



MINISTRY OF GENDER, YOUTH AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

AUGUST 2015 RESPONSE PAPER

**THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, DIVERSITY, THE
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**SUBMITTED BY THE MINISTRY OF GENDER,
YOUTH AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

AUGUST 2015



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RESPONSE TO JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE (JSC) RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development (MGYCD) thanks the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development for placing domestic violence at the forefront of its agenda and accepts the recommendation advanced by the Committee.

Please note that the JSC Recommendations are highlighted in blue for ease of reference.

1. The allocation of funding and human resource 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.

The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development continues to place the issues of Gender-Based Violence/Domestic Violence as a priority on its agenda, and has begun to take steps to address the issue of funding and human resources namely:

- Funding for the Domestic Violence Unit including Programmes and Projects geared towards addressing the issue of Gender-Based Violence is included in the Ministry's current budget as well as the Estimates of Expenditure for fiscal year 2015/2016.
- Increase in the Human Resource for the Domestic Violence Unit. As a result of discussion with the Service Commissions Department in April of 2015, the position of Manager, Domestic Violence Unit was temporarily filled and recruitment for the established positions within the Unit commenced. Additionally, the Ministry is in the process of filling the other positions within the Domestic Violence Unit as well as reviewing the overall organizational structure of the Unit.

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.

The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development strongly agrees with the provision of transitional housing for victims of gender based/domestic violence. There is a challenge currently in accessing spaces for victims of domestic violence on a transitional basis.



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However, the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development proposes to collaborate with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development to establish transitional housing specifically for victims of domestic violence. In the interim, the Ministry intends to partner with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) offering this transitional housing service.

3. The creation of a coordinating body in the form of a Committee with representative from TTPS, shelters and the MGYCD towards the creation of a domestic violence policy and to provide continuity and consistency of policy.

Cabinet, via Minute No. 575 of February 20, 2014, approved the creation of an Inter-Agency Committee to oversee the establishment of the Central Registry on Domestic Violence (CRDV) of which the TTPS is represented by the Crime and Problem Analysis Branch.

Currently, the Ministry in collaboration with United Nations (UN)Women is developing a National Strategic Action Plan (NSAP) to end Gender-Based Violence in Trinidad and Tobago, which will include a National Communication Strategy. The Ministry will assume the coordinating role in the execution of the Plan. Additionally, data collection and analysis from the Ministry's initiatives specifically: the Central Registry on Domestic Violence, Domestic Violence Unit, Domestic Violence Model Shelters and the National Strategic Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence, will be used to guide the development of the Domestic Violence (DV) Policy.

4. Public education programme to support both the perpetrator and victims of domestic violence in collaboration with the TTPS outreach programmes.

The Ministry continuously conducts outreach public education programmes on various issues including domestic violence for which the TTPS and other key stakeholders provide their support. Additionally, new initiatives of the Ministry that address domestic violence include:

- National Communication Strategy on Domestic Violence. The Ministry is partnering with Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to formulate a National Communication Strategy through consultation with Key Stakeholders. This National Communication Strategy will form part of the Ministry's National Strategic Action Plan (developed in collaboration with UN Women).
- The Barbershop Initiative, which is an adaptation of the United Nations Barbershop Conference, is meant to engage the widest cross section of men and boys in a discourse on domestic violence, gender parity and sexual harassment as the Barbershop is the typical setting where men/boys converge and discuss various issues. In fiscal 2016, this initiative will be executed in several communities in the country.



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Continued initiatives of the Ministry include:

- National Family Services, MGYCD, provides:
 - Counselling and psychological care for both perpetrator and victims of domestic violence among other issues.
 - Training for Lay responders to domestic violence in communities to equip volunteers of the community with knowledge/awareness of domestic violence and how to respond appropriately to instances of domestic violence.
- The Gender Affairs Division provides:
 - Defining Masculine Excellence Programme which addresses the subject of men and the notions of masculinity to address various issues including domestic violence. This is supported by other programmes managed by the Ministry such as the Food Preparation and Home Management Programme for Men 9 to 99 and the Gatekeepers Project for Men.

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.

Currently, no specific allocation has been dedicated for research as it relates to domestic violence. However, Cabinet via Minute No. 575 of February 20, 2014 approved the establishment of the Central Registry on Domestic Violence (CRDV). In its budget submission for fiscal 2016, the Ministry has requested funding towards the full establishment of Central Registry on Domestic Violence (CRDV). When implemented the CRDV will:

- Provide a more efficient and effective method of monitoring domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago
- Quickly identify past victims/perpetrators of abuse and assist in obtaining a profile of victims and perpetrators.
- Enhance the development of effective evidence-based policy and programmes through a deeper understanding of the incidence of DV.
- Identify the groups at risk.
- Improve communication/collaboration among practitioners, by the provision of access to historical data/information from a trusted source.
- Reduce the duplication of services by informing practitioners of all agencies involved with a case and by extension, duplication of costs of service delivery.

The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development strongly agrees to the recommendation for research. Thus, to facilitate this, additional funding will be requested by the Ministry to build research capacity and conduct research in collaboration with key stakeholders. Additionally, through the allocation of funding, the Ministry will partner with tertiary institutions and Civil



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Society Organizations (NGOs, CBOs, FBOs) through the One Off Grants to have research conducted.

6. Increased awareness that there are also male victims of domestic violence and the assistance available.

The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development (MGYCD) in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is currently developing a National Communications Strategy on Gender-Based Violence in which men and boys will be a specific target group.

The Ministry has dedicated one (1) of the two (2) domestic violence shelters under construction, specifically to male survivors of domestic violence. Additionally, in its 2015/2016 budget submissions the Ministry proposes to expand on training workshops and publications specifically targeting men and boys on the issue of domestic violence.

The Ministry's National Parenting Programme supports and strengthens parenting in T&T by offering parents the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies to meaningfully address some common parenting challenges.

Additionally, initiatives of the Ministry also seek to promote awareness of issues of domestic violence for both males and females. However, some initiatives target males in particular namely: Defining Masculine Excellence Programme and the Barbershop Initiative.

7. Provision of additional resources to domestic violence shelter towards the provision of 24/7 service and the creation of new 24/7 sanctuaries for domestic violence victims.

The Ministry will continue to support Domestic Violence Shelters and other Non-Governmental Organisations working in the area of gender-based/domestic violence through the provision of one-off grants, subventions, technical support and institutional capacity building initiatives.

Additionally, the Ministry is establishing three (3) domestic violence shelters/safe homes {two (2) Female Safe House and one (1) the Male Safe House} that will operate 24hours daily and provide sanctuary/emergency housing for abused women and men and their children. Within immediate proximity (few yards) to the shelters will be the facility providing various interventions and support services. These properties forms part of an allocation of four (4) residential properties which were allocated to this Ministry by the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure (National Infrastructure Development Company (NIDCO) and are currently undergoing refurbishment.



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8. Development of programmes for victims of domestic violence to assist with the re-introduction into society.

One of the four (4) residential properties which the Ministry acquired from NIDCO is currently undergoing refurbishment. This facility, located in South Trinidad, will be utilized as an Outreach Centre to conduct counselling, entrepreneurship training and skills development to victims of domestic violence who require the services as part of their healing and empowerment.

The Women City Centre (WCC) Project is a collaborative initiative of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through Ministry and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). This centre/facility will provide integrated services for women (a one stop shop) across five major areas namely: violence against women, sexual and reproductive health, economic autonomy, community education and child care. These integrated services will empower women by offering under ‘one roof’, services that meet their immediate and long-term needs.

Additionally, the Ministry will collaborate with various civil society organizations and state agencies to provide assistance to clients/victims of domestic violence.

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 service, training and counselling for the victim and family.

The Ministry currently collaborates with various Ministries and other state agencies as well as non-state agencies in the execution of its mandate. Established protocols and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) will be developed between key agencies including the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and the Ministry of People and Social Development to ensure victims and their families receive adequate financial aid, social services and training.

The Ministry is in the process of developing an Inter-Ministerial Response Strategy for critical incidents, including issues of gender-based/domestic violence. The main objective of this strategy is to provide a coherent framework for Social Sector Ministries/agencies to respond to critical and other incidents in accordance with acceptable standards of quality. This coordinated response will focus on two main components:

- Effective first response; and
- Quality of Response – with set standards for speed / timeliness; efficiency and reliability and trust.



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CONCLUSION

The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development will continue its efforts and expand initiatives to treat with the issues of domestic violence. However, to adequately address the problem and increase effectiveness, it would require a multi-sectoral collaboration in the provision of training and support services.

The emergency and sensitivity of issues involving gender-based/domestic violence, demands that it be placed as a National Priority. Furthermore, the supporting structural components of the agency charged with addressing gender based/domestic violence must be stabilized and strengthened to allow for continuity of programmes and policies to support both victims and perpetrators of gender based/domestic violence.

The Ministry again thanks the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development for the recommendations advanced. The Ministry is assuring its full commitment to treating with the issues of domestic violence to not only the benefit of families but for the wider society and the nation.