

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO AND REPORT ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, HELD (IN PUBLIC) IN THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM MEZZANINE FLOOR, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, THE PORT OF SPAIN INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 2016.

PRESENT

Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir	Chairman
Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein	Member
Miss Nadine Stewart	Member
Miss Khadijah Ameen	Member
Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith	Member
Mr. Julien Ogilvie	Secretary
Miss Kimberly Mitchell	Assistant Secretary
Miss Katharina Gokool	Graduate Research Assistant

ABSENT

Mr. Esmond Forde	Member [<i>Excused</i>]
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine	Member [<i>Excused</i>]

TRANSFORMED LIFE MINISTRY

Pastor Glen Awong	Founder, President
Mrs. Florence Awong	Vice-President
Ms. Kathryn Lee	Administrative Officer

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LIVING WATER COMMUNITY

Ms. Rhonda Maingot	Foundress, Director
Ms. Hulsie Bhaggan	Administrator
Ms. Caroline James	

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Mr. Roger Watson	Manager, Centre for Socially Displaced Persons
Ms. Angelique Taylor	National President

PIPARO EMPOWERMENT CENTRE

Ms. Jessie Joseph	Director
Mr. Vincent Paul	Peer Counsellor Supervisor
Mr. Dexter Cole	Chef, Piparo Empowerment Centre

VISION ON MISSION

Mr. Wayne Chance	Executive President
Mr. Gordon Husbands	Monitoring and Evaluation Director

1.38 p.m.: Meeting resumed in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room.

Mr. Chairman: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the Eighth Meeting of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration. This is the second public hearing pursuant to our enquiry into the effectiveness of State's intervention directed at socially displaced persons in Trinidad and Tobago. I would like to say again, welcome to all members of the public who are listening on Radio 105.5 to the proceedings broadcast live, and also to our viewers on the Parliament channel who are faithfully tuning in whenever there is an enquiry in the Joint Select Committee system of the Parliament. The proceedings are also being broadcast on

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Parliament YouTube channel *ParlView*, and members of the viewing and listening audience are invited to send comments, especially if they having worked in the area that we are enquiring can provide solutions from their experience that will assist the Committee in making its decisions.

At this time I would like to welcome the officials who are present with us this afternoon. They are officials from the Transformed Life Ministry, the Living Water Community, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Piparo Empowerment Centre, and Vision on Mission. Before I ask Committee members to introduce themselves and before I ask the witnesses to introduce themselves and their organizations, I would like to remind our live audience as to the objectives of this second enquiry.

We had six objectives of the enquiry, that is, six main purposes that we wanted to enquire into. But, for today's sitting we really—given that we have the institutions that are actively on the ground doing the work with respect to rehabilitating socially displaced persons—would like to examine the systems and procedures in place for the effective management and monitoring of the various state sponsored centres and institutions involved in housing and/or rehabilitating the socially displaced.

We would like to obtain from the witnesses their views on the effectiveness of the multi-sectoral efforts and rehabilitation services targeted towards the socially displaced persons. Of course, during the enquiry a number of other issues will arise, but we are really focused today on finding from the perspectives of the witnesses themselves, what are their views on the status of socially displaced persons and their rehabilitation, and what solutions could they recommend from their own experience, day-to-day experience, so that we in the Parliament can make an informed decision with respect to preparing our report so that we can see some changes in this area of the socially displaced persons. I would like at this point in time to invite Committee members to introduce themselves. May I start on my left?

[Introductions made by members of the Committee]

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Mr. Chairman: And may I ask the representatives of the NGOs and the agencies who are here to introduce themselves and, also, may I indicate that the Committee is grateful for the submissions that you have kindly sent to us, and we acknowledge them. Thank you very much. So, may I start on my right, who I think is Mr. Cole?

[Introductions made by members of the entities]

Mr. Chairman: At this point, I would like to invite the agencies which made submissions to us to briefly address us for a few minutes so that we can start the discussions and then open the floor to questions from members of the Committee. May I ask Ms. Rhonda Maingot for some opening remarks, Foundress and Director of the Living Water Community. I start with the middle to ensure equity.

Ms. Maingot: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our Committee has worked in particular on the streets of Port of Spain and surrounding areas for over 30 years. We have worked with socially displaced persons. We have a centre for socially displaced persons downtown Port of Spain. During the course of the 30 years, of course, we have seen a very different target group come to us and change rapidly, I would say, in the last 10 years. We have seen many of our clients be very sick, die of AIDS in particular, many of them have also been able to come off the streets with rehabilitation that we have offered. Many of them, unfortunately, have remained on the streets or have just gone on to a better place.

Our experience of working on the streets over these years has shown us that we really have never been able to put our finger on the problem for socially displaced persons. No matter what Government is in, and what we try together, or what work has been done, the clientele on the streets seems to get more and more, as the years go by, and although they change, and I would think in the last—when we first began a lot of the people on the streets were homeless because of social problems in their own homes or in their areas, now we see a very different clientele on the streets, a lot of them, of course, are mentally ill and a lot of them are addicted to drugs or

alcohol.

So, we deal with a lot of different psychological problems with the homeless now. I guess maybe that it is one of the reasons why as soon as we feel that there is something that we can do, the target group, the clientele shifts so much that what we thought can help can no longer help. And it has been a struggle to continue working on the streets and to helping our sisters and brothers who are in need. And I am very happy and grateful to the Government Trinidad and Tobago at this time, to have this Committee set up so that the stakeholders can really talk about it and see what is the best thing, and what has been successful in other countries as we ourselves have investigated that, and what can we do as a people, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, to come together, because we believe, and I really believe that there is only one way and that is the way of community effort taking in the Government, the business community, the NGO community, everyone working together on this problem. The one organization I know, our organization, we can never handle this problem. It is totally beyond what we can do as an organization, so I am happy to be here to discuss it with the other stakeholders and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Ms. Maingot, and I will ask Ms. Jessie Joseph of the Piparo Empowerment Centre to address us briefly with a few brief opening remarks.

Ms. Joseph: The Piparo Empowerment Centre is actually a department of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. Piparo Empowerment Centre opened its doors in 2001, and we are set up specifically to deal with substance abusers. Our clientele come from the social displacement units, the Inter-Agency Unit, and we also have walk-in clients, we have clients from other centres, we also have a number of people coming in from the Magistracy, Judiciary; we have people coming from the Drug Treatment Court; we have low-income people coming from

the workplace, from various government Ministries; we have people from national security, the army, we treat people from across the board.

Since we opened our doors, we have treated over 1,400 persons. Our programme is actually a very structured programme geared towards substance abuse treatment. So, in treating with the substance abusers we have a specific method of working with this particular group. Our success rate has been—but internationally it is 30 per cent and under. We meet this success rate and, most times, exceed it. We have with us today one of our success stories, Mr. Cole, he is now on our staff. Included in our programme we have a whole series of skills. In addition to the treatment, we have a whole series of skills which enable our clientele at the end of the day to be able to fit back into society and to find themselves into a better economic situation. That is basically it in a nutshell.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Before I move on to our next agency, a point of clarification, you said you deal with substance abusers, what types of substances? Is alcohol? Is narcotics? What type of narcotics are you seeing being abused?

Ms. Joseph: All. Any altering substance. It may be things that people concoct for themselves. Apart from all the drugs that we know sometimes people concoct things that affect them mentally, and they have to come in for treatment.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. May I ask Mr. Wayne Chance, Executive President of Vision on Mission, to briefly address us with respect to his own perspective on the subject of our enquiry?

Mr. Chance: Thank you very much. Vision on Mission is an organization that would have had its genesis from within our nation's prisons of Trinidad and Tobago. Vision on Mission focuses on the whole question of reintegration of offenders. Primarily our clientele comes from the prisons, but we also work with persons who would have been deported from different parts of the world. We facilitate this through the means of facilities which we refer to as in-transit facilities. We

accommodate these individuals for a period of six months to two years. We provide employment opportunities with various agencies as a means to help them to restore their life and taking responsibility at the same time. We conduct a host of different interventions as it relates to various chromogenic needs, we use best practice approach and evidence approach as it relates to treating with this particular target group.

We have worked with over 11,000 persons. I am proud to say we have about 82 per cent success rate. We have recently, within the last seven years, started working with persons through our reintegration model who are socially displaced, and we have been accommodating such clients and helping them, particularly those who would have had a prison background and for some reason or the other through some family issues, or community issues, or whatever, would have become socially displaced, we help them to resettle back into the community.

1.55p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chance. And I will invite Ms. Angelique Taylor, National President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to address us briefly at this point.

Ms. Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is really an honour to be able to attend today's proceedings to contribute towards the enquiry, to be able to come up with different solutions, workable solutions that we all can contribute to.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is an international charitable organization comprising of lay persons who serve persons in need regardless of their colour, creed, religion or social status, and we also collaborate with other organizations to empower persons to achieve self-sufficiency. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago approached the Society back in 1991 to come on board to assist in the operation of the Centre for Socially Displaced Persons and we have done so since 1991.

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We continually work with the Ministry in terms of the efficient management. I would not—I would want to say that we are prepared to work with the Ministry to improve the situation at the Centre for Socially Displaced Persons. We have started discussions. We understand that the problem of social displacement cannot be solved with just the Society of St. Vincent de Paul but as our colleagues have indicated, this requires a national response and all stakeholders involved to be on board for the resolution of this problem. Thank you very much, Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, National President, Society of St. Vincent de Paul. And finally Pastor Glen Awong, President of Transformed Life Ministry, could you address us now?

Pastor Awong: A pleasant good day to each and every one. I have over 25 years working with the socially displaced on the streets, picking them up from the streets, bringing them by me, bathing them, cleaning them. Some of them was real wounded with maggots and worms and different things like that, rejected by the hospital at times. So I have a great experience working with them as time goes along.

I just worked with about 200 people under the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and my experience was not too nice. I had some stumbling blocks with the Ministry, of displacement, but I have conquered and made sure that the project was very successful, where they take them to the Piparo Centre, up there, and to my surprise nearly everybody was on the streets at this time.

It is very hurtful and therefore I know a greater effort needs to be done, I know one Ministry could do it. I do what you call the assessment, take them in by me, assess them with every sickness, every disease, make sure they get medication for them, make sure they come back to their status, the majority of them are suffering with mental illness.

So I know many more people need to be on the board. You need the health officers, you need different laws to pass that; you have the right to pick up these

people from the streets because the street is in a mess. I am glad for this meeting today because I have a great input to give. I will stop here, at this present time. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Is it a burning issue Ms. Joseph?

Ms. Joseph: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to clarify one little thing, less it be misconstrued. There are two centres up at Piparo, one for the socially displaced and the Piparo Empowerment Centre which deals specifically for substance abusers and I think Pastor Awong was referring to the Piparo Empowerment Centre, but his referral was to the New Horizons which is for the socially displaced.

Pastor Awong: I did not call any name but it was really referring to—

Ms. Joseph: No, but when you said up at Piparo, you understand what I mean.

Mr. Chairman: We will clarify during the course of the proceedings. Before I invite Committee members to pose their questions and I know they are all eager to pose their questions, the Chair does have a prerogative in that he can override all of them in the Committee. So what I will do now, with their leave of course, is that we have with us two success stories who have kindly accompanied the teams and I would like to ask Mr. Dexter Cole—[*Crosstalk*] I was told we have three. If we have three—I was advised that we have two, but if there is a third I will invite you to address us as well. But Mr. Dexter Cole and we have Ms. Caroline James and I want to thank you particularly for coming forward and what I would ask for you briefly and we will be engaging you since you were there and now you are here. I will ask for you to simply tell us, as far as you wish to tell us, what you felt like being there and what you feel like now being here.

Could you tell us what was your experience of both places? And I will ask Mr. Cole to address us briefly on that point.

Mr. Cole: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My experience with the Piparo Empowerment Centre is one of a transformation that—I am impressed with what work is being done

as regards rehabilitation regarding the socially displaced because of—my state was one where I had given up and my choice was the use of drugs and Piparo has restored my tolerance level as regards putting up with the daily, everyday struggles, I should say. Because not being educated as regards the needs, as regards living arrangements, for instance, the programme does not only help with the rehabilitation of drugs. We have parts of the programme where there is a spiritual part of the programme where you can have your prayer session and stuff like that. We have a recreational period. It is not only about drugs, but as regards the rehabilitation from drugs, there is an intensive input as regards the staff who are on board making sure that the client is involved with the knowledge of the true dangers, of the potential dangers of these drugs that we seem to choose or gravitate to.

My personal experience with the Piparo Empowerment Centre is one of a transformation and restoration as regards my confidence level because the staff never shunned me in any way. They give me a free opportunity to get involved with every part of the programme because the programme itself has the different departments whereas it seems to mimic a work environment that once you get involved with the programme you seem to easily fit in society when comes to obtaining a job or seeking employment. That is there, and now, my completion of my programme took beyond the nine-month period because the staff there saw that there was something I could have done more than just what I had already been doing.

What they did was they had like courses entailed in the programme that you could get involve with, you can make yourself more employable to the society that we have today, and as regards respect for others this has increased for myself as regards how I relate to others and the Piparo Empowerment Centre is a place that I will always be talking about. I will never stop talking about the Piparo Empowerment Centre because, like I said it has restored my confidence level, tolerance level and today how I feel is more, I should say, involved with things

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around me. Because of my drug use I isolated myself and I was not communicating and stuff like that and today I should say I am proud of the work being done even in Parliament because, I mean, without these, I should say, dignitaries putting things in place for—a place like Piparo Empowerment Centre I would not have a voice today. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Before I ask Ms. James, there is a follow-up question I need to pose to you and that is, you would have been a young man like everyone else who went to school with you and then you started on drugs, narcotics of various types. From your experience what advice would you give to a person so that he will be dissuaded from making those first few steps into the role of decline?

Mr. Cole: What I should say is that my choice of drug use was not so much of me willingly going into it. It was like peer pressure. So what I believe could be the advice or should be the advice is to have the relevant information as regards whatever getting into because I was not aware about what the substance could do to me. But it was introduced to me in a classroom and we had like one or two guys who used to do it like after school and stuff like that. So my advice would be to become more informed and do not be too hurry to experience the existing world, because I believe that was my biggest fault, because I wanted to do the things that I am seeing like people older than me doing at an early age. So I believe being patient with what is being taught at the moment could be the real key and you know, being informed about things around you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Cole. Already a solution is appearing before me as Chair and committee members, that is, maybe we need to really start at age five in our primary schools to teach our youngsters about the perils and if we are not reaching them, I would recommend that maybe we find other mechanisms to tell them, from age five and on, about some of the effects of narcotics use and abuse. But we will come back to that point and I will like to bring in Ms. Carolyn James to

also tell us about your experience of being there and your experience about being here now.

Ms. James: First, I will say my experience being there was very hard, as a woman being on drugs. It is a lifestyle, you had to adapt to survive. And the style I adapt was defence mechanism, a loner being out on the streets at nights, I adapt the criminal mentality to survive. So then there is a lot of stuff in the criminal mentality. I learned it, I did it; it was hard to say, stop, because I never knew I could have get cleaned. I never knew it had places I could have gone and get cleaned. So I always had this in my mind, I will die using drugs. But after getting incarcerated, in and out of prison several times; in 2004, I was incarcerated and there is where I get that spiritual awakening in prison. And while there, they had a queen show and I decided to go into this show and stuff happened and I ended up winning the show.

One of the judges came back on two separate special visits and questions were asked, if I get help would you take the help and stuff, but in my time of using I know people promised to help me so many times and never turned up. So it came like as though this is another one. So I was just like, okay. But when she came she really came back and I accepted it. And on my way, released from prison, she took me to the New Life Ministries. I went, I did a screening and they sent me back home to put things together and went back there and did my programme, three months in-house and that is where I learned about addiction.

Two years after I had to go back, every Monday, as a two-year follow-up, to see how I was living in the free world now without drugs amongst these same people that I was using drugs with. It was a hard thing to do, yes, but I wanted to stay clean. So I keep going to my meetings on the Mount and I keep liaising with my counsellors and telling them certain things that keep happening, but I kept on going because I started to enjoy that free life from the drugs. And I keep on doing it until I started getting involved in Narcotics Anonymous meetings and I started working the

programme. And in working with the programme, things started happening because I had a life of—the life I came from was a broken home—and I started going back to school, getting my education and things start falling into place.

So I realized well, hey, this thing is working and I hold on to it and I keep working it and this is what they teach me, keep working it so that it will be able to work for me. And the simple things that they taught me to do, I keep doing that on a daily basis and up to now I am still doing it. And today the life that I have now is 100 per cent better than the one I had before. I love this life that I have now because I have more sense, I learned a lot more about drugs, the dangers and the damages which I knew and today I am proud of myself for who I am today and where I am at because of getting to do a programme at New Life Ministries. Today, I am 11 years clean from doing my drugs. Today I am working; I am a staff; I am working at Piparo Empowerment Centre as a Counsellor. Today I am giving back what I have received.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Ms. James. I need a follow-up because you know, again, solutions are appearing to us, we need to solve the problem. I want to ask you from the experience that you have had, if you meet someone who is a substance abuser, what can you tell that person, maybe not immediately but over a period of time so that he or she will see the harm he or she is doing to herself. Is there anything or things you will tell that person based upon your own experience and hopefully enable that individual to see the errors of her ways?

Ms. James: Yes. Firstly, I will find out or let them know that if there is a problem that causing them to end up on drugs you need to talk about it, because with my experience I had nobody to talk to. My parents were not there. I was sexually abused and that is what led me—so if I have to say anything to anybody, I will let them know we have hidden secrets and these hidden secrets are things that will cause us to end up on drugs to hide that pain. So we need to talk and let it out to prevent us from going there.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much and therefore you see a need for maybe people who are on a downward slide to have a confidant, someone they can trust, someone who understands, someone with empathy and compassion who will be able to allow them to open up so we can diagnose the source of the problem as opposed to masking it by narcotic use. Thank you very much.

We have started on a very, very, productive note. We are getting to an understanding of why citizens can find themselves slipping through the cracks and not taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the State. We are getting a clearer understanding and we are getting also some solutions and since I have assured all Committee members that all witnesses will be given an opportunity to speak I shall now be more silent and I will ask MP Christine Newallo-Hosein to ask her first question, then the other members of the Committee and, of course, the mission leaders can always direct the question to their support staff and to their assistants as they see fit. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. I just want to ask Mr. Cole, how were you introduced to Piparo Empowerment Centre? Were you on the verge of wanting help? Were you encouraged to get help? Was it voluntary or were you taken against your will? Could you just indicate?

Mr. Cole: Firstly, I did not begin at Piparo Empowerment Centre, I started at Transformed Life Ministry and there is where I was told about Piparo Empowerment Centre. But the initial being at Transformed Life Ministry was introduced to me from the IAU unit that was going through Port of Spain asking individuals if they get the opportunity to get off the streets if they would take the opportunity and with the hope to be reintegrated into society and it is that approach there, the last part of it, to be reintegrated into society is what encourage me to take the opportunity.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And how long did the rehabilitation programme take with you? Was it instantaneously? Did you resist at first? What was the process before

being rehabilitated and reintegrated?

Mr. Cole: All right. I believe the educational part of it with regard to what substance abuse persons go through was the turning point factor for me because I was not aware of the things that I would go through with the—willingly wanting to stay away from the drugs where we have, there are withdrawal symptoms. I was not aware about this. So being educated of what the individual suffers as regards to wanting to make the change is what encouraged my transformation because I was not aware about these things, things like anxiety and stuff like that. These things, becoming educated as regards to these stuff is what helped me to make that turning point because when I looked at the damaging effects in the event that I do return. In the event that I stay away from the drugs maybe about three months or four months and I return, there is even a greater damage being done because of the abstinence at the time. So the rehabilitation programme took like about, beyond nine months for me where the turning point really happened. The programme at the Piparo Empowerment Centre is nine months and I was at Transformed Life Ministry for three months so then the turning point for me really took place beyond the nine months where I truly started to absorb what Piparo was offering as regards to the dangers of the drugs that I was so involved in.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. And Ms. James, I do not mean to take you back, but I just wanted to find out from you, you indicated that the persons who would have initially offered help never returned and I am asking on the other side. When we encounter persons who may be afflicted with the drug abuse problem or any issue like that we tend to have distrust that the person is genuine in wanting to change their ways, as opposed to wanting moneys to purchase more narcotics. How can someone who has a family member or a friend, how can they distinguish the difference between someone who is crying out for help as opposed to someone who wants to get a quick fix.

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Ms. James: I think they have to look at their behaviour. The person that cry out for help they behave in a particular way, lackadaisical, they do not care, this kind of way. And the person who really needs the help they cry out, they come out to you and let you know, hey, I think I need some help here. But the person on the other side who is really visiting these people to give them that help they must be able to trust them and show that they are really—because while you are using drugs people promise you so many things and they do not fulfill the promise. So now when you really want to go for that help or that help really coming to you sometimes you really do not believe it is the true help and you turn away from it. But the behaviour tells, for me, I could tell by that behaviour.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Just to ask Ms. Maingot, what are your experiences in transforming the lives of persons that you encounter and particularly the displaced persons that you work with through the Port of Spain City Council because they indicated that you, in fact, work with them in dressing and feeding and preparing them for court. What is the process really and what types of behaviour do you encounter?

Ms. Maingot: First, I would like to say that years ago it was much easier to do that than it is today. Of course, because of the psychotic problems that we face and the drug addiction, but we have rehabilitated people that were sick on the streets. Someone we picked up, I remember a very long time ago was blind. We took her into one of our homes and again, as our brother here says, even the hospital would not take her even to bathe her, and we would take her into our home and eventually we got operations done for her eyes. So she could see and she became a very integral part in our Ministry, in our hospice where she worked with us and she had her own life.

And another man I remember, he was really a terrible, terrible situation. It took us, I think working with him on one to one for about three or four months before

he would even speak. He was so badly hurt and wounded as a human being. And again we were able, after a very long time to move him off the streets and to get him into one of our homes where he lived until he went to the Lord. So it has been a one on one working with people, seeing what they need, what is their problems, addressing those problems and then moving them to another place. You cannot do it collectively, it is on a one on one basis and that has been our experience.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much and a follow-up question before I move to, I think, Sen. Stewart and then Sen. Ameen. The follow-up question is this and it is addressed to all witnesses because I really need to get to the bottom of this situation. From your experience working on the ground, what percentage of the socially displaced that you have encounter and treated is able to be rehabilitated? Is it 100 per cent or is there that there is a percentage that we simply cannot reach from your experience. Any response. I am looking for the ballpark figure as to the majority. Can the majority be rehabilitated and if so what is that percentage from your experience?

Ms. Bhaggan: Firstly we have to ask, why are people on the streets? They are not all there for the same reasons. So some may be there because they are mentally ill. Some may be there because they have dual disorders, which means, mentally ill and drug addiction or some kind of addiction. Then there are those who have social issues, maybe the aged, medically unfit. So there are many reasons.

So if you put them in one basket it is difficult to have an across the board percentage. You got to look at each category. But people are basically rehabilitative. You can do it. But as Rhonda said, you need one on one treatment. It is not en masse. You cannot just herd people like sheep. So it is a very involved, integrated and perhaps intensive process. It requires collaboration with all the stakeholder who are involved. So, for example, it is great to know that Transformed Life Ministry can network with Piparo Empowerment Centre or New Life Ministries doing network

with different people. So among the NGOs we have our own network. What is missing is the kind of institutional support that is required.

So what we need to do, for example, let us look at the case of the people who have dual disorders. If you want to treat somebody with a dual disorder and you want them in a mental institution for, let us say, detox and treatment they are placed along with all the other mentally ill people and that sometimes could create more of a problem than a solution. So we need in Trinidad and Tobago proper detox centres so that persons on the streets who have dual disorders they can be separated, treated and properly detoxed and stabilized and then they could be moved into a rehabilitation centre.

The second thing you need, there are some people who are mentally ill and will never really get back to 100 per cent of sanity. We do not have convalescent homes in Trinidad and Tobago where you can have these people in a managed facility where you ensure they take their medication for example. Because once somebody is stable and they go back out there and there is no one to help them with their medication, they relapse.

2.25 p.m.

Then we have situations where transition homes are required. As both of our two recovering persons have said, when persons go into a rehabilitation centre it is not a magic bullet. It is a lifelong process of adhering to a particular way of life and treatment, and having continuous access to professional help. It takes, on a minimum, two years to rehabilitate one person who is willing to enter into rehabilitation, and in that time no centre would keep somebody for two years, or 10 people for two years.

So what happens, therefore, we need transition homes which could be again managed facilities, where they have a minimal amount of supervision, and from those homes they can work. I know Vision on Mission do a lot of that with ex-

prisoners, but for drug abusers you need the same kind of approach. So if you do that, I would say from our own experience in the field, there is a chance of at least 80 per cent of the people who are socially displaced, with those kinds of facilities and support systems, you can have a fairly good chance of rehabilitation.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. We have gotten a percentage. We can work with that, but again, I know other members have not yet come in but this is a very important point. You have mentioned that we need to categorize the substance abusers from those who are mentally ill and people who have their own personal problems. From your experience and, again, to all witnesses, which is the group from your experience you found the easiest to rehabilitate and to get them back into mainstream society? Anyone venturing? As to the various groups of individuals who have found themselves in the category of socially displaced, which is the group—I am looking for the low-hanging fruit—that seems to be easiest; and which is the group that seems to be the most difficult with respect to time, effort and resources to rehabilitate and get them back to fully functioning status?

Mr. Husbands: Mr. Chairman, I think I will take a shot at this one. Based on my experience working in the penal system, and along with Mr. Wayne Chance, not all of the inmates who come to our penal facilities could be considered unrepairable. A great percentage of them, with the right kind of assessment, using the right kind of assessment tools to identify the risk and the needs, and to develop the right kind of programming to suit and treat those issues that more or less pushed that person into criminality, we can make an important impact in terms of rehabilitating these persons.

Let me give you an example. There must be a clear policy in terms of when you arrest persons what do you want to do with them. From the sentencing perspective, what are you sentencing for? It is not just for retribution. It should be for utilitarian purposes to deter, to reform, to rehabilitate, to restore, incapacitate, and to

reintegrate. So from very early you must have a clear path in terms of how are you going to change that person or get that person involved, and it starts with training staff to have the proper tools to assess and to develop proper programming. But more than that, there must be a clear theory of change, and there are so many, and we have adopted a clear theory of change not only in Vision on Mission, but in our penal institutions.

A lot of people may frown on it. It is based on the cognitive moral theory to change criminal thinking, and it puts that person through certain steps. People must have the capacity to feel that they have the capacity to change. So it starts with helping them to redefine their situation. They must get them to a point where they start to feel guilt, stop making excuses, and you must teach them about the criminal mask. There are about 10 areas about the criminal mask and I will not go into it at the moment. But more than that, you have to teach them how to change through education, give them the gift of self-worth, the keys to freedom, and provide them with the pathways towards resettlement, and this must be done from the time that they come into our penal system.

So I am saying the population within the prison, more than 90 per cent of them with the right kind of care, support, surveillance and supervision, but more so a proper resettlement plan and a proper resettlement estate—and I am using my words quite definitively—to suit the needs and the risk of those persons and it must be based on special needs groups for women, youth and adults, those who are recidivists as against those who are just reoffenders, different interventions. It takes three years with care, support, surveillance and supervision, with Government's support, proper support, with a clear collaborative work between human services, Ministry of Health, criminal justice, Ministry of Housing. It must be a clear pathway in terms of a harm reduction approach, with the right kind of resources, the right kind of training, the right kind of personnel if we really want to think in terms of reducing the

numbers as socially displaced.

If these inmates who come to us are not given that kind of what I call true care perspective, quite a few of them would have ended up on the streets. So we are into a preventative, not only curative. In terms of reducing the number of social displaced, if we have a proper functioning correction system supported by the probation department, the courts, social services, the prison, housing and the like, and mental health, we can have a large reduction in terms of the number of homelessness coming out of the penal system.

Mr. Chairman: Basically then, with a proper system of counselling and trying to find the root cause of the person who is so affected, then we would be able to diagnose his problem and rehabilitate him in a much faster manner?

Mr. Husbands: More than counselling, Mr. Chair. It must be an evidenced-based approach using the actuarial instruments to capture in an individual basis the criminogenic needs to plan, develop accountability plan, treatment plan, re-entry plans on an individual basis, care, support, surveillance and supervision. You must attack all of them, family issues, associate issues, behavioural issues, substance abuse issues, work issues and the like. You have to attack all of them if you really want to reduce the level of reoffending and reduce the number of socially displaced persons. It is what you call a collaborative harm reduction approach based on a re-entry penal policy.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, very well. Thank you. And now members of the Committee will get the free flow. I will ask Sen. Stewart to ask her question, then I will ask Sen. Khadijah Ameen to pose her question.

Miss Stewart: Mr. Chair, I think Ms. Hulsie Bhaggan touched on one of the issues that I wanted to raise, that is in terms of the structure at your facilities, especially for those places that have persons that are admitted drug and alcohol abuse, or dependence. Because I know that even in the international sphere there is a structure

set up where these persons they come in, they go to detox, they go to intensive inpatient, then they move on to rehab, partial hospitalization, outpatient, and then you move them to halfway houses.

So my question, I want to find out about the structure, if there is any link with Piparo, with New Vision in terms of halfway houses for these persons because one of the issues could be they end up on the street because they just get sucked in after going through the process? After going through this whole rehab, there is no follow-up. So I just wanted to find out about the structures, and what is your link with any halfway houses or any homes where these persons can still be monitored to ensure that they do not end up on the streets again.

Ms. Bhaggan: Well in the case of New Life Ministries it is a family oriented programme. So the families are also part of the programme. So eventually the client will be reintegrated into the home and the follow-up sessions will take place. For those who have no homes to go to, we normally will keep them at the centre until we could find some alternative. But to say there is any structured system where we could actually move them into a transition home those do not exist, and that is where the problem arises because persons go through their treatment and those who are willing to stay stuck, as you would say, in that world they are not able to be given a fair chance. And if those facilities are established, then there will be a higher level of success stories coming out of rehab centres.

As it is right now, most rehab centres will keep people sometimes up to two years and then we will find ways to get them to be employed, and they are in and out, but that is not really the best kind of arrangement. So there is definitely a need for that transition system, and for those phases in the treatment process.

Mr. Husbands: May I?

Mr. Chairman: But a follow-up question. A follow-up question and it is coming from the contributions that both of you have indicated, Ms. Bhaggan and you, and

that is this. Ms. Bhaggan you indicated that we need to categorize and to tailor treatment according to whether an individual is bipolar, a substance abuser, a victim of abuse, family neglect. In your opinion—and again it is out to the entire witness panel—do we have the range of agencies in Trinidad to address the various causes of socially displaced so that we could channel the individual, who is bipolar to a particular NGO, as opposed to putting all of them in one particular facility? Do we have the range? And if we do not, what would you recommend as an addition to the range given the limitations that you have seen from your experience?

Ms. Bhaggan: Well firstly, I must commend the Ministry of Health, the various institutions they have. They do a really good job under very trying circumstances, and our experiences with Ward I in San Fernando and St. Ann's have been excellent. Our main concern is that we really should not be mixing the substance abusers with the mentally ill.

In terms of the NGO movement, we have a range of NGOs in this country who do yeomen service and many of them are equipped to deal with most of the social problems. So the problem is not, not having enough NGOs or people to provide the services, the problem has always been getting the resources for us to have the professionally trained staff to be able to handle these cases and that is where the bottom line is. We are so busy we cannot all the time be raising funds because the time we are spending raising funds we should be saving lives, and this is where there must be more state sponsorship for the NGOs who are involved in the nation of this business.

I should also mention that that social displacement problem would have been far worse if the NGOs in this country, like some of those who are here present today, if they were not doing their jobs, you would have far more people on the streets of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Chairman: And before you come in and I want you to respond as well. You

raised an important question, and the question is the division of labour between the Government and the non-government organizations including church supported bodies, what kind of financing arrangement do you think would make a difference to the work that you do at the level of the State? Should the State provide again half, three-quarter? What amount of financing do you think you will need from the State to ensure that you can discharge your functions and rehabilitate persons in a more timely fashion?

Mr. Husbands: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In response, I think it is Miss Stewart, she mentioned in terms of halfway houses. We do not have halfway houses in Trinidad and Tobago. Halfway houses are minimal facilities that are akin to the prison. We have reintegration centres and rehabilitation centres. You only talk about halfway houses when you have parole, where inmates are released, at the last phase of the sentence to complete their sentencing in these what you call “non-wall facilities”. Right? I just want to make that quite clear because we keep talking about halfway houses.

With respect to the percentage of Government funding, I might sound a bit eccentric here, but I think for prison it must be 100 per cent because it is a part of the whole criminal justice system estate, it forms part of the whole correctional funnel. A reintegration centre or a halfway house is part of the whole funnel of caring for ex-inmates. So I will say 100 per cent for ex-inmates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. So many questions coming from me as Chair because I do have an economics background, but I cannot usurp the questions the Committee members will want to ask. You see the issue that is arising is this, we spend a large amount to house inmates. Apparently the AG indicated that it is \$25,000 per month or something. So I am just wondering from the perspective of the NGOs whether you can give thought—because this is something that I think we need to seriously address—to an amount per institutionalized individual that you think a

state subvention should be appropriately made for? But that will come later in the proceedings. Thank you very much and I will ask Sen. Ameen who has been silent for quite a while.

Miss Ameen: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Earlier one of your, I think it was Ms. Bhaggan who made reference to the need for rehabilitation and establishing rehabilitation centres. I see in your paper that you submitted to the Committee before this meeting, that you made a recommendation for the relevant Ministry or the State to sign an MOU to establish a rehabilitation programme and reintegration programme for socially displaced persons in Trinidad and Tobago. I know that apart from your organisation other organisations may want to contribute, has there been any progress with signing such an MOU and do you anticipate something like that happening based on any initiatives you are aware of in the Ministry; and if not, would it be a recommendation that you would want to make out of this Committee?

Ms. Maingot: Yes. What we have submitted as a recommendation, we have submitted it to the last maybe three, or four, or five Governments, and for many years trying to work towards this project, which will be an integrated project, as Hulsie was talking about, and also involving the whole national community. Certainly the last two Governments, and I am sure this Government, have been very interested in the project. The previous Government was very interested.

The last two Governments have sent representatives from the Government to a project like it in the United States, where we have patterned the project that we are offering or suggesting from there. So there has been definitely the interest of the last few Governments to work a project something like this. Of course, it is going to take a long time to work it through, but thank God for this opportunity that we have here today, that we can discuss it, or maybe open our hearts to and ideas to one another in such a project which we really feel is the answer. We have seen it work in Miami. I remember going to Miami maybe 30 years ago and was horrified at the amount of

people that were on the streets, and families on the streets, children on the streets. And then I remember going back to Miami 15 years later and I could not believe where all these people had gone. Where in our own country the population on the streets is just growing, here in Miami the population on the streets, they hardly had anybody on the streets. So that is what really made us work towards looking at this. Mr. Anthony Salloum actually, he had visited the project and I went there with him to visit the project, and that is what really began our working towards getting a similar project here in Trinidad and Tobago to help our homeless population.

Miss Ameen: Now at present there are a number of Government projects that have been postponed or stalled based on funding. Is this a project that you feel in your proposal you can include recommendations for public/private partnership in terms of financing the infrastructure?

Ms. Maingot: Interestingly enough, 75 per cent of the cost of running the project in Miami is paid by the business community. If you have ever noticed—maybe we never noticed our bill when we go to a restaurant, but if you go to a restaurant in Miami and you will look at the bill there is a tax. A 1.0 or 1.5 per cent tax which is called a homeless tax, and that tax is given to this project in Miami to operate. At least 75 per cent of the funds come from that. So there are ways of doing it and I am sure we will be able to do it, but we would need everybody on board to work with it.

Mr. Chairman: A follow-up again on the money issue, and again to the entire panel of witnesses. Could you give an estimate from your perspective on how much does it cost on a monthly basis to treat one of the charges under your care? I know it will vary because you differ with respect to the type of persons you treat with, but could we get an estimate as to the average monthly cost in your organisation of treating with one of your charges, one of your displaced persons? Any volunteers?

Pastor Awong: If I am dealing that you are dealing at present with a street dweller,

a person that live on the street, rock-bottom, a fella that is wounded and is bruised, man or woman, it will be very costly because—I will get to the cost just now—you have to take up this person from the street, you have to be able to make sure that they eat a proper meal, give them somewhere proper to sleep, then you have to have transport to make sure that you take them to assess them for every sickness—TB, AIDs, whatsoever sickness—then you have to make sure to get the medication. Sometimes the hospital does not have the medication, they give you a prescription. It is a very large work. It is very deep stuff.

When you go for a fella on the street sometimes, poor fella, his belly—we are talking about rock-bottom and you have as host of them. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, through their IAU, bring in about 200 of them. We are talking about rock-bottom people. It was very costly because you have to have doctors, you have to have mental psychiatrist doctors, you have to have caregivers, you have to have security because they are not taking their medication for a very long while and they come in in a real state.

So you have to have a staff to work in the ministry, you have to have a staff to work out of the ministry. Sometimes when you take up somebody out of the street, you have to be able to clean the spot where they are, you have to sanitize it. So it is a very extensive to work with somebody rock-bottom. We are hearing working and everybody have their different groups here who might take people straight from the prison, but we are dealing with this which is something that is haunting our country right now. Women are running from them when they see them mad, they coming to beg for a dollar. A woman fell down just the other day and broke her foot. A street dweller raped a woman in St. James. So it is something haunting our country and it needs immediate attention.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have an estimate of cost in your centre, for example, how much it will cost you for one of these—

Pastor Awong: This whole process here might cost about \$6,000 a month.

Mr. Chairman: For the month, for one of these individuals?

Pastor Awong: For one client.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much.

Pastor Awong: And that is the least. Just now. Because I work with a staff in Transformed Life Ministry and I was forced to use the same staff but I am more experience now to use the same staff on the outside. And when you take these people on the outside and they get a little strength, maybe, and they will pick up people's bags and run with them; you have to have people to go and get back the people's bags for them. They are not right in their head and you are dealing with people that are mental, you have a double problem, they are also addicts. So you have that person, you have to be able—taking up people from the streets they have to be properly assessed. When you are talking assess, it deals with different treatments, different wounds, their dentals. You deal with their eyes, you are dealing with the whole structure.

Mr. Chairman: So we do have a range that for the individual who is most socially displaced, we can look at a figure of \$6,000, I imagine, for individuals who are not as afflicted it may be less, but that is a figure that we can work with.

Mr. Chance: If I may, Chair?

Pastor Awong: It could be more.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Mr. Chance you come in and then afterwards Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith has not spoken. But Mr. Chance come in. Very well.

Mr. Chance: If I may, on the question of expense for the rehabilitation and reintegration. Many times it differ based on the assessment and intervention. It may require certain type of services and people, professionals; certain types of practitioners to get involved.

Now the cost can be reduced drastically if you have the State buying in. For example,

in the hospital and other state agencies there are people who are already qualified. So if the NGOs have some kind of collaboration, an official collaboration, you find you could have referral to certain agencies and cut certain expense. If you have to depend on solely the NGO to provide all aspects of the service it is going to be very costly, but a lot of the cost can be reduced if you have collaboration because there are experts out there that can help in terms of various aspect of their risk and needs, and reintegration services; within the facility of six and seven, within the same rounding like Glen Awong in terms of treating with persons at the level in terms of where we are and the staffing that we have.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. In terms of these proceedings we take stock of some of the solutions which have so far come from the deliberations thus far. So before I move to MP Glenda Jennings-Smith, I would just like to recap the four solutions that appear to me to have some consensus.

1. Coming from individuals who are now success stories, we understand the need to have a confidant for people who are in difficulties and who are socially displaced to be able to relate to someone whom they can trust, and I think that is something we would need to be looking at;
2. We need to provide education at an early age with respect to the ill effects and the outcomes of say, drug abuse or narcotic use;
3. We need to categorize the socially displaced into the various categories so that we could understand the types of needs of each particular category, understanding that the drug abuser is going to be a different individual from an individual who is bipolar, or someone who is a deportee; and
4. Coming out from what Mr. Chance said, valuable suggestion is that if there is collaboration amongst the NGOs and the various Government agencies, the cost in treating one of these afflicted individuals can in

fact be controlled or reduced.

So I want you to consider those four solutions to agree, or amend them, as we proceed, but now I will ask MP Jennings-Smith to pose her question.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Thank you, Chair. Now I am cognizant of the four suggestions you made, Chair, and I will stay on that point because one agency in particular spoke about a 30 per cent success rate, and when we say success rate I really want to question what we mean by success rate. Is success rate when a person walks out; when a person leaves your institution? I want to refer back to the recommendation made by Mr. Husbands when he spoke about resettlement and the whole continuum—care, support, surveillance, supervision—because why I am saying that is because I am interested in the whole recidivism issue and the reoffending issue. How important is this to each of you all organisation? Because what we are speaking to is a whole reform package where one group could work into another group and get better results because it is continuum of care. So I really want to ask that question. Anyone who could answer it, I will be happy.

Mr. Chairman: The floor is open to all witnesses.

Ms. Joseph: If I may? In terms of the Piparo Empowerment Centre, what we have is an aftercare arm of the programme. So we do not just treat with people and drop them out there and say go ahead, but we follow-up. We have a group that we have formed with our past residents where they can come back and talk about their success, and we can follow-up on them and ensure that they are maintaining their programme either by attending meetings and so on, and making sure that they are in a sustainable environment where they can work and support themselves.

One of the challenge though, like Ms. Bhaggan said, we do not have ready housing for them. So as a result you find people staying longer in the programmes, but the greatest challenge for us is to house them after the programme. We try to get them into jobs and so on, but in terms of follow-up we do follow-up. One of the

impediment though is staffing.

Mr. Husbands: Mr. Chair, on that same issue, at Vision on Mission we operate on a tracer model, in that it takes three years for a next inmate to start to live independently. Jobs, family reunion, dealing with their associates, finding homes, and you must have that kind of motivational interviewing continuing. It is more than that. It is about trying to build their character and that takes a long while. They have to try to change their attitudes before they even try to change their behaviour. And all of that comes in terms of having the right kind of staff that understand the eight pathways out of reoffending. Three years and you must have the right kind of staff with the right kind of interventions, but more than that there can be collaboration. And I can go back to an example, New Life Ministries, they were once hired to do a proper rehab within the penal system and they were doing quite a good job, but you see we like quick fixes.

2.55 p.m.

You cannot talk about impact after a person just comes out a month, three years tracing. So we must be patient and we must have the right kind of measures. The impact and the cost-benefit analysis, the Attorney General said it costs about \$25,000 per person. If that person reoffends, it is a next \$25,000. If that person does not reoffend, you are saving and multiply that by three years.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. And a follow-up and I need to pose a question to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul subsequent, but the follow-up is this, do you have a programme—because you see what was indicated to us by Ms. James is that you need to have a confidante, someone to whom you could relate to. I would like to know from your angle, do you have a system of sponsorship, say where people who have gone through your system are there to provide a kind of a support for those who are in the early stages of reform so that they can hold their hands and prevent them from slipping out of your direction?

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Mr. Husbands: Through of a case management, there is something that they call inmate or ex-inmate run programme, we call them coaches. We teach them how to instruct, how to train and how to correct those. They have been through the pathways already so we call them coaches. Not mentors, not whatever, we call them coaches because a coach actually is going to train you and then allow you to go and then watch and see how you are going to see where they need to intervene.

Mr. Chairman: So that programme is in existence?

Mr. Husbands: Definitely.

Mr. Chairman: Does that programme exist say with respect to you, Mr. Dexter Cole, are you one of those coaches to provide some kind of guidance as a confidante for individuals who may be on the verge of slipping and you will be able to hold their hand and bring them on the correct path?

Mr. Cole: Thank you, Chair. What is done in the programme is that when we have already completed the programme, persons who are on the verge of completing are encouraged to keep in contact with persons who have already completed and are staying clean. So that, I would say, is in existence with the Piparo Empowerment Centre whereas persons who have completed and are staying clean, mind you, are the encouraging factor for persons who are on the verge of leaving and even on completion.

Mr. Chairman: Just as we have organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous where the recovering alcoholics can come together to trade stories, do you have the same thing for narcotics abusers? An organization like that where you get together on a periodic basis to provide that kind of support for each other?

Mr. Cole: We do. Presently in the centre, we have Narcotics Anonymous meeting that is regularly every Saturday but at the completion of the programme, when you go through the completion of the programme, some literature is given to you on the completion to meetings that are throughout the country, whereas provided you do

have the time, you could get involved in one of these meetings that is throughout our country, that we are encouraged to get involved in one of these.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much and I was just given the cross eye by MP Newallo-Hosein, she needs to come in, but St. Vincent de Paul has been silent for a bit and I would like to bring them in a bit. I would like for you to indicate to us, St. Vincent de Paul, what is your experience in dealing with the socially displaced? You are one of those organizations that has been in long existence in Trinidad and Tobago. What have you seen over the years, what is your experience and what would you recommend now given any changes you have seen within recent times?

Ms. Taylor: Thank you, Chair. The experience of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul with the Government at the time has had its ups and downs. We recognize that in our delivery of services at the Centre for Socially Displaced Persons, based on the original contract agreement, I would want to say at some point along the way, certain responsibilities have dropped. We would want to recommend very strongly that the Ministry of Social Development reviews the original contract with a way forward in terms of creating a new one, having a proper assessment of the programme, try to arrest some of the challenges, work along with us in terms of identifying and coming to a resolution as to how we can address some of the problems.

I know at their end that they would have had challenges in terms of staff resources at the Ministry under the SDU and IAU. The original arrangement would have included—and we raised some of those discussions with Mr. Chance just now in terms of having that partnership where the Ministry would provide technical assistance in terms of social workers to do proper case management with the residents, so that there is a structured transformation of the person, a structured programme for transformation. We would want to recommend that they try to seek those sort of resources again.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, I need to interject here. I understand you run the Riverside

Plaza facility.

Ms. Taylor: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Okay and in concrete terms, how many residents do you treat with on a daily basis at that particular facility? What kind of arrangement exists between St Vincent de Paul and the Government? And what really do you do for the inmates or the residents in the Riverside Plaza?

Ms. Taylor: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. At some point, I would like to ask the centre's Manager to come in. He has a little more experience than myself. However, there was an original contract agreement. We were approached, as I had mentioned earlier, by the state to operate the centre. And back in 1991, our executive secretary was in the forefront in the Society in terms of sitting in on state projects, state committees, to come up and help support the State with a solution to the problem and that solution would have been the establishment of the SDU as well as the establishment of centre.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Could we hear from your Manager of the centre as well before I move on to MP Hosein?

Mr. Watson: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and head table. I am sitting down here and hearing so many things, I am glad to make a contribution. But what I would say first of all, at the Centre of Socially Displaced Persons, we are just not faced with probably ex-prisoners or drug users. We are faced with socially displaced persons in a wider range, whether it is domestic violence, young guys who were brought up in the orphanage, people of natural disasters, loss of job, house burn down. It is a wider variety that we are dealing with and so many points that I could touch that stressing with one or two things, Ms. Taylor may have said there, getting back to Wayne Chance also, we do not have any other opportunity to break down cost in terms of no doctors, no nurses, so we use the health centres, we use the hospital. One of the only problem that we are faced with is getting people to the health centres with no

transport. We used to have but we do not have it through the social displacement unit.

You know, so many things, I do not think I can touch everything here right now but in terms of even halfway houses, follow-up with a lot of people. We have people at the centre there now that if tomorrow they get proper housing, they will leave because they are already working and equipped with a proper bank account, but in terms of no resources, no housing, they may go.

Mr. Chairman: Could I intervene? Very interesting because you are saying that there are people there who really may just be lacking a house and they are not substance abusers, they are not bipolar, they do not have any other social problems except maybe that they are poor. So what I will ask of you, I mean this hearing could go on for hours and hours but we do have a limited amount of time.

Mr. Watson: I know.

Mr. Chairman: Can I ask you and your administrator, if you could categorize for the Committee, to the best of your ability, given—I do not know how many people you serve on a daily basis. What are the various groups and their numbers, the mentally ill, those who are individuals who may be returning from prisons abroad, individuals who are simply homeless, individuals who are domestic abusers? It would certainly help us if you have that data and if you can give us a breakdown. Suppose you deal with 100 persons in a day, 20 may be X, 20 may be Y and so on. That would certainly assist us in getting a clearer picture of the range of individuals who have found themselves in your centre.

Mr. Watson: Okay, Chair. What I will give you is the present status that we have there. Right now we have 15 females: five are homeless, just based normal homeless and 10 are mentally ill. So mentally ill with homeless but five are just based homeless. At present, we have 100 males: 59 of them are just homeless. We have 26 are mentally ill that come with the homeless and we have 15 of them that are drug

addicts. Out of the 15, 11 are drug users and four are alcoholics. We also have a range here that we can show you their age group. Their age group will vary: 20-plus is three; 30-plus is 16; 40 plus is 19; 50-plus is 38; 60-plus is 25; 65-plus is 15 and we even have out of that 15, three of them are over 80.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. We would like to get those statistics and any other statistics that you have in writing, if you could forward that to us subsequently because that is very critical. You will come in, again, but I do have to get MP Newallo-Hosein to pose a question. Thank you very much, Sir.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. I have a couple of questions and I just want to before I go on, if I can ask Ms. James and Mr. Cole if you would be willing to state the age at which you got involved in drugs and what age are you now and which location were you at when this happened, if you do not mind and then I will get into my other questions.

Ms. James: My addiction started at the age of 20. I spent 25 years on the streets and at the age of 45—between 40 to 45, I started my programme at New Life Ministries. My age now, I am 57.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And at what location were you—became involved in drugs.

Ms. James: In the drugs.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes. You do not have to give the exact address, just the location.

Ms. James: I started my addiction at Curepe and I am from south.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. Mr. Cole. Thank you.

Ms. James: You are welcome.

Mr. Cole: Okay, thank you. My addiction started—my drug use started at age 12. I was introduced to marijuana from someone who was using it and the area that—I was in San Juan. My age presently is 41.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. I just want to ask Ms. Taylor. I listened to you

when you spoke about the programme and the challenges that were encountered in the previous administration. I found it a little bit disingenuous in light of the fact that the programme, I understood it to be, had not received an increase in subventions and in 2014, it was the first time they had received an increase in subventions and I think that statement you made, I think is a little bit disingenuous. But I am just going to continue with my line of questioning to any of the NGOs who can advise. Are you able to determine how many socially displaced children are residing on the streets and are there any arrangements that you are aware of, if it does not occur under you, to assist socially displaced parents with children? Thank you.

Ms. Maingot: I know that there is an organization called Credo and they work with socially displaced children and with their families. They have, I know, two or three places downtown, one is on Nelson Street and there is also a—they have a unit for young women as well.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: I have a follow-up question, Mr. Chair, to Mr. Cole. Your story that you gave, you know, it—you said you started the drug use at 12 years; most definitely, you would have been at school. Can you say—was it a peer who introduced you or was it an older person and under what circumstance?

Mr. Cole: It was a peer who introduced me to the use of marijuana and it was told to me that it could help me study even better, it could improve my studies and stuff like that, so I took the opportunity to get involved in the hope that I will bring up my grades, you know, because that is what was told to me.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Did you ever engage in selling during the school time?

Mr. Cole: No, not during school time, beyond that.

Ms. Bhaggan: Mr. Chairman, may I? Just a brief comment. Based on our experience over the past 30 years, the majority of people started substance abuse between the ages of 9 and 11. Secondly, in the schools currently, there is a wide use of substances including pushing and there are also some new interesting developments where there

is—they are now using a mixture of codeine and Sprite to become high in the schools.

Mr. Chairman: Sprite and something. [*Laughter*] Okay, so they use Sprite and they mix it with something. But on that point before I bring in Sen. Ameen, we did get a recommendation from our social media network that was just brought to my attention and I want to raise for the consideration of those of you who work with the individuals who are afflicted. Do you think that there is merit in employing then, at the primary school level, individuals who are rehabilitated drug abusers to indicate to the school-age children the perils, and hopefully reach them in that way from a reformed or an individual who has become clean from drugs for a while? Do you think there is merit in using some of these people in the school system?

Ms. Bhaggan: If I may? Well, first—okay, go ahead.

Mr. Paul: Yes, thank you for that, Ms. Hulsie Bhaggan. On the floor by us as the empowerment centre, we use peer to assist the recovering addicts. What we say man helping man to help themselves. Definitely we believe strongly that the approach of having somebody familiar with the actual use coming to you with information—Mr. Cole would testify, when he first came in, he did not like me at all. I am the one who confront you so we deal with confrontation. So we say lacking of information is what led a lot of people to use drugs and Cole just shared that. So I think strongly using someone in the school or even having it as part of the school curricula, I think would bring evidence that this could be a successful approach. Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Ms. Bhaggan, you wanted to say something before I move to Sen. Ameen?

Ms. Bhaggan: I want to support the idea of having recovering persons in the school but I also want to piggyback on what Vision on Mission had said, I think Mr. Gordon. What is interesting is why do people use drugs? And I believe if within the system, we are able to build character and build people's self-esteem and life skills, then

there is no need to use drugs to deal with your issues and problems. So we should also do it the other way around where, within the curriculum in schools, we must build character.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. So therefore, there is a solution that is emanating and that is the incorporation of the Ministry of Education to ensure that we minimize the incidence of socially displaced persons later on in their life. So we have about five recommendations so far coming out of the hearings. And finally, Sen. Ameen, it is your turn.

Miss Ameen: Mr. Chairman, for all of the organizations and those who are represented here today as well as those who are out in our nation doing yeoman service, I want to commend all of them for their work over the last few decades and supporting our social structure. But Mr. Chairman, anywhere there is moneys concerned, whether it is Government funding or donations from kind citizens or businesses, we must have accountability and transparency. And while I do advocate for organizations to have more support, financial support, and particularly from our corporate entities, eh, I believe in corporate responsibility.

But I want to ask, many of you get funding from the Government, from the State through the Ministry responsible. I want to ask you, in terms of your accounting mechanism, is it that you must be audited on a regular basis? Is it that you must submit certain reports and so on before you receive funding? Have you ever been in situations where because your audit is not—and I am using that word loosely—is not completed that you had delays in moneys being released to you? I know that Ms. Taylor spoke about some things at her organization and your relationship with the Ministry of social and so on. You have a working relationship with them but are you also employed with them?

Ms. Taylor: Yes, I would have forgotten to give a proviso that I am an employee of the Ministry of Social Development and it has been very fortunate that I am able to

collaborate with colleagues in terms of the particular project for the Centre for Socially Displaced Persons. I listened to member Hosein just now and it was not meant to be—the comment was not meant to be, as you say, disingenuous, but I was speaking in the context of past and I am talking about 2008, 2010, that kind of relationship that we have. The relationship that we have now and it would have stemmed from the previous administration where greater engagement has benefited in the way that we have expected. We needed to have additional resources.

At that point before, there was intervention by the last administration, meals cost \$3.00 a day per person. It was very difficult on the organization. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, as all the other colleagues here, is a non-profit organization. We have other projects inclusive of the Cyril Ross Nursery. The Cyril Ross Nursery is another source of—I would not say it is a burden but it cost a lot to maintain an HIV/AIDS child. The State provides \$50,000 on a quarterly basis. We have to consider other costs. We have 17 other institutions in homes across Trinidad and Tobago and when subventions are late coming from the Ministry, we have to dig within our own resources to keep the project afloat. We have done this very quietly. We do not like to engage in politics. We see this as a very important ministry to God's people, and that is the disenfranchised, and we prefer to work quietly with the Government. We have had our church leaders being involved at the head of the State and that has produced a lot of benefit.

What we would want to strengthen is our effective use of the moneys provided for us. Of course, you know, other colleagues would say, you know, 100 per cent should be the amount being captured by the State. I would want to disagree and because I work within the Ministry, the emphasis is to have the NGOs have some sort of independence. We spend a lot of time, as Ms. Maingot said, trying to raise funds in order to deep different ministries working and operating, because we recognize that at the end of the day these are persons, these are our brothers and sisters. These are

persons that can make a contribution and for that we continue to work in the vineyard, you know, going the distance and providing yeoman service.

One of the requirements coming out from the project—because we talked about accountability, one of the requirements for our organization is that we have separate accounts and we do. We are supported in other institutions, it is not 100 per cent; we raise our own funds. We want to start exploring external funding agencies as well. And actually, when I took up office as the President, I was already an employee of the Ministry of Social Development, well, people and social development.

Miss Ameen: Does it provide a conflict though, a challenge? Because, I mean, you have—the organization has a role to play in terms of a collaboration but there would be some accountability issues as President. And I know the question may have come up before but does it present a conflict?

Ms. Taylor: I used to think of it as a conflict but I have been using it as a benefit in terms of having an understanding as an NGO and having an understanding as a government employee, I am seeing synergies working together towards the benefit of the end user—of the beneficiary. It is not about politics. This is about a national response, a national approach to targeting persons who can become productive citizens.

You know, we—I would not say “we quarrel” a lot about but we are so concerned in terms of where is the next dollar going to come from, but there are opportunities and as an employee of social development, I was able to have meetings with the Port of Spain Corporation. We had a meeting with the corporation coming out of the last enquiry with the Government agencies. We have started working on some of the recommendations. The Port of Spain Corporation initially has come up with a number of recommendations, how we can partner with the same public-private partnership. There are agencies out there willing to invest and support the need.

Miss Ameen: I just wanted the other organizations to also, with regard to your

accountability in your organization.

Mr. Chairman: If you can be as brief as possible, we do have time for one last round of questions before we summarize.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Mr. Chair, I am surprised that this is taking a turn like this. This political—I am feeling almost sorry for the member who has to explain and we are going along a political line, it is regrettable.

Miss Ameen: No, no, it is not political at all. If that is the perception, it is not.

Mr. Chairman: Right, could we just ask again, briefly for all members—the heads of organizations to indicate for the interest of the national community, the accountability standards that you have, so that when people make their donations and so on, they know that the money is going to good cause.

Ms. Maingot: I speak on behalf of our community, Living Water Community, we have and have always had an audit done, private or public audit come in to do an audit every year. We have a relationship with the Ministry of Health. We submit to the Ministry of Health quarterly reports on our—the funding that they give us for our ministries. So on a regular basis, we submit reports of financial and other reports to the Ministry and at end of every year, we have audited accounts.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. I would imagine that all agencies do have an internal audit department that will ensure that funds are appropriately allocated.

Mr. Chance: Well, I was just going to add to, but you mentioned it, in that the Ministry that you are aligned with normally would have that internal auditing. Apart from that, we, the NGOs, also have to provide external audited statements.

3.25p.m.

And at times NGOs face serious difficulties, in terms of the cost in providing audited statements and sometimes the timeline. There has been major consideration on the part of the Ministry of Social Development, in terms of that. But if it is prolonged you have a situation where your funding sometimes is withheld if there is

not a proper explanation. So, yes, those situations sometimes can have some implications.

Then again, in terms of transparency, we employ a board of persons from different walks of life, different backgrounds, and so forth, to help, in terms of the governing structure of the NGO for transparency and accountability purposes and all of those structures we have.

Mr. Chairman: We have to truncate at this time.

Mr. Chance: But Chair, may I, before you run out of time, make a recommendation? Because we have seen here and heard contributions as they relate to what different NGOs do here and you have seen a kind of alignment. But the problem with the NGOs, there is a high degree of competitiveness and some of the issues that clients face are sometimes as a result of the dysfunctional and fragmented way in which organizations exist on the outside. There is not much synergy among each other in sharing responsibility and a lot of NGOs—I am a part of the NGO world—they are very territorial, in terms of the domain in which they operate.

For example, the Government may have a responsibility to align this whole thing in a very systematic way to get the desired result. You have two NGOs here, Transformed Life Ministry and CSDP, the State provide assessment. You have Piparo and you have Transformed Life Ministry do treatment and then you have Vision on Mission that provides housing and re-entry and you heard from the both of them that after their programmes are completed, yes they provide certain elements of housing, but it is not their main thrust. Whereas Vision on Mission main thrust is re-integration and we work that system.

Just for one second again, we sent a client that had a drug addiction to Piparo. When Piparo completed the treatment, he came back to us and we put him into employment and then we provided an apartment and he moved along and the follow-up. So you need to have that kind of synergy to curtail and to reduce certain things.

UNREVISED

Mr. Chairman: And I do need to curtail, but as you know we are solutions-oriented. Let me propose two solutions now for the issues which were raised. The first is, since it is a cost to you to have audited statements, maybe it is time we put moral suasion force on some of the accounting firms to do for the NGOs, some auditing at a much reduced cost.

Second, with respect to closer collaboration amongst the NGOs, do you think it would be beneficial, on a quarterly basis, once every three months, for the various groups such as this group to meet with the line Minister or the line Ministry, say Ministry of Social Services, to iron out your differences so you can synergize a little bit better? So we do have some solutions coming out of the questions posed.

But we are stretching it since the issues are so very interesting. We have time for one last round of quick questions from members of the committee and then I will ask the witnesses to offer us some closing statements. May I start with MP Newallo-Hosein?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you very much, Chair. I want to thank you all for coming and for sharing your stories. They were encouraging. I just want to pose this question to Ms. Maingot to ask, the programme that you are following, that you want to adapt, they operate within the City of Miami and I want to know: what is your opinion of that same programme being operated in our city?

Ms. Maingot: I really think that this could be an answer to our homeless problem in the City of Port of Spain and in the other parts of Trinidad and Tobago. It is a programme that is holistic. It has the assessment approach. It has the shelter approach, it has the rehabilitation approach, it moves from one to the next and the idea even that people who cannot really be back in the society, that we should move them somewhere else too. So it is really from the streets to a place where you can live and be happy. I think what we have to do for the homeless is show them a possibility that something can happen. Your life does not have to be like this. You

can make something beautiful of your life and that is what we are working towards.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Sen. Stewart, you have a question.

Miss Stewart: I have several questions but I would just ask one as we are wrapping up. Before I ask my question, I would like to congratulate Mr. Cole and Ms. James, I think we should have done this before, on your progress thus far and I hope that you would continue.

But, specifically my question to Ms. James, what recommendations will you give to this committee to deal with particularly women, socially-displaced women, on the streets?

Ms. James: My recommendation I would give to this Committee for women is to pay more attention to us because basically family support we do not have that, once you are on the streets and I think we need more of that support system for women. Once we have that, I think we would be able to move forward in life and put things in place to have a better life. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: A follow-up, Sen. Stewart? You are okay?

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: I too want to place my regards as far as Mr. Cole and Ms. James. I want to compliment you and I know it is a journey.

Ms. James: Yes, it is.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: And I want to stick to the whole idea of the continuum of care and I want to ask Mr. Dexter Cole in particular: are you satisfied with your support, the support mechanisms in place to assist you in your journey and this continuum of care? Are you satisfied? That could also go for, well Ms. James you partly answered that question a while ago. I just want to know from you: are you satisfied with it?

Mr. Cole: Thank you. I am quite satisfied with the support system of the Piparo Empowerment Centre, because with the respects of my elevation, I should say, with the total abstinence, I was given the privilege to be employed there. With so doing,

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I should say, my future living has a lot to do with staying clean and maintaining the living of, I should say, encouraging others. It is a society, I believe, I would like to remain with, because I did not have that support and this support that came out for me, I see that I could give that encouraging word to somebody else who probably needs that support also.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Chair, I want to also compliment the agencies here with us this afternoon, all the NGOs. I know it is a difficult job, especially, as I said before, how do we measure success? Is it when people leave because we know once you are a drug addict or you are in this situation it is a lifelong challenge. So I want to compliment every one of you this afternoon for your input and your continued service to country.

Miss Ameen: Chairman, in addition to Mr. Cole and Ms. James, earlier in the meeting it was mentioned that there were three persons who came through the system and I want to acknowledge Mr. Wayne Chance who himself is a testimony of being, I mean really turning around lives and contributing to other persons' lives in a positive way; that first-hand experience. Not only the experience but the willingness to share your experience with others.

I want to take this opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to encourage persons in the public domain who are listening to always take the opportunity to invite organizations like these and people like these to give their testimony to children, whether it is in the community centres, homework centres, in schools and other community NGOs who do work.

Because apart from the school system, through the Ministry of Education, you can reach a lot of young people so that they will have that message in terms of what addiction can do and even those who may not go into drugs but when you end up socially displaced, how it interrupts your life. So I want to commend you for being brave and sharing your story and your caregivers, the people who have helped you

along the way, to commend them as well for continuing your work.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. I am getting an opportunity to speak again.

Mr. Chairman: Final questions.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No final questions. I just wanted again to concur with the rest of my colleagues in congratulating you and keep up the good work. And I do hope that out of this that we will provide a series of recommendations for the continuum of care that you have in place already. So thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, very much. Before I ask the representatives of the NGOs to offer us closing remarks, there is one last final issue that I wanted to raise with Ms. James, because you indicated that we need to pay more attention to women's issues and I wanted to get into a little bit of detail. Do you think that there should be some NGO or some aspect of the Ministry which would look at the following types of women's issues that they are not currently looking at? I do not know. But you need to tell me: domestic abuse, something that women experience in an inordinate manner in Trinidad and Tobago; rape; sexual abuse; incest. Do you think you need individuals who are sensitive and who understand these pertinent women's issues to really reach out at the NGO level to women out there so that they can have the requisite counselling, guidance and support to ensure that they can get onto the road to rehabilitation quickly?

Ms. James: Yes, there is a place in Palo Seco for women where New Life Ministry rehabilitates these women and they work with them, these same battered women.

Why I mentioned women need to have more strong support, I remember in my time I did not have support. I did this programme alone. And my only support was my higher power. So I think now that I am here, I think that women really need that support because if we do not have that support system we will stay out there not having the education knowing well, hey there are places we can go to get help and we need the support. You understand? I know Palo Seco has one and I think we need

some more of these places.

Mr. Chance: Chair, it would be very remiss of me if I do not have an opportunity to mention that Vision on Mission is actually championing, I think, one of the biggest women's facility in the region right now. We are, if you go to south you would see a very large facility in Claxton Bay by the flyover that is sponsored by Republic Bank. It is going to accommodate 65 women, dormitory and single unit.

It is expected to open in August but it would not be addressing the issue of battered women specifically. It would be addressing women coming out of prison, deported and delinquent girls. Because there are a lot of delinquent girls who cannot go back home. We have a number of them staying in various places and we have those who are coming out of foster homes at the age of 18 and sometimes find themselves in streets. So that is the kind of clientele. So I would like to put that out there so that the other NGOs could know that come August that is an opportunity.

We also have a facility in Wallerfield that stands ready to open, in terms of accommodating people. It is retrofitted. Everything is in place to accommodate 100 men on 52 acres of land to involve agriculture and other types of employment opportunities and stuff like that.

There was a completion in Laventille last month, of apartments on the part of Vision on Mission that provides reasonable apartments for persons who want to go into independent living. So all of these opportunities are not specifically for the clients of Vision on Mission but for the country and all NGOs who may have need of such services. I just wanted to put that out.

Pastor Awong: May I say this much before we close?

Mr. Chairman: What we are going to do now, at this point is we will be inviting closing remarks from the President, Transformed Life Ministry; Living Water Community; the Society of St. Vincent and de Paul; the Piparo Empowerment Centre and; again Vision on Mission. Can I invite Pastor Glen Awong to offer us his

closing remarks and then I would move around afterwards. It will be Mr. Awong, Ms. Maingot, Taylor, Joseph and then Mr. Chance.

Pastor Awong: Well, I pray Almighty God that this Committee here will really serve and support the NGOs, that they will be able to do their work with clarity and power.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank you very much. Ms. Rhonda Maingot.

Ms. Maingot: I just thank God indeed that we could come together here today and have this discussion/conversation and hope that we can move forward with it and we thank God for that.

I thank God too for the people of Trinidad and Tobago who continually support and help our NGO groups. None of us could be here without them, and also the Governments of Trinidad and Tobago that had supported us during this time. It is going to take a collaboration, continued collaboration, and more than that, as we go forward. Thank you and God bless you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Ms. Angelique Taylor, Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Ms. Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It was really an honour to be part of this enquiry and to be among fellow colleagues in the NGO business. I am hoping that this is the start of ongoing and continuous involvement for disenfranchised persons. So that your recommendation of quarterly meetings with the Ministry and with other agencies, perhaps, maybe, under a multi-sectoral committee which used to transpire in the past, maybe that can be re-established. So that we can move forward together in partnership level. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Ms. Jessie Joseph, Director, Piparo Empowerment Centre.

Ms. Joseph: Thank you, Chair. I would like to say thanks be to God and to this committee for having the opportunity to come and to share some of what we do at

Piparo Empowerment Centre. I know we are a little bit different in the sense where we are a Government-run agency, but I share the concerns of my colleagues from the NGOs. I must say that, you know, we all have challenges and we all have to work with them but I am grateful that we can come together to discuss a national issue that is affecting all of us—whether we, whatever agency we are working with, we are part of this nation and everything that happens affects us. I want to say that I am happy to be a part of the discussion today.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, and Mr. Wayne Chance, Executive President, Vision on Mission.

Mr. Chance: May I pass the honour to my Director to close?

Mr. Chairman: Please do.

Mr. Husbands: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chance. I am thinking public policy here. I am seeing a five-year plan for a continuum of health care and public health. I am seeing an establishment of a resettlement estate to address the needs of all the different vulnerable groups. We cannot hold all in one particular place, and I am seeing Trinidad and Tobago becoming a more humane society.

Mr. Chairman: Is there any other witness who would like to leave us with some closing comments, Ms. Bhaggan?

Ms. Bhaggan: Mr. Chairman, since you are an economist, I want to suggest that any resources placed towards the NGOs, they are not really a cost item, they are an investment. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Excellent. Our colleague from the Riverside Plaza, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, closing remarks from you, Sir.

Mr. Watson: It is very nice to see we can gather here and see how we can put our hands and heads together, because we really need a lot of intervention coming from all of us and whatever we can get from the Government in moving forward with the homeless situation.

As I said, there are so many things for us to do, so many things for us to say, so many issues out there, and I would like to see we can resolve many of them. As Ms. Maingot had said we are dealing with, how I call it, a change in clientele now, that it is not as easy as years gone by. It is a change in clientele. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: I want to thank you all witnesses, very much. Our committee is a solutions-oriented committee. There is a problem in Trinidad and Tobago where people hold the view that we sit and talk and we get nothing done. But what has emerged out of our two-hour deliberation and the meeting of the minds of people who are actually working the ground, is what I have been able to sum up as follows: we absolutely need one, to have persons on the ground with experience as confidantes working with the vulnerable individuals who have fallen through the cracks. We need to provide education at an early age, with respect to the ill effects of substance abuse. We absolutely need to categorize the homeless and those who are socially-displaced, so we can know what the causes are, which influence them to move into that direction.

There is a need for closer collaboration amongst the NGOs to minimize duplication and to maximize, as Mr. Chance said, synergies. We need to get, or we should get, individuals with experience in drug abuse, that is recovering or recovered drug addicts to actually share their experiences with our school age population. I think they would have a greater impact in informing the youngsters about the ills of narcotics, as opposed to someone who does not have the experience with narcotics abuse. We can, of course, obtain the assistance of auditing firms to provide auditing services at a much reduced cost so that your accounts are going to be transparent and it would act as a trigger for there to be greater public contributions, knowing that the funds are well used.

And finally from Ms. James what I was able to get is that we do need to look at

specifically women's issues; women's issues that are peculiar and unique to women. I have identified that domestic abuse, rape, sexual abuse, incest, and so on, are things that we need to be able to focus on, so that the confidantes will be able to relate to these women and allow their rehabilitation to be expedited.

This, if there are any solutions that we can implement at the level of the State and to put in our report for Ministerial action, I will invite each and every one of you to send in writing, so that we would be able, in compiling our report, to indicate to the Ministry what can be done and what is the timeframe we can expect these changes to be made.

I would, therefore, wish to thank all of the witnesses for a very illuminating session. I would like to thank the NGOs, the managers, those who administer these particular powerful agencies on behalf of the State, and as Ms. Bhaggan said, it is not really a cost saving, it is an investment in our human capital formation in Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to thank the success stories. It is an indication that with appropriate intervention and with an understanding of the problem we can achieve a success rate of 80 per cent and maybe, as we refine our techniques we should be able to rehabilitate every single individual who has fallen through the cracks in Trinidad and Tobago.

The objective of our committee, of course, is to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago can evolve into a kinder, gentler society. So I want to thank all of your European you for sharing your experiences with us. I want to thank members of the committee for participating in the deliberations and taking such a keen interest in this very current social issue and I want to thank all members of our listening audience and our viewing audience and also the media for being here to cover these proceedings. Thank you all and a most pleasant good afternoon.

3.48p.m.: *Meeting suspended.*

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