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**Summary of Proceedings  
Public Hearing**

**Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration**

Held on Wednesday May 18, 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 May 18, 2016 from 10:22 a.m. to 12:34 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. Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine, MP
3. Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP
4. Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP
5. Ms. Khadijah Ameen
6. Mr. Hafeez Ali

**Witnesses who appeared**

The following officials of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MoSDFS) appeared before the Committee:

- Mrs. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers                      Permanent Secretary
- Mr. Haimdath Ramoutar                      Deputy Permanent Secretary
- Ms. Loraine Reyes-Borel                      Executive Director, Social Displacement Unit

*Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration  
(Including Education, Health, Gender, Tourism, Public Administration, Labour, Culture,  
Community Development and other Social Services)*

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- Ms. Sarah Rambaran Deputy Director, Inter-Agency Unit
- Dr. Barry Ishmael Legal Officer II

The following officials of the Ministry of Health (MoH) appeared before the Committee:

- Ms. Donna Ferraz Permanent Secretary
- Dr. Clive Tilluckdharry Chief Medical Officer (Ag.)
- Dr. Rohit Doon Advisor, Health Promotion, Communication and Public Health
- Mr. Lawrence Jaisingh Director, Health Policy, Research and Planning

The following officials of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) also appeared before the Committee:

- Mr. Deodat Dulalchan Deputy Commissioner of Police, Operations (Ag.)
- Mr. Sterling Hackshaw Assistant Commissioner of Police, Operations (Ag.)

The following officials of the Port of Spain City Corporation (PSCC) also appeared before the Committee:

- His Worship Councillor Keron Valentine Mayor of Port of Spain
- Mrs. Annette Stapleton-Seaforth Chief Executive Officer
- Ms. Lystra Parke Deputy Chief Executive Officer
- Ms. Erica Prieto Acting Superintendent, City Police

**Key Issues Discussed**

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

- i. In 2004, the number of street dwellers was estimated at 905 as compared to street counts conducted in January 2015 which estimated the number of street dwellers at 539 persons. A two day count on May 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016 suggested that there 349 street dwellers;
- ii. The role of the Ministry of Health involves clinical care of the socially displaced. The Ministry currently has 212 cases under its remit; of which 78 are at the St. Ann's Hospital;
- iii. The Port of Spain City Corporation (PSCC) engaged in four (4) exercises to remove persons off the streets; who may fall into different categories ranging from drug addicts, mentally challenged to deportees.

- iv. The role of the Police in relation to Section 75 of the Summary Offences Act Chapter 11:02;
- v. The challenge with the systems in place for treating with the socially displaced;
- vi. The challenges facing the MoSDFS in treating with the socially displaced include lack of human resources, facilities for assessments, accommodation, and challenges in the operations of other agencies involved;
- vii. Socially displaced persons are frustrated, vulnerable and disenfranchised;
- viii. The system for treating with the socially displaced needs to become more structured and closer collaboration amongst the relevant agencies is required;
- ix. The need to have a *Continuum of Care* to treat with the issue of social displacement;
- x. The difficulty faced by socially displaced persons in accessing the various forms of identification/documentation such as a Birth Certificate and Identification Card and social services;
- xi. The feasibility of the use of social workers to assist socially displaced persons in acquiring their forms of identification;
- xii. The disconnect in activities between the Social Displacement Unit (SDU) and the Inter-Agency Unit (IAU);
- xiii. The methodology used by the SDU to determine the statistics on socially displaced persons;
- xiv. The disconnect in statistics collated by the Port of Spain City Corporation and that of the SDU;
- xv. Information on the number of rehabilitation facilities owned/controlled by the Government and NGOs and the respective subventions received from the MoSDFS;
- xvi. The use of NGOs to assist to take the socially displaced off the streets;
- xvii. There are no laws to mandate that the socially displaced be confined to rehabilitation centres;
- xviii. The use of University resources such as the University of the West Indies to assist in collating and maintaining a database of socially displaced persons;
- xix. The need to institutionalize surveys done by the MoSDFS;
- xx. The practicality of mandating that wandering displaced persons be confined to a halfway house;
- xxi. The need to categorize socially displaced persons in terms of mental challenges and substance abuse;
- xxii. The challenge faced by Police Officers in assessing a person giving an account of and for himself;
- xxiii. The feasibility of the use of court orders to mandate that socially displaced persons go to rehab;
- xxiv. The need for legislation changes to the Mental Health Act Chapter 28:02 and the Summary Offences Act;

- xxv. The lack of continuity of tracking of socially displaced persons in place at the SDU;
- xxvi. The implementation of quarterly meetings to assist in treating with challenges facing the SDU;
- xxvii. The core responsibility of the SDU is that of policy and the IAU's is that of implementation;
- xxviii. The effectiveness of the IAU;
- xxix. Support mechanisms in place for people facing poverty to prevent homelessness;
- xxx. The factors causing social displacement;
- xxxi. Accommodation available to the socially displaced and the amount of accommodation provided by government, private or religious institutions;
- xxxii. The number of socially displaced children residing on the streets; and
- xxxiii. Arrangements in place for socially displaced parents with children.

### **Recommendations proffered during the Public Hearing**

The following recommendations emanated from the discussions:

- i. that the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services use Social Workers to assist the socially displaced in acquiring forms of identification and social services;
- ii. that every socially displaced person should be documented;
- iii. It be compulsory for persons living on the streets be confined to a properly run halfway house;
- iv. that quarterly meetings amongst the relevant stakeholders be held;
- v. that mentally challenged persons be categorised from substance abusers and other socially displaced persons.

### **View the Hearing**

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

<https://youtu.be/mIXrLL8s5jQ>

### **Contact the Committee's Secretary**

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

*Committees Unit*

*May 18, 2016*