



Ministry of Tobago Development

Joint Select Committee on Ministries,
Statutory Authorities & State
Enterprises

(Group 2)

Responses to Recommendations on Tobago Regional Health Authority

**FIFTH REPORT OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE (JSC) OF PARLIAMENT ON
MINISTRIES, STATUTORY AUTHORITIES AND STATE ENTERPRISES (GROUP 2),
ON THE TOBAGO REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY**

TRHA RESPONSE TO FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Legal and Regulatory Framework

JSC Findings:

- Framework is non-definitive and in some areas contradictory.
- No clear lines of distinction between the purview of the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Tobago House of Assembly (THA). The framework is further complicated by placing the Tobago Regional Health Authority (TRHA) under the ambit of the Ministry of Tobago Development

JSC Recommendations:

- The framework needs to be carefully analysed and resolved
- Immediate attention needs to be given to the clarification of the legal and regulatory framework governing the TRHA.
- May require an amendment to the TRHA Act or the Tobago House of Assembly Act
- Need to define clearly, roles and responsibilities and institute clear lines of reporting and accountability

TRHA Response:

- *The issue of the framework between the MoH, THA and TRHA is not one which can be addressed by the TRHA; however the TRHA is guided by the RHA Act 40 of 2004. The resolution therefore lies in the comprehension and review of the legal underpinnings of this Act at the level of the THA/ Central Government.*

2. Human Resource Management

JSC Findings:

- Given the limited local resource pool, the Authority is proactive and creative in addressing its human resource capacity requirements through its recruitment/incentive and training practices
- Dissatisfaction with the existing dual track system as this affects the daily management and the ability of the TRHA to effectively supervise all staff

JSC Recommendations:

- The Ministry of Public Administration should make an intervention with the Director of Personnel Administration to regularize the status of public officers who have not yet been transferred or appointed as necessary.

TRHA Response:

- *Regarding the dual track system, categories of staff whose reporting lines remain external to the TRHA, include laundry staff, health attendants, drivers, enrolled nursing assistants and cooks. Representation continues to be made by the TRHA to the DHSS to facilitate the transfer/ re-assignment of THA staff who are still working alongside the TRHA staff.*

3. Primary Health Care Services

JSC Findings:

- Further discussions to be held to determine the quality of the care and the effectiveness of the outreach programmes.

JSC Recommendation:

- More attention needs to be given to providing basic facilities at health centres and the requisite staff of nurses, doctors and pharmacists. Active consideration should be given to opening health facilities until 8 pm daily and on weekends.
- Introduction of “Know your numbers” campaign localised in all primary health facilities to assist the TRHA with determining the health status of the various communities
- Continued effort should be made to reduce the mortality rate by adopting clinical protocols and standard operating procedures locally adapted to the local environment. Regular review of these protocols is necessary.
- Provide greater resources for primary care

TRHA Response:

- *There is an expectation that the people in all communities should have individual services. A strategic review is intended to set up Wellness Centres vs Health Centres vs Enhanced Health Centres. The model of healthcare management to be reviewed strategically.*
- *Recruitment for nurses, doctors and pharmacists etc is in progress*
- *Extended hours at health centres is linked to increased staffing, therefore only strategically located health centres are to be opened from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. These*

include the Scarborough and Roxborough Health Centres. The Canaan Health Centre already provides extended hours.

- *The Authority is in the process of implementing a Performance Budgeting (Output Budgeting) System. This would address issues of resource allocation between both Primary and Secondary health services.*

4. Secondary Health Care Services

JSC Recommendations:

- Urgent need for a cardiology department and the purchase of an echo-cardiogram machine
- Need for development of a strategic plan, secondary and possibly tertiary health.
- Need for the immediate filling of the vacant positions for Occupational Safety and Health Department
- Need for establishment of policy regarding placement of elderly who have been abandoned at the hospital into a senior citizen home.

TRHA Response:

- *The TRHA has recently established a cardiology clinic at the Scarborough General Hospital with an echo cardiogram and stress testing machine.*
- *A full time cardiologist is expected to be recruited soon.*
- *The vacant positions within the OSH Department is in progress of being filled*
- *The TRHA endorses the need for policy regarding the elderly who have been abandoned at the hospital. In this regard, the TRHA has been involved in discussions with the Division of Health and Social Services (DHSS) so that the responsibility for this process/ social service can be subsumed rightfully under the mandate of the Division of Social Services. In this regard,, the TRHA has begun an assessment of the National Policy re placement of abandoned persons and developing partnerships with private homes to place such persons.*

5. Health Policy Assessment

JSC Findings:

- Evident need for updated assessment

JSC Recommendations:

- Commence assessment of the health system and policy environment beginning with a process of data collection at its health and outreach centres

TRHA Response

- *Plans are already in place to capture information from the community on healthcare delivery and needs assessment. This effort is to be revitalised.*

6. Financial Management

JSC Findings:

- The small percentage of the total expenditure of the TRHA directed toward the delivery of primary care services
- Imbalance in the allocation of resources between personnel cost and actual healthcare cost

JSC Recommendations:

- The ratio of management cost to service delivery expenditure should be examined and corrective actions instituted.
- Careful analysis of personnel expenditure versus capital development and goods and services should be conducted.
- Consideration should be given to the high overhead associated with the management structure

TRHA Response:

- *The TRHA participated in the MoH costing exercise as well as the DHSS Economic analysis, and the health needs assessment data review.*
- *The percentage allocated to Primary Care Services is to be benchmarked against other RHAs.*
- *The Authority is in the process of implementing a Performance Budgeting (Output Budgeting) System. This would address issues of resource allocation between both Primary and Secondary health services.*