



Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity

Public Hearing Summary

Friday December 6, 2019

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:

- Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly Chairman
- Mr. Sean Sobers Member
- Mrs. Hazel Thompson-Ahye Member

Witnesses who appeared:

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

- Mrs. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers Permanent Secretary
- Mr. Vijay Gangapersad Deputy Permanent Secretary
- Dr. Wendy Johnson Director, Social Investigations Division
- Ms. Maxine Hunte Research Specialist II

Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development

- Ms. Kevar Williams Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
- Mr. Albert Chow Chief Executive Officer, NEDCO
- Ms. Joann David Director, OJT Programme
- Ms. Asha Jagassar-Jaggernauth Chief Manpower Officer (Ag.)
- Mr. Makesi Alexander Sector Specialist, Enterprise Development Division

National Commission for Self Help Limited

- Mr. Elroy Julien Chief Executive Officer
- Ms. Aveland Hendricks Accounts Manager
- Mr. Bobby Yacub Senior Project Officer (North)
- Mr. Gary Romain Senior Project Officer (South)
- Mr. Kelvon Morris Project Officer

Key Issues Discussed:

1. The current legislative reform initiatives of the MOSELD which seek to promote equal opportunities in employment and to address discrimination of vulnerable groups.
2. The current efforts of the MSDFS:
 - a. To restructure the Standards Means Test (SMT) to capture persons who fall outside the scope of the eligibility requirements;
 - b. To address grievances/ complaints of citizens and to supervise officers;
 - c. To consider a client management system to treat with all complaints;
 - d. To seek the assistance of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to provide recommendations for improvement on the SMT utilized which is currently in the process of finalization;
 - e. To standardize the processing of grants, the operations of the Division and the training of officers which are aimed at strengthening the delivery of its services;
 - f. To create a Social Services Empowerment Unit which is intended to function as a one stop shop and was expected to commence by second quarter of fiscal 2020;
 - g. To implement the Project for a Directory by Family Services of UWI which is in the process of finalization and expected to be completed in the second quarter of fiscal 2020; and
 - h. To facilitate collaboration amongst state agencies and Ministries via an Integrated Social Enterprise Management System.
3. The legislative appeals mechanism for pension, disability assistance and senior citizens pension which grants the right of appeal to the Central Public Assistance Board for persons who have been rejected at the level of the Local Board.
4. The number of successful applicants for funding at NEDCO for 2019 being two hundred and eighty-six (286) as against approximately two thousand (2000) applicants.
5. The lengthy response time by different state agencies and the indication made by the MOLSED that follow up is solely reliant on the applicant/ interested persons seeking services.
6. The current efforts of the MOLSED:
 - a. To train providers and employers to ensure placement of above four hundred (400) persons per month; and
 - b. To commission the Survey of Living Conditions Report by the Chief Statistical Office (CSO).
7. The NCSHL's upgrades within the past year to address the efficiency of its system which governs grants such as the use of the ticketing system; the establishment of a Monitoring and Evaluation Department as well as a Complaints Department.

View the Hearing:

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube page via the following link:
<https://youtu.be/zjsuFhWWGHk>

Contact Information:

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

Committees Unit
December 09, 2019