

# Ministry of National Security

## Response to the Recommendations contained in the Third Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on the Treatment of Child Offenders at the Youth Training Centre, St. Michael's Rehabilitation Centre for Young Male Offenders and St. Jude's Interim Rehabilitation Centre for Young Female Offenders

### 1. Recommendation (4.23)

The Committee recommends that the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service increase the budgetary allocation to the Youth Training Centre (TYC) in order to complete outstanding renovations for the dormitories, security system, sewer system and vocational materials. During the visit, the Committee was advised that if monies were allocated for material, the labour can be sourced from the Centre or from other state institutions, such as YTEPP, MUST or SERVOL.

#### **Comments**

The Youth Training Centre is not allocated funding under a specific vote in the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service. If there is a need for an increase in funding, this is made available from the Prison Service budgetary allocation. In this regard, a request for additional funds was made to undertake the identified works. The request was approved and work is scheduled to commence shortly on renovations of three (3) dormitories and the purchase of furniture and minor equipment.

### 2. Recommendation (4.24)

The Committee recommends that there is a need for additional specialized staff to support and develop rehabilitative policies, programmes and procedures for child offenders.

#### **Comments**

In January, 2017, a Prison Psychologist was assigned to the YTC on a two (2) year contract. A Special Education teacher was also assigned to YTC on a month to month contract. At present, a request for permanent staff to address the special needs of residents is currently engaging the attention of the Human Resources Department of the Prison Service.

### 3. **Review of the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (CATT) Recommendations** (4.25)

The Commissioner of Prisons is committed to implement the recommendations of the Children's Authority as soon as it is practical to do so. The following are comments on specific recommendations.

**(a) Recruitment of Sufficient Staffing**

In January 2017, the Prison Service engaged the services of additional professional staff to work with lads at the YTC. This includes a Special Education Teacher on a month to month basis and a Prison Psychologist on a two (2) year contract. A request for permanent staff to address the special needs of YTC residents is presently engaging the attention of the Human Resources Department of the Prison Service. In addition, suitably qualified Prison Officers will be assigned to the YTC as the need arises.

**(b) Requisite policies to be developed and implemented**

The YTC has prepared an Operational Procedures Manual which details policies relating to:

- Behaviour management
- Sexual abuse
- Searches
- Security
- Surveillance
- Clear escort and scheduling procedures

**(c) Financial allocations to facilitate procurement of renovation materials for remaining dormitories as recurrent costs**

The present system of disbursement of funds for infrastructural projects at the YTC is being reviewed.

**(d) Provision of increased capacity**

At present there are thirteen (13) dormitories at the YTC that are being renovated on a phased basis. On completion of this renovation work, the accommodation capacity at the YTC will be one hundred and forty-four (144). The actual number of lads being housed at present is sixty-seven (67). Therefore, with the present capacity being more than double the actual number of lads, it is deemed to be adequate at this time.

**4. Recommendation (4.48)**

**The Committee strongly recommends that the Strategic Plans for the SMIRCYMO and the YTC be drafted and approved by the respective Ministries within six (6) months. The Strategic plan would assist the Rehabilitation Facilities in providing a functional Organizational Chart and methods to rectify the issues of staff shortages.**

**Comments**

At present, the Draft Strategic Plan for the YTC is being reviewed by the Commissioner of Prisons. This document contains an Organizational Chart for the institution.

**5. Recommendation (4.54)**

**The Committee recommends that the Youth Training Centre works in tandem with the various trade schools such as YTEPP and other organizations such as CEPEP to further the vocational skills of the offenders at the Centre. This would allow for the offenders to be able to utilize their vocation as a means to secure a productive future and help reduce recidivism at the Centre. Furthermore, in the future, these persons could be hired by the Centre to use their vocational skills to aid in the continual maintenance and upgrade of the facility.**

**Comments**

The YTC has already partnered with YTEPP with respect to training for the lads and the provision of assistance with minor infrastructural improvements. The areas of training include electrical installation, plumbing, construction and cabinet making.

**6. Recommendation (4.55)**

**The Committee recommends that remedial teaching methods adopted by St. Judes and YTC need to be tailored to improve and encourage the transition into other mainstream education/vocational institutions upon exit from the institution.**

**Comments**

The YTC educational plan is geared towards enabling Lads to transition into mainstream educational and vocational institutions upon their exit from the institution. In light of this objective, all lads are assessed upon entry to determine their academic levels following which they are placed in classes according to their levels of competence. The YTC has remedial classes, for primary school and secondary school levels consistent with external educational institutions.

**7. Recommendation (4.56)**

**The Committee recommends that the Officers assigned to the YTC be kept for a minimum of 2 to 3 years prior to being rotated so as to provide stable relationships for boys' psychological rehabilitation and increase the trust between the staff and the lads.**

**Comments**

Historically, officers assigned to the YTC have remained with the institution in excess of the three (3) years as recommended by the Children's Authority, unless they are subject to disciplinary processes. Presently, there are officers at the institution who have been stationed there for over ten (10) years and who have been able to build lasting bonds with the lads.

**8. Recommendation (4.61)**

**The Committee also recommends that the legislation be amended to allow the YTC to provide for the accommodation of male child offenders under the age of 16 years on criminal and capital offences. This would address the issue of funding and the streamlining of human resources.**

**Comments**

Legislation is currently being drafted to rebrand the Y.T.C as a 'Rehabilitation Centre.' The legislation would enable the Centre to accommodate male child offenders at the institution. The Children's Community Residence, Foster Care and Nurseries Act, 2000 defines a 'Rehabilitation Centre' as a residence for the rehabilitation of youthful offenders, in which youthful offenders are lodged, clothed and fed, as well as taught and includes industrial school as defined in the Children Act.