



Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity

Public Hearing Summary

Friday March 6, 2020

Topic:

Inquiry into persons living in poverty and extreme poverty in Trinidad and Tobago with specific focus on vulnerable groups.

Committee Members:

The following Committee Members were present for the public hearing:

- Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith Vice- Chairman
- Mr. Esmond Forde Member
- Mr. Sean Sobers Member
- Mrs. Hazel Thompson-Ahye Member
- Mr. Dennis Moses Member

Witnesses who appeared:

Living Water Community

- Ms. Rosemary Scott Assistant Director
- Ms. Hulsie Bhaggan Consultant

National Centre for Persons with Disabilities

- Ms. Shereen Baksh Vice Chairman
- Ms. Giselle Ramose Programme Manager

Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

- Ms. Paula Lucie-Smith Chief Executive Officer
- Ms. Marise Warner Member, Board of Directors

Single Fathers Association

- Mr. Rhondall Feeles President
- Mr. Wendell Grant Director

Single Mothers Association

- Ms. Shermaine Howe President

Salvation Army

- Major Joliker Leandre Divisional Commander
- Major Carolinda Cumberbath Secretary for Social Services

SERVOL

- Ms. Susan Gopaul Consultant
- Ms. Rachel Laidlow Councillor

Key Issues Discussed:

1. The assessment (biological, psychological and social) that needs to be conducted on persons who are living in poverty to determine whether upon acquisition of ‘decent work’ persons are able to sustain the work.
2. The need to review the distribution methods of information on social services due to the unique difficulties of persons with disabilities (PWD) and persons who are non-readers.
3. The following factors that may affect a person living in poverty to access social services:
 - a. the stigma associated with illiteracy discourages non-readers from expressing their inability to read during the application process for a social service;
 - b. the negative attitudes of the customer service representatives which discourage persons for apply for a social service;
 - c. social services may exist on paper when persons go to access the services they are not available.
4. The need for the collaboration of the services provided by the ALTA and the Adult Education Programme.
5. The need for additional funding for all NGOs to provide services for persons living in poverty and extreme poverty.
6. The opinion that Government agencies may view NGOs as competitors in the provision of social services rather than collaborators.
7. The Salvation Army to collaborate with government agencies to create a report assessing areas like child poverty and housing for the purpose of invoking change on a national level.
8. The mediums which the NGOs use to provide access to information to vulnerable groups:
 - a. Radio programs;
 - b. Word of mouth;
 - c. Television programs;
 - d. Social media platforms;
 - e. Podcasts; and
 - f. Seminars to encourage persons to identify persons within their community who may be in need.
9. The challenges of the NGOs to access services for persons in need:
 - a. Lack of information on the location of the social services provided by the State;
 - b. The period of time it takes for the Ministry to determine whether a person will receive the grant;

- c. The parameters of the means test which does not consider factors other than the income of the person applying for the grant;
 - d. Misinformation that a single fathers cannot qualify for social services grants;
 - e. The format of the application process is unfriendly for persons who are non-readers;
 - f. Lack of assistance for PWDs and non-readers;
10. The methods used by NGOs to encourage persons to access services:
- a. SERVOL's Parent Outreach programme;
 - b. Caravans with information at community centres;
 - c. Multi-sector approach to provide information to persons in need;
 - d. Sessions to schools and other organisations; and
 - e. Assure non-readers that they are not alone and encourage them to access literacy services;

View the Hearing:

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube page via the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVnsSxNvDrQ>

Contact Information:

You may contact the Committee's Secretary at jschumanrights@tparliament.org or 624-7275 Ext. 2288/2402.

Committees Unit
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