiness and so on and, you know, beginning to do

like the procurement plan that is necessary for each fiscal and so on.

Madam Chairman: So that unit is not really actually overseeing procurement yet in your Ministry? Because what I want to know is the relationship between your committee and the work of the Procurement Unit.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: There is a relationship, and while we are saying Procurement Unit, that unit is really just public servants in the Ministry. So that the person who is heading up the unit really has a position in another division and is really being used there in the interim while we are trying to get the persons for that particular unit, and so that person is usually also on the committee. So that is where the link is.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And just as we are talking procurement, do you have an idea of when your unit will be completely established? You have an approved structure for your unit? Yes?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We have an approved structure.

Madam Chairman: Do you have an idea when your unit is going to be completely established?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: I cannot say, but I could indicate that there is a Cabinet Note done to go forward with respect to filling some of the positions, a very limited number.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much. Anybody? Member Deonarine.

Ms. Deonarine: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Madam Permanent Secretary, mention was made in your submission about the projects selection criteria. What is the projection selection criteria?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Could you just say where it was mentioned?

Ms. Deonarine: On pages 20 to 21. It says projects are selected based on the projection selection criteria which are then formulated into the Ministry's strategic work plan for the fiscal year.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Okay. Well, the project selection criteria would actually be relevant to the type of project being undertaken. So we have some projects that would be done under—new projects that would be done under our PDD, Policy and Development Division, because there was a decision taken that if you are doing any new programmes, that is the division that would develop it according to the template for developing new programmes, and then there are projects that are developed which are under the PSIP which are the more infrastructural-type projects. Okay? So if we are doing a programme, in terms of PDD, the project selection

criteria would usually involve okay—so what is the priority of the Ministry right now, what is the target group involved and so on?—so that we could determine which one to select, because given the financial constraints, we have to be very selective in terms of which programmes we put on the front burner and which ones might go down a little lower or which ones we might be able to do with an international agency and so on. So I think that is what we would have spoken to when we talked about project selection criteria.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. I asked because I am wondering the extent to which the project selection criteria is linked to the goals and objectives of the sustainable development goals.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: They are linked primarily to our strategic plan and the *Vision 2030*. That is what they are linked with most of all, but you know *Vision 2030* is also linked to the sustainable development goals so, in a way, indirectly it is linked that way.

Ms. Deonarine: But each theme in the *Vision 2030* plan is linked to a particular sustainable development goal.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: That is why I said indirectly it would be linked to the sustainable development goals too.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. So could you tell me which goals most of your programmes are impacting on right now?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Most of them would be related to poverty and inclusion in terms of inequalities and so on where we bring in persons with disabilities and those types kinds of target groups.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. So I want to move to programmes that you all do with CBOs and NGOs. Now, in your introduction, you did mention that approximately \$41 million is given in subventions to NGOs and CBOs. Right now, how many projects you have with NGOs and CBOs?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We do not have projects, but what we do is we provide a subvention to them for them to provide services to particular vulnerable groups. So we have about 25 that we provide subventions to, including the statutory boards, one of which was TTHAI and we also have the Blind Welfare Association that we give a subvention. So TTHAI and the Blind Welfare Association and the Lady Hochoy Home.

Ms. Deonarine: What criteria is used to grant these subventions?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Well usually NGOs will submit a request to the Ministry with respect to

a subvention and there is a process where the Ministry will determine the type of service that is being provided, whether it is in keeping with what our remit is and also we will determine, depending on how much they are asking for too, there is a guideline that was approved by Cabinet in terms of how we determine who we give and what we give, various sub-teams—so if it is disability, if it is children with disabilities or whatever the kind of service—if it is also abuse, whatever the service is, we will determine and we have actually a template that we would use to assess.

Ms. Deonarine: Are you in a position to submit to us that template?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, we could.

Ms. Deonarine: In writing?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes. We could submit what they use to determine and assess.

Ms. Deonarine: I want to move to homeless persons living in and around Port of Spain. What role the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services plays in dealing and addressing this issue with displaced persons in and around Port of Spain?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: So that particular remit of the Ministry is under the purview of the Social Displacement Unit and you would have some information to in terms of that unit. What that unit is responsible for is implementing what we called the continuum of care which is a guideline that we use to provide services for street dwellers and homeless. So that unit works in collaboration with the other Ministries that have responsibilities for various areas to treat with this issue along the continuum, but our Ministry is primarily responsible for moral suasion, going out, engaging the persons on the street to encourage them to go to the facilities that we have available to do an assessment and to determine where they should actually go for rehabilitation.

So, primarily our Ministry is responsible for the collaboration with the other Ministries to make sure they do what they have to do, but with respect to our remit, we engage the persons and we ensure that they get to a facility where they would get rehabilitation. So we would usually have primarily two types of persons on the streets: persons who have a mental problem and then person who have an issue with drug abuse or alcoholism or something like that and then there are some who do not have either of those but they are homeless for some reason. So where persons are assessed that they have a mental problem, it means that they have to go to a facility to deal with that mental issue and that is the Ministry of Health, because we do not

have the purview for those kinds of facilities. If it is drug use and abuse, obviously we have PEC, Piparo, and we could also collaborate with some of the other agencies that provide that type of rehabilitation.

If it is strictly homeless, we have the CSDP, which is the Centre for Socially Displaced Persons over at Riverside and we also have Court Shamrock Home in San Fernando that we could have those persons go to until, of course, they have to transition, because they cannot stay there for ever and that is where we have a little challenge with respect to social housing because this is housing for persons who really cannot make a rent of more than \$1,000 or \$1,500, so they would not be able to get a house from the Ministry of Housing and so we are the ones who have to work with housing to determine how to treat with these persons. So there is that other aspect of social housing and transitional housing that we are working with the other Ministries to address.

Ms. Deonarine: Its sounds as if it is lot and it has a lot of collaboration with other—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It has a lot of collaboration to do with other Ministries, especially the removal of the person from the street. Just to understand that the only action we could take is moral suasion. Any moving of the persons, if they have a mental issue, it is the Ministry of Health, or if it is taking them to court, because they are loitering, is the police and the majority of persons on the street are not moving based on moral suasion.

Ms. Deonarine: So all you can do is go and ask them to move?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Ask them to move and if they agree, we take them—

Ms. Deonarine: And if at that point in time you discover that they are either mentally ill, then you need call the Ministry of Health?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Call support from the Ministry of Health where there are other issues in terms of the persons who are the Mental Health Officers who have to take the person off the street. They have to be precepted. They have to get a particular authority to do that and there are some technical legislative issues with that right now, so not many of them are able to do that.

Ms. Deonarine: So are you in a position to say or share with us the amount of displaced persons that you interact with or engage with on may be a monthly, quarterly or annual basis? Is there any record of how you—because if it is moral suasion, it is just members of the Ministry going and asking these persons to move, but is there any documentation on, you all

are using this method and then documenting who you contact to take care of the persons and so on?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We do have records. We have just one Field Officer unfortunately right now, working in that unit that goes out and does the moral suasion and she provides reports on a monthly basis in terms of the number of persons that she engaged on the street and the numbers that actually go into facilities. So I think between 15 and 20, I would think might be the persons that she would engaged on a monthly basis. In terms of persons who would actually go into the facilities, it would be much less and sometimes even if they go in, remember there is no way that we can keep them there so that within a short space of time they may be back out on the streets.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. So those reports that the unit have compiled, could you share it with us?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Sure.

Ms. Deonarine: And also, clearly—was a needs assessment done for the unit, the Displacement Unit, because it is just one person you are saying?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Well, there is one person there now, but that is another division where we have done recruitment and they should have some more persons coming on board within a short space of time, like a month. So the interviews have been done already. Ms. Belle, you can share how much persons are in that unit with us.

Ms. Belle: Yes. Madam Chair, well the Executive Director position has been filled. There is a Senior Social Work Specialist—that position was advertised—and two Business Operations Assistant II; those positions are to be advertised. A Driver Courier I, that position was advertised last month. Five Field Officers, the advertisement has already been done. We are awaiting approval for the recruitment of those persons. Social Worker, there is one position and a recommendation was made for that position to be filled. One Business Operations Assistant I position, that has been advertised.

4.25p.m.

Ms. Deonarine: Thank you. When do you expect—*[Crosstalk]* Sorry, did I interrupt?

Ms. Belle: No. No.

Ms. Deonarine: When do you expect all these positions to be filled because some of them have not been advertised yet?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes. The only ones that were not advertised—all the technical ones have been advertised and they are expected to come on board within the next month or so; that is the Field Officer and the Senior Social Work Specialist and the Social—

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. Another area I want to—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Just one moment.

Ms. Deonarine: Sure.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Mr. Gangapersad, were you able to find the data?

Mr. Gangapersad: Yes. There are some available data here for quarter one, quarter two and quarter three of last fiscal. In quarter one the Ministry would have engaged on the street, 112 persons. In quarter two—

Ms. Deonarine: That is in Port of Spain only or the entire country?

Mr. Gangapersad: Mainly in Port of Spain. In quarter two, 142, and in quarter three, 90 persons were engaged on the streets by the Social Displacement Unit.

Ms. Deonarine: And what about the other areas of Trinidad, like San Fernando and maybe the rural areas?

Mr. Gangapersad: Inside of this would be some for the areas outside of Port of Spain so we would have to submit that disaggregation.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We will also submit a recent report that was done on the street count. I think it was done in October last year in terms of determining how many persons are in the streets of Trinidad; not Tobago, only Trinidad.

Ms. Deonarine: I know you also mentioned that within a short period of time, even if you try to use moral suasion you have the Ministry of Health intervene or the TTPS intervene, most of the time they tend to end up back on the street, at that point in time what is your role? What are you in a position to do?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Re-engage them, that is all that we can do at this point.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. I want to move to another area with respect to grants and programmes by multilateral lending agencies, do you all have any right now?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: No.

Ms. Deonarine: Are you all considering seeking any, because what I know is that multilateral lending agencies, they usually have technical assistance support, support in the sense that it is

not a loan. So it is grants that they give you to deal with these social issues, especially in an economy where crime is very prevalent and you have a social safety net that is increasing. Have considerations been given to reach out to any multilateral lending agencies?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We have been working with the UNDP with respect to poverty reduction and the development of the poverty strategy, and in recent time we have been working with the Caribbean Development Bank with respect to an assessment of the disability sector.

Ms. Deonarine: Was that done?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It is now starting.

Ms. Deonarine: Now starting, okay. And when is it expected to be completed?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: I think that project is going to take about a year.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. You have like a project profile describing the component?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Everything, because they have done it before in other jurisdictions so they are using the same template.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. Could you submit to us that as well?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Sure.

Ms. Deonarine: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have some follow-ups based on questions asked by member Deonarine. The first one, you mentioned that after Health or another agency engages the street dwellers and they return to the street you would just engage them again, what is NFS doing in terms of getting the family involved to have the person reintegrate into the family? What support is provided?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Usually the Social Displacement Unit, there are social workers in there and they are the ones who treat with the families of the persons who are homeless. Family Services does not really get involved.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay. What I am trying to get at is, what is done to help to support the family so that they could engage the displaced person and have them back home. What is the Ministry doing to help build back that family unit, to assist in building back the family unit?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Because I am not operating at that level, I cannot say exactly what they do with the family. I do know that for most of these persons, even if they find a family it is

usually very difficult for the family to accept the person, especially if it is mental health issues. Most times the family does not want the person back, and even if it is an alcohol or drug abuse and we put them in Piparo, we work with them, I could say, with the families when we put them in Piparo. I know that for sure. Some of them reintegrate and some of them we have to find transitional homes or permanent kinds of accommodation for them after they leave there, but once they get to Piparo Empowerment Centre, we work with the families in a comprehensive way.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: The follow-up had to do with the issue of subventions and I wanted to understand what is your mechanism for monitoring the subvention to ensuring that there is value for money and that it is actually being used for the purpose given, and I wanted to specifically raise the Blind Welfare but explain the process first and I will explain to you why I wanted to raise the Blind Welfare Association.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: With respect to the subventions we have an NGO unit which oversees the provision of subventions to organizations, NGOs. Every month the NGOs have to submit their expenditure, actual expenditure information which the NGO unit reviews and also it determines what they get the next month. The amounts that they should get are determined by Cabinet so they are also overseeing that to ensure that they get what is approved. And also we have the auditing function, as Ms. Mc Kie mentioned, the audit unit actually audits the accounting records of those NGOs.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Is the Ministry aware of the current—I do not want to say impasse but the current breakdown with the Blind Welfare Association, the general body, and what is happening in Tobago?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We are aware because we have had letters coming to the Ministry, so we are actually dealing with it right now. But just to indicate that those organizations, there is a limit at which the Ministry could take action, especially if it does not have to do with the Ministry, the subvention that the Ministry gives. So sometimes these issues have to do with governance of the organization which the Ministry may not have any jurisdiction over.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: My final question, Madam Chair. My final question is about the NSDP programme, I wanted to get a status update please on the programme.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: That is the National Social Development Programme?

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Yes.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Mr. Gangapersad, could you take this one? He is responsible for that division.

Mr. Gangapersad: Sure. Thank you, PS. Through you, Chair, the NSDP programme is an ongoing programme that treats with house repairs; three major grants really, house repairs, house wiring and electrical house wiring—minor house repairs, plumbing and house wiring. They also administer the SEED programme, which is the Sowing Empowerment through Entrepreneurial Development. So that programme is currently being administered or continues to be administered in the Ministry.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Is it being accessed nationwide or is it a Trinidad only thing?

Mr. Gangapersad: It is being accessed nationwide. In terms of Tobago, the applications usually are done through either the Social Welfare Division or through the food support unit in Tobago. So we have been receiving some, not many I must admit, but some applications have been coming from Tobago and these matters are to be addressed.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: And what is the current status of your staff at the office in Tobago? That is my final question, Madam Chair, what is the status of your staff in Tobago?

Mr. Gangapersad: The status of the staff in—

Mrs. Webster-Roy: The Tobago programme under the food card programme and the NSDP programme.

Mr. Gangapersad: Right. In terms of NSDP, NSDP does not have a staff really assigned in Tobago. As I indicated an arrangement is done where the food support or the Social Welfare Division collects the application. That is sent to Trinidad. Those applications are then logged and some arrangements have to be made as it relates to the processing of these applications. As it relates to the food support, the food support in Tobago is still in operation at the Carnbee office with a regional coordinator, and I think four liaison officers at the Carnbee location.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Are they on contract or short-term?

Mr. Gangapersad: These officers are on short-term.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: How long have they been on short-term?

Mr. Gangapersad: I believe from my recollection they would have been on short-term since August 2017.

Madam Chairman: Member Bodoë.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I could just follow up on member Webster-Roy's

question about the National Social Development Programme, and there is a table on page 11 of the submission here that speaks to the number of applications and beneficiaries. So I am looking at house wiring—I am not sure if you all are on the same page as yet. It is page 31, sorry. Page 31 of the submission, NSDP. So I am looking at house wiring, materials and labour house wiring, materials only, minor house repairs, improved water supplies, electrification and lighting of community facilities. So two questions, one, are these separate from the benefits you can access through T&TEC and WASA, and so on? And my other question would be, why zero applications in some instances? Is there an explanation for that? It is a social programme and I find it is a bit interesting that no applications would have been made, because I am sure, as a Member of Parliament, I am sure there is a quite a need for this. Is there an explanation?

Mr. Gangapersad: Chair, through you again, the programme is distinct from what is offered at other Ministries. So this is a programme administered by this Ministry.

Dr. Bodoë: So it is available and the public should know of it.

Mr. Gangapersad: It is available and the public should know of it, and as I indicated earlier on, we would have been advertising these programmes through our various communication strategies. As it relates to the zero applications here, this programme, really the minor house repairs, is heavily subscribed. The other areas in terms of plumbing and house wiring are not as heavily subscribed as the others. The fact that they have zero applications here probably would suggest that persons did not really apply during that period for these services as they would have applied for the plumbing and the minor house repairs.

Dr. Bodoë: So can I ask this part of your communication strategy because as Members of Parliament, I am sure that there would be need for this. As part of your communication strategy, this information, do you make an effort directly to target, for want of a better word, MPs' offices? That is the first question. The second, in terms of the paperwork and the forms, and so on for this, where would that be available, in sub-offices?

Mr. Gangapersad: So to answer your question, as I indicated earlier on, the public information and education series was in fact conducted in every constituency throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The approach would have been to engage MPs, as well as councillors and other key stakeholders in the area, and those events were in fact well attended. The other approach that we are using is the outreach, and again the ground in terms of getting the word there, there are the councillors and as well we have engaged in some cases the MP offices so

that persons can be informed to come out. And at these events all of the services of the Ministries are offered in terms of both. At the outreaches now they are actually doing on-the-spot assessment to determine the eligibilities for these grants, as well as giving out information to citizens on how to go about qualifying any relevant documentation that they need to submit in order to get the grants.

Dr. Bodoë: Sure. Thank you. I just want to take you back to page 30, Madam PS; this is under the Benefits of Projects and Programmes across Trinidad and Tobago, and the Social Welfare Division and their column Food Support—it is on page 30—and I am looking, it is just for comparison, September 2018, 24,327 grants, number of persons benefited, and if I go down to December of 2019, I see a figure of 23,969, but in January of 2020, I am seeing a figure of 11,157, almost a 50 per cent reduction. Is this a typo or does this reflect a change of policy? And do you have the figures for February 2020, so we can follow the pattern?

Mr. Gangapersad: Right. So it is an error. In fact, the figure is 24,338; January 2020, the figure is 24,338.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay. Do you have February figures there?

Mr. Gangapersad: I do not have February figures but I know the current figure as of March, I think, is 24,702.

Dr. Bodoë: All right. So there is no change in policy, I just wanted to clarify that.

Mr. Gangapersad: No.

Madam Chairman: Might I just intervene. Mr. Gangapersad, before we go any further, are there any other errors in this matrix you are giving us that you would want to point out one time so we would not—

Mr. Gangapersad: No. I actually saw this error just before we left the Ministry.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay. If I can draw your attention to the third column, Public Assistance, and I see here September 2018, just for comparison, 23,150 citizens would have benefited, but in January of 2020, 18,286; a reduction of almost about 20 per cent there. Is there an explanation? Is it something that varies or is it a reflection of reduced funding?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It is really policy, I believe, reflecting the fact that we would have introduced our standard means test for eligibility for this grant.

Dr. Bodoë: So those who may have qualified prior to—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Some persons, yes, would have fallen off having been recertified to

determine if they still—well, this particular one, if they are still eligible for the grant.

Dr. Bodoë: I just want to go back to page 31, and just for a few comments on the Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme, the GAPP programme and the Retiree Adolescent Partnership Programme, the RAPP programme, can you give us a brief explanation of these programmes, their structure and their benefits and how you go about accessing them?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: With the GAPP programme it is the one we would have spoken about with respect to the caregivers, so if you have an older person and you are unable to, you know, pay for services for the person, then you apply through the GAPP programme and you get a caregiver who would provide the services for the older person. So there is a training element for young persons and then there is the caregiving part where you actually go out and provide care for older persons.

The RAPP programme is a programme under Ministry that treats with vulnerable at-risk young people where we have retirees working with the young persons who may have been identified in their school as, you know, having behavioural problems, and so on, and the retirees would work with them after school in various areas in terms of helping them with their homework and life skills, and counselling and mentorship so that, you know, they get back on the right track and also that they become citizens who will move on and fulfil their potential. So we have, I think, about five centres and we have forms that you can fill out too to be part of this programme.

Dr. Bodoë: The retirees, do you have like a number that participate in the programme?—of retirees who would engage these young people.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It would vary, but I do not have the figure in terms of the number of retirees we have in the programme right now. I do not have that figure readily.

Dr. Bodoë: Is there something you could provide to us?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: I could provide that.

Dr. Bodoë: I mean, it is a reflection of how much people are willing to help back in society. And is there any particular—would there be criteria for participating as a retiree?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: There will be criteria that would be provided. Most likely you are willing and you probably would have been a teacher or whatever is the need that they are looking for; sometimes in the area of sport, or so on.

Dr. Bodoë: Yeah. It is not something that is very well advertised though, the opportunity for

retirees to give back in this way. So it is just a suggestion that I am sure there are many retirees who are willing and able to participate in this service and perhaps you might want to look, you know, at advertising this may be a bit more heavily.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes. Understood. Agreed.

Dr. Bodo: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: PS, I just would like to follow-up on this, this same RAPP programme. What you told us at page 32, there are 257 participants. Would that be total, meaning retirees and students?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: No, that would have been the young people.

Madam Chairman: This would be the young people.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: This would have been the young people.

Madam Chairman: All right. And so this is what the current cohort of young people in the five centres are?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It may be a little different because this information was 2019 information.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So you could give us an update on that, please?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yeah. Sure.

Madam Chairman: And also you had indicated to us that there were plans on the way to expand the number of centres. Could you tell us, because the centres are five: Couva, Belmont, La Horquetta, Valencia and Laventille. Am I correct?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So could you tell us what is the status of the plans to expand the number of RAPP centres?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We have not expanded as yet, we are still at the five.

Madam Chairman: You are still at the five—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes.

Madam Chairman:—I know, but have you identified areas? Has your keep back been funding? Has your keep back been identifying schools? Has your keep back been identifying retirees? That sort of thing is what I am trying to find out.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It is not identifying—we have had some challenges identifying centres, but I think the challenge is just to simply move towards implementing and getting the additional on board and taking it to Cabinet because it would have to be taken to Cabinet.

Madam Chairman: All right. So you could give us a time frame?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We will commit to the next three months, Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So you would give us a report of that. And I would really like us to get some in writing what are the criteria for selection of retirees. And how long does a programme run? So I am a child in school, who identifies that I am giving trouble?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It usually would be the social worker in the school.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And how long do I go to this programme for?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It is determined by the coordinator of the programme, and I believe they would work with the young person until they see the change that is necessary. So it may be nine months, it may be a year.

Madam Chairman: What is the skill or expertise of the coordinator?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: The coordinator on board, that person—Ms. Belle, do you have the qualifications for the coordinator for that position, the coordinator for RAPP? We would have to get it, but essentially the person would have to have a degree and they would have had experience in working with young persons and with youth programmes.

Madam Chairman: All right. So what I would ask is for us to get a fuller understanding of this RAPP programme, which we think is a great programme, if you can, in writing, give us some more information about how this programme is administered, the criteria for the selection of the retirees, the qualifications of the person who assesses the children, how long they are staying there. I guess it would vary, but I want to know if I could be six years in the programme. That is what I am really asking, that sort of thing. And least—I do not know about anybody else here around the table, but lest I be accused of neglecting my own, I would like us to talk about the Division of Ageing because, you know, our understanding is that we are an ageing population, and I see we do have a Division of Ageing and I see you have a number of programmes administered by the Division of Ageing, and I would just like to get some further information about these programmes. So I see the Older Persons Information Centre, is it that there is one hub located in your Ministry or do you have them in various regions, whether it is in a regional corporation or some out-centres or so on?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It is a hub in the Ministry, an 800 line.

Madam Chairman: It is a hub in the Ministry, an 800 line, so it is just really an electronic information interface?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It is, but it is also the conduit for receiving reports on elder abuse. So we receive reports on elder abuse through the OPIC centre and also it is a place that older—persons come in to get information about older persons.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So it is sort of like a repository of information available to all the public, okay?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes.

Madam Chairman: What do you all do as the recipient of complaints for elder abuse?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We receive the reports and the inspectors in the division will go out and investigate. Depending on the nature of the report they will also work with the police when they go out to determine whether there is any truth to the report, and based on what they find they would determine the action. So if, yes, it is abuse, they would actually have the police involved to remove the person or to deal with the issue, and if it is something that is not a criminal offence, they would work with the family if they are allowed to.

Now, there are two types of abuse that come in, private homes, which they are a bit limited to deal with, unless, you know, it is a physical abuse, they would make sure they go in with the police to determine whether there is any validity. And if it is a home for older persons then they have some more—they could do a lot more if it is a home for older persons under our jurisdiction, because we do have homes under our jurisdiction. So we would go in and we would work with the home in terms of the issue there.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So basically you all just treat with physical abuse?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: No. There are the different types, recently we had to report on what we do, so there is the financial abuse, there is the psychological, then there is the physical also, and, you know, so there are the various types.

Madam Chairman: All right. So how do you investigate psychological abuse?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: I am not sure how they deal with that really. I am not sure how they would deal with the psychological.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So if you could let us know, because, you know, it is quite interesting in what is abuse. So my mother may be a very independent 90-year-old woman and therefore takes umbrage to say, my intervention in trying to assist her. So that is one form of possible abuse that I, interfering with her independence, but then on the other hand, if I leave her alone and something goes awry I am going to be also culpable for another kind of abuse,

neglect. So I would like to know how you all treat with psychological abuse. And also since you are a hub for information, how do you sensitize in an active way, not just my coming to you, but how do you sensitize, in an active way, people about elder abuse and its forms?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: So at our outreaches which was mentioned before, we do a lot of sharing of information on elder abuse. We also always observe World Elder Abuse Awareness Day where we work with other agencies and also our own Ministry in providing the information. There is information on our website about elder abuse, and we also, through our outreaches, provide the information. So through the PIs, through the outreaches, through the website, through collaboration with other agencies, we provide the information out there and the education about elder abuse.

4.55 p.m.

Madam Chairman: So can I ask one thing? Is there a definition of “elder” in Trinidad and Tobago?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: I am sure there may be. Mr. Gangapersad is saying 60 years and over, but our old age pension is 65.

Madam Chairman: No, no, no. I specifically asked that question because I think Mr. Gangapersad is correct, that an elder person is a person 60 years and older. Many of us in Trinidad and Tobago, including you, are not sure about that. Therefore I ask that very basic question in terms of your public information and your public outreach, that many people are elders according to the legislation and just do not know that.

So I want to know in terms of, you collect these information about statistics about complaints and so on, do you publish some sort of annual report, anything like that?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, we have our administrative reports that we have to comply with according to parliamentary—

Madam Chairman: Right, but do you publish a little handbook that is for public consumption, that is accessible, on the number of reports in homes, in private homes, that kind of thing for sensitization or even on your website?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We published those types of bulletins at one time through our Interministerial Research Council, but when the council’s life came to an end we have not published any since then. But we do have a bulletin that we produce in the Ministry, and we also put it on the website I believe, Social Light, that provides what the Ministry is doing, and we do provide some statistics in the Social Light, and we put it on our website.

Madam Chairman: You just told me that the Interministerial Research Council, its life came to an end.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Its life came to an end, but it was also reconstituted in 2018, I believe it is. So it is functioning now.

Madam Chairman: Could you tell me the sort of qualifications of the persons that make up this research council? Even if you do not have it, you can supply that in writing.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Really the Council reflects the social sector. Mostly the directors of all the social sector Ministries are on that council because it is overseeing the social sector research agenda, ensuring that it is happening, and also identifying gaps in the research for social issues.

Madam Chairman: So there somebody who is qualified with ageing, or gerontology or something like that?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Not necessarily. No.

Madam Chairman: That is why I asked, because on the one hand I heard it reflects the sector. So if you could give me in writing the actual skills composition of the persons who make up this Interministerial Research Council. Could you tell us about the Community Care Programme? Is that still operational?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, the Community Care Programme is still operational. The intent of that programme was really to ensure that we are providing accommodation for persons who are in the hospitals around the country, but they have been abandoned by family members or they just do not have any family members. They may have come to this country from one of the smaller countries of the Caribbean, and they just ended up being alone and in the hospital, and therefore there is nowhere for them to go after they are actually discharged from the hospital. And so our Ministry would pay for them to be housed in homes for older persons.

Madam Chairman: So I see you have given us some statistics for October 2018 to June 2019. Could I ask if we could get some more updated statistics please?

If one of these abandoned persons is placed in some home by you all, is it that the Ministry would pay the expenses of the person's upkeep while in the home?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes.

Madam Chairman: And for the rest of their lives?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: For the rest of their lives.

Madam Chairman: Okay. The one I am really interested in is the Senior Activity Centres Programme. Has that been restarted?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, it has been restarted.

Madam Chairman: I know initially there were five centres. How many are there now and where are they? So that the general public will know. And how do I qualify to enter one of these programmes, apart from being 60 years and over?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Mr. Gangapersad.

Mr. Gangapersad: In terms of where they are located I would defer and ask that we provide that information in writing, because I do not want to misrepresent where the five are actually located as well the criteria for accessing the programme.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: The senior centres programme though, there is really not any criteria. It is just these centres that operate providing activities for older persons, and once you are in the area you could actually access the centres, and get involved in the activities. It is really to ensure the well-being of older persons, so that instead of staying—

Madam Chairman: But I do not know where the centres are.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: So the programme had stopped and we had some of the centres fall off in terms of the programme, because they could not continue to operate. So, for example, we have one in Maloney. We have a centre in Maloney. We had a centre in Princes Town, Rio Claro. Those were some of the areas, but we will have to provide the information.

Madam Chairman: Let me ask, is this information on your website?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Would I therefore see a centre in Mayaro, or would I see a centre 10 Water Lane?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, you would see—

Madam Chairman: I would see a very specific address?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, you would see a specific address.

Madam Chairman: And this is not operated by your staff, it is operated by an NGO?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: NGOs.

Madam Chairman: Is it fully funded by you all or is some sort of subvention?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Primarily, yes.

Madam Chairman: So that in terms of your funding, what is the policy to determine the

allocation to any specific centre?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Generally, according to the NGO/government policy it is maximum 60 per cent of the expenditure of the NGOs. It changes somewhat. For example when we give subventions to NGOs treating with homelessness, for example, or ex-prisoners, we usually give the 100 per cent because it is really difficult for them to find the funding to meet the other 40 per cent. So there are some NGOs that would get 100 per cent, but generally the rule of thumb is 60 per cent of the expenditure of the organization.

Madam Chairman: So would I then therefore, if I have to access this senior activity centre spoken of, be required to pay some fee?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Depending on the centre. So if the centre's expenses are beyond the 60 per cent that we give them, they may charge a fee to the persons who are participating.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So would you know which centres should be charging a fee?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We will know which ones are charging.

Madam Chairman: So could you give us all that information? Might I know, Mr. Gangapersad, am I 55 or 60 to qualify to go to the centre?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Fifty five and over.

Madam Chairman: As you said that the programme has restarted, so this status that you gave us for June 2019 about a note being submitted to Cabinet for the resumption, all of that is past tense? The note has been done, it has been approved by Cabinet and you now have a not certain number right now, but you will tell us the number and the locations?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes.

Madam Chairman: And these homes for older persons, we still have nine?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Less one.

Madam Chairman: Eight. So which one we lost?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: I think Chaguanas and Mayaro.

Madam Chairman: So we have seven?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Two actually.

Madam Chairman: So you have to start back? Why were those discontinued? So the home in Chaguanas I think it was just an issue of the organization that was running it, you know, who just stopped the programme.

Madam Chairman: So were there residents there at the time?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, there would have been residents who would have been relocated.

Madam Chairman: By you all to other homes?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Or the organization, once they were closing off.

Madam Chairman: And the one in Mayaro?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: The one in Mayaro, again, I think the issue was management, and the fact that many of these homes were set up many, many, many years ago, sometimes by a village council, and you know with the village councils there is the issue of new younger persons joining, and they do not really have many of those. Therefore after the ones who are there, the founding persons move on, there really is not anybody to manage. So I think this Mayaro one was like that.

Madam Chairman: Let me just ask something, and this is really for the public. I see it is really for people who are socially isolated and/or indigent. So what happens with respect to the financing of their maintenance and care? Is it that you provide a subvention to the home or do they get social assistance?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Which covers that.

Madam Chairman: Do they get social assistance too?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Some persons get social assistance, senior citizens pensions and so on.

Madam Chairman: An in addition to this you all pay towards their care too?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Once we are paying a subvention the policy is that those persons should not get an additional grant from the Government. That is the policy. Sometimes they are in private homes, they get their grant.

Madam Chairman: But we are talking about these homes for older persons. If somebody qualifies to be in a home for older persons they would not be getting?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Not in the homes that we give subventions. It is just the seven as it is right now.

Madam Chairman: Yes, those are the ones we are talking about, homes for older persons under your programme. The seven are what we are talking about. The residents in there would not be getting any grants from the Government?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Should not, as far as the policy goes.

Madam Chairman: Therefore, it would be your subvention that is running the home.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: And providing for them.

Madam Chairman: Is it fully funded?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It is fully funded, those homes.

Madam Chairman: Those homes are fully funded. So if you could help me. I am looking at the expenditure statements that you all sent us in the course of this morning. I think that is 002. Would I be correct?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: 04, under “Current Transfers and Subsidies”. It does not have a page number. But Current Transfers and Subsidies 04, 28, senior citizens homes.

Mr. Chairman: 04, 28, all right. In terms of that—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: \$1.2 million.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and up to January there was a disbursement of 700—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: 842.

Madam Chairman: Would that have covered up to January or would that have covered a period beyond January?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: They are getting their disbursements monthly. So this would take up to February.

Madam Chairman: So this \$705,842 would have taken us up to February?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Disbursement up to February.

Madam Chairman: So roughly monthly what the disbursement accounts—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Actually they have different amounts for each home.

Madam Chairman: Yes, but when you have it here under 28, you are giving me a total.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, it is a total.

Madam Chairman: So all I am asking, what your monthly total of the subvention is?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: So what I am saying is that each home has a different amount, so I will have to get that. So I am not sure how much each home would get to make up this 705,842. I will have to give you that information.

Madam Chairman: But the total of the seven homes, what is that monthly?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: So that is what I am saying—

Madam Chairman: You would not know unless you give me each one and add up?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: That is what I am saying, no.

Madam Chairman: I just want to ensure that this \$705,842 does not have a deficit in it.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes; I do not think there is a deficit in it. We try to give the homes what

they are supposed to get each month.

Madam Chairman: And you try to give them on time?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes.

Dr. Bodoë: I just wanted to follow up with regard to the issue of abuse of the elderly. The Older Patients Information Centre, I see here that you received 147 reports from private residences, domiciles. Can you define and explain what you mean by “private residence”?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: The private residence would be in persons’ homes, in the person’s home where they live with their family.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay, so that is nothing to do with a state oversight?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: No, usually we cannot go in, as I said, unless it is a physical abuse report and then we bring the police in because they would have the authority to go into a private residence. So normally it is a member of the family who is living in the home?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: A member of the family who is abusing.

Dr. Bodoë: So we do not have, like how in other countries you might private nursing homes, in the US for example, do we have those in Trinidad?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: There are those that we do not give a subvention.

Dr. Bodoë: But is there any regulation of those homes? Do you have to meet specific criteria? Is there any monitoring of these homes?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Under the Private Hospitals Act right now that is where they are regulated.

Dr. Bodoë: You have any idea of the number of these residences? I do not know. What is the correct term to use for these?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Older persons’ homes. The last count it was just over 200 in the country; just over about 212 or so.

Dr. Bodoë: And they have to be certified, you have an inspection process and so on? But that does not come under your Ministry?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Not right now until the Older Persons Homes Act is proclaimed, which it has not been proclaimed as yet, and that is why they fall under the private hospitals.

Dr. Bodoë: So the Ministry of Health at this point?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Under the Ministry of Health.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: As you said something it just reminded me. You all had appeared before the JSC Social Services, and there seems to have been some—and this may have been my impression—some sort of uncertainty with respect to regulating of these homes. Between yourselves and the Ministry of Health who took the lead? Has that been resolved?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It has been resolved because we have agreed that without the proclamation of the Homes for Older Persons Act, the authority is the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Health is overseeing right now. If they have to get certification it is from the Ministry of Health.

Madam Chairman: Any idea when the Act would be proclaimed?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We have been working towards that. Right now we have to liaise again with some of the key stakeholders, the homes and the association with respect to the changes that we are proposing for the Act and the regulations. So not within another three months.

Madam Chairman: Just because we are ageing, I just wanted to ask you, this is 02, Goods and Services, this would be a division within your Ministry? Would I be correct?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Where are you reading?

Madam Chairman: I am in February, and this is 02, Goods and Services, 002, Division of Ageing.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, that would be the Division of Ageing in the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: So can I ask, I see up to January the expenditure was \$453,284.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, only for contract employment, meaning the officers who work in the Division, inspectors, and the Director and so on.

Madam Chairman: So would I be correct in saying that the \$99,681 for February is a reflection of what the monthly expenditure is on contract employment, or has that changed?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: In that division.

Madam Chairman: Yes, in that division. In terms of promotions, publicity and printing, I see that there is an allocation for \$80,000, and having regard to the hub that you all are, I see that there has been no expenditure to date. Could you explain that?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes, once we are doing promotions and publicity and printing it is usually done under another vote under the General Administration, which is a sort of way that we manage the finances. Well, not we, but generally how it is managed in the public service right now. You do all of your publicity under that General Administration Vote, even if other

divisions may have allocations.

Madam Chairman: So this remains money, if not touched, to be vired somewhere?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Well, you may have the money but it is but you may not get the releases.

Madam Chairman: You may have the allocation but not the release?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Yes.

Ms. Deonarine: I have several things that I would like to ask. I want to start off by asking, what is the poverty line that you all are working with right now, is it the \$1.90 declared by the World Bank?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: No.

Ms. Deonarine: What are you all working with?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Mr. Gangapersad, do you have the specific figure?

Mr. Gangapersad: So the line that we are working with right now as it relates to the poverty line is 14.39.02.

Ms. Deonarine: And what percentage of the population falls below that?

Mr. Gangapersad: That we will have wait on the exercise that would be done by CSO in the upcoming survey.

Ms. Deonarine: But in the existing 2005 SLC—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It would have been the 16.7 per cent.

Mr. Gangapersad: The 2005 SLC would not have used the 14.39.02. The 2005 SLC I think the figure was 6.65. What we did is that we used the Retail Price Index to bring the figure up to 2016. So that 14.39.02 is the figure after considering the Retail Price Index.

Ms. Deonarine: Right now do you all have any programmes dealing with special needs children?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Well other than the grants that we spoke about specifically with children with disabilities, what we would do is just support the NGOs that provide these types of services.

Ms. Deonarine: Through the subventions?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Through the subvention, or if they are doing a specific programme they may come to the Ministry to ask for a one-off grant and it would be considered.

Ms. Deonarine: And what about collaboration with the Ministry of Education in terms of special needs education? Do you all have any role to play in that?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We collaborate in terms of providing advice and so on. Recently we would have received approval from Cabinet for an interagency committee that would be overseeing the implementation of the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Through that committee there will also be the collaboration across the Ministries and agencies.

Ms. Deonarine: But not necessarily or specifically for special needs children?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Well, education is on the committee, and as such, because the policy includes recommendations for children with disabilities that is how the collaboration would take place in terms of those programmes, ensuring that they are implemented.

Ms. Deonarine: What about programmes or grants for teenage mothers, teenage pregnancy, anything there?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: No, but I do not know, Mr. Gangapersad any of the programmes under social welfare may capture that group?

Mr. Gangapersad: Not directly or deliberately. I just wanted to go back to the issue of special needs. Under the Public Assistance Act provisions are made there for a single parent who has to stay home and care for a child with a disability. That parent is also provided with support, a public assistance grant to provide for themselves while they care for a child.

Ms. Deonarine: I want to go back to the means test that you mentioned very early on in the hearing. You said that a revision was done to the means test in 2018?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It was implemented in March 2018. Of course we gave ourselves, I think, a nine-month time frame to review and so we have done a review with support from ECLAC. The findings we sent to Cabinet in terms of what are our recommendations for the revision to the SMT.

Ms. Deonarine: So are you in a position to say how the revision to the means test that you all implemented in 2018 has impacted on accessibility to social programmes?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: The figures showed it, so that is why we would have indicated the reduction in the numbers of public assistance recipients. That is one of the impacts that we have seen and also for food support.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay, so what would you say were the major factors that changed in the revised means test?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Mr. Gangapersad, you want to explain that a little better?

Mr. Gangapersad: Sure. The revised means test to—the updated revised means test?

Ms. Deonarine: The one that you all implemented in 2018 for which you all submitted a report and recommendations to Cabinet.

Mr. Gangapersad: So when we implemented in 2018 it was the first time that we would have implemented a means test in the country. Prior to that there were several approaches that targeted, none of which were scientific or aligned to the poverty studies or the poverty measures that are generated in the country. The review for the current revised means test was done in accordance with the measures that the country would usually adopt for defining poverty, which means simply what we did in 2016 to generate the new measures, is the same approach we would have used to generate a new figure up to 2019.

Ms. Deonarine: Are you in a position to share with this Committee in writing the recommendations that came out of that report with ECLAC?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: As soon as we get a decision from Cabinet on the revision.

Ms. Deonarine: Now, everyone in this room is fully aware of what is happening with the economy, and not only the shocks in terms of COVID-19 but also the shock in terms of the energy prices. This week we just had a recent collapse of energy prices. What if in a couple years, Madam PS, you are asked that you choose maybe two programmes that needs streamlining or two programmes that adds the least value to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, which two programmes would those be?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: That is quite a challenging question member, in terms of programmes. I would probably just select programmes where I know there may be a duplication in another Ministry. So, for example, National Social Development Programme I know there is a similar type programme in the Ministry of Public Utilities, so I may identify that one to say, okay, let us look to see how we could streamline it. I might do the same for other programmes that I know another Ministry may be targeting the same client.

Ms. Deonarine: Which other programme you could say from the top of your head?

5.25 p.m.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Some of the housing-type programmes, yes, that I know that are across Ministries. Yes. So Self-Help and also some emergency programmes where you provide emergency relief. We might be providing it, housing might be providing it, so those kinds of programmes.

Ms. Deonarine: So why suggestions are not already, or recommendations are not already being made to Cabinet or whoever needs to make the decision to kinda combine these programmes to ensure that one entity is executing these programmes? I am not saying to remove the programme, I am saying to find a way to have one entity execute or implement the programme and provide the benefit to the citizens because in terms of transaction cost of two entities executing the same thing, it means that it is adding to your cost of doing things.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: The recommendations were made. There was a committee that was appointed to look into this matter. There was a report that was done and it is, you know, with the particular Ministry that had oversight for that particular exercise.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. Now, Madam Permanent Secretary Seecharan, we did not hear from you for the past three hours and 25 minutes. Would you care to share with this Committee what is your role?

Ms. Seecharan: Okay. Member, what happen is just that I just recently joined the Ministry, just a couple of weeks ago.

Ms. Deonarine: Welcome.

Ms. Seecharan: So this session so far has been a learning experience for me as well.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. What area is your portfolio?

Ms. Seecharan: Okay. I have been given the Disability Affairs Unit, procurement, HIV/AIDS Coordinating Unit.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Essentially, of course, because she is new, you know, we tried to help her along by not giving her too much at one time.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. So learning as we are doing. Madam DPS Belle, what area are you focused on?

Ms. Belle: Well, I myself am relatively new to the Ministry as well, it is just a little over three months. I deal with HR, general administration, Adult Education GAPP, RAPP.

Ms. Deonarine: And Mr. DPS Gangapersad?

Mr. Gangapersad: Unfortunately, I am not new to the Ministry. [*Laughter*] I have responsibility mainly for grant administration, that is the Social Welfare Division, NSDP, Piparo, the NGO Unit, IT as well, and the Division of Ageing.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. So, Madam PS Sobers, I would have indicated, in terms of the impact assessment, J-PAL is one source. I have the full name for you. It is the Abdul Latif Jameel

Poverty Action Lab.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Poverty Action?

Ms. Deonarine: Lab.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: The first time I have heard about it.

Ms. Deonarine: They are an institution in collaboration with MIT. And the name of the online programme is Evaluating Social Programmes. It is available on edX and also, if you go on the website of J-PAL, there are one-on-one programmes that they do at a cost of US \$2,500 per person. So options for you to consider because—and why I am focusing on this is because—

Madam Chairman: Members, may I just intervene and really kind of caution about singular recommendations. Okay? Please, thank you. You could proceed along another line.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. All right. Well, what I am trying to say is that, we are in a position where \$5 billion is being spent on an annual basis for social programmes in the country for the welfare of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. We are also in a position where our benchmark for the poverty rate is delayed, significantly delayed so assessment is a problem, assessing impact is also delayed. The moneys that are being transferred to households in Trinidad and Tobago account for almost 40 per cent of current transfers and subsidies. Transfers and subsidies account for 50 per cent of total government expenditure, so it is critical that we are in a position as a Ministry to ensure that we are able to assess the impact and the value that is being added to each one of the recipients of these programmes.

So, not having to give singular recommendations, but consideration should be given to finding a way to do these impact assessments even if it means collaboration, and assessing these programmes. That is my final remark.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: And, Madam PS, this is another one of my pets, gender-responsive budgeting and I have seen from the Ministry's submissions that you all do not have any specific programmes and projects that address gender equality. In fact, all your projects and programmes are gender neutral and therefore, I would like really to understand that statement in the whole context of the sustainable development goals where no one is going to be left behind, and understanding that things are likely to impact men and women differently. So how do you marry this statement with leaving no one behind and the programmes that you issue?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Chair, some training has been done by the Office of the Prime Minister

with, you know, persons across the public service in terms of gender budgeting and the whole gender mainstreaming and so on. One of our officers in the Ministry, she has been part of that arrangement. However, for it to actually roll out into how we do our budgeting is another issue but when we say that our programmes are gender neutral it means that, whether it is male or female, they could access it. So that facilitates any person who is vulnerable being able to get the support that they need. So, in that respect, I do not think anyone should be left behind because whoever needs support, can get it.

I do agree though that we may need to streamline programmes to ensure that some persons—and I should say males here—because what we have found is that most social programmes are accessed by women, the men do not access the programmes. Even the outreach programmes, when we go out there, it is mostly women coming to find out what is available, the men are not coming.

Madam Chairman: Yeah. But, you know, on the one hand, I understand the point in terms of there are programmes available to persons but in terms of—and I guess when you start to do your impact assessment, it may better help you look at how do these programmes, while they are available to everybody, the actual delivery of the programme, how does it impact men in terms of what you are targeting, how does it impact women? And I think the very statement that you just shared shows that there may be something in the design or the publication of the programme, while it is gender neutral, that may be leaving out or not reaching somebody.

So I say all that to say that, with all due respect, there is nothing called “gender neutral”. Right? So, not a men’s only programme or a women’s only programme, it is not that we are advocating but it is a question of, how do we reach you? How do we make you hear what we are saying? And it may be the very fact that it is gender neutral that men may think, “That is for women, boy”. Okay?

So, in terms of your service delivery, your policies, your programmes, you know, maybe the gender responsive is something, budgeting is something that we may have to look at. And I see that—the good news is that, you are saying that soon you will be doing sex disaggregated reporting. Where are we with that, and how soon?—because that might also help in devising your policies and your programmes and how you distribute your limited resources to get a bigger impact?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: So we have started in a limited way and Mr. Gangapersad is the one who

would usually collect the data for the reporting on particularly the grants and so on, so he could mention to the Committee where we are at with that.

Mr. Gangapersad: Yes, thanks. And, Chair, just from the available data that we have, knowing fully well that the data is, you know, there is some level of challenge in terms of minding the data, but from the available data I can say that, 19 per cent of our food card recipients are male headed and—

Madam Chairman: Nineteen or ninety?

Mr. Gangapersad: Nineteen, 1-9. And the other programme that parallels persons who are usually coming to us in terms of programmes, is the Public Assistance Grant, and 27.9 per cent of those are male heads coming to apply, either for themselves, or for themselves and their dependents. So though the data is not—we have total figures, it is worthy of consideration that this would, in fact, reflect the national database of our two major grants for the food card and the public assistance.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And you would not have any sort of data to suggest that this 19 per cent and this 27.9 per cent is reaching the vulnerable group of males?

Mr. Gangapersad: The answer to that is, no. I think what we need to do—and PS would have alluded to it earlier on in terms of the importance of the study done by CSO. What we would have done for the first time in this country in 2018 would have been to align our targeting model to how CSO will determine who is poor from not poor. Now that we have done that, in time and with the data from CSO, we would be available to look at our database and be able to tell whether or not the numbers that CSO is pointing out in a particular area, whether or not in terms of catchment, we have the same numbers in our system. And if there is a disconnect, we will then be able to reorganize our strategy to make sure that people are not excluded.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Fiscal 2021 is too hopeful?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: For the SLC? I think they indicated January 2021 to be completed.

Madam Chairman: So fiscal 2022. Okay, and thank you. Ms. Auditor II, just that I do not end on the note of the PS, to give a little relief, when we were having our discussion, you told me the last audit that you could recall is the TTAHI. Okay. When you all had done the submission, you all had indicated the golden value care services. I think that would have been in 2019 and there would have been a report, an outcome report, if I am correct?

Ms. Mc Kie: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Yes. And having regard to your timeline for follow up, I expect that that would have been passed.

Ms. Mc Kie: No. We did not do a follow up because that matter is with the fraud squad.

Madam Chairman: It is with the Fraud Squad. Okay. Let me ask something. You all have a fraud policy in the Ministry?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We do not have an official fraud policy, but we deal with fraud matters as they come up in a particular way, and according to what is required by the Financial Regulations.

Madam Chairman: And without pushing to know anything further, the matter is with the Fraud Squad, do you know how far that investigation has gone? Is it still ongoing?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: It is still ongoing.

Madam Chairman: It is still ongoing. And the last thing, risk policy. Do we have a risk policy?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We do not have a risk policy. We treat with risks in terms of what audit would do but it did come up as an issue that has to be addressed across the public service in the audit report of the JSC that dealt with audit units of the public service.

Madam Chairman: So where are you all with that? Because if we are talking sustainable development goals, my understanding is built into that is the understanding that there are risks. So that if you are going to achieve your goals, you have to assess your risks and know how you are going to mitigate and so on the risk. So where are we, in terms of our Ministry, in developing a risk policy?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We have not started, Chair. I think the intent was that the risk policy would be a standardized policy across public service which would usually be done by the central agency which is public administration.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much. Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Madam Chair, for the opportunity. Madam PS, given your years of experience in public service, what do you think could be done in the short, medium and long term to improve the efficiency within the Ministry and the programmes?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: What could done in the short term is for us to get our standard procedures in place so that we are doing the same thing across all the offices of the Ministry in terms of the processing of grants and so on, and also, to ensure that we implement the ICT

system so that we have central database, and we are more efficient in terms of , you know, simple things as if somebody is on a grant and they want to move from one location to another location, you know, and not having to disrupt their transfer when that is done.

So I think treating for short term, I would say, treating with the standard operating procedures so that people are also getting their grants processed in a shorter space of time, treating with our customer service issues. In the various offices we are dealing with that so people could have a sense of where their application has reached and whether it is approved and those sorts of issues and also, the staffing, the recruitment drive, ensuring that we bring on board a significant number of our members of staff so that we can deliver.

In terms of the medium term, I think the whole issue of bringing on board, implementing the National Social Mitigation Plan and treating with the resilience of the population especially in the light of what has taken place with the oil prices and so on, our citizens must be more resilient, even in the area of the youth and how they treat with their issues, you know. Lots of young people are not treating very well with the issues that face them, whether they, you know, they are thinking about suicide and so help, but helping people to cope, and that is what resilience is all about.

So in the medium term, I think it is important for us to ensure that our programmes are treating with that and also, the developmental aspect of our programmes that will ensure that people are graduating out of receiving a grant.

And in the long term, our fourth major strategic objectives, which is an organization that is innovative and flexible and meeting the needs of the people on a timely basis but more than that, understanding how we are impacting which is member Deonarine's, you know, major area of concern and ours too, so that we have in place a framework that is actually measuring what we do.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And is it Kanneh is your name? Just to ensure that we did not make you feel that you came here for no good reason. I just want to ask, in terms of what we have been told before about ISEMS and that negotiations are going to begin soon. Are you in a position to say who is the vendor? Who is going to supply?

Mr. Kanneh: Not at this time.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Not at this point as we do not know in the negotiations what may take place.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So may I ask then, with whom are you negotiating?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: We are negotiating with a particular supplier—

Madam Chairman: Okay. All right. So until those negotiations—

Mrs. Bailey Sobers:—through iGovTT.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Good. Fine. I understand. Okay so, thank you very much.

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: And, Chair, if I may, the Permanent Secretary has some closing remarks.

Madam Chairman: Well, [*Laughter*] I was about to ask you, if you read lips? Because I was going to ask you— yes, but if you defer to the Acting Permanent Secretary. Sure. Ms. Seecharan.

Ms. Seecharan: Okay. Well, on behalf of my colleagues, I will like to thank the Committee for inviting us here and allow them to engage in such vibrant discussions and the activities of our Ministry. We do look forward to any recommendations which you all may have to allow us to improve service delivery to our clients who are the most vulnerable in society.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. And I just want to ask one thing, like I do not want this discussion to end. What can you recommend that we can do to assist you?

Mrs. Bailey Sobers: Send your recommendations because we have had, as PS said, rich discussions and there are a number of areas that you have put forward that, you know, we feel that we can take on board and change some of what we do.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So thank you very much. So I want to thank you Madam PS, Acting PS, Deputy PS, Deputy PS, Manager, Information Technology and Auditor II for coming and spending such a long time with us, letting us understand what you do and how you get it done and the constraints that you suffer under and your plans to improve your service delivery. I want to wish you all a very safe journey home. There are some other questions we have here that we will send in writing with a time frame.

I want to thank the members of the media who attended this session. I want to thank the members of the listening and viewing public who have stayed with us, sent in questions, and we know you are out there viewing with interest because you meet us at places and ask us further questions. So I want to thank you all. This meeting is now suspended.

5.46 p.m.: *Meeting*

