

Second Report of the Joints Select
Committee of Human Rights, Equality &
Diversity on the Human Rights of Socially
Displaced Persons in Trinidad & Tobago
with specific focus on their treatment and
relocation from Port-of-Spain public
spaces

**Ministry of Social Development and
Family Services**

Response

June, 2022

Second Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on the Human Rights of Socially Displaced Persons in Trinidad and Tobago with Specific Focus on their Treatment and Relocation from Port of Spain Public Spaces

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Introduction

The Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality & Diversity developed the Second Report on the *Human Rights of Socially Displaced Persons in Trinidad and Tobago with specific focus on their treatment and relocation from Port of Spain public spaces*. The Report was presented in the House of Representatives on May 06, 2022.

In the Report, the Committee provided a list of findings and recommendations regarding its Objective 1: *To Examine the treatment of socially displaced persons in the relocation from public spaces in Port-of-Spain*. In keeping with Standing Order 100(6) and 110(6) of the Senate and House of Representatives, the Committee requested a written response from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) on their recommendations regarding the treatment of socially displaced persons.

In this regard, the MSDFS formally submits the following response paper to the Committee's findings and recommendations.

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Findings and Recommendations of the Joint Select Committee:

Joint Select Committee's Recommendation(s)

4.18 The Committee recommends that the MSDFS provide the Committee with a breakdown of the short, medium and long-term implementation plan, inclusive of timelines, regarding the measures to rectify the issues at CSDP highlighted in Table 6.

MSDFS' Response

The MSDFS proposes to decant CSDP by July 2022, therefore the Ministry will not be responsible for addressing issues at that facility thereafter.

Joint Select Committee's Recommendation(s)

4.19 The Committee recommends that the MSDFS implement the following to allow a holistic approach to support services and mitigate instances of duplication of services:

- Establish a database of persons in receipt of social welfare grants and care/support at institutions with information sharing capabilities across the divisions of the MSDFS; and

MSDFS' Response

The MSDFS is currently engaged in the building of an Integrated Social Enterprise Management System (ISEMS). This system will facilitate the transformation of the Ministry's Social Services Delivery Model to a Service Centre (One-Stop-Shop) Model that is client-centric and service driven. The system's database will uniquely capture clients and members of their households. The system functionalities also include:

- **Application Programming Interface (API) which supports strong opportunities for interoperability with other systems**
- **Web Portals for data sharing with external stakeholders**

The scope of the solution includes:

- **Online eligibility determination, allowing citizens the ability to access and screen for program eligibility**
- **A unique identifier ID for each client. One client will have only one Registration record which should be applicable across the Ministry's services**
- **Integration with E-Identity**
- **An online portal for accessing critical services**
- **Workflow management to fully automate the operations for online applications with end-to-end processing from intake to decision making**
- **A foundation for working with citizens to become self-reliant and independent**

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- **A single view of applicants, allowing caseworkers operational efficiency through comprehensive case management tools**
- **An appropriate benefit in the specified amount on a timely basis to citizens**
- **A platform that can be leveraged to accommodate new services with ease**

Key stakeholders assisting the Ministry in this project are:

- **Ministry of Digital Transformation**
- **iGovTT**

In the interim on a monthly basis, a manual check of persons who receive care/support at institutions is performed to determine whether they are in receipt of social welfare grants.

Joint Select Committee's Recommendation(s)

- **The MSDFS should implement the following administrative and oversight measures (see item 3.11) to improve scrutiny to avoid the recurrence of persons residing at the CSDP and in receipt of grants from the MSDFS:**
 - **An alternative approach to the management of the disbursement of monies to NGOs;**

MSDFS' Response

The Ministry acknowledges the need to improve its method and management of the disbursement of funds to NGOs. As a consequence, MSDFS will implement a “cost per beneficiary model” for clients to access services and programmes provided by NGOs. This model will be applied to determine the fees to be provided for services, standards of care and ensure greater accountability and transparency in the administration of state funds.

- **Establishment of a system of information sharing between the CSDP with other State Funded and Community Care providers**

MSDFS' Response

The Application Programming Interface (API) of ISEMS supports opportunities for interoperability with other systems. As such, the solution will enable data and information sharing across the organization and with other social sector ministries and service providers. In this regard, once fully implemented and operationalized, the system can allow for the real-time sharing of data with partners such as CSDP and other service providers.

- **Improved investigative procedures for applicants of grants from the Social Welfare Division.**

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MSDFS' Response

The MSDFS acknowledges the need for greater coordination between the Ministry and CSDP. As a result, the Ministry's Social Displacement Unit in consultation with the Management of CSDP will duly notify the Social Welfare Division on a monthly basis, of the new clients at the Centre, so as to facilitate timely cross referencing with the MSDFS' clientele.

Joint Select Committee's Recommendation(s)

4.20 Given the issues highlighted at the CSDP, the Committee recommends that the MSDFS complete and finalise the grievance procedure for the Centre by May 31, 2022.

MSDFS' Response

The Grievance Procedure has been completed at the Ministry level for submission to the Society of St. Vincent De Paul for consideration/review and implementation at the CSDP. It is anticipated that the Grievance Procedure document can be finalised before 31st July, 2022.

Joint Select Committee's Recommendation(s)

4.21 The Committee acknowledges the role of the decentralised model of care in the treatment and relocation or removal of socially displaced persons in POS, the Committee recommends that the MoH provide the Committee with the implementation plan and the status of the implementation of the decentralized model of care.

4.22 Given that the MSDFS' is implementing the initiatives in the Continuum of Care for the relocation or removal of socially displaced persons in POS, the Committee recommends that the MSDFS:

- provide an update on the state of the initiatives recommended in the Continuum of Care Framework; and

MSDFS' Response

The Continuum of Care (COC) is an arrangement of services that covers the engagement of street dwellers on the streets as well as assessment, which includes: care plan development, rehabilitation and support to reintegrate into society either through independent living or Care/Supervised living options. In this regard, stakeholder participation is critical to ensure the efficient implementation of the MSDFS' COC model. This involves not only ministries and departments but NGOs and the private sector as well.

To this end, the initiatives of the COC, which fall under the purview of the MSDFS, have had some progress, particularly regarding the establishment of various facilities, which is a critical success factor for the COC. Moreover, the Ministry has

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identified two (2) properties to facilitate transitional living accommodation and has refurbished a facility to provide long-term care for persons 18-55 years old. Additionally, a site for the establishment of an Assessment Centre in Port of Spain (PoS) was identified recently and the Ministry is currently engaged with other State entities on the necessary tasks to operationalise the Centre within the shortest possible timeframe. For further details, the COC Framework highlighting activities already initiated and to be completed is attached at Appendix I.

Joint Select Committee's Recommendation(s)

- encourage more cohesive stakeholder participation to ensure the efficient implementation of the MSDFS' Continuum of Care Model.

MSDFS' Response

The Ministry continues to encourage cohesive action regarding the COC as the MSDFS' Executive has held particular stakeholder engagement meetings with State Agencies such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of National Security, Regional Corporations and the Business sector. Meanwhile the Social Displacement Unit (SDU) also holds regular engagements with Mental Health personnel and City Corporation's agents in its day-to-day activities to address street dwelling.

Joint Select Committee's Recommendation(s)

4.23 Given that one of the key factors for the removal of relocation of socially displaced persons in PoS is legislation, the Committee recommends the MSDFS:

- complete, finalise, and commence implementation of the policy for Socially Displaced Persons Act, 2000 by September 2022; and
- provide the implementation plan and timeline for the implementation of the policy and the Act, to the Committee.

MSDFS' Response

The Ministry is in the process of finalising the draft Policy for the Amendment of the Socially Displaced Persons Act, No. 59 of 2000, through its internal Legislative Review Committee. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the completion and commencement of the implementation of the Policy will be accomplished by September 2022. However, the Implementation Plan, and the Timeline for the implementation of the Policy and the Act will be determined based on the following factors including but not limited to:

- Completion of the internal Departmental review
- Submission of the final draft Policy to the Ministry's Executive
- Stakeholder Consultations
- Review and comprehensive finalisation of the Policy

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- **Submission to Cabinet for approval**
- **Submission to the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel (Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs) for the necessary legislative drafting (including Legislation Review Committee meetings)**

It is estimated that Cabinet approval will be sought by September 2022.

Joint Select Committee's Recommendation(s)

4.24 The committee recommends that MoH collaborate with the AGMLA, to review the Mental Health Act, in accordance with the National Mental Health Policy 2019-2029, and subsequently be placed on the legislative agenda by the end of fiscal 2022.

4.25 The committee recommends that the MoH collaborate with the Municipal Corporations to provide mental health sensitization sessions and training to Municipal Police Officers who engage daily, with socially displaced persons.

4.26 The Committee recommends that the MSDFS note the proposed initiatives of the POSCC to encourage the voluntary relocation of socially displaced persons, in item 4.11, and collaborate with the POSCC to implement the initiatives as an interim measure, pending the proclamation and implementation of the Socially Displaced Persons Act, 2000.

MSDFS' Response

The MSDFS has engaged in collaborative initiatives with the Port of Spain City Corporation, including the handover of the Temporary COVID-19 Pandemic (C19) shelter for Street Dwellers in 2021. The Ministry is therefore committed in its efforts to provide on a continuous basis, the City Corporation with plans/programmes/activities for addressing street dwelling in PoS, as well as support via technical advice and resource sharing.

Joint Select Committee's Recommendation(s)

4.27 The Committee recommends that MSDFS collaborate with other Ministries, Departments and Agencies to negotiate for socially displaced persons at the transitional facilities, once their care plans allow, to be incorporated into programmes available to the public to facilitate a seamless transition into society.

MSDFS' Response

The MSDFS COC Framework allows for collaboration with other Ministries, Departments and Agencies. Collaborative initiatives include:

- **Liaising with the Ministry of Labour to get jobs for socially displaced persons who are capable, as part of their rehabilitation and re-entry strategy**
- **Skills training partnership with partners such as MuST, Servol, YTEPP etc and our SEED programme of self-employment for those who may be eligible and NGOs such as Vision on Mission.**

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- **Engaging NADAPP to incorporate socially displaced persons with substance abuse issues into rehabilitation programmes**
- **Liaising with the Ministry of Health to provide long term care for socially displaced persons who have mental health issues at the New Horizons facility**
- **Accommodating older socially displaced persons at Homes for Older Persons**

Joint Select Committee's Recommendation(s)

4.28 The Committee recommends that the MSDFS include the Office of the Prime Minister, Gender and Child Affairs, and the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, in the stakeholder discussions and activities related to the policy to ensure that the perspectives of socially displaced children or children whose parents are socially displaced are considered in the deliberations.

MSDFS' Response

The MSDFS will implement the recommendation of the Committee to include the Office of the Prime Minister -Gender and Child Affairs and the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago- in the stakeholder discussions and activities related to the policy. This will ensure that the perspectives of socially displaced children or children whose parents are socially displaced are considered in the deliberations.