



Summary of Proceedings Public Hearing

Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration

Held on Wednesday June 15, 2016

Inquiry: An inquiry into the effectiveness of the State's interventions directed at socially displaced persons in Trinidad and Tobago.

Venue: The public hearing was held on Wednesday June 15, 2016 from 1:38 p.m. to 3:48 p.m. in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room, Mezzanine Floor, Office of the Parliament, Tower D, the Port of Spain International Waterfront Centre, 1A Wrightson Road, Port of Spain.

Committee members

The following committee members were present:

1. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir – Chairman
2. Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP
3. Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP
4. Ms. Nadine Stewart
5. Ms. Khadijah Ameen

Witnesses who appeared

The following officials of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul appeared before the Committee:

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

The following officials of the Living Water Community appeared before the Committee:

- Ms. Rhonda Maingot Foundress, Director

- Ms. Hulsie Bhagga Administrator
- Ms. Caroline James Rehabilitated Client

The following officials of the The Piparo Empowerment Centre (PEC) also appeared before the Committee:

- Ms. Jessie Joseph Director
- Mr. Vincent Paul Peer Counsellor Supervisor
- Mr. Dexter Cole Rehabilitated Client

The following officials of Vision on Mission also appeared before the Committee:

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

The following officials of the Transformed Life Ministry also appeared before the Committee:

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

Key Issues Discussed

The following are the key subject areas/issues discussed during the hearing:

- i. the adverse impacts substance abuse may have on a person's life;
- ii. the support systems required to successfully recover from drug addiction;
- iii. the average length of time needed to be rehabilitated from drug addiction or other forms of abnormal social behaviour;
- iv. factors which cause drug abuse such as peer pressure, mental and physical abuse, lack of support systems;
- v. the importance of educating young persons about the consequences of using drugs and drug addiction;
- vi. the need for the socially displaced to have a confidante to provide emotional support;
- vii. the programmes and services provided by the Piparo Empowerment Centre;
- viii. the socially displaced tend to mistrust persons who offer help since the majority often do not follow through with meaningful or long-term assistance;
- ix. the increasing number of persons on the streets with mental or psychotic illnesses has placed greater demand on the resources available;
- x. the percentage of persons that can be rehabilitated;
- xi. the need for a Continuum of Care services for the socially displaced;

- xii. the need to categorise persons on the streets to ensure that each group receives the most appropriate support services and care;
- xiii. the percentage of persons who are at an irredeemable stage of illness;
- xiv. the need for stakeholder collaboration and the provision of the required services and facilities;
- xv. the need for a structure to combine the efforts of all stakeholders;
- xvi. the need for Detox Centres for persons diagnosed with dual illnesses;
- xvii. the lack of facilities to provide care to persons who require nursing care;
- xviii. the group of socially challenged that require the least amount of time and resources to rehabilitate;
- xix. socially displaced people must have the necessary platform to experience change;
- xx. the lack of transition and convalescent homes and the need for such;
- xxi. substance abusers should not be mixed with the mentally ill;
- xxii. inadequate resources force many NGOs to spend most of their time raising funds rather than focusing on rehabilitation/ social outreach;
- xxiii. the significant role played by NGOs in caring for socially displaced persons;
- xxiv. the type of resources required from the State to treat with the issue ;
- xxv. status of the MOU for the Centre proposed by the Living Water Community;
- xxvi. the feasibility of the Centre proposed by the Living Water Community adopted from a Miami based model;
- xxvii. the estimated amount of money needed to care for a client per month is TT \$6000;
- xxviii. state assistance and NGO collaboration can assist in reducing the cost per client;
- xxix. definition of the term 'successfully rehabilitated';
- xxx. follow-up programmes for graduates of rehabilitation programmes;
- xxxi. the number of persons at the CSDP, the relationship between the Society of St. Vincent De Paul and the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, and the programmes in place for the socially displaced at the CSDP;
- xxxii. challenges facing the CSDP;
- xxxiii. some socially displaced persons are homeless and are not drug abusers or mentally ill;
- xxxiv. a new interesting development in schools is the use of codeine and sprite as a narcotic;
- xxxv. the use of rehabilitated persons to enlighten primary and secondary school students about drug and substance abuse;
- xxxvi. the need to include a Building Character Programme in the school curriculum to prevent persons from going down the path of substance abuse and social displacement;

- xxxvii. transparency and accountability mechanisms utilised by NGOs;
- xxxviii. the need for more support systems for women;
- xxxix. the need for a properly functioning corrective system;
- xl. the need for a reform package and resettlement estate for ex-prisoners;
- xli. the need for suitably qualified staff to provide services in the centres and work with the NGOs.

Recommendations proffered during the Public Hearing

The following recommendations emanated from the discussions:

- i. that primary school students from age five (5) should be taught about the adverse effects of drug and substance use and abuse;
- ii. the rehabilitation process should involve rehabilitated and experienced persons who can act as confidantes;
- iii. that the socially displaced be categorized;
- iv. that a proper system of counselling should be implemented and a cognitive plan should be developed and should include all issues such as criminal, family, social, and poverty;
- v. that there should be NGO collaboration which can significantly reduce the cost of treating persons;
- vi. that rehabilitated persons assist with educating students about drugs and substance abuse;
- vii. a Character Building Programme should be included in the school curriculum;
- viii. the need for closer collaboration to minimize duplication and maximize synergies among and between NGOs;
- ix. that auditing firms be approached to provide auditing services to NGOs at a lower cost;
- x. the need to examine women's issues;
- xi. that all groups meet once every quarter with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services to synergize activities and procedures.

View the Hearing

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

https://youtu.be/hX_XmTtZAYg

Contact the Committee's Secretary

jscspa@tpparliament.org or 624-7275 Ext. 2283

Committees Unit

June 16, 2016