



**Response by TATT - Follow-up on the Implementation of the
Recommendations made in the Twenty-Second Report of the Public
Accounts Committee on the examination of the Audited Financial
Statements of the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and
Tobago for the Financial Years 2010 to 2016.**

January 2022

	TATT'S RESPONSE
<p>1. Internal Audit</p> <p>The TATT should report to Parliament on the progress and improvements made by its Internal Audit Department with regard to the training of staff to use the Internal Audit Department's TeamMate Software by January 31, 2022.</p>	<p>The TATT in its discussions with the new Manager, Internal Audit recruited in 2020, decided to forego the use of the TeamMate Software. This decision was made after considerable research into the software revealed that it is employed by very large, often, multinational companies with audit teams of ten (10) plus persons spread across large geographical areas. In comparison, TATT's Internal Audit team is a very small team comprising of only four (4) members of staff and the organization is a small organization consisting of ninety-nine (99) employees at one main physical location.</p> <p>As a result, the Internal Audit team utilizes rigorous mechanisms offered within Microsoft Suite as a comprehensive audit management system to help the auditors and the audit department leadership to manage all aspects of the audit process, namely documentation of working papers, audit reports and a tracking database for follow-up of recommendations.</p>
<p>2. Accounts Receivable</p> <p>The TATT should report to Parliament on the following by January 31, 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The progress made with respect to the recovery of its outstanding debts; 	<p>The TATT has continued to take action in the courts to recover debts due and owing by concessionaires. Action has also been taken to recommend termination of concessions to the Honourable Minister.</p> <p>The following concessions have been terminated:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ice Media Limited, debt outstanding \$69,493.00. Court award to date \$50,129.32 2. Caribbean Broadcasting Systems and Services Limited, Debt outstanding \$258,800.13. Court award to date \$201,127.97. 3. Wireless Communications Limited, Debt Outstanding \$44,000.00. Court award to date \$43,082.00. <p>Regarding Universal Service Fund Contributions, all delinquent contributors have been pursued for contributions due and all except for TSTT have paid or committed through the courts to pay by specified dates. TSTT is being pursued through the courts for the amounts owed to the fund.</p>

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ii. Any deferrals offered to debtors as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic	Deferrals were made to debtors in the Broadcasting Sector only. This sector suffered reductions in revenue of over 50% during the period from 2019 to 2021. Broadcasting concessionaires were given a longer period to pay fees
iii. The progress made by TATT in adopting new or more aggressive debt collection mechanisms particularly for foreign debtors; and	The TATT has no foreign debtors currently.
iv. The specific action undertaken to reconcile the outstanding debt cited above as awarded by the courts in the United States	The matter of TATT v. Mohan Jaikaran (CV2014 – 00093) is currently before the High Court where the Estate of the deceased (Mohan Jaikaran) is being pursued to recover the debt owed to the TATT.
3. Universal Service	
i. The TATT should provide a status update to Parliament on the progress of the Digital Inclusion Survey by January 31, 2022;	The TATT in collaboration with the Central Statistical Office and Kairi Consultants Ltd (project consultants) conducted face to face field interviews which commenced on April 19, 2021. The targeted sample size of 6,000 households was agreed with the Central Statistical Office as being representative of the population. The COVID-19 pandemic did interrupt the field interview process for a period of 134 days during which fieldwork was suspended, Field activities resumed on September 14, 2021. Fieldwork officially ended on November 21, 2021, with a total of 6,215 households surveyed, comprising 17,145 individual responses. The survey analysis is currently being undertaken by the project consultants, with final reports expected to be submitted to the Authority by end of January 2022. The survey report is expected to be published after all reviews and approvals by early March 2022.
ii. The TATT should engage with local service providers to provide data on geographic mobile internet, voice/SMS and fixed line coverage and consolidate their responses in their Quarterly and Annual Market Updates for ease of public reference. A report on this should be submitted to Parliament by January 31, 2022; and	<p>The TATT has engaged the relevant service providers to obtain a geographical breakdown of Internet and mobile subscriptions for 2021/2022.</p> <p>This initial engagement has allowed service providers an opportunity to provide available statistics and articulate any constraints in providing data disaggregated at the level of municipalities in Trinidad and parishes in Tobago. On receipt of the information from service providers, the resulting feedback and data submissions shall be reviewed and analyzed to determine the current feasibility and way forward for incorporation into future quarterly and annual market reports.</p>

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	<p>Additionally, the TATT is engaging with service providers to supply information to update its geographical information system (GIS) to illustrate the fixed and mobile network coverage in Trinidad and Tobago. This project commenced in November 2021 and is expected to be completed by September 2022.</p>
<p>iii. The TATT should conduct a feasibility assessment on the potential benefits and drawbacks of inviting a third service provider to Trinidad and Tobago and report to Parliament on its findings by January 31, 2022.</p>	<p>A feasibility assessment was conducted and an initial review of the document was completed by a sub-committee of the Board after which changes were recommended. The document is not yet approved for publication.</p>
<p>4. Lack of Enforcement and Low Compliance - Recommendation The TATT should provide an update including any draft relevant legislative amendments to Parliament on new enforcement mechanisms implemented to address service provider compliance issues by January 31, 2022.</p>	<p>Amendments to the Telecommunications Act Chap. 47:31 were formally submitted to the Ministry of Public Administration on March 12, 2019. Further review and resubmission took place in 2020.</p> <p>The Amendments include permitting TATT to impose monetary Administrative Penalties for breaches of their concession on providers who are in breach of their statutory obligations or their authorization. The draft legislative amendment relating to administrative penalties is attached as Appendix 1 & 11</p>
<p>5. Project Management Plans and Timelines</p> <p>i. The TATT should report to Parliament on the progress of the completion of its outstanding projects including their expected completion dates, no later than January 31, 2022; “The TATT commenced a project for the installation of Wi-Fi access points throughout the country, on August 23, 2019. While work on the three (3) Wi-Fi projects had commenced on schedule, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, only 2 out of the 3 projects were on target for completion.”</p>	<p>1. <u>TTWiFi</u></p> <p>Parliament is informed that TATT has successfully rolled out Wi-Fi at the 16 public libraries and the waiting areas in 10 public transport hubs – i.e. PTSC bus terminals, Water Taxi terminals and Inter-Island Ferry Terminals – in Trinidad and Tobago. Due to the pandemic and the online learning mode for schools, Wi-Fi has been rolled out in 44 unconnected primary schools, at the computer room, library and administrative offices, including the principal’s office and staff room. This phase of the TTWiFi project is scheduled to be completed by September 2022 with the rollout of Wi-Fi at main waiting areas in hospitals and health centres. Wi-Fi connectivity has already been deployed at the COVID-19 designated hospitals, Couva Hospital and Multi-Training Facility, Arima General Hospital and Augustus Long Hospital.</p>

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	<p data-bbox="978 175 1719 207">2. <u>Persons with Disabilities subsidised Phones Project</u></p> <p data-bbox="930 248 1934 354">The Persons with Disabilities subsidized phones project is implemented and in progress. As of 14th January 2022, the Authority has authorised 93 participants to receive the subsidy.</p> <p data-bbox="978 394 1682 427">3. <u>Broadband Infrastructure Development Project</u></p> <p data-bbox="930 467 1961 646">The 1st broadband infrastructure development project is scheduled for Brasso Venado and Los Atajos in Trinidad and Parlatuvier, L'Anse Fourmi and Bloody Bay in Tobago. Bids from concessionaires have been evaluated and the award of contract to the winning concessionaire is imminent. The project is scheduled to commence and be completed by September 2022.</p>
<p data-bbox="128 724 905 865">ii. The TATT should provide Parliament with an update on the effectiveness of its public awareness campaign, to promote the PwD Project to the community of persons with disabilities by January 31, 2022; and</p>	<p data-bbox="930 724 1955 865">The PwD initiative aims to subsidize the cost of mobile devices with assistive technologies for the visually impaired and/or the hearing-impaired communities. The amount of the subsidy is equivalent to 90% of the first TT\$600 of the cost of the device plus VAT, i.e., TT\$540 plus VAT.</p> <p data-bbox="930 906 1948 1230">To increase public awareness of the project, the Authority continues to publish newspaper articles, launch videos created specifically for the PwD community, participate in both television and radio talk show programmes, and collaborate directly with PwD organisations including the Blind Welfare Association, Trinidad and Tobago Association for the Hearing Impaired, Persons Associated with Visually Impairments and the Consortium of Disability Organisations. In addition, the Authority has amended its eligibility criteria to qualify for the subsidy to include all minors with a disability and all persons in receipt of an invalidity grant from the National Insurance Board.</p> <p data-bbox="930 1271 1934 1377">During the 2021-2022 financial year, the Authority intends to collaborate with the Ministry of Education to directly assist children with disabilities who can benefit from this project.</p>

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<p>iii. The TATT should report to the Parliament on issues and obstacles which confronted the entity regarding the management of its projects portfolio during the Covid-19 pandemic and including proposals for addressing same, by January 31, 2022.</p>	<p>The Parliament is asked to note that project delays arising from the COVID-19 restrictions is the major issue encountered during the management of these projects. The periods of lockdowns and halt on construction activities impacted the implementation of Wi-Fi and the designated locations. The closure of offices also limited uptake in the persons with disabilities project.</p> <p>TATT has been able to mitigate delays caused by the restrictions, as far as practical, with careful planning and coordination of activities with all parties involved in the deployment of Wi-Fi and working around the restrictions. For example, during the lockdown, essential personnel were engaged to conduct works.</p> <p>Due to the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Authority has updated its application and authorisation process which gives all applicants the option to submit their registration documents online as well as receive all approved authorisations online</p>
<p>6. Spectrum Allocation</p> <p>i. The TATT should provide Parliament with an update on the status of completion of its Spectrum Management Framework document and its efforts to modernize the regulatory framework for maritime services by January 31, 2022;</p>	<p>The revision to the Spectrum Management Framework has been prepared and will undergo at least two rounds of public consultation before finalization and publication by September 2022. The first round of public consultation was conducted from 11th October to 13th December 2021. The comments and recommendations received are being considered and the second round of consultation is scheduled for May 2022.</p> <p>TATT has also prepared an Authorisation Framework for Maritime Services which is intended enhance the use of maritime radiocommunication devices for safety of life at sea and commercial maritime communications. Public consultation on this Authorisation Framework is expected to be completed and the document published by December 2022.</p>

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<p>ii. The Ministry of Digital Transformation should provide Parliament with an update on the proposed amendments to the Telecommunications Act by January 31, 2022; and</p>	<p>Please see Appendix 11</p>
<p>The response of the office of the Solicitor General to the PAC, stated that the office had challenges in the preparation of its opinion on the 2013 Request for Proposals for a third mobile provider and the assignment of the 700MHz spectrum. It was noted that the requested opinion of the Solicitor General was impeded by the lack of verification of the facts by the Ministry of Public administration and Digital transformation. Without this verification, the submission of the Solicitor General's opinion could not be facilitated.</p> <p>iii. The TATT should provide Parliament with a report explaining the reason for its noncompliance with the request by the office of the Solicitor general for verification of facts. It should also include a clear policy to ensure that such noncompliance does not recur. This report should be submitted by January 31, 2022.</p>	<p>[This seems to be a typographical error]</p> <p>The note indicates that it was the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation, and not the TATT, that failed to provide verification. TATT has not received any such request from the Solicitor General's Chambers. The MDT, now standing on its own has provided a statement on the matter at Appendix 111.</p> <p>TATT has been compliant with all requests made of it regarding information to the Ministry in this matter. Based on the last request by the Ministry, an Information Note was submitted to the Minister on the third Mobile Operator on 27th September 2019.</p> <p>TATT has resubmitted this Information Note to the Minister of Digital Transformation</p>
<p>7. Need to Promote STEM Education</p> <p>i. The TATT should report to Parliament on any further measures to be implemented to extend its cooperation efforts to more tertiary level institutions by January 31, 2022;</p>	<p>The TATT has been in discussions with the Ministry of Education during 2021 and has received a proposal from the Curriculum Development Division of the Ministry of Education with options to provide assistance for the development of</p>

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	<p>ICT's in education. These initiatives are aimed at influencing the CSEC and Cape syllabuses initially.</p> <p>TATT is also currently considering the establishment of bursaries for tertiary level students to promote ICT-related fields of study.</p>
<p>ii. The TATT should collaborate with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, towards the development of initiatives aimed at providing training and experience to prospective journalist and report its findings to Parliament, not later than January 31, 2022.</p>	<p>TATT provided training to journalists in partnership with the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters Association as part of its Broadcasting Forum in 2019 and 2020 using a virtual format in August 2020. The areas of training provided were "If I were a Media Owner" and Presenting Your Story: Tools Techniques and Tips"</p> <p>A proposal for further training in 2022 is currently being developed.</p> <p>An approach to the Ministry of Labour has not yet been made.</p>