

EXCERPT OF VERBATIM NOTES OF THE TWENTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, HELD IN THE A.N.R ROBINSON MEETING ROOM (WEST), LEVEL 9, (IN CAMERA), AND THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM (MEZZANINE FLOOR) (IN PUBLIC), OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, THE PORT OF SPAIN INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018 AT 9.50 A.M.

PRESENT

Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir	Chairman
Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein	Member
Ms. Khadijah Ameen	Member
Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine	Member
<i>[Mr. Taurel Shrikissoo - Invited Member]</i>	
Mr. Johnson Greenidge	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Ashaki Alexis	Grad. Research Assistant

ABSENT

Mr. Esmond Forde	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Rohan Sinanan	Member [<i>Excused</i>]
Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith	Member [<i>Excused</i>]
Ms. Allyson West	Member

10.42 a.m.: *Meeting suspended.*

10.48 a.m.: *Meeting resumed.*

UNREVISED

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mrs. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Natasha Barrow	Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Mr. Vijay Gangerpersad	Chief Technical Officer
Mrs. Loraine Reyes-Borel	Director, Social Displacement Unit
Ms. Patricia De Leon Henry	Director, National Social Development Programme

Mr. Chairman: Good morning. A special good morning to all of the listeners and viewers on the various channels which transmit the Parliament's proceedings to the population of Trinidad and Tobago. Welcome to this our Twenty-Third Meeting of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration. Today's meeting is a follow-up hearing on the responses provided, pursuant to the Committee's second report on an enquiry into the effectiveness of the State's intervention directed at socially displaced persons.

Members of the public are invited to submit their comments during the proceedings through any of the social media platforms available on the Parliament's website.

This hearing of course, as I said, is a follow-up enquiry. We did pursue a couple of more detailed enquiries prior, I think almost a year ago. So the reason for this particular enquiry is to determine where exactly are we with respect to the implementation of the recommendations which were made following the evidence that we took from the stakeholders about a year ago.

At this point I would like to ask the members who are here from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services to briefly introduce themselves.

[Introductions made]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, representatives of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. I would ask members of the Committee to introduce themselves, and I will take the liberty to introduce one member who viewers would not have been familiar with on this Committee. He is my colleague, Sen. Taurel Shrikissoon, who has taken a keen interest in the work of this Committee, and he is attending the Committee's meeting this morning as a guest and someone with an interest in the subject under enquiry.

So I will ask for introductions again, starting with my right. Sen. Shrikissoon, you can introduce yourself again.

[Introductions made]

Mr. Chairman: Good morning, I am the Chair, Independent Sen. Dhanayshar Mahabir.

At this point I would like to remind our stakeholders of the six objectives of our initial enquiry. The first objective: To determine the prevalence of cases of social displacement in Trinidad and Tobago. Two: to understand the line Ministry's plans and strategies for addressing this social issue. Three: to examine the systems and procedures in place for the effective management and monitoring of the various state-sponsored centres involved in housing and/or rehabilitating the social displaced. Four: to evaluate the procedure used to assess socially displaced persons and monitor their condition after social and medical interventions are executed. Five: to determine the effectiveness of the multi sectoral efforts and rehabilitation services targeted towards the socially displaced and, six: to determine the status of the review of the Socially Displaced Persons Act of 2000.

These objectives are very comprehensive. I think basically the Committee wanted to find out everything about what is happening at the level of the State with

respect to treating and dealing with the socially displaced in Trinidad and Tobago.

I therefore at this point will ask the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, to offer her brief opening remarks before we proceed with the follow-up enquiry. Mrs. Bailey-Sobers.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Thank you, Chair, for inviting me. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services welcomes, of course, the opportunity to share insight into the responses to the reduction of street dwelling in Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry continues to work steadfastly and collaboratively to provide an appropriate and effective national strategy to treat holistically with the socially displaced and eradicate street dwelling. We recognize, however, that among the stakeholders, group efforts have been made to address the problem guided by a collaborative and integrated approach, but the issue continues to be a challenge.

As you are aware, Chair, the Government has approved a four-level continuum of care programme which will facilitate the removal of street dwellers, the assessment, rehabilitation and transition into society, and we would have provided the information in our response on this.

The continuum focuses on research, engagement, temporary care, primary care, advanced care and monitoring and evaluation. Draft standards of care, a revised draft policy document for the Socially Displaced Persons Act of 2000 have been reviewed in the context of the Street Dwellers Working Committee's report, and it is envisaged that this will play a key role in charting the way forward.

Efforts have also been made to establish pertinent baseline data as recommended by the Committee since we met, and with the development of a multi-year research agenda. A national street count was conducted in November 2017, and another survey was completed in April 2018, not as

comprehensive, only dealing with CSDP, that is the centre at Besson Street, Piccadilly Street, and New Horizons.

The purpose of the survey was primarily to allow for the categorization of the socially displaced persons in care, and we expect to do Court Shamrock in San Fernando at the end of May. We expect also to commence the client demographic baseline data and needs assessment by June this year, which will allow the Ministry to have a detailed understanding of the population, inclusive of the causes as well as their needs.

The Ministry has also been engaging its key stakeholders on working through the various strategies proposed in all of the outcome documents, including the JSC reports and, in this regard, permit me to say that the Ministry has already taken steps to allow for the establishment of a Street Dwellers Coordinating and Monitoring Committee, which will perhaps begin its work between this month and next month.

The establishment of the Committee is viewed as a key success factor in addressing the problem. At this point I wish to assure the Committee that the Ministry remains committed to the implementation of the recommendations of both this Committee as well as those of the Street Dwellers Working Committee, and significant strides have been made in the area of collaboration, especially with the Ministry of Health. So we have already met to chart the way forward with respect to the future of the New Horizons facility for persons who are mentally challenged and socially displaced in Piparo, and we are planning site visits scheduled for this week.

I now turn over to PS Barrow who will just give some insight into the infrastructural types of advances we have made since we met with you.

Mr. Chairman: Very well, PS Barrow.

Ms. Barrow: Good morning again, and thank you Chair for affording me the opportunity to update the Committee on where we have reached with regard to the infrastructural arrangements being made to date.

As you would have been aware, steps were being made to establish a street dwellers assessment centre, as recommended by the Street Dwellers Working committee. Identification of a location for the establishment of these centres has been a challenge as it pertains to suitability and ease of access to our clients.

To date the Ministry has identified at least two appropriate locations as a short-term remedy within the Port of Spain south environment. We have approached the Property and Real Estate Division of the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications to secure the property, and plan to approach Cabinet this month with design plans.

The Ministry also remains in close communication with the San Fernando City Corporation as it relates to expanding the existing facilities at Court Shamrock which presently accommodates 26 persons.

The electrical upgrade and pump installation at CSDP, which became necessary due to OSH requirements, is expected to be completed this month, and renovation at the Centre of Hope and New Horizons are also required due to OSH and public health compliance, is expected to commence this fiscal.

I take this opportunity to assure the national community of the intention of the Ministry to continue to engage the relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the necessary measures, and to ensure significant impact on this phenomenon.

We are happy here this morning and thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Ms. Barrow. As is traditional, I will start with a couple of simple questions before Committee members move on to their own particular concerns.

During our initial enquiry, the matter of simple statistics arose and it was indicated in your response that you were going to deal with this in very short order. Is it that you now have up-to-date statistics on the number of socially displaced persons in Trinidad and Tobago?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Thank you, Chair, again. As indicated we would have done a street count in November. So we do have statistics with respect to the end of November, which would have given us a national total of 414, 27 in Arima; 60 in San Fernando; 177 in Port of Spain. Of course there were other areas which we addressed, but those are the main areas I am giving figures for, the total being as I said, 414 present.

Mr. Chairman: So you have the figures as of November?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: At the end of November 2017, and we are due to do another street count this year.

Mr. Chairman: Is it that you are planning two street counts for the year? What is the number that you are planning to keep your database up-to-date?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: We usually do one per year.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Out of the 400-plus that you are indicating as existing in 2017, could you indicate how many of those were women?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Yes, I believe we have that statistic.

Mr. Chairman: I raise this because issues arose with respect to how we were going to treat with women who were socially displaced.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: In total we had six persons I am seeing here who are female.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. And that is of November 2017?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. The second broad issue I wanted to raise with you, Madam Permanent Secretary, is with respect to the Socially Displaced Persons Act

of 2000. That Act is not yet proclaimed, from my understanding. Has it been proclaimed?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: No.

Mr. Chairman: It has not. Could you again remind us what are the challenges, and what the Ministry has done so far with respect to satisfying certain requirements which will allow for a proclamation of this particular Act.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: There are a number of issues with regard to the Socially Displaced Persons Act. The Act was actually reviewed by the Street Dwellers Working Committee and a number of recommendations were made in terms of its amendment. The primary one being that the whole issue of this Ministry treating with the removal of persons from the streets should be removed. So that it will remain the remit of the Ministry of Health.

That Act also treats with the staff for the unit and also a Socially Displaced Persons Board, Street Dwellers Board. What we have done is actually—the committee that I spoke to in my opening address, we have gone to Cabinet, we are going to Cabinet to set up that Committee so that they could do some of the work that the board would have done, if we had established the board through the Act.

We also had some recommendations in terms of the whole continuum of care that has to be addressed in the revision to the Act. At this point we have also revised the policy, because in order to have an Act passed you usually have to have a policy that goes with the Act. So we have revised the policy, and at this point we have our legal person reviewing the policy before it is actually forwarded to the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs.

We also have to meet with the Ministry of Health and our other stakeholders to review all the changes that were recommended by the Street Dwellers Working Committee before we finalize the policy and send it off to the Ministry of the

Attorney General and Legal Affairs. So we are still, I would think, at a place where we are not yet ready to proclaim because we have these different actions to take.

Mr. Chairman: Madam Permanent Secretary, this is now the issue I have. There is also the Mental Health Act which is the primary responsibility of the Ministry of Health, but the Mental Health Act also affects your Ministry discharging its responsibility with respect to mentally challenged socially displaced persons. We recommended that there be a review of the Mental Health Act, which is not within your purview—that is within the Ministry of Health—but it affects the work that you do.

The socially displaced Act affects the work you do directly. The recommendations are still in transit as it were. It is not as if there is any closure. My question to you is, do you think there is a need for one coordinating body to coordinate with the various agencies, the Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of Health, your Ministry, so that we could navigate our way through the socially displaced persons Act and the Mental Health persons Act? Is it because of the absence of one centralized agency or unit in the government apparatus that these particular changes to the legislation are not really being pursued with the timeliness that I think they ought to be pursued? What is your view on that?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Chair, I think the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services has that role right now, through the Social Displacement Unit, that coordinating responsibility. In terms of the challenge, probably Mrs. Reyes-Borel who works directly as the person in the unit, could give us some insight as to what some of the challenges may have been.

Mr. Chairman: Before I ask Mrs. Reyes-Borel to come in, could you advise the Committee on the membership of the Social Development Unit—I need to get it

clear on my mind—and what really the powers are with respect to their authority to liaise with all other Ministries to ensure that the various stakeholders in the State apparatus can come together to settle on particular matters so we can move speedily? The Socially Displaced Unit, I need to understand its particular structure and from where does it derive its powers to perform the coordinating role that I think is very necessary.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Chair, the unit actually is part of the Act; however, the Act was not proclaimed, but we still set up the unit, and the unit really over the years have been considered by the other Ministries as the coordinating agency.

Mr. Chairman: Excellent point. We understand the catch-22 situation. So there is an Act, it is not yet proclaimed, the Act recommended a Socially Displaced Unit. De facto, the Socially Displaced Unit is in existence. Is it that although the Act has not being proclaimed, this particular unit as you are saying does in fact, although not in law, has the authority to perform the coordinating role?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: It does have the authority, and they have been working with all the agencies and they do in fact cooperate with the unit.

Mr. Chairman: Again Committee members, I do need to follow up this before I raise some issues, so that we could ask Mrs. Reyes-Borel to give us a little insight into the work you have been doing so far at the SDU, and then I go on to the Committees members.

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Thank you. The unit essentially coordinates with the service providers in terms of providing the interventions for the clients. That is something that really works in terms of networking, as to there is a situation and we reach out to the various agencies in terms of having the interventions.

The unit has been in the past secretariat to the Social Displacement Board, and at the board level is where you really have the opportunity for more action at a

higher level, and in terms of the—

Mr. Chairman: Clarification. How long have you been in existence and how long have you been functioning as a unit?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: The Unit was established on the 3rd of August, 1999.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so you have a long experience, and therefore there really should not be a problem with coordination?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Well, there really should not be a problem with coordination, but what has happened, because you need coordination at a higher level—because when you have the service providers' meeting, you find that you have more response to crisis as compared to having your system be able to respond in a consistent manner. We see at the unit that with the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee that is being proposed, that will allow that kind of networking at a higher level, that will allow for policies, processes and procedures to put in place so that these things are effected at a higher level and approved, so that you do not have to, more likely than not, depend on interventions as things happen. You have a process, you have a procedure. Everybody knows what their responsibilities and authorities are, and they can act on it, and if there is a problem, there are again the processes to have the problems addressed if things do not happen as they should.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. MP Newallo-Hosein is now invited to continue the discussion.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I have a number of questions, but the first one I would like to ask is, how many persons have been relocated since November of 2017 when you had your head count?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Relocated off the streets?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: That would not be a number that I would offhand.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: One, two? How many persons you would have had interventions for?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Interventions via the unit? We would have numbers via the unit, which would be what our field officer assigned to the unit—we would be able provide that. But we must remember that persons also access the services at CSDP voluntarily, so we would have to compile both what are the admission figures at CSDP and what the unit would have done.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mrs. Reyes-Borel, I would think that if you have a unit, you would be very excited about the achievements of the unit, and therefore when you come to a Committee, you would be able to say, “Hey, since we last met with you in 2017, we have had so many interventions. We have so many persons relocated off of the streets”, and therefore you would have been able to speak of the success of the unit. You speak of an inter-ministerial unit now to be able to deal with it at a head level, is there an inter-agency unit which was operational at the point of November 2017?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: The question on the inter-agency unit, I would like to defer to have that answered by the Permanent Secretary, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Permanent Secretary, is there an IA unit?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: No, we do not have an inter-agency unit. The Social Displacement Unit acts as the unit that collaborates with all the other agencies.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: That agency, which is the SDU, is now forming its IMU, which is the inter-ministerial unit, which Mrs. Reyes-Borel just indicated will be established or is being established.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: No, this is the Coordinating and Monitoring Committee that will be established to oversee the recommendations—the implementation of the

recommendations of the Street Dwellers Working Committee.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Therefore, the implementation unit, the arm which was the IAU was in fact disbanded and now we are creating another unit to do the implementation. Is that what you are saying?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: No, we are not creating a unit. We are just establishing a committee, an overarching committee with representatives from various sectors: the Ministries, the private sector and the NGO sector.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is there any unit that is operational at this point that implements the policy or the existing policy of the Ministry regarding socially displaced persons?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: The Social Displacement Unit of which Mrs. Reyes-Borel is the head.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, so you are the implementation arm and yet the implementation arm cannot indicate to the Committee this morning how many persons have been relocated off of the streets since November 2017, and how many persons have had intervention. Just to ask the NSDP, how many persons have actually walked in off of the street to the NSDP offices, and at which office did that intervention take place?

Ms. De Leon Henry: Socially displaced persons would come off of the street; however, they would go to the Social Displacement Unit which is located on St. Vincent Street. If there is any need after for referral to the National Social Development Programme, then that is done, but they are the unit that they would interact with.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So, I am a socially displaced person, and I live in Toco, I have to come to Port of Spain to get intervention?

11.15 a.m.

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: May I? It is not NSDP. It is the CSDP, Centre for Socially Displaced Persons that is located in the Riverside car park. That would be the facility where persons do walk in. And the numbers that we have for since January in terms of persons at—the total number is to March 28, 2017:; we have 68 persons; New Horizons, five; Piparo Empowerment, five; CSDP 29 in Port of Spain; CSDP in San Fernando, 39.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Those are persons that you have located at all those intervention centres?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Those would have been persons who would have been for the period 2017 March to 2018 March. And at present there—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And what were the numbers prior to that date?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Prior to that date, I do not have that information here with me, but to date there are 115 persons at CSDP in Port of Spain. There are 26 as mentioned earlier by PS in San Fernando, 21 at New Horizons, 17 at our elderly facility in Arima, and 17 at Piparo Empowerment Centre.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I have follow up to my colleague's question and that is: There was a recommendation that some of the rehabilitated socially displaced persons be employed as life coaches to assist other socially displaced persons to integrate. Were you able to secure any success at all in getting some of the rehabilitated socially displaced persons to act as these life coaches? Any success in this area?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: At the facility at Piparo there is one staff member who would have come through the programme specifically at Piparo who is currently employed there.

Mr. Chairman: And so that you have had one, do you have a target, of course, to maybe at the end of the year to increase that number from one to any other

amount? I am really curious as to how well that particular initiative is working, and if it is working well whether you plan to expand the number of life coaches drawn from the community itself?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Well, because it is a state-run facility we would have to go through the process of establishing the position of life coach. The staff who is currently working, he is working as—he is on the agricultural programme, and from time to time he is part of the sessions where they would work with the clients where he does, where he sits in and he is closer to a mentor. So the process of establishing the position of life coach is something that has to be done for the Piparo and any other facilities that we may have. So it would require some more work than we had the opportunity to do.

Mr. Chairman: And one final follow up before I ask MP Hosein to continue. You had indicated in your submission that there was a need for 15 social workers as a minimum and you did have an optimum number, I think, doubled that amount. How many social workers do you have at present employed in the Ministry to deal specifically with the socially displaced persons?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: We have one person right now in the Social Displacement Unit who is a social worker, but we are working towards interviews.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. So, Madam Permanent Secretary, we are well below the minimum of 15 that was recommended.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Yes. We are at this point in time, but as I indicated, by probably the next two months we should have some more in the unit.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Chair, if I may, could I just make one correction, please?

Mr. Chairman: Sure.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Earlier in terms of the question on the number of females—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers:—the information I gave was only for Chaguanas, but in terms of the total of the 414, 22 persons are female.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much for the correction, Madam PS.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The PS had indicated that there are key stakeholders who are going to be engaged and so forth and a committee is due to be established sometime between May and June. What is the name of that committee?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: That committee is the coordinating and monitoring committee for the socially displaced persons.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And you spoke about categorization of socially displaced persons. How many categories have been established thus far?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Ms. Reyes-Borel?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: The categories are: the elderly, mentally ill, substance abusers, core morbidity and the strictly homeless.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Have you encountered within the last two and a half years an increase in persons who have become homeless because of the fact that they have lost their jobs?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: The CSDP's files do not indicate that is the case in terms of our last review which would have been done over February/March; that is not being indicated.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: But before a client goes to CSDP, does the client not come to you, the Ministry, first? Or are their clients who would access the Ministry before being sent to CSDP?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Clients can access CSDP voluntarily, and also, via the unit.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. So for the persons who may have come to you, have you identified anyone who has become homeless as a result of losing their

homes because of unemployment?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Our files do not indicate that either, the Social Displacement Unit. The Social Displacement Unit would refer—most cases get referred to the Centre for Socially Displaced Persons. So there in whatever we would have seen at the unit, would be inclusive of what would be at CSDP.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Can NSDP tell me what role you play in this whole SDO?

Ms. Henry: Member, I have been invited to participate in this Committee because I would have previously been at the project implementation unit dealing with the infrastructural issues with respect to the assessment centres for socially displaced persons.

Mr. Chairman: Sen. Ameen.

Ms. Ameen: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, these faces are becoming so familiar now. Chairman, I want to ask—PS Barrow spoke about the draft standards of care and the revised policy document, and I remember that the last time you were here you spoke about it as well. But in your information task you indicated that the timeline for this was in April of 2018. You did mention it again, and you did indicate that you are still in the process of working. So, I wanted to ask if you had the opportunity, I know you spoke of the street dwellers working committee's report, and the Cabinet Minutes and so on. Have you reached to the stage of meeting with the Attorney General Office? Has the legal officer of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services met with the office of the Attorney General, and what was the result of that meeting? And clearly we would have passed the April 2018 deadline that you would have had, so I want to ask: What is your new timeline regarding the implementation of the standards of care reviewed policy document that you spoke about?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: So, we do have a draft standards of care policy document,

and as I mentioned before, we have revised the policy document that goes with the Bill so that we can move towards proclamation, but we have not met with our key stakeholders with respect to the revised document, because it is with our Legal Officer reviewing it right now.

Ms. Ameen: Do you have a timeline to say that by this date you want to meet with the Attorney General's Office by this date? And you know, the steps and the process and the dates by which you aim to achieve them?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: We do not have a date as yet, but we are trusting that we will be able to move forward with getting it to the Attorney General before the end of the fiscal.

Ms. Ameen: Chairman, I want to suggest here that there are steps required to reach certain objectives, and it is my belief that for prudent management of the process and not to allow it to become unnecessarily delayed, dates should be decided for each of the steps, each of the objectives in this process, so that before the end of the year, the PS and the others involved in the process will be able to tell if they are on track to being on time. Because I know there was a date before, and I really would not like another Committee to come here and have to be having this same discussion with a new date. So, I want to ask through you, Mr. Chair, if the Ministry could consider making such a timetable and sharing that with us so it will help them, yes, but I will also inform the Committee as to when we can reasonably expect this document to become closer to an Act?

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. And before I ask PS Bailey-Sobers to respond, I understand that there are matters outside your remit. Those are matters over which you have no control with respect to a timeline, but then there are certain issues which your unit can handle. So may I recommend that you look at what it is that falls within, strictly within your purview and provide the timeline,

and that which does not fall within your remit, you provide for us an indication as when you think in order for you to discharge your responsibility well, it will be reasonable for us to expect that completion. But before you do that, I want to raise an issue on something I think is within your control.

There was said to be a public/private partnerships to employ persons, a, who was socially displaced? I have noticed in some supermarkets, for example, that I see persons who are differently abled being employed. Was your unit able to secure any employment with the private sector? So, we are focusing on the timelines, but were you able to secure any employment, any agreements with the private sector so that you have some kind of arrangement where the private sector will offer employment to your rehabilitated individuals?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: I am not aware of a structured arrangement, but of course, I will ask Ms. Reyes-Borel, probably she would have some more information.

Mr. Chairman: With respect to the timelines, may I recommend that you itemize the various issues which are within your control and you provide for us a timeline? And the issues which are not within your control, an expectation of when you would like to see it done? For example, the recruitment of the social workers is not within your control. Some other agency has to recruit that, but I would like if you can indicate to the Committee, when you would like to get your 15 members, given your own understanding of the time it takes in the public service to recruit such individuals?

So, you look at some of those practical things and give us an indication of when, because I myself was very, very surprised that you only had one social worker and you did not have the full, the minimum that you thought that your Ministry needed. So, I think you understand exactly the decomposition of what is within your control and what is outside of your control with respect to

implementing certain measures within, say another year, of particularly by 2019, end of 2019 where you would like to be? Another question, Sen. Ameen?

Ms. Ameen: Mr. Chairman, I am just reminded in our last discussion one of the weakness that the Ministry identified for itself in the implementation of several key projects was that it did not meet milestones as a result of the project management, and I think it is becoming more apparent as we discuss some more of your plans that, you know, as you go along. I wanted to mention that, but also in the submissions, the Ministry mentioned some challenges with regards to the recruitment and the retention of the required competencies. I just want to extend a little bit on what the Chairman asked earlier.

You spoke about the challenges, but I wanted to get from you, what sort of steps you were able to take to improve on the recruitment? But basically to, I mean, deal with your shortage of staff, at least, the ones within your control, as well as, you know, what the Ministry would have done to ensure efficient and effective retention of staff?

Ms. Barrow: If I may? Right now, the Ministry has been pursuing aggressively its recruitment of its contract positions which we have control over. Right? And it is expected that, at least, within these three months, well up to the end of June, that we would have completed the exercise with regard to filling the vacancies that we have within the Ministry on contract. The interviews for the positions of social worker have already been scheduled and we expect that to be completed by the end of June.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Some clarification, will those be contract workers?

Ms. Barrow: They will.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. And is it because they are contract workers you can expedite the recruitment process?

Ms. Barrow: We can do the recruitment as opposed to us having to go through the service positions.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. But could you give us a timeline then if all goes well when you can get your number? Is it the number of 15 or some other number?

Ms. Barrow: It would be dependent on, it is more than 15, and we are looking at across the Ministry not just the Social Displacement Unit, and we are hoping to fill all of the positions, but it would be dependent on the persons who would have applied, and whether or not the time frame for bringing them on board would be on what notice they may have to give because they might—

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Very well.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Just a quick question to follow up on that. And that is you are looking to bring on persons on board. Do you have the requisite budget to bring on those persons? Do you have on your hand at this moment to say that you can bring on these persons without—

Ms. Barrow: Funds were allocated in our budget for all of our contract positions.

Mr. Chairman: During the current fiscal year?

Ms. Barrow: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. And could you indicate to us, I do not have the estimates before me, how many persons did you request and on what the allocation was so that I would be satisfied that you are not facing budgetary constraint?

Ms. Barrow: I will have to provide that information.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. Thank you very much.

Ms. Ameen: Chair, I am concerned. We are hearing the Ministry speaking of staff shortages. We are hearing of challenges with recruiting and dealing with the deficiencies of staff, and on the other hand, over this same, within this same fiscal year there are a number of persons whose contracts were either terminated or not

renewed within this same Ministry. And in some areas, units that were responsible for research, for example, to inform the Ministry so that they can make informed policy recommendations that would then become law, those units have been, in some cases, disbanded, in some cases operating with very skeletal staff. So when the Ministry is grappling to make do with the expertise that they have, on the other hand, I mean, you could dress it up in different ways, but when people's contracts are not renewed, they are effectively fired.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. So could I pose a pointed question then to both permanent secretaries? Based upon the enquiry at hand, which is socially displaced persons, is it that apart from what I have identified as a deficiency in social workers, do you have a shortage of any other type of staff which is adversely affecting your ability to discharge your functions re the socially displaced persons? Apart social workers, is there any other type of person— professional—that you need in order to ensure that you duty with respect to the socially displaced persons are discharged?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Chair, it is primarily social workers. We also have some administrative persons, and we also had some field officers. Those are the persons who would have gone onto the street to do moral suasion with the persons to get them into centres. So generally those are the persons in the unit, and those are the persons we are working on to bring on board as contract workers.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. And may I ask MP Ancil Antoine to come in at this point?

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Yes. Good morning once again. I am a bit not clear on your establishment of the assessment centres. I am getting two different responses from the Ministry. You said that Cabinet agreed to take ownership of the lands located at the corner of South Quay and Piccadilly Streets for the establishment of an

assessment centre. That area is south for your centre for socially displaced persons at the car park, the old car park. And then you said that—in your submission you mentioned preliminary assessments were conducted at the Spree Simon building and former site of the Besson Street Police Station and this is north of the displacement centre. Are you acquiring both properties or just one property?

Ms. Barrow: So the location behind CSDP, that plot of land, we when looked, we are still trying to acquire that for it to be vested under the Minister of Social Development and Family Services. We have been liaising with both Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, property and real estate, HDC, with regard to having that vested with us. However, in the interim or in the short term we did start looking at other locations that we would be able to provide the services of an assessment centre in a shorter period of time that it would take for us to construct the assessment centre and the transitional housing behind the CSDP.

One of the areas that we went and we did site visits on was the Besson Street Police Station, the old Besson Street Police Station, as well as by the Spree Simon, one of the buildings which is next to the soup kitchen that is there. And we did determine that the Besson Street Police Station, that site was the most suitable location, as well as its proximity to the CSDP, as well as the location of it would have been the most ideal location. So, we are pursuing establishing the assessment centre there which will also be for transitional housing also.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: So what Note is going to come for the property at the bottom of South Quay and Piccadilly Street?

Ms. Barrow: No. The one for Besson Street.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: So the South Quay is no longer—

Ms. Barrow: It is, but it is the long term.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: It is in the long term.

Ms. Barrow: Yeah.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: So you have a short term and a long-term plan?

Ms. Barrow: Yeah.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: So Besson Street is long term. Could you give me time—

Ms. Barrow: Short term.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Short term. So in the short term, could you give me a time frame?

Ms. Barrow: Well, the Note for Cabinet is going to go by the end of this month, and we are still liaising with—we are kind of constrained by property and real estate and the acquisition and of the building itself.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: And was this catered for in the PSIP?

Ms. Barrow: Yes.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Yes. And—

Ms. Barrow: This would have been the original project that would have started off when we were looking at Queen Street which was the building that we found to be structurally unsound by the Ministry of Works and Transport that we had to abandon that.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: So there was no need for any increases in terms of the midterm review for this property?

Ms. Barrow: No.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. Okay. Sen. Shrikissoon.

Mr. Shrikissoon: Thank you, Chair. Good morning all. I would just like to reflect on some of the questions that member Hosein was asking earlier, and we heard via your introduction that there just about 415 thereabout displaced persons in Trinidad at the last time it was measured. Do you have the number for the year before, 2016? You can just give me the total, the total would be fine.

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: We had to—

Mr. Shrikissoon: Could you just give me one total, the total just as you presented the total for 2017?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: The total for 2017 was 414.

Mr. Shrikissoon: And the year before?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: The year before the total was 317, but we need to note that some areas, the 2017 count included some areas that were not included in the 2016.

Mr. Shrikissoon: Okay. Essentially over the—year on year you would have had about 100 persons increased in terms of being socially disabled.

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: What appears to be an increase, because some areas were not counted, that is not a—we cannot make that assumption.

Mr. Shrikissoon: Sure. But just generally there was a noted increase of 100, we are not saying it was specific, but just general.

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Well if the area was not counted. So, for example, if there were five people in Barataria and in 2017 and Barataria was not counted in 2016, we cannot call it an increase because we would not have had the data for what was in Barataria in 2016. So in the end, street counts—this is the nature of street counts. It is very difficult to count entire areas and be clear that you have specifics. So what happens is, areas are counted and you have the best that you have at that given point in time; that is a point in time survey. So what we have sought to do is to increase assistance through the corporations so that we can have consistently and as many areas counted as possible using the resources of the various corporations because, again, the regional corporations, often they have a better idea as to where the population might be in any given area and on any given night. And in terms of population, 414 will be those who are on the streets.

What we also include are persons who are in the centres for socially

displaced persons to add that figure to have, to be able to speak to persons who are socially displaced street dwellers in Trinidad and Tobago. So 414 represents the persons who were found on a specific night on the streets and to have a comprehensive to say, street dwellers, you would add who would have been at the centres on that specific night.

Mr. Gangerpersad: Chair, if I may? I am just doing the maths from the area that was done in 2016 and comparing it to the area that was done in 2017. In 2016, it was 317. When you look at the areas that were counted, the similar areas in 2017, it was 265 and 69. So there was a decrease over the period.

Mr. Shrikissoon: So that helps me. But then the question therefore is: How many of those of the decrease, or how many that the Ministry or the unit would actually intervene in getting them off the street? For that decrease, can you account, via your actions, can you account for this decrease or is it just because?

Mr. Gangerpersad: The answer to that is it is not certain whether it is the intervention of the Ministry or any of the NGOs that is dealing with the population.

Mr. Shrikissoon: My point is, or should I ask one more question: Do you have a goal as to how quickly or how many of the socially displaced people on the streets you would like to see addressed or removed off the streets in a particular year? Do you have a goal or an agenda?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Usually what we look at is a percentage in terms of the number that is on the streets from our street count. So the percentage realistically given the capacity of our centres. We usually look at trying to have a 20 per cent persons engaged for any given year or so, to have engaged 20 per cent, at least.

Mr. Shrikissoon: So am I to assume that of the number that you would have counted that your goal for the year would be to reduce it by roughly 20 per cent?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: For the areas, for the various areas that we would have

engaged, yes. And specifically given resources, we look at Port of Spain and San Fernando given that those are the two facilities that have the first step, the centres, the shelters that persons can go to.

Mr. Shrikissoon: You essentially have two challenges: one, areas which street dwellers that were not accounted for in the areas that you did not check, and then roughly 80 per cent of people remain on un-helped because of inadequate resources?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: We would have, and as evidenced of persons on the streets, we do have a significant amount of persons who are not accessing help. Now, the amount of persons that you get into your facility is not necessarily, is not an actual representation of how many persons you have engaged and offered help because the persons, as far as the unit is concerned, what we do is offer the help. They can say to us, no they are not interested. So in terms of persons that you can take through the process that is the 20 per cent that we look at, not how many persons may have been engaged.

Mr. Shrikissoon: If you could just allow me to make one comment.

Mr. Chairman: One comment and then MP Newallo-Hosein because she has a burning follow up to your comment.

Mr. Shrikissoon: I think we should recommend some metrics for this unit for us to measure performance and to determine because it remains unmeasurable.

Ms. Ameen: I wanted to ask if there are like international standards that could be recommended. I know the ideal is 100 per cent, but there might be some—

Mr. Chairman: Okay. So Sen. Shrikissoon and Sen. Ameen, both of them would like to get some metrics, some objective measurable pointers. Could you indicate what those might be for us?

Ms. Ameen: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Could we give them an opportunity to response while—Sen. Ameen, could you hold because MP Hosein does have some burning follow ups to the points raised by Sen. Shrikissoon.

Ms. Ameen: Chairman, if the information—

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Could you clarify, again, the question because I think we are talking about metrics.

11.45 a.m.

Ms. Ameen: Yes, a follow up from Sen. Shrikissoon with regard to what your target is in terms of the percentage of people you removed from the street. Thus far, your target really is limited by your resources and I know that is not an ideal situation. Ideally, we would like to see 100 per cent of persons removed. But what I am asking: Are there any international standards that exist in terms of percentages, in terms of number of people that you would want to engage as well as remove and can those things guide you in terms of improving your target? I know right now you are very restricted with your resources. So if you could share that with us.

Mr. Chairman: All right, so we have gotten the drift, I would like the representative to respond. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Sure, Chair. I just need to make one point and I would ask Mrs. Reyes-Borel to speak to the other issues and to indicate that the removal of persons from the street, if you would recall, that is an issue that we are addressing with the Ministry of Health so that in terms of targets and given that the authority for us to remove is not in our remit, it would be difficult for us to create targets unless we do that collaboratively with the Ministry of Health. So that it is not so much our resources that limits us but the authority; it is not in our remit to remove persons.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, but you do have the socially displaced unit, the SDU. You indicated that it was the coordinating arm. According to the Act, it does have de facto powers. It has some powers. It has an ability to liaise with the police, the Ministry of Health and all the other agencies. So since this unit is in existence, I would like to find out what prevents the unit from working with these other agencies of the State to achieve their objectives. Right, and Sen. Shrikissoon wants to come at this point.

Mr. Shrikissoon: Yes, just for one point and I understand your position with respect to having people removed or persons removed, but we could just use a metric of how many people you have actually engaged and not necessarily go further down in terms of removed, but just to tell us how many people you would have engaged so as to determine the effectiveness of the unit.

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: In terms of engagement, those figures can be provided because, yes, we do maintain our stats in terms of the engagement of persons; that is maintained in the unit. Well we do not have that here today so that can be provided. The question in terms of the coordination, what we usually encounter is the explanations from our partners and our networks. Again, it is their resource constraints. So we do have the major challenge of the removal of the mentally ill and that when we speak with the Ministry of Health in terms of the mental health officers and their services, that they do have the issue of resource constraints also.

So in terms of removal, when we speak of removal and this is involuntary removal, it would be the Ministry of Health or the police and the police would indicate that to be able to engage some persons, they do require the support of the Ministry of Health also. So from our partners, there is also the report of resource constraints to do what they need to in terms of effecting involuntary removal.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. MP Newallo-Hosein has to come in, I

think she is intrigued by your response.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Very much intrigued because as far as I am aware, the IAU Unit, they were responsible for—which means Inter-Agency Unit. That unit was responsible for the coordination of which Health must be involved and the police because no person can be removed off the street unless it is voluntary. The Ministry has chosen to disband this unit and therefore, as such, the unit has become impotent. You have not been able to do the work that you are able to do. If you are, in fact, stating that there has been a decrease, then, therefore, the IAU Unit was in operation at that time and therefore, the credit must go to the unit because they were the implementation arm. The unit that is currently being managed in the Ministry is a policy-making unit. A policy-making unit does not implement and therefore, if it is that you are stating that you need to depend on your partners, which is Health, to remove, then you are in fact saying that you are making a policy for another Ministry, and that cannot be.

And so, I am asking the question, following up from Senator, who did the counting before or was the counting always provided—the figures provided by the corporation? And if this is in fact so, then you are depending on data from another institution which cannot be. You must have your own data collection processes. And if this is in fact so, when was this arrangement made with the corporations and also what areas were not counted in 2016?

Mr. Chairman: Let us get the point here. There is an SDU, socially displaced unit. MP is saying that there is another unit that was in charge of implementation. I need to get it clear in my own mind. Is the SDU challenged with respect to implementing?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: At this point, the SDU is responsible for both implementation and policy and it is challenged. As we would have said, there is

one social worker. So we are working towards ensuring that is properly resourced. So that, of course, would be a challenge. But at all points, that unit worked collaboratively with the other agencies because in terms of the authority, legislative authority, it is really the Mental Health Act that we are depending on to get the mentally ill, which are the persons who are mostly the socially displaced persons, off the streets.

Mr. Chairman: So you have, PS, an SDU with access to one social worker and that you have to implement policy. Is it that you absolutely need a better staff complement before you were able to execute? Is it now based upon the recruitment process that you have ongoing that once it is finalized, the SDU will then be adequately staff resourced to discharge its function?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: They will be adequately staff resourced and at this point when they do not have their full complement, they work collaboratively with their partners, which are the NGOs and CBOs and the other Ministries.

Mr. Chairman: All right. But the agency that MP Newallo spoke about. Is it the IAU? The IAU, was that disbanded?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: We no longer have that unit in the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: How many persons—I need to get it clear in my own mind. What type of persons were employed in that unit? What was the professional class? Is it social workers? Is it psychologists? Who exactly were the persons employed in the IAU?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: That unit, there was a head, a manager and they would have had some social workers, I believe, or field officers, persons, who will go on the street and speak with and encourage the persons to come off the street.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so that was really the implementation arm. That was the arm that went out on the streets, it went out and it spoke to the persons. It had a

police officer, a social worker and individuals who are au courant with this problem and who would do a number of things, one of which is to bring them to the centres, one of which provide counselling, one of which may be refer them to detox centres. Yes, I need clarification, I am not understanding what the IAU did.

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: The Inter-Agency Unit was intended to bring the collaboration and coordination that was required to look specifically at persons being removed off the streets. The Inter-Agency Unit, the recommendation was that there would be police officers, mental health officers and social workers. The Inter-Agency Unit was identified to be working within the Social Displacement Unit. The Inter-Agency Unit effectively was not that. The Inter-Agency Unit were police officers employed by the Ministry of, at the time, People and Social Development. There was a mental health officer who, again, was engaged by the Ministry, briefly I believe, to perform the functions of mental health officer and there were social workers.

The engagement of persons via the Inter-Agency Unit was a police officer—the system for removable via a police officer is for a person to be charged with an offence and be brought before the court. No person who was removed under the Inter-Agency Unit was brought before a court. No person who was removed via Inter-Agency Unit with the assistance of a mental health officer was brought to St. Ann's, which is where they should be brought to; that was not done. So, in effect, the Inter-Agency Unit, while it did have, to some extent, the presence of these various officers, still the authority to do what they were supposed to do was not legally vested in these persons.

So in essence, we had a unit, the Ministry had a unit that would have been effecting voluntary removal and relocation to a facility. In the end, to review, ideally, that system cannot work. It will not stand scrutiny because a mental health

officer—if someone is removed by a mental health officer, they must be taken to St. Ann’s. If you take them anywhere else, that would be contrary to law.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. I need to get something, again, clear in my own mind. You get a report, your Ministry gets a report that there are a number of persons who are living in a particular square and you get a report that they have been there for a while. How soon can we, the society, expect an officer of the SDU or an employee of the Ministry of social services to visit the place where these individuals are residing to offer the necessary guidance, counselling and health? So I give you a report today that I know that there are a number of persons who are sleeping in a particular area, when can I expect a visit from the SDU or any other agency of your Ministry to pay a visit and to do the necessary evaluations?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Our field officer visits upon reception of the report. So the field officer is assigned to visit.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mrs. Reyes-Borel, could you identify to me how many persons are employed in your unit currently?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Currently in the unit, we have a Business Operations Coordinator, we have a Field Officer and we have Social Work Supervisor who is a social worker, myself, Executive Director, I am a trained social worker.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So you have four persons?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Currently, four persons in the unit.

Ms. Ameen: And what is the ideal complement? Do you have vacancies and positions not filled?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: We do not have the information on the approved structure at this point but we could make that available. The approved structure.

Ms. Ameen: Yeah, you could always send it to us. But are there, in fact, positions in that unit that are not filled and are those amongst the positions you intend to

recruit people for, contract positions?

Ms. Barrow: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: And Sen. Shrikissoon does have a follow up.

Mr. Shrikissoon: Thank you, Chair. To Mrs. Borel, with respect to the four persons employed at your unit, can you advise how many of them are currently engaging the socially displaced on the streets?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: The field officer has responsibility for the engagement. That is field officer's specific responsibility. If for some reason, the field officer is not available, it is done by the senior social worker.

Mr. Shrikissoon: Essentially, your answer is one? One with a backup.

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: One with the responsibility and the additional person.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. But I need to get clarification, again, on the duties of this one or two officers. I give a call. I say I think there are persons who are living there and they need help or they may have approached me and they would say, "Can you provide help for us?", so I call your office. Your officer, you said, will visit, maybe, within a reasonable period of time, a three-day period—let us say within the week, an officer may visit. The officer visits. On that visit, does the officer visit alone? Does the officer visit with any assistant? Does the officer visit with a police officer? Does he visit with an intention to providing any kind of care, immediate assistance? Or does the officer visit just simply to take a report?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: That would depend on the nature of the report. The officer would visit with—is supported by staff that we have at the New Horizons so there is a vehicle and a psychiatric nurse attached to New Horizons. So that the officer will visit in conjunction—depending on the nature of the report, we would determine what kind of support the officer would need to do. At times, the officer may visit on her own, especially if it is Port of Spain and environs, areas that she

knows.

Mr. Chairman: The New Horizons, could you indicate what it is?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: It is the facility that—it is a care facility located in Caparo.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You said the area that she knows. Does not mean if she is unfamiliar with an area that there is no visit?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: She would go alone in the areas of Port of Spain because we do have reports—Charlotte Street, Frederick Street. Those streets, she is likely to go alone; leave the office and walk down.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Just to ask, what time of the day would a count be done on your street dwellers?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Street counts are done between the hours of 10.00 in the night to five o'clock in the morning. It usually starts at—it may start later in Port of Spain because the clients take longer to bed down, but in the more— areas such as Arima, Sangre Grande, we would start at 10.00. So it is between 10.00 p.m. to 5.00 a.m. in the morning.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Are you aware that some street dwellers may not be there at nights or there may be street dwellers who are there not at night, in the day? There are different counts for street dwellers and how does the Ministry—how are they able to identify whether the same persons are not being counted twice or they are not being counted at all with your time frame for counting?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Well, let me indicate for point in time service, best practice, it is done at night. The Ministry did do a comparative street count day and night in 2016 to compare the figures in terms of numbers. The numbers in the day were significantly less than the numbers in the night. The count in the day is compounded by the fact that people are moving. You are more likely to have

difficulty in identifying who is the person living on the streets. So we have looked at that aspect and done a comparison but to indicate that point in time in the night is best practice internationally.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Mrs. Borel. I want to shift the dialogue now a little bit away from your Ministry and towards the NGOs which work in conjunction with your Ministry. There are some functions which are best done by the Ministry within Ministry and then there are some functions which are best done by the non-government organizations. We were advised that there was a committee that was established to coordinate the work of the NGOs as it relates to the socially displaced. What is the status of this committee?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Chair, I am not aware of that committee that was set up to coordinate the—

Mr. Chairman: Okay, okay, I read that in one of the submissions—well, there is a follow up from MP Antoine.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Yes, you said in your response: a terms of reference and Draft Cabinet Note for the establishment of the street dwellers coordinating and monitoring committee has already been prepared. Time frame for the establishment of this Committee is May 2018.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Yes, and that is the Coordinating and Monitoring Committee that would be established between this month and next month which will be overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of the street dwellers working committee. That is their remit.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: And what will be the terms of reference of this committee? Because this committee is—it is anticipated that this committee would comprise officials from Ministries, NGOs, the private sector, et cetera and I would assume from the Port of Spain Corporation as well. So what is the terms of reference?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: The terms of reference of that committee includes examining the report of the street dwellers working committee and the outcome documents of this committee and ensuring that they are implemented. They are also going to ensure that an implementation schedule is developed to ensure that we have time frames for the implementation of the various recommendations. They will be working with Ministries and agencies to develop their specific work plans for the recommendations and of course, identifying barriers to implementation and bottlenecks and treating with those and also monitoring the review and reporting to the Cabinet.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Would there be a sub-implementation part of this committee? Because I am getting the impression that we are creating a very large bureaucratic-base situation with committees and so forth but very little on implementation and we are dealing with street dwellers, we are dealing with socially displaced people, where it should have a different dynamic in terms of a pyramid with a smaller top and a wider base. It is a reverse pyramid. A lot of bureaucracy on top, very little implementation below.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Member, this committee is not intended to be bureaucratic, it is a coordinating committee. It will just be overseeing the implementation of the recommendations and of course, as I indicated, they will be working with the different Ministries and agencies to make sure that they have their work plans and that resources are actually put towards the implementation of the various recommendations. So I think this committee has been a missing link whenever we have plans like this and this is probably why some of it, in the past, have sort to have fallen by the wayside because we did not have this monitoring mechanism in place.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Again, I ask who would implement the recommendations,

the findings of this committee so that it would get down to the people who need it most—the street dwellers and the socially displaced people.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: All the key stakeholders. The Ministry of Health has a role, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and also the Ministry of Health; the key players.

Mr. Chairman: Again, I raise the issue with the NGOs but it involves much more than the NGOs, of course, as MP Ancil Antoine indicated. What I would like to know is this, NGOs receive subventions from your Ministry and every subvention ought to be monitored and evaluated. Who does the monitoring and the evaluation of the expenditures of the NGO to determine that the NGOs, so discharged, are doing what they are required to do after they have received funds from you?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Chair, we have a mechanism in place. We have an NGO unit in the Ministry that is responsible for overseeing all the subventions that we give to various organizations. That unit monitors the expenditure on a monthly basis and on a quarterly basis and we also have an M&E Division which we are currently trying to fully resource. That unit, over some years, did not have the full staff and we now have a director and we are looking to provide some additional support for the director so that that unit, for example, at this point in time, is doing an evaluation of the CSDP, the Centre for Socially Displaced Persons and out of that report, of course, would come some of the issues that we may have to address, what they are doing well, what they are not doing well and how we can improve what they are doing there.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. And have any NGOs been removed from your list on account of misuse of funds?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: No, we do not have any NGOs being removed. In fact, this is because we usually have a quarterly investigation by our audit unit also for all

the NGOs that we give subventions to, to ensure that if they probably not doing their records in the way that they should, that it could be corrected before we have any issues that you speak to.

Mr. Chairman: But have any NGOs received any assistance with respect to internal audit and external audit of their accounts from the Ministry?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: All the NGOs are required to submit annual audited financial statements. Sometimes it is a difficulty because there is a cost and the Ministry has to work with them to get it done in various arrangements.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Because we did indicate that the NGOs themselves should seek some assistance to get some cost reductions from the private sector. Do you know if any of them was successful with respect to moral suasion on the accounting auditing firms so that they could get some kind of financial reprieve as their accounts are audited? Because I would imagine without audited accounts, they would have a challenge to actually source funds.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: Yes, at least one NGO I am aware of was able to do that kind of negotiation so that they are always up to date with their audited financial statements.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, very well. So the recommendation remains enforced that NGOs should, as far as it is practicable, seek to get some kind of assistance from the private sector with respect to auditing the accounts so that they will then be in compliance of your financial rules and their flow of funds shall not be stymied. Any questions from the Committee? You have one, right, yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: PS, as you have indicated that the NGO unit would do the monitoring and evaluation. You have indicated throughout the committee session, this morning, that persons can go to any one of these homes, whether it is New Horizons or the CSDP and I was wondering, how is the Ministry able to monitor

and evaluate if someone goes there directly and how many socially displaced persons would have been readmitted and how are you able to determine whether the person that you are monitoring is, in fact, the same person that came in two weeks or two months ago or whatever it is and therefore, you might be, in fact, attending to the same person and counting it more than once if you do not have a direct involvement in the very first place. I am just asking.

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: I will just answer one aspect of the question and that is to make the distinction between the monitoring and evaluation of the NGOs and the monitoring and evaluation that will take place with the clients. So we do have the NGO Unit and the M&E Unit that will deal with the strategic-type assessments of the organizations to determine whether they are meeting their objectives and then we have the other assessment that will be done by the SDU in terms of the clients and what is happening with those clients as they go into the facilities. So that will be addressed by Mrs. Reyes-Borel.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay and, Mrs. Reyes-Borel, if you can identify what are the objectives that you have set for the various homes, please?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: For clarity earlier on, clients do walk-ins at the Centres for Socially Displaced Persons in San Fernando and Port of Spain. Those are the areas where they do walk-ins and the unit would also do referrals. The other facilities, they are care facilities, so that is subject to an assessment and a referral process. And the other facilities that the unit is directly responsible for in terms of persons who go there would be the New Horizons facility and the Hernandez Place facility. Those facilities, referral is directly through the unit. Other facilities that may be providing care or other services to street dwellers and are receiving subvention would have to provide—they provide data to the NGO unit and the unit in terms of the number of persons that they would they seen and provided service to. And

they are only accountable to us for the subvention.

In terms of persons being double counted, at the nature of the population, persons would present—our population may present more than once in any given period for admission at the Centres for Socially Displaced Persons. That is the nature of the population, but it is understood.

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It would be counted as an admission because at the end you would have 30 admissions for the year, and know that 20 of those are new, and there are 10 that are repeat persons. And that is okay, because that is the nature of the clientele. They will present at the centres—these first step centres—more than once in any given period.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, and I have an interest with respect to, two additional areas that I gleaned from your own submission. One: socially displaced women. I would like to know what intervention do you have specifically for women who are socially displaced re their safety, their health needs, matters that are peculiar to women, do you a specific programme for women who are unfortunately homeless—living on the streets?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: In terms of our population, we do have—women are—it is not a high representation. So, in terms of their care needs, homelessness we have—New Horizons responds to—we have female admissions, we have separate accommodation for the women at New Horizons. And, of course, in terms of whatever their issues are—specific to women, those needs would be addressed by the care staff at the facility.

In the past we would have had referrals for female substance abusers and there is one facility specifically for female substance abusers that persons—women with substance abuse issues can be referred to.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. And now I need to move internationally. You did indicate that you were looking at practices abroad. I understand there was an example from the Philippines, there was one from Los Angeles—the Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool. What I would like to know is, what have you learnt from the experiences abroad that can be implemented in Trinidad and Tobago? Because I know there is something from Chile, from what I recall, from Chile as well, yes.

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: In direct experience would have been—for me as part of—the Director in the unit, would have been in Miami and Chile. The other would have been through research.

And at Miami, the learning essentially was the need to have a coordinated and integrated type of service for the clients. Of course, how it is done in Miami, it would be done differently in Trinidad. And in my opinion, I think it is easier to do it in Trinidad, because we have a public health service that is available for persons that they can walk in and access help and that really does make a difference.

In Chile, what was very clear in Chile was the value for persons living on the streets as individuals, with needs, with desires, with ambition. It was very clear in Chile that these are persons that need help—this is a social problem that requires social intervention with support from other things where when you may have medical or legal issues. So, in my experience that would have been for Chile.

Research overall indicates that this it is a challenge everywhere. The challenge for the Mayor of—he is always in the news, the Mayor of New York in terms of what he is or is not doing with homelessness. Los Angeles has a ridiculous, an entire—they have eight blocks of homeless persons on the streets. And you always find that persons are very clear that they want something done and they want it done now and the response from most people when you say, you want to put it in their community is not here though!

So it is not an easy problem to fix, it is not special to Trinidad and Tobago. The challenges internationally are similar to ours. Our population is thankfully a lot smaller than what I have seen internationally. There are some fantastic ideas such as Housing First which works really well in the rural areas in the United States, because they have housing stock, and they have areas that they can do the kind of housing that you need to be able to give to persons—house them first, deal with their issues after.

So, it is a place that it works well. Currently, it is being identified as best practice. It is an area that is informing, in terms of how we think in the unit, what we might want to do and how—where we might want to head towards—

Mr. Chairman: Very well. May I stop you? You raised a very important point. We have, let us say, 500 people who are sleeping on the streets, let us say from your count. Do we have 500 beds currently available now in Trinidad—I am not sure about what the arrangement is with Tobago. So that if you were able to interview all of them, you were able to tell them, “I have a bed for you to spend the night.” Do we have that facility in existence now in Trinidad? The number of beds equal in the amount of people sleeping on the street?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Four hundred and fourteen. No, we would not have 414.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, how much do we currently have? Because you see your point is, housing first. I think that is the key that is going to open the door to solutions. If we can get them into accommodations, so that they can have a shower, they can sleep, they can get breakfast in the morning, basically a bed and breakfast, as it were for people who are living on the streets. I have seen it done in Ottawa, for example, and they are out during the day, but in the night they have somewhere to sleep.

If it is that, we have 414, say persons via you count, hence statistics happen

to be important, how many beds would you say exist right now, which are available for housing?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Right now at CSEP, we have about 60 beds that are available.

Mr. Chairman: All right, so we have 60 and we may need about 500—give or take. So we are short basically, 400 beds. And is it from your recommendation? Because, you are on the field, you the social worker, you know what the needs are. Is it that these should be provided by the NGOs, the Government, or any other form? From your experience as a social worker, what is the best mode of delivery for this critical need?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Immediate shelter. Shelter arrangements are usually done. What I have seen it is done—managed by NGOs but it funded by State funding.

Mr. Chairman: Excellent. Thank you very much. I think we are making some progress with solutions.

Mr. Shrikissoon: Given your response, then could I really ask. What is underpinning the PSIP figure of \$3,002,000 then, given that you do not have the allocation that you need? What is influencing that budgeted request amount?

Mrs. Bailey-Sobers: We are just going to provide some information on what we are planning to use that money for, one of which is a shelter, which will address some of the issues for a couple—

Mr. Shrikissoon: You do not need to go into too much details. You could just tell me like how many beds would be available in that shelter given the gap?

Ms. Barrow: One hundred and sixty.

Mr. Chairman: We are approaching the time limitation, and the Parliament normally is accommodating to me to move beyond 12.30 but I have committed that we will complete at 12.30. Could we pose our critical last set of questions now, obtain the responses from our invitees, and then we will wrap up? Yes.

Ms. Ameen: Very quickly, Mr. Chairman. The shelter identified to be built under the PSIP funding, has the process—the procurement process begun as yet and do you intend to complete and award—at least award the contract by the end of fiscal 2018? Because, we would not want to know that you are not using the moneys allocated, you know.

Ms. Barrow: Yes, that is the intent, we hope to complete the whole procurement—as I said we were in the process still of trying to acquire the land, as well as with regard to Besson Street now making steps to acquire the building. That would just require renovations.

Mr. Chairman: One last short question, promise me it is a short question, MP?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mrs. Reyes-Borel, you indicated that you visited a facility in Miami. You also indicated that there were issues all over. But I too, have visited a facility, I do not know if it is same as you, the Chapman Facility, which if anyone who travels to Miami would see that there are no street dwellers on the streets, because they have strict enforcement guidelines due to a strong unified legislative agenda which involves the businesses. Have you or the Ministry considered adopting the Chapman Facility, to assistance in this regard, seeing it is very successful?

Mr. Chairman: Yes or no?

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: We are considering all the options.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Madam Permanent Secretary. It is now about time to wrap up. This has been a very informative session this morning, and I will ask the Permanent Secretary to offer us some closing comments before I close the proceedings. And also the second Permanent Secretary, if she wishes to also offer some closing comments, I will invite her to so do.

Mrs. Reyes-Borel: Thank you again, Chair. Of course, the Ministry remains

committed as we did indicate at the commencement of this session, to its role of coordinating the work of all the agencies, to reduce the issues that we are speaking of this morning. We recognize that process in some areas has been much slower than in other areas, such as with the legislation but, of course, we will be working assiduously with our partners to change this and to improve the implementation and the advancement of what we have to do.

We trust that, with the coordinating and monitoring Committee coming on board in the next two months, our efforts will move forward exponentially and we will be able to make a dent in the situation over the six months.

Primarily, we will seek to address what is within our remit to address, which will include the staffing in the unit, and also ensuring that that unit is resourced, and making sure that the policy that we have reviewed is actually addressed by the other stakeholders and that we can get it to the Attorney General as soon as possible.

Of course, the data collection which came up here is another issue. We are working on that system and we trust that probably at the next session, we will be able to say that we have put a system in place that we are able to collect the data that we need, so that our policy and programming could be improved significantly. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Madam Permanent Secretary. PS Barrow would you like to add—

[Ms. Barrow declined]

PS Barrow has not taken the advantage of the opportunity to offer her closing remarks.

But this morning's session as I indicated is a very informative one. Because what arose is that despite whatever successes, we may achieve on the legislative

front there still is a deficit with respect to accommodating our socially displaced who happen to be sleeping on the streets and in the squares. And I think it is a matter of utmost priority that we now give thought to how we are going as—the social worker, Ms. Borel indicated, to offer a place for the socially displaced to be accommodated at least during the night.

And housing first in my mind will ensure that we make a great deal of progress in starting to arrest this problem. It is understood by the Committee, it is accepted by the Ministry that the socially displaced remain citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, who are guaranteed all the protection under our laws, and their treatment must, of course, be in compliance with the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. We do need to understand that we are dealing fellow citizens who have special needs, one of them is to ensure that we have adequate accommodation.

So, we look forward to what the PSIP will contain with respect to accommodating the 400 individuals who have to sleep outdoors because no beds are available and hopefully that number should be reduced. But we want to see what will happen between the Ministry, the PSIP and the NGOs on this critical matter. That I think was a very important statistic which arose towards the end of our proceedings.

There is a need to regularize life coach positions so that those who are rehabilitated and reformed can at least obtain some employment within the state sector itself. We know that more social workers are needed, and we hope that the recruitment process will proceed a pace.

We have seen that the SDU—the socially displaced unit may not have as much implementation capability as is required but we hope you are going to work on the implementation capabilities, so that this unit will at least visit on the street. You see, the treatment of the socially displaced will occur by visits on the street. It

cannot be confined to an office in the towers. One has to go out and in order for that one needs the apparatus to make the street visits, and to be able to negotiate with the persons on the street that they must take advantage of the opportunities offered by the State.

We need timelines for actions. You have given us the assurance that these timelines will be forwarded, certainly with respect to items under your control, and with to items not under your control, we were advised that the SDU—socially displaced unit, is in the process of coordinating all the various agencies which would include the police, because we do need to look at the Summary Offences Act as well for loitering. That is an important component the Mental Health Act, the AG's Office, the Ministry of Health, the Socially Displaced Persons Act, so a number—I understand the complexity. But there are a number of agencies which must be coordinated. Without proper coordination nothing will get done in a timely fashion, and without proper implementation the homeless will remain on the street. And without a number of beds available, we will not be able to accommodate. And if we do not address these issues we will return a year from today and we will not have made much progress in the problem.

And what is the problem? We would like our socially displaced to be given a chance to become socially integrated.

We discussed the need for private partnerships that may have to be a function of the SDU, or maybe the social workers, to coordinate with the private sector and an opening arises with respect to the private sector participating with the NGOs to provide auditing services at a reasonable price, but also to relate with the private sector so that they can offer employment as well for those who wish to be reintegrated, and who should be reintegrated into society.

We have looked at—the overall, therefore, the problems where there are

silos, and the problems of this particular issue falling within a range of Ministries. I am of the hope that the SDU will be able to coordinate the various agencies, and so the tasks for the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is really to bring the partners together and to do what it can do immediately—quickly and what it cannot do to expedite the legislative problems that we have with respect to the Mental Health Act, and the proclamation of the socially displaced persons Act, maybe even look at the Summary Offences Act. But also we need critically to be looking at hardware. How are we going as a society to provide a bed for the 400 persons on a nightly basis who have to sleep on the streets because the State and the NGOs are currently not able to house them?

This I think concludes this morning's hearings. I wish to thank all of our listeners and our viewers on the Parliament channels. I wish to thank the members from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. It has been very informative. I wish to thank my colleagues in the Committee for pursuing this follow up visit and at this point in time. I bring the meeting to a close. Good afternoon and thank you for your participation.

12.34 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*