



The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Office of the Permanent Secretary

E: 19/3/88

May 15, 2021³

Ms. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel
Clerk of the House
Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
Cabildo Building
St. Vincent Street
Port of Spain

Dear Ms. Sampson-Meiguel,

Re: Fifth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on an inquiry into the State's Capacity to provide support of Domestic Violence and Family Conflicts (with specific focus on the availability of support mechanisms during COVID-19 pandemic)

I refer to your letter Ref. No. Parl.: 14/3/69 Vol.VI dated April 24, 2023 at caption.

Please see attached the recommendations/comments by the Ministry of Education on pages thirty-four (34) to thirty-seven (37) of the Report.

Should you require additional information, kindly contact Mrs. Anna M. Singh, Chief Education Officer (Ag.) at ceo@moe.gov.tt or 622-2181 ext. 2344.

Yours respectfully,


.....
Kurt Meyer
Permanent Secretary



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Education Towers, No.5 St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad

**Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public
Administration**

**Fifth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social
Services and Public Administration on an inquiry into
the State's Capacity to provide support of Domestic
Violence and Family Conflicts (with specific focus on
the availability of support mechanisms during
COVID-19 pandemic)**

May 2023

Fifth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on an inquiry into the State's Capacity to provide support of Domestic Violence and Family Conflicts (with specific focus on the availability of support mechanisms during COVID-19 pandemic)

The recommendations/comments of the Ministry of Education outlined on pages thirty-four (34) to thirty-seven (37) of the Report are as follows:

ITEM	JSC RECOMMENDATION	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S RESPONSE
B	<p>The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with NGOs and private agencies, should develop a comprehensive and inclusive Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) programme for schools. The revision and strengthening of existing programmes do not require a vast increase in funding allocation and can be as effective in addressing DV and GBV. This is a medium-term strategy and initial iterations of the programme can be based off existing toolkits from UNESCO and facilitated in-house by teachers or through education drives hosted by the NGOs and private agencies.</p>	<p>The Ministry of Education agrees that collaboration with NGOs and private agencies, will develop a comprehensive and inclusive HFLE programme for schools.</p> <p>A comprehensive HFLE programme currently exists and is being delivered by the teachers. Aspects of the HFLE curriculum are aligned with the personal social component of the guidance and counselling curriculum.</p> <p>The review was undertaken by the Institute of Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) and School of Education, to align both the primary and secondary school curriculum to include topics of family and gender-based violence subsequently undertook the review of the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum.</p> <p>Under this initiative, a gap analysis was conducted to analyse the existing HFLE curriculum and topics related to domestic violence (DV) and gender-based violence (GBV) were included in two relevant themes of the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum.</p> <p>At the primary level, the following topics were proposed for inclusion under the theme:</p> <p>Self and Interpersonal Relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms of physical and emotional abuse at home; • Harassment;

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender stereotypes; • Inequity within relationships; • Bullying; <p>Sexuality and Sexual Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-based violence—causes and consequences; • Roles in the family, village, and country; • Gender attitudes; • Stereotypes, and practices; • Equity and inequity; • Gender roles and responsibilities; and • Sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. <p>At the secondary level, the following topics were proposed under the theme:</p> <p>Self and Interpersonal Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors that can destroy relationships within the family and lead to conflict; • How to respond in hurtful relationships; • Gender-based violence (GBV); • Strategies for recognising and reducing GBV; • Support agencies for conflict situations; • Different ways of dealing with conflict; • Financial stress and family violence; • Peer pressure • Sexuality and Sexual Health; • Characteristics of a healthy family; • Conflict resolution, sexual abuse; • Sexual assault;

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying by adults and others; and • Gender norms and stereotypes <p>Noteworthy is the fact that HFLE is not an assessed teaching position and its implementation is currently dependent on generalist teachers (Teacher I) at the primary level through an integrated approach.</p> <p>At the secondary level, it was recommended as a standalone subject; however, implementation is currently based on teacher's willingness to implement the content, which varies across school and class levels. The revision being proposed maybe considered highly sensitive with specialised information not readily available. This would require the support and intervention of experts from Guidance and Counselling, School Social Work, Ministry of Health, Non-governmental Organisation and Civil Society Organisation as well as other resources personnel from the community to support those persons charged with implementing the curriculum.</p> <p>Additionally, the perspectives and views of faith-based organisations and parents/guardian, as valuable stakeholders must be fully ventilated. The Ministry also recognizes the need to organise responsive measures to mitigate any issues that may affect teachers and students from the treatment of proposed topics.</p>

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D	<p>Provision of a safety plans – All reports of DV (whether a protection order was granted or not) should be accompanied by a safety plan. This can offer some support and relief to persons who are afraid of reporting their abuse.</p>	<p>The Ministry concurs with the recommendations made. Additionally, there should be an increased awareness of the importance of having a safety plan which can start at the school level. This should be encouraged even before reporting.</p> <p>A basic safety plan could be developed with the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying of escape routes; • Identifying of a safe place to go; • Preparing of a survival kit; • Learning self-protection skills and coping mechanisms; • Speaking to someone they trust; and • Knowing the hotline numbers and emergency support.
F	<p>Improvement of the overall access to support – while there are programmes available, there needs to be improved timely access to social support services that address the consequences of abuse to help survivors stabilise and rebuild their lives. This includes shelter and medical, psychological, legal, and economic and other counselling and support services. Access to support can be initiated by explicit steps outlined on social media platforms and across traditional media by each providing agency.</p>	<p>The Ministry of Education agrees with the recommendation. The Student Support Services Division (SSSD) enhanced the overall access to support to students during the COVID-19 pandemic by establishing hotline numbers.</p> <p>These numbers were disseminated via the Ministry's website and social media platforms.</p>
G	<p>Within the next six months, there should be an increase of prevention and Intervention strategies (through training programmes, psycho-social support, education, and empowerment) targeted specifically for men. Additionally, the development of more widespread mentorship programmes for boys and men is important. These programmes can be</p>	<p>The Ministry of Education, through the Corporate Communications Division, in collaboration with the Student Support Services Division (SSSD), are providing mentorship programmes to students – both males and females. Coupled with this, the SSSD will be increasing the delivery of areas of the curriculum specific to:</p>

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	<p>developed and facilitated by both Public and Private Sector agencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychosocial problems • Personal safety • Rights of a Child • Parenting in education • Pilot of ten (10) secondary schools in Restorative Practices. <p>Furthermore, an audit of the existing programmes can be completed to determine the efficacy of the initiatives.</p> <p>The Ministry of Education recognises the importance of a mentorship programme for boys and men and in response, readily granted approval for the introduction of the Barbershop Initiative under the Ministry of Gender and Child Affairs Division, to conduct workshops that targets males, pending adjustments to the themes and content of the programme.</p> <p>The programme will provide training to twenty-five (25) male students at the Forms One (1) to Three (3) levels in April–July 2023 at the following secondary schools:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arima North Secondary 2. Bon Air Secondary 3. El Dorado East Secondary <p>The objectives of the programme are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a safe space for male-to-male discussions about behaviours, attitudes, and gender relations; • Increase awareness of the impact of gender inequality, negative gender stereotypes and existing cultural and social gender norms on behaviours, attitudes;

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender relations; • Identify organisations that provide support and other services for men and boys; and • Change attitudes related to the use of violence. <p>The Ministry of Education is willing to continue to collaborate with public and private sector agencies that are willing to implement programmes that will mentor students and provide opportunities towards developing positive attitudes and behaviours.</p>
H	Improved monitoring and evaluation of existing programmes and intervention policies. This will greatly assist with the further improvement and development of strategies for targeted groups. This can be done in-house by each Ministry/Agency that administers intervention in any capacity,	The Ministry concurs with the recommendation.

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	however, any data collected should be shared and should feed into the Gender-Based Violence Consolidated Database every quarter.	
I	Regular, mandatory follow up and contact with persons affected by protection orders (victims and perpetrators) by social workers and the TTPS to monitor compliance and for assessing the need for further support and intervention.	The Ministry is in agreement with the statement.