



**REPORT
OF
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUMAN
RIGHTS, DIVERSITY, THE ENVIRONMENT
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
on the
Examination of Programmes and Services which provide
support to victims of Domestic Violence**

FIFTH SESSION OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT (2014/2015)

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Committee Mandate

The Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development was established under House of Representatives Standing Order 106 to consider from time to time and report whenever necessary, on all matters related to:

- (a) the compatibility of Acts of Parliament with human rights, and any matters relating to human rights in Trinidad and Tobago (but excluding consideration of individual cases);
- (b) the creation of an inclusive and more equitable society through greater social justice and sustainable human development within Trinidad and Tobago; and
- (c) the environment, climate change, energy efficiency, sustainability, and planning the use, sustainable development and protection of land and other resources.

Committee Membership

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Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie	-	Vice-Chairman
Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis	-	Member
Mr. Rodger Samuel, MP	-	Member
Mrs. Ramona Ramdial, MP	-	Member
Ms. Alicia Hospedales, MP	-	Member
Mr. Nizam Baksh, MP	-	Member
Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey, MP	-	Member
Mr. Ganga Singh	-	Member
Mr. Garvin Nicholas	-	Member

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Publication

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. The Committee resolved at its third meeting held on Friday April 24, 2015 to inquire into the **programmes and services which provide support to victims of domestic violence** and agreed that the following three (3) objectives would guide the inquiry:

- **to determine the adequacy of programmes and services for victims of domestic violence;**
- **to determine the adequacy of resources of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for victims of domestic violence; and**
- **to determine the relationship between the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development and other stakeholders in reducing domestic violence.**

1.2. The Committee agreed that both the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development (MGYCD) as well as the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) were to be invited to a public hearing on Wednesday May 20th, 2015.

1.3. The Committee obtained both oral and written evidence based on the objectives listed above. The work done by the Victim and Witness Support Unit (VWSU) of TTPS as well as by the MGYCD is, no doubt invaluable, however some of the significant issues concerning the programmes and services which support victims of domestic violence were:

- insufficient human resources to support the VWSU, TTPS and the Domestic Violence Unit, MGYCD;
- insufficient financial resources to adequately meet the demand for increased support programmes and services of the TTPS and MGYCD;
- the absence of local empirical studies to support the justification for programmes and services within the MGYCD and TTPS; and

- the need for more programmes targeted towards communities and public schools.

1.4. The Committee submits its findings and recommendations with respect to supporting victims of domestic violence in Chapters 4 and 5.

2. INTRODUCTION

Background

2.1. The Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago states that one of the key fundamentals of human rights and freedoms is, *“the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process in law”*.

2.2. According to the Chairman of the Equal Opportunity Commission, between 1991 and 2014, 125,166 applications under domestic violence legislation have been filed at magistrates courts¹. The Domestic Violence Act, Chap. 45:56 states, *“domestic violence includes physical, sexual, emotional or psychological or financial abuse committed by a person against a spouse, child, any other person who is a member of the household or dependant”*.

2.3. The Committee examined a number of issues related to its mandate and identified domestic violence as the first area to be considered.

Legislation

2.4. The Domestic Violence Act, Chap. 45:56 was assented to on October 12, 1999. The object of the Act was to offer victims of domestic violence greater protection by increasing the power and jurisdiction of the Court; enlarging the scope and ambit of the Protection Order; providing harsher penalties; and giving the police greater powers in respect of their ability to intervene in domestic violence situations. This Act repealed the Domestic Violence Act, 1991, and sought to introduce comprehensive domestic violence legislation in Trinidad and Tobago on par with international standards on the sanctioning of domestic violence, as specified by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

¹ Paul, Anna-Lisa. “Equal Opportunity Commission on sex discrimination: More men complaining.” Guardian. December 11, 2014. <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/2014-12-11/equal-opportunity-commission-sex-discrimination-more-men-complaining>

2.5. Section 23(6) of this Act was amended by the Police Complaints Authority Act, 2006 to require a report on unwarranted use of police powers of entry and arrest to be submitted to the Commissioner of Police instead of the Police Service Commission.

Programmes and Services

2.6. In 2011, the MYGCD was established. The Ministry's assignment of responsibilities included, National Family Services and Gender Affairs. The National Family Services Division (NFSD), MYGCD is the primary institution in Trinidad and Tobago to provide a range of programmes and services to promote healthy family functioning. Counselling and support are also available 24 hours a day through the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (868) 800-SAVE (7283), for issues including gender violence such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape.

2.7. During the launch of a report entitled, "An Updated Compilation of Domestic Violence Research 2001-2011", in March 14, 2012, Chairman of the Advocates of Safe Parenthood: Improving Reproductive Equity (ASPIRE) was noted as stating that while the MYGCD's and TTPS's role is important, there is a *need for co-ordination with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that support victims of domestic violence*².

2.8. In preparation for the public hearing the Committee was informed that NGOs performing work in this area include, Trinidad and Tobago Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Families in Action, Advocates for Safe Parenthood: Improving Reproductive Equity, The Shelter, Madinah House, Mizpeh Halfway House, Nekevah Rescue Center, Organization for Abused and Battered Individuals (OABI) and The Halfway House.

² Neaves, Julien. "Domestic violence reports on the rise." Trinidad Express. March 14, 2012.
http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/Domestic_violence_reports_on_the_rise-142723705.html

2.9. The Committee was informed that in July 2014, the MYGCD launched the National Consultation to review the Domestic Violence Act, Chap. 45:56 and according to a media report³ also highlighted the following statistics:

- During the period 2012 to 2013, the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago reported that 11, 382 new cases of domestic violence were filed which reflected a 2.1 per cent decrease from the 2011-2012 period;
- During the period 2012 to 2013, the National Domestic Violence Hotline handled 997 new client calls of which 767 were female and 230 were male. However, for the period January to June 2014, there were 65 calls; 46 females and 19 males; and
- During October 2013 to May 2014, the National Family Services Division dealt with 104 domestic violence cases inclusive of call-ins, walk-ins and referrals from other agencies.

2.10. According to another media report⁴, from 2001 to 2011, on average, 25 persons were murdered each year as a result of domestic violence. Although police officers are trained to effectively handle reports of domestic violence and counselling services are available to victims through the VWSU, the Coalition Against Domestic and Gender-Based Violence believes there needs to be a better approach that includes the provision of more resources for the VWSU⁵.

2.11. Based on an analysis of the current system in place, there appears to be a lack of coordination and a number of gaps which hamper the adequate support of victims of

³ Bachan, Kamille. "Domestic Violence: A big problem." Trinidad Express. July 30, 2014.

<http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/Domestic-violence-a-big-problem-269313591.html>

⁴ "TTPS calls on domestic violence victims to seek assistance." CNMG News. February 09, 2015.

http://www.ctntworld.com/cnews2/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5302:ttps-calls-on-domestic-violence-victims-to-seek-assistance&catid=137:c-news&Itemid=707

⁵ "TTPS calls on domestic violence victims to seek assistance." CNMG News. February 09, 2015.

http://www.ctntworld.com/cnews2/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5302:ttps-calls-on-domestic-violence-victims-to-seek-assistance&catid=137:c-news&Itemid=707

domestic violence. As a consequence, the Committee agreed to establish an inquiry into the programmes and services which provide support to victims of domestic violence.

Objectives of the Inquiry

2.12. At a meeting held on April 24, 2015, the Committee agreed that the objectives of the inquiry were:

- i. **To determine the adequacy of programmes and services for victims of domestic violence;**
- ii. **To determine the adequacy of resources of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for victims of domestic violence; and**
- iii. **To determine the relationship between the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development and other stakeholders in combatting domestic violence.**

Conduct of the Inquiry

2.13. On May 20, 2015 a public hearing was held with representatives of the MGYCD and the TTPS at which time the Committee questioned the officials on the various matters based on the inquiry objectives. Prior to the public hearing, notice was given as to the general objectives of the inquiry and in response, written submissions were received from the MGYCD and TTPS. These responses provided a frame of reference for the supplementary questions pursued at the hearing.

2.14. The MGYCD was represented by the following seven (7) officials:

Ms. Sandra Jones	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Monica Williams	Director, Gender Affairs
Ms. Vidya Pooransingh	Director, National Family Services
Ms. Menawatie Singh	Director, Human Resources (Ag)
Ms. Patricia Doyle	Manager, 800-Line
Ms. Gaietry Pargass	Legal Consultant
Ms. Shelley-Ann Hart	Project Execution Officer

2.15. The TTPS was represented by the following five (5) officials:

Mr. Stephen Williams	Commissioner of Police (Ag)
Mrs. Ann Marie Alleyne-Daly Administration	Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag),
Mr. Glen Hackett	Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag), Crime & Support
Mr. Harold Phillip Operations	Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag),
Mrs. Margaret Sampson-Browne	Manager, Victim & Witness Support Unit
Ms. Keisha Bowla-Hines	Head, Executive Management Services

2.16. The Committee also sought responses from twenty-eight (28) supporting agencies. However, written comments were received from the following stakeholders:

- | | |
|---|---|
| I. Islamic Ladies Social and Cultural Association; | VIII. The Shelter; |
| II. Madinah House; | IX. Andrey Mollineau Halfway House; |
| III. Mizpeh House; | X. Network of NGOs of Trindand and Tobago for the Advancement of Women; and |
| IV. Myrtle's Place; | XI. Men Against Violence Against Women (MAVAW). |
| V. Nekevah Rescue Center; | |
| VI. Organization for Abused and Battered Individuals; | |
| VII. Halfway House; | |

2.17. The **verbatim notes** and the **summary of written submissions received from stakeholders** are attached as **Appendix I** and **Appendix II** respectively.

3. EVIDENCE

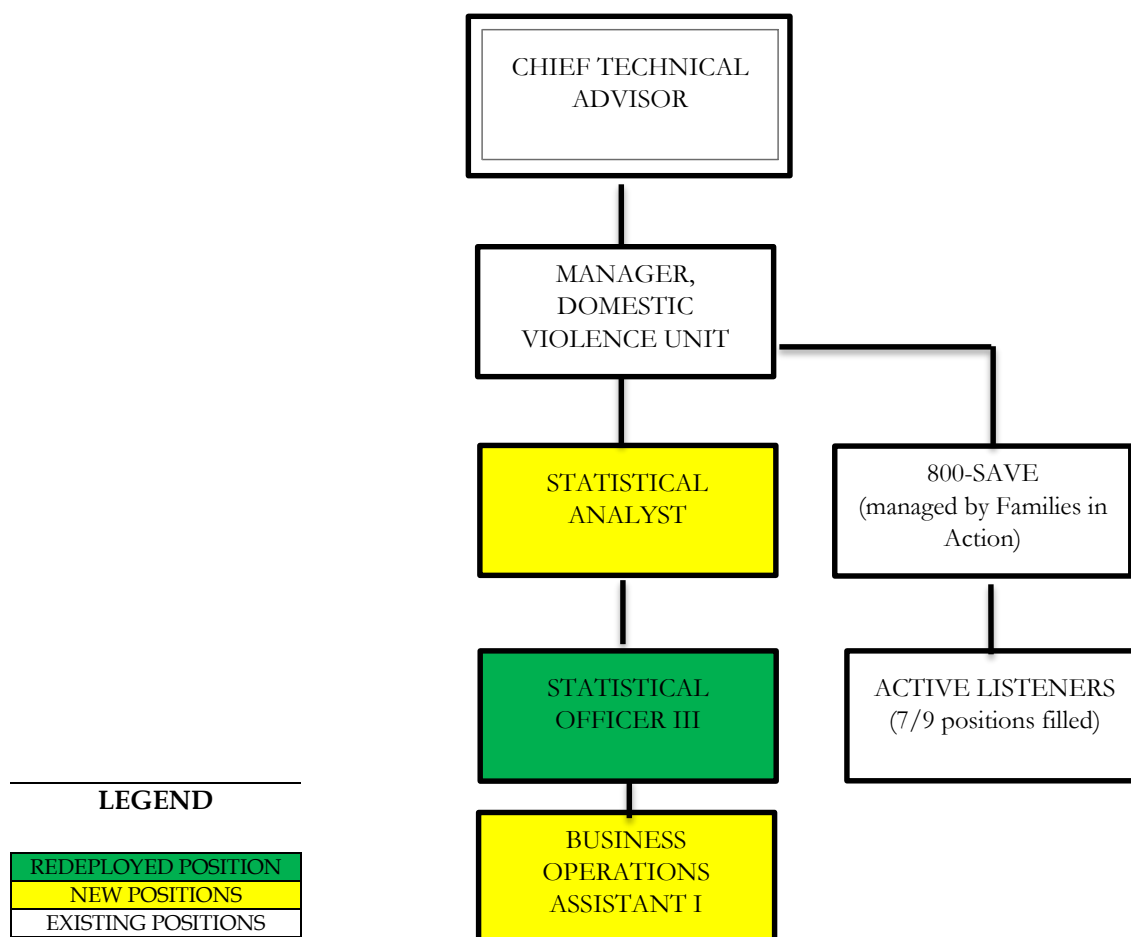
Adequacy of Programmes, Services and Resources, MGYCD

Domestic Violence Unit

3.1. The Domestic Violence Unit's mandate includes devising, implementation and evaluation of projects, training staff and visiting non-governmental-organizations and community-based organizations to monitor progress of programmes and projects. This Unit will be responsible for the oversight of the Domestic Violence Registry Project which is expected to be launched in August 2015. The organizational structure for the Domestic Violence Unit is outlined in Chart 1.

Chart 1

Organizational Structure of the Domestic Violence Unit



Shelters

3.2. In 2013, the Gender Affairs Division, MGYCD conducted an assessment of shelters to determine the requirements of shelters and how the Ministry could meet the needs of the clients. The Ministry's methodology consisted of a focus group discussion with representatives from ten (10) shelters and a visit to four (4) shelters. There have been further visits to shelters since 2010, however routine visits are difficult due to limited staffing. The focus group discussion highlighted a number of training needs and service delivery gaps such as:

- the need for formal networking between shelters to facilitate sharing of information;
- the need for improved record keeping;
- the need for transition homes and transition services to assist clients in rebuilding their lives;
- the need for the National Central Registry for domestic violence; and
- the need for more services to address children's needs.

3.3. The Committee was informed that the Ministry has two (2) safe houses, one for males and another for females under construction to be completed by quarter IV, fiscal 2015 and four (4) buildings being refurbished. Two (2) of these buildings will accommodate families and will especially cater for families with boys over the age of ten (10) years as they are currently not accommodated by existing shelters. According to data submitted by the Domestic Violence Hotline as at April 20, 2015 there are currently eight (8) shelters with a capacity to accommodate one hundred and thirty two (132) single women and at least sixty six (66) women with children. These figures are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Shelter Capacity as at April 20, 2015

No.	Name of Shelter	Single Women Accommodation	Families (Women With Children)	Facilities (Rooms)
1	Halfway House	12	15	3 rooms each with 1 double and 1 single bed 1 room with 6 beds
2	Hope Shelter	16	Not Stated	8 rooms
3	Madinah House	17	Not Stated	Not Stated
4	Mizpeh Halfway House	12	Not Stated	7 bedrooms
5	Myrtle's Place	20	Not Stated	Not Stated
6	Nekevah House	4	6	Not Stated
7	The Shelter	26	15	Not Stated
8	Vision of Hope	25	30	Not Stated
	TOTAL	132		

National Domestic Violence Hotline (800-SAVE)

3.4. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is a 24 hour hotline service for domestic violence victims that is managed by Families in Action. This hotline has a close relationship with shelters.

Research

3.5. The Committee was informed by the MGYCD that there have been attempts to conduct local research on domestic violence, however, the major challenge remains who would initiate and provide the technical and financial resources for the research.

Public Education and Sensitization Strategy

3.6. The Committee was informed that a public education and sensitization strategy conducted by the Ministry in 2015 comprised of:

- Text messages to Digicel customers with a message, “Domestic Violence is a crime... Help is available... Victims or observers, call 800-SAVE”;
- Radio and media appearances were done in February 2015;
- Mass mailing of informational brochure to over 200,000 persons via TTPOST;
- Print advertisements published in daily newspapers from January to April 2015
- Television Ticker tape messages placed during the Carnival season and the period March to April 2015;
- Television advertisement highlighting the ramifications of domestic violence and the National Domestic Violence Hotline from March to April 2015; and
- Radio advertisements from February to April 2015.

Adequacy of Programmes, Services and Resources, TTPS

Victim and Witness Support Unit (VWSU)

3.7. The VWSU was established in 2009 and has offices within each of the nine (9) police divisions. It responds to referrals within twenty four (24) hours upon receipt from a police station and provides support including:

- individually tailored support to meet the needs of victims of crimes and witnesses to crimes;
- guidance through the criminal justice system;
- information on the progress of client investigations;
- liaison services with other support agencies.

3.8. The Committee was informed of 11, 307 domestic violence reports for the period 2009 to 2014 as outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Domestic Violence Reports for the period 2009 to 2014

Division	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Port of Spain	3	1	22	12	59	22	37	7	23	7	47	22
Southern	451	160	346	141	576	228	778	315	696	238	582	262
Western	127	36	95	32	169	112	146	21	115	36	105	26
Northern	185	59	147	42	261	86	268	84	286	96	251	72
Central	122	33	217	68	159	36	187	39	145	37	269	75
South Western	117	62	96	25	154	87	109	29	62	14	60	12
Eastern	27	2	18	2	19	4	18	1	9	6	33	8
North Eastern	92	27	63	20	48	12	48	8	55	17	42	23
Tobago	2	0	46	5	106	36	181	61	86	34	34	8
Sub-Total	1126	380	1050	347	1551	623	1772	565	1477	485	1423	508
Total	1506		1396		2174		2337		1962		1931	

3.9. According to the *TTPS Operating Plan 2015, Building an Exceptional Organization: One Team, One Vision*⁶ dated January 20, 2015, the Committee was informed of plans:

- to enhance the capacity of the VWSU to provide support to victims and witnesses of crime by strengthening its structure, administration, staff training and human resources;
- to develop a plan of action in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to address the incidence of domestic violence; and
- to train 1000 officers to increase their awareness of domestic violence and enhance their ability to effectively manage these matters.

⁶ TTPS Operating Plan 2015, Building an Exceptional Organization: One Team, One Vision. January 20, 2015.
<http://www.ttps.gov.tt/Portals/0/Documents/COMPLETE%20OPERATING%20PLAN%202015%20WEBSITE%20VERSION.pdf>

Domestic Violence Investigative and Procedural Manual

3.10. The *Domestic Violence Investigative and Procedural Manual for Police Officers in Trinidad and Tobago* assists police officers of all ranks to effectively and sensitively respond to reports of domestic violence and to take appropriate criminal procedure measures to prosecute the suspect and thereby protect the victim of domestic violence.

Relationship with Stakeholders - MGYCD

3.11. The Ministry plays a pivotal role with all stakeholders, they are the:

- Coordinator: establishment of the central registry and the National Domestic Violence Hotline;
- Facilitator: conduct of workshops and lectures for various publics inclusive of shelters;
- Supporter: provision of grants, technical assistance and subventions;
- Collaborator: access additional support services available through the Ministry of the People and Social Development; and
- Focal Point: access technical and financial support, for example United Nations Women.

The stakeholders are TTPS, Ministry of the People and Social Development, Ministry of Health, Families in Action, Ministry of the Attorney General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Judiciary, United Nations, Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women, Trinidad and Tobago Coalition against Domestic Violence, Rape Crisis Society, Shelters and civil society organizations.

Relationship with Stakeholders - TTPS

3.12. The Committee was informed that the Community Relations Section, TTPS as well as the VWSU interacts with various organizations, communities and schools. This

relationship has provided avenues for the discussion of matters such as sensitization, raising awareness and minimising the occurrence and impact of domestic violence.

Other Evidence

3.13. The submissions received from stakeholders are summarized in Appendix II.

4. FINDINGS

Adequacy of Programmes, Services and Resources, MGYCD

4.1. The Domestic Violence Unit, MGYCD is currently staffed by three (3) persons and lacks senior management as the position of Manager is vacant. The Committee expressed concerns that given the Unit's mandate that even when the vacancy is filled, the Unit will require further human resources and funding resources to effectively achieve its goals. The Domestic Violence Unit needs proper funding to attract the required human resource and institutional capital required to do its work.

4.2. The National Domestic Violence Hotline's relationship with shelters assists the TTPS with the placement of domestic violence victims. However, it is difficult to find shelter placements in the night and for families with a male child over the age of nine years. In those instances male children are separated and placed with an extended family member. Indeed, the majority of written submissions received from shelters also indicated that accommodation is primarily for women and battered women and children.

4.3. The Committee was pleased that the Ministry currently has two (2) safe houses under construction, scheduled for completion by the third quarter of fiscal 2015, one of which will cater for families with boys over the age of ten. In addition, four (4) houses were acquired from National Infrastructure Development Company Limited (NIDCO) and three of these houses will be utilized to accommodate families with boys.

4.4. The Committee was informed of the need for transitional housing for victims as shelters are limited to accommodation for three to six months and in certain circumstances, an extended accommodation of up to one year.

4.5. The Committee was informed during the public hearing of an ongoing project called “Women City Centre” funded by the Inter-American Development Bank. This Centre will provide for domestic violence victims to access services such as police, medical and legal services.

Adequacy of Programmes, Services and Resources, TTPS

4.6. The VWSU plays a supporting, non-investigatory role within the TTPS through therapies such as psychotherapy, trauma therapy and crisis management. The Committee was informed that although the VWSU human resources complement comprises only fourteen (14) VWSU Support Officers and one (1) Manager it continues to respond to referrals within twenty four (24) hours due to the dedication and commitment of its officers.

4.7. The Committee was pleased that the VWSU had launched Addressing Victims Anywhere (AVA) in 2014 to spread the word of the existence of the Unit through community meetings and walkabouts in areas including Sangre Grande, Arima and Chaguanas. It was expressed that the Unit has responded to 208 violent crime reports and thus far for 2015 responded to 4,000 reports⁷. Therefore, the VWSU has established support groups in most police divisions to provide long term support for clients.

4.8. The Committee was informed that the VWSU also intervenes when the service(s) the victim and family require are difficult to access. Therefore, additional support is needed to provide a seamless approach for victims and to provide 24/7 sanctuary options for victims of domestic violence. In instances where the Unit cannot access a particular service from the National Domestic Violence Hotline, police officers try to find someone such as a neighbour or a relative that will house and support the victim and families until the service becomes accessible.

⁷ This statistic was referenced for reports not limited to domestic violence cases.

4.9. We noted that no information was provided concerning the issue of training for the staff of the VWSU. The services provided by this unit are of an extremely delicate and sensitive nature, it is therefore imperative that proper training is provided to the staff of the VWSU to aid in the execution of their duties and responsibilities.

Relationship with Stakeholders - MGYCD and the TTPS

4.10. The VWSU's partnership with stakeholders is critical to meeting the current demands of the Unit in the absence of necessary human resources. For example, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, MGYCD assists with the placement of domestic violence victims. The support from community policing, support groups, the police youth clubs and other community groups assist the Unit with responding to domestic violence cases.

4.11. During such an intervention, assistance from the Ministry of the People and Social Development and the Ministry of Community Development is critical in order to gain access to food cards, temporary shelters or rentals. Other non-governmental organizations such as Childline refer reports made by children to the TTPS who utilize the VWSU to support the investigator.

5.RECOMMENDATIONS

Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development

5.1. Given the widespread presence of domestic violence and its impact on human development, the Committee recommends:

1. the allocation of funding and human resources towards the Domestic Violence Unit by the Ministry become a priority in the upcoming fiscal year in order to achieve its mandate and effectively oversee the Central Registry on Domestic Violence;
2. the Ministry include the provision of transitional housing in its Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence/Domestic Violence stakeholder partnerships. Particular focus should be placed on the Southern Division which had the highest domestic violence cases reported between 2010 and 2014;
3. the creation of a coordinating body in the form of a Committee with representatives from TTPS, shelters and the MGYCD towards the creation of a domestic violence policy and to provide continuity and consistency of policy;
4. public education programmes to support both the perpetrator and victims of domestic violence in collaboration with the TTPS' outreach programmes;
5. more funding be allocated for research with specific focus on tracking victims of domestic violence to determine its impact on the victim's life;
6. increased awareness that there are also male victims of domestic violence and the assistance available;

7. provision of additional resources to domestic violence shelters towards the provision of a 24/7 service and the creation of new 24/7 sanctuaries for domestic violence victims;
8. development of programmes for victims of domestic violence to assist with the re-introduction into society;
9. coordination with other government ministries and states agencies including the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and the Ministry of People and Social Development to allow for the early referral and access to financial aid, social services, training and counselling for the victim and family.

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

5.2. The Committee also recommends:

1. the allocation of funding and human resources for the VWSU by the TTPS become a priority in the upcoming fiscal year;
2. the development of transitional plans in the Northern, Southern and Tobago divisions where all requisite services are provided for victims of domestic violence; and
3. there be an increase of the resources to the Community Policing Units throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Your Committee respectfully submits this Report for the consideration of Parliament.

Sgd.
Rev. Joy Abdul- Mohan
Chairman

Sgd.
Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie
Vice Chairman

Sgd.
Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis
Member

Sgd.
Mr. Rodger Samuel, MP
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Mr. Nizam Baksh, MP
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Sgd.
Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey, MP
Member

Sgd.
Mr. Ganga Singh
Member

Sgd.
Mr. Garvin Nicholas
Member

Appendix I

**EXCERPT OF THE VERBATIM NOTES OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, DIVERSITY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT HELD IN THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, THE PORT OF SPAIN INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, 1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN ON
WEDNESDAY MAY 20, 2015 AT 10:35 A.M.**

PRESENT

Committee Members

Rev. Joy Abdul-Mohan	Chairman
Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis	Member
Mr. Rodger Samuel, MP	Member
Mrs. Ramona Ramdial, MP	Member

Secretariat

Ms. Candice Skerrette	Secretary
Ms. Khisha Peterkin	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	Parliamentary Intern

ABSENT

Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie	Vice-Chairman	(excused)
Mr. Ganga Singh	Member	(excused)
Ms. Alicia Hospedales, MP	Member	(excused)
Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey, MP	Member	(excused)
Mr. Nizam Baksh, MP	Member	(excused)

OFFICIALS OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE

Mr. Stephen Williams	Commissioner of Police (Ag.)
Mrs. Ann Marie Alleyne-Daly	Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag), Administration
Mr. Glen Hackett	Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag), Crime & Support
Mr. Harold Phillip	Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag), Operations
Mrs. Margaret Sampson-Browne	Manager, Victim & Witness Support Unit

**OFFICIALS OF THE MINISTRY OF GENDER, YOUTH AND
CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Sandra Jones	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Monica Williams	Director, Gender Affairs
Ms. Vidya Pooransingh	Director, National Family Services
Ms. Menawatie Singh	Director, Human Resources (Ag)
Ms. Patricia Doyle	Manager, 800-Line
Ms. Gaietry Pargass	Legal Consultant
Ms. Shelley-Ann Hart	Project Execution Officer

Madam Chairman: Good morning, everyone. Let me take this opportunity to warmly welcome all of you to this public hearing of the very important Joint Select Committee on the Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development. I also want to warmly welcome the viewing and, of course, the listening public.

We especially welcome our officials to this Fourth meeting of the Joint Select Committee. This very important committee came into effect at the Fifth Session of the Tenth Parliament in August 2014. So it is a fairly new committee, and we are very thankful that you took the time out to share with us some very important issues affecting the issue of domestic violence.

I want to namely welcome the officials from the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development as well as the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. First, the officials from the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development: Ms. Sandra Jones, Permanent Secretary; Ms. Monica Williams, Director, Gender Affairs; Ms. Vidya Pooransingh, Director, National Family Services; Ms. Menawatie Singh, Director, Human Resources; Ms. Patricia Doyle, Manager, 800 Line; Ms. Gaietry Pargass, Legal Consultant; Ms. Shelley Ann Hart, Project Execution Officer; Ms. Mary Moonan, Programme Coordinator, Childline.

Also extended, very special, welcome to the Acting Commissioner of Police, Mr. Stephen Williams; Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag.) Administration, Mrs. Ann Marie Alleyne Daly; Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag.) Crime & Support, Mr. Glen Hackett; (Ag.) Deputy Commissioner of Police, Operations, Mr. Harold Phillip. And, of course, most importantly, the Manager of the Victim & Witness Support Unit, Mrs. Margaret Sampson Browne. Welcome one and all.

I will just like to let you know I am newly pointed Chair of the Human Rights Committee and as an Independent Senator I am most elated that my colleagues appointed me Chair of this Committee and I am Joy Abdul Mohan. At this time I would invite the other members of our committee to introduce themselves.

[Members of the Committee introduce themselves]

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, members. Just to put things into perspective and to give you a little idea of what is happening today and the reason for us meeting. The mandate of the Joint Select Committee as outlined in the House of Representatives, Standing Order 106 states:

“The Committee on Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development shall have the duty of considering, from time to time and reporting whenever necessary, on all matters related to–

- (a) the compatibility of Acts of Parliament with human rights, and any matters relating to human rights in Trinidad and Tobago (but excluding consideration of individual cases);
- (b) the creation of an inclusive and more equitable society through greater social justice and sustainable human development within Trinidad and Tobago; and
- (c) the environment, climate change, energy efficiency sustainability, and planning the use, sustainable development and protection of land and other resources.”

So this is our mandate. And one of the very important issue identified there is, human rights and the protection of individuals within Trinidad and Tobago.

From the onset, I would like to also state that the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago reminds us that one of the fundamental human rights and freedom is, and I quote:

“(a) the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law;”

And when we think of the issue of domestic violence, according to the Chairman of the Equal Opportunity to Commission between 1991 and the year 2014, applications under domestic violence legislation have been filed at the Magistrates’ Courts and the Domestic Violence Act, Chap. 45:56 states:

“domestic violence includes physical, sexual, emotional or psychological or financial abuse committed by a person against a spouse, child, any other person who is a member of the household or dependant;”

And so, within this context we are very concerned about the services and the programmes offered in relation to domestic violence, not only the perpetrators, of course, but more so the victim. And the Domestic Violent Act, Chap. 45:56 was assented to on October 12, 1999. And:

“The object of the Bill was to offer victims of domestic violence greater protection by –

- increasing the power and jurisdiction of the Court;
- enlarging the scope and ambit of the Protection Order;
- providing harsher penalties;” – as it were –

“ – giving the police greater powers in respect of their ability to

intervene in domestic violence situations.”

And this Bill repealed the Domestic Violence Act, 1991, and” –sought– “to introduce comprehensive domestic violence legislation in Trinidad and Tobago on par, of course, with international standards...”

Today, we seek therefore to have dialogue with such important entities like yourself, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service as well as the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development. Therefore members and our officials, very important issues will be raised today and I am sure as you respond we will do so with the interest in mind that we are going to assist those who have experienced violence at the hands of the perpetrators, at the same time to ensure that there are suitable programmes and services offered to alleviate such a problem of domestic violence. And domestic violence, as we know, crosses the barriers of age and gender, religion and race, educational and economic backgrounds.

Today, we hope that through this public hearing we will come to some form of decision and also we will be able to propose ways forward in terms of how we treat with domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago. And if we just start of the process this morning, we want to address the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development from the onset. And as we prepare to do so, one of the things that we would normally do, and I want to ensure that we do this, of course, as we proceed, we would like to invite, first of all, Ms. Sandra Jones, Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development to make some opening remarks following which I will also invite the Acting Commissioner of Police, Mr. Stephen Williams, to do the same. So could we have some opening remarks from Ms. Sandra Jones please, thank you?

Ms. Jones: Thank you, Madam Chair, and members of the Committee. On behalf of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development we are very happy to be here this morning to be part of the discussion on such a troubling issue. The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development has been in operation over the past three years and domestic violence is one of the key issues that the Ministry is seeking to address. It is an evolving process, but we are hoping that this morning we can be able to make some contribution to help advance the process.

With me this morning, we have our technical team. We have Ms. Monica Williams who is really the Director of Gender, and under her watch the issue of domestic violence falls very much under her purview, as well as Ms. Vidya Pooransingh who is the Director of National Family Services and, very clearly, her division actually treats with victims and help us to actually treat with some of the prevention strategies that we are now seeking to, really and truly, advance throughout the country with respect to prevention and bringing support to victims with respect to domestic violence.

We have our Manager from the hotline who is very critical as well, because the first responder and actually being there helping to be able to treat it. Ms. Gaietry Pargass is our Legal Consultant who is really spearheading the whole revisit of the Domestic Violence Act. In 2013/2014, the Ministry held a number of national consultations aimed at really looking at revising and modernizing the Domestic Violence Act. We are in the process of pulling the necessary information to take the information forward to actually treat with those particular issues, and we have other support officers, the Director of HR, the Project Officer here with us who can be able to make some contribution. So, as I said, and in closing we thank you for giving us the opportunity to contribute here this morning. Thank you.

10.50a.m.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Jones. Can I now invite the Acting Commissioner, Mr. Williams, to please make some opening remarks?

Com. Williams (Ag): Thank you very much, Chairman. It is, in fact, an opportunity for us, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, to seek out, by way of this deliberation, ways and means of improving, addressing, this matter which has affected society for an extremely long period of time. Trinidad and Tobago has been struggling as a society to address domestic violence and we are still in that very said position – struggling. There are things which can be done by way of improvements, and through this dialogue we are hoping that we can make some recommendations for such improvements, and those improvements can be by way of procedures, legislation, but even by way of how the police effectively address the matter.

With me are all three Deputy Commissioners and the Manager of the Victim and Witness Support Unit. I also have present one additional person who was not mentioned. I do have the Head of Executive Management Service in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, Mrs Keisha Bowla Hines as a member of my team. She is a psychologist and we have brought her here to assist us as we present and respond to whatever queries, concerns, and add to the effort of improving the general approach towards domestic violence. So I thank you very much for inviting us.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Williams, and I want to thank both Ms. Jones and Mr. Williams, and your teams, that you have taken the time off to be here to have dialogue and to deliberate on such a sensitive issue. Thank you most kindly.

And if we were to start off the proceedings, in the submissions of the Ministry you stated that an assessment of the shelters was conducted by the Gender Affairs Division of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development. We would like to ask: how many shelters were represented during the focus group discussion? And further: why was the assessment limited to visiting at least four shelters? And this is for the Ministry.

Ms. Jones: Chair, I would ask Ms. Williams to respond to that, please. Thank you.

Ms. Williams: Thank you very much, PS and Chair. In terms of the question asked, you asked why we only visited four and how many were represented. Ten shelters were represented at that meeting in 2013. Tobago was not represented at that meeting, but we tried, because there is a shelter there – there was one functional, but they did not attend, but now there is no shelter there.

So we had 10 shelters represented at the meeting and we felt it necessary to meet with them because, as PS indicated, the Ministry was rather new and we were trying to streamline the work of the division at that time. We knew that we had to take up the mantle of treating with domestic violence. And in further discussion with 800 SAVE, which falls under the Gender Affairs Division, one of the issues that they kept raising with us, as a division, was that there were some problems experienced with accessing some of the shelters. For example, there was some difficulty in getting people in on weekends, on public holidays. They were not taking boys over certain ages – over the age of nine or 10.

Generally, we cannot complain about the shelters because at that time the Government did not have a shelter in operation, so we had to work closely with the NGOs who were managing all these shelters, who were owners of these shelters. So we felt it best to really have them come in, discuss with them what we were experiencing. The shelters shared with us what they were experiencing and out of that dialogue we came up with a – I would not say an action plan, but some recommendations as to how we would move forward.

The reason only four shelters were visited, because I myself, personally, went at that time with the manager of 800 SAVE – the person who was manager at that time – to actually visit and have a hands on experience as to what was happening. I have since gone back to some of the shelters. I try to visit as far as possible, but it is not something that, given the staffing and all of that, and the way that we work as a division, it is sometimes difficult to do those kinds of routine visits. It is not really something within our direct remit but for good partnership, for good collaboration, we do really interact with the shelters. And 800 SAVE, the hotline, is that agency that would, you know, be in touch with them on a daily basis in order to place clients.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Committee Members, do we have any further questions regarding this matter? Mr. Samuel?

Mr. Samuel: The question that I have is far deeper than the plaster on the sores that we attempt to put on the wound, but I am interested in us having the kind of information as to what is the cause of domestic violence. I am asking that for a reason. There are several theories with regard to causes and stuff like that, but rather than talk about

domestic violence, I want to sort oftalk about violence that becomes domesticated. In other words, we are living in a society where violence is the norm, and it eventually, as life evolves, reaches the point where we term it as domestic violence.

History itself, and studies, will prove that domestic violence is an end product of something that has been happening with the psyche of the human mind for a long period of time, and our programmes should be geared towards dealing with it before it becomes domesticated. We have been putting plasters on sores, but not doing the kind of scientific and clinical studies, and setting in motion those mechanisms in our education systems, and the development of the system to now deal with it at the cause level.

We are living in a society where it is fun to post on YouTube and Facebook, children beating each other tremendously, and to the others, that is fun. They are applauding. They are having fun. The violent games are a thing that appeals to our children. They want to see blood, and then it eventually becomes, what we call domesticated. It reaches home.

I would like to find out from both parties—I am not addressing any particular group—what are the scientific approaches? What are the researches done? What have you based your present approach on? And where can we find the clinical research that you have done to assist us in understanding the dynamics of this pain that our society suffers? And it is not just local. But we have to think about much more because it is a violence that has become natural, then it reaches home.

Before, there was a time, if I may continue, it was among young men. Now it is among young women and we are building shelters. Yes, that is good. We are helping those that are victims. That is fantastic. But I think we need to rapidly dig deeper or else we will have to build a lot more shelters and a lot more programmes like that, if we do not get up and realize we have not scratched the surface as yet, and we need to step on the highway, mash the accelerator before we also get knocked down. I just want to hear your views on that.

Ms. Jones: Chair, Ms. Pargass, our legal consultant, who is versed in this area, would make a contribution, and then Ms. Pooransingh. Thank you.
Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Ms. Pargass: Thank you. I think the issue raised is a very fundamental one, the causes of domestic violence, and it is one that has been addressed by researchers and by activists in the area, internationally, regionally and to some extent, locally. We have not had that many research studies carried out on the causes of domestic violence but there have been a few, and one that comes to mind is the one conducted by the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action, the Trinidad and Tobago Chapter. It is a

dated study, in a sense, but it attempted to delve into the causes of domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago.

Before I get to some of the findings, what the literature states quite clearly, and what seems to be universal, is that the cause of domestic violence, or that domestic violence is rooted in a power differential. So that stranger upon stranger violence is not necessarily rooted in that power differential. Intimate partner violence, the literature suggests, is rooted in that power differential between partners. Violence against children in a domestic setting is also rooted in that differential.

The CAFRA study was conducted in the late '90s, if my memory serves me right, and it concluded that that was the case. What it found was that domestic violence was occurring across all strata in the society, all socio economic strata, but that it was higher – that was the finding – in the lower socio economic strata. The study suggested that more work should be done because the sample – it was a fairly significant sample, but it did not necessarily lead to the most definitive conclusions.

So having said that, I want to say that a challenge in Trinidad and Tobago, and a challenge in the Caribbean, because other countries in the Caribbean have attempted to carry out such research, but that remains a major challenge: who is to initiate and lead the research and how should that research be supported? Because all research require significant inputs of technical and financial resources, as we know. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Samuel?

Mr. Samuel: I have heard that when I was in secondary school. That is to tell you how long ago I am hearing what you just said. It is a long time you are hearing of all of this and, to date, in Trinidad and Tobago, we have not studied our own people. I want to give you an example of that. A lot of times we focus on international surveys and reports and many of those surveys and reports cannot apply to us. We are a kind of different breed. We fete in a coup. When there is a hurricane watch, we go and watch the hurricane and lime. We are a different people, and we must do clinical studies on the psyche of our own society, so that we can understand how we think, and not apply what works in other spheres of societies around the world to us. Yes, we can learn from them, but there is something that we must do about our people. And if we do not understand our own people, then we cannot formulate the kind of programmes. I just heard you say, Ma'am, that we have not done the kind of research in Trinidad and Tobago.

11.05 a.m.

We are basing it on some Caribbean research and some other research. If there is nothing comprehensive, then what is guiding your approach; and how do you in turn assess the success of your approach if there is no comprehensive research done in

Trinidad and Tobago for our people? I want to go back to the issue of children because oftentimes we hear about domestic violence and it is based on violence of men against women, and we hardly ever talk about the violence of women against men, and you talk about among partners is not a power struggle.

Every bit of violence is a fight for supremacy. Every bit of violence is a fight for power; one person want to reign; one person wants to show their supremacy. In the sport of boxing it is one person wanting to show that I can hold the belt. In common language, one person wants to have the glory to say I beat him up or I beat her up and everybody is about fame. It is a power struggle across the land, and it finds itself in the homes when it comes to relationship and stuff like that. Sometimes I get the impression we are not taking this thing the way it should be taken. Sorry to be emotional about it, but I am very serious that we have not done enough and we are talking not based upon facts. Madam Chairman: Mrs. Robinson-Regis, you had a question?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I know my colleague has certainly become very emotional, but I think the situation warrants a little more clinical examination of what is on the ground. It is clear from the information that we have here that, first of all, with regard to the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, one question that was asked: does the Ministry have a dedicated unit to treat with domestic violence cases? It says, no, they do not. And when we looked at what they sent us—and I commend the Ministry for being so forthright—they have said there is no manager of domestic violence unit—if I am reading this chart correctly—there is no manager of gender affairs, there is nobody in the National Family Services, nobody in 800-SAVE—it is being managed by Families in Action—and the active listeners on the 800 line, there are only seven of nine positions filled.

So I think we have to get back to the fact that the Ministry that is charged with the responsibility of dealing with this issue is not adequately staffed, and even though we have statistics that is showing us that the issue of domestic violence is becoming very prevalent because we have moved—from 2009 it was 1,506, by 2011 and 2012 it had moved to over 2,000 people who reported and it may be more than this, and the police will be able to give us perhaps some even more information. Even when we look at the information relating to what the police has sent us, their issue is also one of staffing. So even though as a society we know that this is an important issue and we want to treat with it and so on, we just do not have the people in place and—

Mr. Samuel: But why?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Well, it would amount to—several things may be causing that problem. If we do not have the actual bodies to deal with this issue, I would like to posit that we are not going to have people who want to do the research because the research is a more ethereal sort of thing and we do not have a history of doing research

in our country, but it is on the ground. I would like to find out from the police who have to deal with this on, maybe a day-to-day base, what have been their concerns in dealing with this kind of issue and, also, I wanted to know if there was a mechanism for tracking or following the persons who have been victims of the abuse. If there is a mechanism for tracking. There probably is not because it might be difficult to do that after they come out of the system.

I would really like to commend the PS and the members of her team, and the Commissioner, for coming with such a high powered team to deal with this, to talk to us in the Parliament about this issue because it is an issue that is very troubling. It is an issue that we have to find solutions for and it may take us some time, but I think it is something that commendably we have started looking at it from the parliamentary arm where we will be the ones making legislation and we will be the ones who would have to ensure that the policies are put in place, to ensure that whatever problems you have we can also assist you in dealing with it.

So I would just like to find out how do you manage when you do not have enough staff, enough people on the ground to actually deal with this issue? So that is my question.

Madam Chairman: Just before we get a response from the police service, just to add to Mrs. Robinson-Regis' concerns and questions after the, not only emotional, but very painstaking as it were feelings from the son of the soul, from Mr. Samuel, in reading through the submissions from both entities, the Ministry and the police service, I identified two major challenges that your organizations faced and there is no doubt about it, funding and staffing. In other words, finance and personnel. The question is: do you think members, officials, that these are the deterrence from you really providing support for victims of domestic violence? Are these the real reasons why they cannot move forward and have most substantial programmes, funding and staffing? Now I will ask the police service to respond?

Com. Williams (Ag.): Thank you, Chair. May I just answer the last item asked about funding and staffing, and I would not put it in the context of the real reason. I would say it is a relevant consideration as we go forward that there is need for funding and staffing to effectively address the policing of domestic violence, but it is beyond just mere staffing and funding. As an organization, and maybe I can embrace the comments and the question of Dr. Samuel and Sen. Robinson-Regis because I think out of that some items were posed towards the police.

In a comprehensive way what we have recognized is a need for us to improve broadly how we police in Trinidad and Tobago, and as we focus on planning the way forward, our strategic plan of 2014–2016 surely reflects within one of our strategic goals that of reducing and detecting crime, an objective of establish an evidence-based policing

culture. When we speak about establishing an evidence-based policing culture, it really has to do with looking at experiments and quasi experiments as we explore how we can find improved approaches to treat with strategies and policies to deal with policing matters. Domestic violence is one such relevant matter.

So from a policing perspective, at present we are looking at a comprehensive review of the policing of domestic violence with a clear intention for us to identify by way of recommendations whether there is a necessity for amendments to the Domestic Violence Act, whether there are amendments we need to make to our procedures such as our Standing Orders, our departmental directive to our officers as to how they should approach domestic violence, or whether there is the need for us as an organization to have a dedicated domestic violence reduction unit.

Those issues are not effectively addressed, but they will be addressed because we have taken an approach, a quite distinct approach from the past, that we need to take a comprehensive review of how we police domestic violence. We are not satisfied that we are doing the greatest job, but I think that is why the term “we” was used by Dr. Samuel. It is about “we”. Everybody have a part to play in seeking to have the improvements made in addressing this problem which has confronted society for such a long time. So it is not vested in one agency, the police service. Police service has a role and we are looking to take on in a manner clear way, take on that role that is assigned to us as an organization and we are doing it in well-structured approach. So I just wanted to put that on the table.

The police service is moving forward, but moving forward firstly by reviewing how we are addressing domestic violence so we could have a comprehensive assessment done, but it is in the context of identifying as an organization whatever we do in the future it must embrace us using for testing purposes, experiments, and quasi experiments, and that is built-in in what we described as establishing an evidence-based policing culture. We are doing it in other areas. The reason why we have seen the organization moving in a particular direction – and the nation is yet to fully accept the results of the very said things that sometimes people ask about, how are you driving crime down. We have done that. We have done experiments, we will look at hot spots. Hot spot policing is now the order of the day. We first did a full experiments, scientific experiment, under the guidance of Prof. Lawrence Sherman out of Cambridge University, and coming out of that there were recommendations for changing strategy.

So we have changed our strategy in treating with crime by way of prevention, and we now cover all the locations where there is high concentration of crime. Crime has been driven down over 2013 and 2014 to a new law, and it is not something which people readily accept, but it is something which has happened in Trinidad and Tobago, 12,055 serious crimes. In 2014 is the lowest annual total for 30 years and it did not happen by accident. It happened by we taking a clear approach, policing approach, scientific

approach and develop strategy out of that. Same way we are going to experiment around treating with domestic violence.

I had a pleasure of this being given by the way of a gift, but this is something which I will even suggest that a copy be made – not available through me – to all the members of the very said Committee. Policing Domestic Violence, this is a publication by Prof. Lawrence Sherman, experiments and dilemmas around it. It is comprehensive, highlighting experiments done in other jurisdictions to explore ways and means of improving the policing of domestic violence, and for us – well I have a copy and I think the Deputy Commissioners all have a copy. This is how we do business. We are not doing policing business by accident and by “vaps”. That is how we are doing it. I would submit that maybe just for edification that the Committee itself take a copy of this and take advantage of reading it and identify. Inside there may be useful suggestions and recommendations which we readily can bring to bear on the way forward.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much and we will accept that gift from the police service. [Laughter]

11.20 a.m.

Madam Chairman: Before Miss Ramdial asks her question, strategic planning is of great importance in this century. The only problem we have with strategic planning is the implementation of that strategic plan and I know sometimes it is very challenging, but thank you very much, Commissioner, for your response. Miss Ramdial.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Chair. Good morning everyone. This is to the police service, your Community Policing Initiative has been very successful in recent times, especially within communities and, of course, by the different strategies and methods that you have implemented through that vehicle; one of them being the police youth clubs.

In light of this, is there any intention to incorporate dealing with domestic violence with the Community Policing Initiative when you go to different communities in terms of counselling or even just lecturing, education awareness?

Com. Williams (Ag.): I think you hit the hammer on the nail there. The issue of community policing, in its broad context, yes, it is very relevant and it is something at this point in time we utilize for the purposes of education, utilize the domain of community policing. But as you speak about the youth, the whole intention of changing, I listened to Mr. Samuel and he talked about the causes and everything else, but the whole intention behind changing is about generating an impact for the purposes of generating new generations of adults. And the police service, in its thrust, – and that is why even a forum like this might help us as we plan the way forward.

We have 100 plus youth clubs across Trinidad and Tobago. Every time we go to a new community in our Community Outreach Programme, the people are asking us to open more youth clubs. Youth clubs mean that you have to dedicate police officers to work with the young people in communities, so more youth clubs. But part of the challenge is that we need funding and the very said issue that the Chair would have raised, we need funding to back the very said issue of youth club. So, you know, maybe the Ministers can put in a little plug for us as we go forward that the police service get more funding to effectively address the youth clubs.

Because the future that we are looking forward to, a future where the young people could have value. As a young man—not even as a young man, as a young boy, one of the things my father shared with us, you must never hit a woman, and that stayed with me permanently in life. That stayed from the influence of my father. And I am saying from training, exposure, moulding, if we mould the young people, and it is not limited to the young boys who will then become young men, but all the young people, if we mould them in the right way, the challenges that we are confronted with, as a society today, will not be available in the future because we would have been able to influence positively through that moulding our young people. And for us, yes, we have been working with our community policing rollout plan, and a major part of that is working with the young people and seeking to mould them in the right direction.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Samuel wanted to ask a question again.

Mr. Samuel: In whatever limited researches you have done, have you found any shifting in the trends in Trinidad and Tobago? And if so, what have you found and what programmes have you implemented to deal with the shift in trends? And I mean, when you think about the status of violence in Trinidad and Tobago, do you find that as a police service, men would feel free to come to the police station and say, “I have been flogged by my wife” and they are not ashamed or they are not laughed at and mocked at by the officers and say, “Wah kind ah soffyy is this, boy”? Are we seeing trends that are changing? Are we setting up the mechanisms that are levelled across the board or are we still existing in a realm where we feel that violence and domestic violence are just based on some one-sided view of our society? What have you observed in your limited researches and your response to them?

Com. Williams (Ag.): Well, in that context, I will not speak about a research. We have not done the research but we have made observations and Trinidad and Tobago society is still one which is caught up where men are seen in the context of “macho” and the society scorns on a man who will, in fact, go to the station and report.

I can throw my mind back as a young prosecutor, a gentleman came to the Sangre Grande court for protection, and the whole court laughed at the individual because his

wife was physically abusing him, and that is an example of the imbalance with society. It is slanted down one part as against the other way of balance. We have seen no change in that very said issue and I am sure that actually acts as a deterrent for maybe the men who are effectively affected by domestic violence, especially in the context of physical violence, coming forward and reporting those matters to the police department.

So we have no obvious increase of men reporting domestic violence, but it is obvious there is an unreported factor which is pretty large based on the perception around a man coming and report domestic violence.

Madam Chairman: Just before Miss Ramdial responds, and maybe a little late, the Ministry could say something about a programme that you have designed. You indicated in your submission that there is a defining masculine excellence programme that we would want to hear about and I think it relates to this issue that we have just raised.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Chair. To the police service, based on your reports over the years, would you agree that the major cause for domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago is that of alcoholism?

Com. Williams (Ag.): One of the things I will not do is to identify causes without the proper approach to identify causes. I would say, in my personal view, as against identifying it as a cause, alcoholism can be a contributing factor towards domestic violence. But I would not identify it as a cause because to identify as a cause, there is a process to identify cause.

Madam Chairman: Mrs. Robinson-Regis.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I would like to find out if there is a programme of training for police officers and for staff of the Ministry with regard to how to either detect—or both, to detect domestic violence situations and also to deal with domestic situations, for the police officers who are probably amongst the first responders in those situations. If there is a training programme dedicated to that.

I would also like to find out if there is a mechanism in place for dealing with domestic violence in higher income families. Because I know that Ms. Pargass said, from the research that had been conducted, that it seemed as though there was more in the lower income families. But it may be a situation where the lower income families may tend to report it but those in the higher income families, for their own reasons, prefer to keep that private and stay away from reporting it to the police or even going to court in those matters, and I would like to know if there is any way of dealing with it in the higher

income families. So two questions there: the training and dealing with those matters in higher income families.

Mrs. Alleyne-Daly: Good morning, I would deal with the issue in terms of training for police officers. At the induction level, our trainees are exposed to the Domestic Violence Act and this is done under the Criminal Law and Evidence Module. It is also done under the Police Duties Module because we know that there are a number of forms and so on that the officers have to familiarize themselves with when they go out to the police stations. In that training programme, we also have our social workers discussing the psycho-social awareness so that the trainees would really understand the sensitivity of domestic violence.

Even as we speak here right now, we also are doing training and retraining of our police officers because we recognize, as an organization, that our officers retire. Every month, you have officers retiring and they leave with the knowledge, they leave with the experience. So we are doing training and retraining of our first responders to be able to deal with domestic violence. This particular manual is extremely useful. [Displays book] It outlines all the procedures and every officer who goes through this training programme is given this manual, and this is how we are dealing with it at this present time.

For this year, 2015, we have trained approximately 250 officers and these are officers who have been in the system but because we recognize that we need to retrain, we are doing that at this present time.

Madam Chairman: Yes, thank you very much.

Mr. Hackett: Chair, I would just like to add to Miss Ramdial's question on alcoholism. While we do not have the empirical data to support the fact that alcoholism in itself is a causal variable with respect to domestic violence, our qualitative data, however, based on our observation, it seems to suggest that alcohol consumption predisposes the individual to engage in domestic violence. There is a pre-disposition to those persons who use alcohol excessively to engage in domestic violence.

With respect to Mr. Samuel's enquiry about scientific experiments and so on that they may have conducted, what we propose to do, we have not had the experiment conducted, we are in the stage, as the Commissioner reiterated, with our operating plan 2014/2016, we are looking at a number of factors. And one of the things we are looking at is what we call the Crime and Problem Analysis unit which is a unit within the police service that looks at statistical analyses and other analyses with respect to crime and other phenomena. We are looking at establishing a dedicated unit within the Crime and Problem Analysis branch to look exclusively at domestic violence looking at qualitative as well as quantitative data.

One of the things that we are looking at as part of our remit in our new dispensation looking at evidence-based policing and quintessentially underlying that principle is looking at what works, what does not work and exploring what looks promising.

So that in all that we will do, what we will – give the undertaking that we will look at studies that have been done externally and look at what works, but not only what works, but considering what Mr. Samuel said about just implementing studies that have been done abroad, we look at extrapolating exactly – by testing what works and see if it works in our society before implementing it. And not only that but, more importantly, we look to indigenize that “int” with respect to our cultural differences to make sure that we speak to things in the study that would have necessity – bring value to the implementation on the society at large.

11.35a.m.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much for that response, and you are right, contextualization is necessary for implementation of suitable programmes for our community. Can we have somebody from the Ministry, Ms. Pooransingh?

Ms. Pooransingh: All right, good day. I would like to answer just about everybody, with a little contribution from myself. I want to go back to Mr. Samuel. It is a very sensitive and emotional issue. You cannot deny that. I am in total agreement with you that we have to get the local context.

In terms of the causal factors from – well, let me just, first of all, agree that resources are needed, adequate resources: financial and human are needed to do significant research in order to develop meaningful programmes. However, on a micro level from where we are at family services, where we do have technical staff who are trained in psychology, and social work. We do get a lot of cases that are coming from the court, from police, from 800-SAVE, from other agencies to us.

So in terms of recognizing some of the causal factors, I would not say alcohol per se, I would say substance abuse is a contributor. I would say unemployment. I would say inadequate housing or cramped living arguments. I would say belief systems, cultural norms, in terms of support systems. So it is not one factor, it is a number of factors. Trinidad and Tobago may be a small country, but even within Trinidad and Tobago, in different regional areas, there are different norms in those particular regions that impact on the way of life, and impact on how – in terms of household – how they treat each other or how they relate to their children.

Communication was another issue that we recognized years ago, that is important in any relationship; certainly, between spouses. So lack of communication or improper communication also contributed to breakdown in relationship issues. Of course, there is a power play, but it is beyond the power play; as I outlined before, there are other contributing factors.

In terms of training, even though the technical officers are all trained in psychology or social work, during the course of the fiscal year, we would also be exposed to on-job-training to refresh in terms of intervention of domestic violence and other related issues like, suicide intervention, treatment of domestic violence. So you undergo refresher training.

In terms of the programmes, as I said before, I agree that we need to develop more meaningful programmes, but it has to be guided by substantial research, and that would require human and financial resources.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Can I just find out—neither the police nor—thank you very much DCPs Alleyne-Daly, Hackett and Mrs. Pooransingh. I just wanted to find about the issue with higher income families, because I really suspect that there is a lot going on with the higher rank—and they are just not being involved, they are not bringing it out publicly, yeah.

Ms. Pooransingh: From our perspective, we do get a few who actually enlist the support of the court, and we would get some. So we have had a few. Yes, you are right, the higher income you go—because it is an embarrassing thing for them, they tend not to come forward, but over the years we have had some who have gone to the court, and they would have been referred to us for counselling. However, most of the time, they try to treat with it personally so that they would go to private psychologists or therapists. So it is really difficult to capture statistics on that but, as was said before, domestic violence is across the board. It knows no religion, no income status, no educational level. It is across the board.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much.

Com. Williams (Ag.): Just from the policing perspective, as I know Sen. Robinson-Regis has asked, we have had no mechanism put in place for dealing with that determination around the income levels. So we have not done research around it, but it is a relevant consideration for research.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Yes, Ms. Ramdial.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you. To the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service: Based on your data in Table 1, I am seeing that the highest number of reports on domestic violence came from the southern division. Are these new reports or are they repeated reports? Would you have that information?

Madam Chairman: Mr. Williams?

Com. Williams (Ag.): Southern division is high and has been consistently high for all the years. So it is broken down in years. In all the years running from 2009 – 2014, we have had a high number of reports from southern division. So it is a consistent issue and, therefore, from a policing perspective, it should signal to us that there is even greater consideration for special focus on southern division.

Ms. Ramdial: In terms of the reporting, my question is – it may be difficult to ascertain at this point: Are there new cases every time a report – different cases – or are they repeated reports of some?

Com. Williams (Ag.): Oh, you are speaking about whether just a few individuals continue to report over and over?

Ms. Ramdial: Right, or are they new cases.

Com. Williams (Ag.): Most are generally new cases, and it is the pattern across the country. It is not unique to southern division, but southern division by way of numbers, has a higher number of reports than other divisions. So it is an issue of concern.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Samuel.

Mr. Samuel: I have two questions. One, in the military and paramilitary services of Trinidad and Tobago, we have had incidents of officers destroying their spouses, and stuff like that. What kind of development programmes do you have or do you recommend should be implemented within the military and paramilitary units? As a person who counsels people, we have tremendous cases of violence within the military and paramilitary units of Trinidad and Tobago, and spouses are sometimes scared to death to even report it. Are there programmes within the services that are ongoing? And what kind of programmes do you have in mind for further dealing with that problem?

The second thing is that my – looking through documents, I was hoping to see the way forward for the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development as they deal with domestic violence; the way forward meaning, I am hearing what you say that you lack. I am not seeing a comprehensive way forward to say, “Okay, these are the things we want – we have to implement, we are implementing. We have an agenda that is before us, and this is going to be in place by this time, and that is going to be in place by that time. We will do this and we are – systematically laid out for the next 10 years, 15 years”, however, you want to lay it out. I would love to see something like that. Likewise, from the police service, a systematic approach, the way forward not just stating your limitations, but if there were no limitations, how you intend to proceed forward and implement these things and the time factors you would need to implement

them. You might never achieve it in our lifetime, but it is good to have a plan. So just two things I wanted to find out.

Com. Williams (Ag.): Who first, Ministry or police?

Mr. Samuel: Ministry could go first.

Ms. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Samuel. I must say that in spite of the fact that we have challenges, the Ministry, over the past three years, we have been very successful in actually laying some foundation, with respect to treating with the issue of domestic violence. In that regard, you know, what we have actually tried to implement, is to get the national domestic violence registry on stream.

That is something whereby we can have the necessary data, national data. I am sure that we could collect data from all the different agencies that are actually getting reports on domestic violence. We are saying that by August, we are going to launch that unit, the Domestic Violence Unit. The Cabinet has agreed to establish a committee. It is a cross functional committee with persons from the Judiciary, the police and other key agencies, NGOs that, really and truly, are overseeing this particular exercise.

In respect of the issue of strategic planning, we have been fortunate to work with our international strategic partner, the UN Women, and we have been able to get funding to actually develop a national strategic plan for the end of domestic violence. The consultancy is soon to start and this plan is supposed to be over a three-year period. It will give us some very clear indication of the key performance indicators as well as the activities and strategies that we need to address over the next three to five years.

A key area as well, it would also clearly identify the research imperatives, as well as give us a sense of the funding imperative that would be required over the year to actually start the implementation there. But as I said, over the three years, the Ministry has been working with other key stakeholders to lay the foundation to actually get the work moving forward.

Mr. Samuel: I just want to follow up on a point. I hear you referring to UN Women, is there a UN Men? I am not being chauvinistic. I want to find out where you are collecting your data from, and if your data is a balanced data or a biased data?

Ms. Jones: Well, I cannot – with respect to UN Men, no.

Mr. Samuel: I am just asking.

Ms. Jones: I am being advised, but the issue is that we are getting some funding from UN Women because they are assisting us. The Government has signed some agreement

as well, and we have been making some contribution towards elimination of domestic violence across the globe. In that regard, they have pledged some funding to us to assist us, and the Cabinet has agreed to that, and that project is soon to be started. It has actually started, Miss Williams just reminded me, thanks.

Mr. Samuel: The paramilitary part of the question.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. The second part of the question, for the police service. Thank you, Ms. Jones. Mr. Williams.

Com. Williams (Ag.): I speak about the paramilitary; that is where the police lie. I will not speak about the military. The police service has a social work unit built within our employees assistance programme. The social workers have been facilitating the support for the police officers in addressing issues of domestic violence both from the side of—extended to the police officers, and their spouses. So they are not limiting support to the police officers alone.

Now, the activities are generally confidential. So the details of those activities and engagements of the social workers are confidential. What they have done beyond that though, the social workers have carried out some workshops across the police service. The year 2014 was a massive exercise across the police service to, again, expose the police officers at the level of training and guidance, all towards acting as, I would say, deterrents, prevention, helping to effectively educate officers in relation to managing their family life.

So that has been done through the social work unit, and the social workers attached to the police service, they are actually employees of the police service; not external the police service. We have employed within recent years, social workers to support police officers.

11.50 a.m.

This is quite distinct from the Victim and Witness Support Unit, where we have employed persons to support victims of crime and witnesses to crime, and domestic violence is one such area for which the Victim and Witness Support Unit addresses. But that is separate and apart from the Victim and Witness Support Unit. We have social workers to support the police officers as we look to address the matters of domestic violence.

Madam Chairman: Just a follow up question from Mr. Samuel.

Mr. Samuel: Commissioner, in that same vein, police officers are on a daily basis under tremendous stress, especially in the society that we live today, being shot at. Even in their own personal lives, the threats that come to them depend on where they work and

the communities to which they are assigned, and there may be a possibility that it can affect them in their own personal relationships psychologically.

I would want to suggest that a closer look be had with regard to officers that are impacted on by the communities that are really, really a life-threatening situations to many of them and to ascertain the end product and to see how it is affecting them in their own lives and their family lives, something out of that data then different programmes of development can come forward. I would like to suggest that, because it is like a person who is at war, and they get back home. It is a totally different situation; it is a totally different person and how they deal with people and how they respond to relatives is absolutely different, and people like that need a particular different approach as to the average every day approach of counselling. I want to suggest that you look into that seriously because many of them, depending on where they are deployed and can be affected psychologically, because it is not being easy shot at.

Com. Williams (Ag): We take the suggestion on board, just to add, we are at this point in time arranging to engage two clinical psychologists as we go forward. As you speak about the way forward, maybe I would get the opportunity to address that if the Chairman so permits me, because you asked for the police service way forward too.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much.

I just want to focus a bit on the Victim and Witness Support Unit, very crucial to what we are discussing. The police service, in your submission, you referred to a document, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Operating Plan, 2015: Building an Exceptional Organization—One Team One Vision. I found it to be very interesting, especially under Table 3.4—Action items to improve quality of live in communities; Strategic Goal 3—Improve the level of citizens-centred service and Objective 3.4—Improve quality of live in communities. I found those to be very, very pointed. When we look at what you have there to enhance the capacity of the Victim and Witness Support Unit, to provide support to victims and witnesses of crime by strengthening its structure and administration and training of staff and human resources and so on; also including training of 1,000 officers to increase their awareness of domestic violence to enhance their ability, as it were, to effectively manage these matters.

We have now in their submission and the response, that given the data on reports of domestic violence from 2009–2014 provided by the police service: how can 14 contracted Victim and Witness Support Officers and one contracted manager respond to cases within 24 hours? It sounds almost impossible, and given the support from the Victim and Witness Support Unit, the challenge is great. I want to hear a little more about the unit and how you are dealing with the issue of domestic violence and treating with it in terms of the support that you are offering. It sounds almost impossible to me.

Com. Williams (Ag): Well, we do have the Manager present, and she will be able to explain the developments with the unit, how overwhelming the work is and the way

forward, because we are seeking to recruit some additional officers at this point in time. So the Manager would give you a comprehensive submission on the Victim and Witness Support Unit.

Madam Chairman: I was hoping to hear from her this morning. Mrs. Sampson-Browne.

Mrs. Sampson-Browne: Thank you very much, Mr. Commissioner and thank you very much Madam Chair and Members of the Committee. In 2013 I visited South Africa to attend an International Conference of Women Police Officers, and the National Commissioner of Police of Durban stood before 2,000 participants and said: "Nothing is impossible until it is done." And she continued to say: "If you sit on a warm seat somebody warmed that seat for you." The Victim and Witness Support Unit has been sitting on warm seats for a number of years and sometimes when we ask the question whether or not 14 can do it, we have been because of the dedication and the commitment of the officers.

In 2008 when the unit was formed, again, under the then Senior Superintendent, Mr. Stephen Williams, we brought in officers who were committed to looking at the issues of responding to reports of domestic violence, and not only domestic violence but victims of crimes. Since then we have been working assiduously and continuously with our stakeholders. If we did not have our stakeholders we may not have been able to exercise and to really commit to the kind of demands that are being made on the unit.

In 2008, we responded to 208 reports of violent crimes. In 2015, over that period, we have interacted or intervened in almost 4,000 reports coming to us. Not all of them are domestic violence victims. What we have found in Southern Division, where we are seeing an increase in domestic violence, is that the reports were made more so by women and some of the issues coming out of there was actually dealing with how do they address the violence with their children.

What the Victim and Witness Support Unit has done in Southern Division is that we have formed a support group where we are supporting our clients who come to us. Because our interactions are not medium to long term, it is short to medium term, so to help our clients, what we have done, not only in Southern Division but, more so, in most of the Divisions, we have formed support groups and that has helped us tremendously in the delivery of service.

Our stakeholders also play an important part a, critical part. The Ministry of Gender, they have supported us through the 800-Save Hotline when we desperately need some where to place our clients, and not all the times we get the respond that we desire, because at 8.00 or 9.00 in the night when you get a report, where do we put a family who has a child, a male child, nine years and over? Where do we put a child like that?

What we have also looked at is examining how clients come to us. We boast and say 4,000 come, a percentage of which is domestic violence, but a greater percentage suffers silently in their homes. So, what the Victim and Witness Support Unit has done in 2014 is that we have launched a project called AVA, the acronym AVA, Addressing Victims Anywhere, and how we did this is that we went out on the streets of Sangre Grande, Arima and Chaguanas, walking and interacting with anyone we meet, not identifying them as victims or potential victims, but hoping that they would spread the word of the Victim and Witness Support Unit; tell a friend, tell a neighbour, say something in our community meetings that there is a dedicated group of officers in the police service, civilians actually in the police service, who are willing to respond on a 24-hour basis to your reports of domestic violence.

We are more like the compassionate arm of the Police Service. Once the report is made, however, the report comes to us – whether it is reported over the charge room, over the phone, anonymously, however it is referred from the various Ministries, from the School, however the report comes to us – the Victim and Witness Support Officers respond and we respond in support and partnering with the Community Policing, because we cannot do it without them. So, we have that support from with the community policing.

We have developed relationships with other stakeholders, with support groups, with community groups, with the Police Youth Club leaders and other leaders because 14 of us, clearly, cannot and will not – we will not attempt to do it alone. We are doing it in partnership with other stakeholders so that they would be able, at the end of the day, or the day of the interaction, we would be able to say yes.

I want to just comment on the reporting on the higher income bracket. I have been a police officer for 41 years and a Victim Support Officer from 2011 to present and if I investigate five of those higher income bracket, I investigate many. I am not saying it is not happening.

Recently we attended a school, a very prestige school, and at the end of our interactions, some of the children came to vent, to share some of the pain that they were having and they were removed from our presence by some of the teachers. They were removed. They did not want the children to speak about it. So we know that there is or are things occurring in particular brackets, in particular incomes, but the information is not coming to us as readily as we would want.

I heard Mr. Samuel speak about it becomes domesticated, the violence becomes domesticated, but it started domesticated. It started in the home. It is almost like a small half and a big half. It started somewhere to end. What has a beginning must have an end. When we see our children – recently I interviewed a girl child, she is 14 years and she is fighting and very violent in the school, and she is saying; “I am doing

this because I am not getting the protection at home. I am being sexually abused and I am not being protected sufficiently at home, so I feel I have to fight for myself.” So all of these things that the Victim and Witness Support is doing is in partnership with our stakeholders and with our police officers, because remember we are supportive of the police.

Once someone makes a report to the police, we are supporting the police. We do not go and investigate. We are not investigative, we are supportive through all the different therapies, psychotherapy, trauma therapy, crisis management, we do all of this with the victims and the victims of domestic violence really get our support, but I would really want to see a whole lot more. A seamless approach to how we deliver that service to our victim and witness.

It is not sufficient that we go into and do our intervention, but the intervention must be seamless, because when we do our intervention there are other services that the domestic violence victim requires, the family requires and sometimes it is difficult in accessing or not timely in accessing. The police can do so much, but there are other stakeholders that need or are requiring to step up to the plate so that that seamless approach could happen for our victims of domestic violence which is an umbrella term for all the offences affecting our families, an umbrella term.

12.05 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Mrs. Robinson Regis.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am glad that you raised that issue of the seamless relationship, and that is a question that has been occupying my mind. I wanted to know what the relationship between the Police Service, the Ministry, and the other stakeholders was. I know in the response to questions you did say that there is a relationship with other stakeholders, both entities said that, but I wanted to have an actual picture of what that relationship is, if a relationship exists and how does it operate between the Police Service, the Ministry, and the providers of the shelters, and so on. If I could get some feedback on that, please.

Madam Chairman: Response?

Mrs. Sampson-Browne: Thank you. When we have – oh, sorry.

Madam Chairman: Go ahead and we will still have a response from the Ministry.

Ms. Williams: Okay, thanks.

Mrs. Sampson-Browne: When we have a client requesting or requiring some services in addition to what we have rendered for them at the first instance, we do – the 800-

SAVE helps us a lot. In fact, that is our only hope. In addition to if we are not—it is our saviour, other than that the police officer has to come up with innovative ways to address the clients at 2.00 in the morning when we cannot get the kind of services from—the immediate services from 800 SAVE, we have to find, together with the investigator, find a neighbour, a relative, someone that will keep or support the client until such time when we could get the services from 800 SAVE, but 800 SAVE has been critical in our service delivery.

The Ministry of the People and Social Development, sometimes they are also critical in respect of when we do an intervention and there is need to get, like a food card, or a temporary shelter, perhaps rentals, and so on. The Ministry of the People and Social Development and the Ministry of Community Development, they work with us to assist us in respect of that, and some of the other NGOs, ChildLine. We work with ChildLine closely because when the children call into ChildLine to make the report, the ChildLine will refer those matters to the police and then the police would seek the Victim and Witness Support Officers to support the investigator through those various—to the many reports.

So, there is an interaction, there is connection, there is communication, but at the end result we want a timely, effective and efficient response to someone who comes to us covered in blood, saying, “I cannot go back to my home. My husband has been beating me. He beat me. My children are at home, I want some help. I need some help now”. How do we address that situation by waiting?—perhaps we have to wait until in the morning before we can get a shelter for you. You have to wait for perhaps 48 hours before you can get a food card. We may develop a plan as part of the remit of the Victims and Witness Support Unit with respect to domestic violence. We develop a safety plan, an escape plan for our clients to escape, but escape from where to go where? And that is what we want. We want to be able—if that client comes to us we could knock at any door at any time and get a response for that client so that they would remove themselves from being a victim to becoming a victor.

Madam Chairman: Okay. The Ministry’s response.

Ms. Williams: Thank you, Madam Chair. I fully support my colleague from the Victims and Witness Support Unit, because exactly what she was explaining is what I was going to treat with to say 800 SAVE, if someone calls 800-SAVE and they are in search of a shelter, the police is that authority, that body that takes that person to a shelter, you just cannot walk into a shelter like that. Some of the problems we identified earlier in terms of the times that one could access a shelter, the people who can access, sometimes we have to fragment families because boys who are over a certain age cannot go so you have to send that child by an aunt, and the child feels as though I have done something wrong. And so to avoid that, those situations, the Ministries now in the—we are almost at the final stages of constructing two shelters.

I know Minister Samuel spoke about, you know, the shelter has been there, you know, to treat with the issues of abuse and violence, but we need to treat with it. So we have two shelters, and I think it might be good news to hear that there is, actually of the two that are being constructed, one is for men and boys, and they are over 50 per cent completed. I think the Ministry is working towards the completion before the end of this fiscal year, and at this stage we are doing the operational manuals, the business plan, all of that is happening as we speak and, so, hopefully, that should be in place so that some of the problems that Mrs. Sampson Browne just identified, in terms of accessing services, that would be greatly reduced.

But it is also very important for us to pay attention to, and as we look forward to the future, how—the shelter has a limited stay, three to six months, basically, and in extended circumstances you may get up to a year if you are fortunate, but people are always complaining, “Do I go back to that abusive situation?”. So the whole issue of transitional housing has to be addressed as we go forward. In previous years there was a plan to have some level of transitional housing available, so that is something we definitely need to look at as we go forward in terms of treating with those people who are leaving the shelters and have nowhere to go. In addition to that, the Ministry also acquired, recently, four houses through NIDCO and three of those would be smaller units to house families that are coming in with boys, children, because, as Mrs. Sampson Browne said, sometimes you have the end product in society where people are fighting, they are doing all kinds of things, they are probably reflected as runaways, and all of that, but sometimes we do not know what that person is carrying inside and what they are carrying probably is just as a result of what they have been experiencing within the home.

So it is a very, very complicated issue to treat with but it is not one we would want to throw up our hands and say, “In despair we can go forward”. We are at the point now where even there is another exercise that is ongoing. We are struggling for the correct name for this project, but it is called the Women City Centre. It is modelled after the El Salvador model where there is going to be a one stop shop. So somebody coming in—if the person comes into the centre and you are a victim of domestic violence, you would be able to access, whether it is the Police Service right there, your medical services, your legal services, a myriad of services so you do not have to go from agency to agency, and with family services there as well. So that they could make the links with the relevant services so that, you know, if you are already in distress and abused and bloody, as Mrs. Sampson Browne said, you cannot be running here and there to try to get the services.

So that project is already—that is supposed to be funded through IDB, and work has gone quite a long way in terms of advancing that project. As we move forward, I know Minister Samuel spoke about the issue of a strategic plan, and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service spoke about it, and I think if we have to be factual because we cannot,

you know, say that this happened and this did not happen, we have to put the thing on the table as is. I think what has happened over the years is that – two issues – I beg my PS's permission to say this and the Chair – that we need to have continuity in terms of how we treat with the issue of violence. It is, as we have been saying, it crosses all geographic boundaries, ethnicity, race, social class, and everything, and so whether we need to have a standalone unit, or whether it is supposed to be in the Police Service or wherever, but one that does not shift with every time we have a shift in governance. I think that is critical.

I have been in this Ministry for quite a long time, regardless of the names it had carried, and I have seen some of what has happened as a result of some of the changes. I think, as we go forward, you know, just as Minister Samuel was becoming emotional, I am becoming emotional about it, because I have borne the pain over the years in seeing what has happened as we progress with this work. So I really needed to put that on the table. Mrs. Sampson Browne, she knows me for years because we have been in this for years fighting this battle. So, I really needed to put that on the table, as we move forward, the need for us to have a coordinated mechanism so that all agencies involved can work together closely as we develop the strategic plan to end violence, that we ensure that whatever is needed, financial resources, human resources, to really make the plan move off from the paper is necessary. I think we really have to pay attention to that. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Ms. Williams. While everyone was speaking, and I think the issues came up – just before I invite Mr. Samuel to make another contribution – and it is something Mrs. Margaret Sampson Browne said, in delivering services a greater partnership among all stakeholders is fundamental, and something Mr. Samuel mentioned as well, is how do you get into the minds of individuals, their psyche, changing the culture how people think and behave, and when I heard about the AVA programme – I am asking – how do we make the society a little more aware of programmes like these?

Perhaps we should, every quarter, go into the schools and ensure that the Ministry of Education takes one day off where the Police Service and various Ministries – a whole day of sensitizing teachers and students, or even religious bodies, and so on, that every quarter for the year that is a standard. It is a statutory date that we keep open in the schools and in religious bodies to observe and to ensure that some of these programmes – we would make the civil society and others aware of these. It may not sound practical, but smaller groups get things done that way as well. Also, how you juxtapose what the Ministry and the Police Service are doing? – and all the stakeholders. So, we would not have a repetition, but there would be continuity really, and, therefore, all the stakeholders working together, partnering, we would come up with something more substantial that we will deal with the psyche, as well as change the culture. Mr. Samuel.

Mr. Samuel: Thank you, Chair. Dealing with domestic violence, and studies in different parts of the world, would suggest they have broken down the causes to just about a group of 10 or 12 ideals, and, in many instances, one of the causes that seems to be clear across the table seems to be the influence of media, and the lives of people and the minds of people. They have also looked at—obviously somebody talked about substance abuse—they have looked at gang pressure and influence: they have looked at unemployment: the glory of power, meaning weaponry in your hand; poverty comes down the ladder; peer pressure; broken homes; poor family environment and bad neighbourhoods, and then there is one that was kind of tricky, it talks about ignorance and intolerance. That was kind of tricky for me. But if we are to look at that, how are our programmes geared towards dealing with these defined, sometimes acceptable causes? How are programmes geared towards dealing with it? How are we meeting, even with young people—and from their own minds and mouths, understanding what they determine to be the cause of even violence among their peers, because they have kind of put things like poverty and broken homes down the list, but the media seems to be standing out a lot in the surveys that I have looked at. The media seems to have had a tremendous influence in what they purport, whether it is through the movies, whatever, Internet, whatever, what they purport to the psyche of young people, and what you feed your mind with forms and shapes your characteristics, and “Shorty” says, well, “shape the part that you would walk tomorrow”. I just wanted to get a response on that.

12.20 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Any of the entities? Commissioner?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Before the Commissioner speaks, could I say that in VS Naipaul’s book, *The Mystic Masseur*, one of the characters did say—and I am putting it in a nutshell—that if your husband did not beat you then he did not love you, and that was cultural. I think Ms. Pooransingh said that and also Ms. Persad, Gaietry—I know Gaietry for so long—Ms. Pargass. I think even though we are becoming a so-called enlightened society, those cultural norms really still exist. They still exist. Some people still believe that that is a mechanism for showing affection.

I am just putting that on the table, not that I agree with it. Let me say that from the outset. I do not agree with it, but I remember that very clearly in VS Naipaul’s book, *The Mystic Masseur*. That was one of the chapters dealing with the violence that he perpetrated on his wife, and she accepted it because she said it was an indication of his love.

Madam Chairman: We do not want what Mrs. Robinson-Regis said to influence your response, [Laughter] but any one of the entities—Mr. Williams.

Com. Williams (Ag.): Just to say there is really no easy fix. For me, I tend to stay away from generic causes, and then to take from those generic causes, guidance to deal with matters. Therefore the police service is not hooking its way forward by way of generic causes, and the hierarchy that is set for those generic causes.

We have clearly understood that matters relevant to our society may be much different to matters relevant to other societies, from which those generic causes would have been identified and the hierarchy set. Be that as it may, we also work on the premise that attitudes and behaviour cannot be changed by us, but we can find mechanisms to influence change in attitudes and behaviour.

As an organization, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is seeking to influence the change in people's attitude and behaviour. There are a whole series of action items that we have listed at this point in time, and they will, in fact, be enhanced in the future, because one of the things I have shared at the beginning is that we are doing a comprehensive review of policing of domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, some of the things we are doing right now will be further enhanced by way of the results of that review.

But we have set ourselves in 2015, an operating plan with some key features which we believe would influence positively. We go out every week. Tonight we are out. We go out every week, and that is not built around the time of the year right now; it is built around our plans. We did it in 2014, we continue it in 2015 with what we call our Community Outreach Programme. Some people refer to it as "town meetings", and we go out and engage with the community. Share with them, get their views, and find ways and means of improving the interaction. Taking on board some of their suggestions and recommendations for us to improve the policing of the very said communities. So that is one mechanism that we use, and we will continue with it.

We are in the process of training our officers to be able to be better equipped to respond to situations that confront us from a day-to-day policing of domestic violence events. So we are taking our officers through training, and we highlighted both the customer service training that they have to undergo and the specific domestic violence training that we have as a programme for 2015, which is ongoing across the entire police service, all the divisions, so that is an ongoing programme. That will continue for the rest of the year training our officers.

We are going through a process utilizing public education, so that is part of our planning too; public education to see how best we can influence the change in people's attitude and behaviour. But there is no easy fix. Down the road we will, in fact, implement an experiment, a full experiment, to seek to get some clear findings, and out of those findings and recommendations we then can influence our policies and strategies as we address domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago.

At this point in time, there are some quick indicators as to some of the things. We believe there may be even need at this very point to start to look at some legislative adjustments, but laws by themselves do not necessarily work because it takes more than that to fix the problem. So it is a big challenge; a challenge for the society, a challenge for all the institutions, a challenge for the people. But as an organization we will be seeking to contribute as much as possible to impact this longstanding challenge that Trinidad and Tobago has faced, that of domestic violence.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. We were about to ask for some closing remarks from both the police service and the Ministry, but Mr. Williams your comments sound very much conclusive. Could I then invite Ms. Jones to make some closing remarks please.

Ms. Jones: From the Ministry's perspective we appreciate our responsibility in helping to build citizen Trinidad and Tobago. Just to take on with respect to what Mr. Samuel pointed to, the question that he is posing, what could be contributing to some of these issues with violence. I must say that since the creation story with Cain and Abel it was there, but having said that one needs to look at the whole issue of individuals in helping them to find a sense of self.

From the Ministry's perspective we are starting on the ground, and we are saying that the area with respect to dealing with parenting in the home—as Commissioner talked about his father stating that you do not beat or hit a woman—that is something we are saying in our parenting programme, that we really and truly need to look at. The literature is also saying that with respect to getting best results to prevent domestic violence, that you must have public education. That is a key part of the strategy, and the Ministry has actually started treating with those particular issues.

We at the Ministry are looking forward to having the strategic plan move forward. We have already started to look at developing a sort of framework to interact with other providers, what we call a critical response framework so that we can prevent duplication. We can work collaboratively with other agencies that are actually engaging in providing the necessary support. We have a committee that is already standing, and we already have a draft and are looking to actually get it going.

We do not see this as a fight that we cannot win. We are saying that this is a national problem, and in every area the Ministry would really and truly work with all its strategic partners, particularly the faith-based organizations, to assist us in really and truly helping to treat with this issue from a prevention side with respect to domestic violence.

In that regard, we sincerely thank again the committee for giving us this opportunity to contribute towards today's deliberations. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: On behalf of the Committee, a very, very heartfelt thank you to members of the police service and the Ministry, for all the work that you have done and the work that you are yet to do. Sometimes very often we tend to chastise, be critical of agencies that are trying their best to deal with situations, and we want to be commendable rather than critical. We thank you for the time you have taken, and trust that all the stakeholders will partner to influence the human society to deal with this sensitive issue of domestic violence.

I want to close with a quotation that I was brought up with by a father who was an educator, an old headmaster, one by Marie Butler, that there are three categories of people in the world: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who do not have a clue as to what is happening. But I trust that all of us, as partners in ensuring that this human society is one that will be liveable, that we can be the kind of people that will make things happen.

Thank you sincerely for your time, and I thank the media for attending, and all our viewing and listening audience for today's hearing. This meeting is now adjourned.

12.31 p.m.: Meeting adjourned.

Appendix II

Summary of Written Submissions Received from Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Programmes and Services	Challenges	Staff Training	Security	Mechanisms for male victims to come forward	Community Outreach Services	Do stakeholders meet?	Do stakeholders share information?	What is required to provide additional support?	Income Source
The Halfway House	Shelter, food, clothing, medical services (visits to hospitals and clinics), and assistance to obtain protection orders, legal assistance and transportation to various offices for women and children only. No services available for men.	Security; victims of HIV/Aids, mentally unbalanced and differently abled persons, having a resident psychologist and security officer.	Through visiting psychologists and social workers, staff are exposed to various training courses and most recently through Families in Action.	Dependence on Gasparillo Police. Property secured with burglar proofing and a caretaker/security man.	Do not have the necessary facilities to accommodate men.	No longer provide outreach services.	Stakeholders attended several meetings but have not done so recently.	Share information.	More financial assistance to provide better services for the victims in terms of security, counseling, programs, food and transportation, salaries(to attract qualified persons and reduce present high staff turn over)	Government subvention, fund raising projects, occasional donations and monies collected from the sale of garden produce.
Mizpeh House	Housing, feeding, clothing and training programmes primarily for women. Counselling programmes and narrative therapy through trained social workers/counsellors on a voluntary and salaried basis. A follow-up program for the total family (with the consent of the resident).	Human resources and funding. Lack of funds to meet needs of clientele and afford university trained staff.	Use of voluntary staff. No staff training.	Adequately fenced and burglar proofed. Outside support through telephone connections with police and neighbours.	-	Yes	-	-	-	Founder, volunteers, cooperative citizens, a bit of overseas fundins and well wishers.
Nekevah Rescue Center	Housing, counselling, career guidance, medical services, shelter and food. No services for men.	Finances, training for life coaches and acquiring staff.	Some are and some are not.	Backup system.	Not really.	-	The Board of Directors meet quarterly, Management Committee meet once per month and Life Coaches meet once per month. AGM meeting is once a year.	Yes.	Finances to enable expansion of programme to include prevention programme.	-
Islamic Ladies Social & Cultural Association	Social welfare programme to assist destitute and needy families through sponsorship programme or one-time assistance. Programmes and services not focused on domestic violence but if it arises client referred for counselling.	-	Voluntary staff.	-	-	For sponsored clients.	Caregivers meet once every 2 montns.	Bi-monthly meeting.	Training support for welfare officers.	Fund raisers and donations from members and well wishers.
Madinah House	-	Client: no desire for change, little/no desire for life skills, little/no work ethic and misplaced motive for coming to home (govt handouts). Support services ineffective/unavailable, lack of professionalism in protective services, limited relocation options, high client return rate to abusive situation.	More training is necessary for Manager and matrons on an on-going program.	Installation of Blink Vigilance and Rapid Response.	Have publicly acknowledged men are victims. Imams are asked to counsel men in such cases.	Set-up booth at public events to give out printed matter and counsel while working with other NGOs. Organized workshop seminar a mixed audience and females only.	Board of Management meets once per month to discuss programmes and services.	Management committee liaises with staff and monitors day to day operations of shelter. Monthly reports sent by Manager to the Board.	Affordable housing, shorter time spent at police stations.	Government subvention since 2009 for recurrent expenditures of shelter. Other operational costs covered by donations from individual and corporate sponsors. Muslims entrust with Zakaat to disburse needy cases and this has helped to transition the muslim clients to their new lodging.

Stakeholder	Programmes and Services	Challenges	Staff Training	Security	Mechanisms for male victims to come forward	Community Outreach Services	Do stakeholders meet?	Do stakeholders share information?	What is required to provide additional support?	Income Source
The Shelter	Safe housing, meals and counselling. Legal and medical services if required. Dependence on Ministries for education. All children accompanying parent sent to school/nursery/ Montessori paid by Shelter.	Proper follow-up should be in place. Registry/Group with all related social services should be made available to survivors. Staff training.	No one is adequately trained to deal with this magnitude. Continuing education and training for staff required.	Paid security service.	Offer counselling to the partners of clients away from safe house. Not equipped to deal with male victims as safe house is communal living.	As best as possible and funds permitting do follow-up with past residents for a period of six months.	No.	Share information with other homes. Funding is scarce and used by safe house.	Drop-in centres need to be created where a client can go for counselling, legal advice or just speak to someone. One stop shop for information on education, employment, housing etc.	Annual Government subvention of \$90,000, that is \$7,500 per month. Fundraising events and private citizens.
Organization for Abused and Battered Individuals	Victim Assistance (Victim Advocates) Training to grassroots organizations, fellow NGOs, professionals. Group training, workshops, seminars, educational and motivational sessions, related to leadership, poverty alleviation, domestic violence and abuse and Family life education. Safe Space group sessions for families, women, and men who are victims of abuse or thriving survivors of the same. Family support and counseling. Community outreach and interventions. Proactive about identifying risks associated with poverty, child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault. Play Therapy for families and the child victim of abuse. Actively working with and in communities and victims to become economically viable, self-sustainable and understand how to deal with the socio-economic situations which confront them and the effects of domestic violence. Working with victims in the area of self-defense	Non appreciation for training by grassroots organization, CBO's, and FBO's, the failure of trained persons within organizations and groups re-traumatizes victims, they intervene without the knowledge of what is the next step, they confuse the victims, and offers no follow up support. Government's failure to invest in training persons who have expressed interest in advanced training in this field of combating domestic violence. Governments disconnect with victim's needs, experiences and need of inclusion or a representative to be their voice during policy and law making processes regarding the social issue of domestic violence. Governments clear disconnect and lack of support to and with small NGO's, grassroots organizations and groups which work overtime on the ground, with families, and within communities. Governments failure to understand that in reality NGO's and CBO's are not only critical but necessary in this work and they should partner with such organizations to prevent, reduce and support victims.	Yes. The Volunteer staff is adequately trained to handle domestic violence cases as we do in-house training once every three months, we constantly remind our dedicated volunteers of the proper practices and ethics surrounding the work. There are also professionals who constantly keep us abreast of best practices or new studies in the field. And we try our best to access any training or workshops around this area or for self-development and for serving the client.	NA	Established a private group for male victims of violence online, in our Sales Force organization space, which gave men a space to discuss the issues and now we have a support group which tries to meet at least once per month based on availability of physical space to meet. However there is an active presence online and this presence is increasing.	Follow-up with schools and individual members, however due to our lack of a permanent vehicle we try our best to hire a vehicle or have friends or relatives support the cause using their vehicle. Where transportation is not available, calls made to check up on victims, or the contact person in the community, sadly due to our lack of finances not always able to do follow up's or maintain a long-term follow up programme. Community outreach in the form of various workshops, presentations, play therapy with adults and children, community threats for the underprivileged in the community, distribution of school books and items, clothing and food supplies.	Stakeholders do not meet together on their own to discuss services, programmes, or funding opportunities. Only time many of the stakeholders meet is when a public consultation is advertised, or when there is a forum to discuss a topic which they are passionate about to stand in support or against.	At present there is no open forum for the sharing of information, collaboration on plans of actions and programmes in order to ensure no duplicity and waste of resources.	The establishment of a transition community for victims of domestic violence with self-contained apartments and managed by an NGO which is accountable to a governing body. The Batterer Intervention Program offers opportunities for change for perpetrators of domestic violence. This service should be made available by appointment or court mandate. The establishment of a twenty four rescue center with self-contained units exclusive of kitchens and laundry area, where there would be speed of access for the police service, community groups who want to make referrals, and other organizations which have victims to refer. Advocates training for persons who interact with victims of domestic violence, persons in the health sector, police officers, social workers, Persons from NGO's and CBO's which work in the area of domestic violence such training as: Interviewing and observational skills, risk assessment, safety planning, follow up and documentation, understanding the dynamics of domestic	Private donations. Fans and Members donations.

	physically, emotionally, mentally, and financially. Using various mediums including video, social media, the internet, television, radio and printed press for the dissemination of education and information as it relates to the prevention of violence against women and girls and men and boys; Providing support for women and girls and men and boys that meets their needs in a holistic way, and respect their rights and decisions where appropriate, to confidentiality, and to participate in any decision making processes that affect them; Safe housing for victims of violence and family disturbances; Referrals for specialized care, support and therapy; Assisting young people to transition from being the victim to a thriving survivor. Training: Behavioral Modification; Purpose planning; Progressive planning for Leaders Self-Awareness and Self-Esteem; Change and Trauma Management Conflict Management and Team Building; Crisis Intervention; Victim Assistance Providers Training; Emotional Intelligence; Anger Management; Self-Defense Training; Trauma and Recovery Life Coaching; Leadership as a Victim Advocate Parenting and family life education; Mediation; Managing Trauma; Healing and Resiliency; Engaging Bystanders in	The lack of government and corporate Trinidad's support to assist with international training, support programmes of small to medium organizations and acknowledge them Having groups popping up all over the country and there is no independent governing body or committee to do check in's on them, evaluate their services and programmes and make sure that within the groups there are members who are trained to deal with victims of domestic violence. NGO'S and CBO's who consider themselves veterans in this field viewing other organizations as insignificant even though such organizations help them build their numbers to make their reports to apply for further funding. Organizations being very clandestine, territorial, and blatantly unwilling to unite to prevent duplication of programmes and services. Organizations who do not see the need to refer individuals who come to them for support even though they do not have the training to support victims and guide them through the healing process. Resource mobilization. Mobility due to the lack of having our own transportation. Lack of shelters and training centers for persons to become qualified victim							violence and abuse, and referral. Trained Victim Advocates appointed in every police station, the courts, hospital emergency rooms and clinics throughout the country. The establishment of a sex offenders, domestic violence and victim's registry, there are individuals who move around the Caribbean freely or migrate to a Caribbean destination of choice however there is no registry to fore-warn immigration officials, customs official, or national security officials about this person/s who may be a threat to others. A district or magisterial court established for the sole purpose of handling domestic violence cases, this will free up the load work for other courts to handle other court matters, it will bring speedy resolution of cases. A body to oversee the enforcement of laws. A structured and systematic plan for data collection which will assist us all in future planning and have proper national statistic from which to quote rather than looking to international statistics the majority of the time. Body Safety Education Curriculum Implementation; Implementation of Workplace Programmes; Tax Break Incentives for Companies; Business Loans accessibility; Victim Advocates to sit on Committees; Independent Victim Advocates to sit in on	
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	the prevention of Sexual Violence and Domestic Violence; Body Safety Education for Parents and Children; Emotional Intelligence; Healthy Communication; Parenting Techno Babies.	advocates and receive training in other areas of service.								Debates; Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Unit; Thorough checks on police recruits applicants; Relocation of high Risk victims; Domestic violence packages for new mothers leaving the hospital; Grant food card support for victims; The ministry of Gender, Youth, and Child Development should have frequent consultations with NGO's and CBO's to hear from them about their progress on the ground.	
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Stakeholder	Programmes and Services	Challenges	Staff Training	Security	Mechanisms for male victims to come forward	Community Outreach Services	Do stakeholders meet?	Do stakeholders share information?	What is required to provide additional support?	Income Source
	Professional Counselling; Skills Training - Computer Literacy, Floral Arrangement, Vegetarian Cooking, Soaping making, Sewing; Literacy Programme; Self Esteem Seminars; Parenting Classes. Services for women and their children include Parenting Classes, Individual counselling for children;Enrolment in the School system Counselling services are offered for men; however, this service is offered off site through male counsellors and networking with our Men's Ministries Department which provide educational programmes for men: training and empowerment sessions in: Mentoring, Parenting, Male Sexuality- and community outreach programmes and provide social settings for deepening relationships	Insufficient funding Limited trained resource personnel Limited equipment for teaching classes Limited facility There are no visual learning tools for children There is need for full-time security on the compound.	Yes	No. The security consists of the Area Police Department: A Drive-by security check twice nightly and once during the day and Security Cameras.	No, not specifically.		Yes, Stakeholders meet regularly to advance the cause of Myrtle's Place. Meetings are held once every two months.		Activism Educational programmes on abuse prevention Increased self-esteem seminars, especially for women Self-defence classes Literacy classes Media blitz Seminars to improve their quality of life.	Individual contributions from SDA Church members and Friends of Myrtle's Place. SDA Church Administration One (1) Corporate Sponsor
Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women	Provide networking and information to develop NGOs. In the process of launching a national UN HeforShe Campaign which asks men to speak up on behalf of women's issue a larger part of this is the abuse of women.	-	Staff have not been trained. Members of the Board have experience in these areas.	No	NA	No	Monthly board meetings.	Share information via email and invite others to discuss and assist where needed.	NA	NA