

National Social Mitigation Plan 2017 - 2022

"Building Resilience
To Secure Our Nation"

Nation Building... Resilience... Prosperity





Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

NATIONAL SOCIAL MITIGATION PLAN: BUILDING RESILIENCE TO SECURE OUR NATION

June 27, 2017

FOREWORD BY
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In 2016, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) embarked on the development of a National Social Mitigation Plan 2017-2022 (NSMP), to cushion the effects of the economic downturn on vulnerable citizens, which include the unemployed, underemployed, persons living in poverty and indigence, some single parent families, persons with disabilities, small businessmen, recently retrenched workers and older persons in Trinidad and Tobago.

Under the theme, “Building Resilience to Secure our Nation,” the document unveils an enquiry into the hazards, risks, and impacts brought about by the economic downturn and provides responses to the potential social, economic and psychosocial effects associated with the downturn through prevention, elimination, reduction, coping and short and long-term recovery strategies for the vulnerable groups.

The National Social Mitigation Plan focuses on three (3) main objectives, namely, strengthening the social protection system, promoting community and civil society action; and enhancing productivity and innovation within both the private and public sectors.

The major recommendations of the plan are outlined under seven (7) key action areas including unemployment relief and basic needs provision; health and wellness; education, skills training and re-tooling and community and civil society action. The Ministry recognized that it was important to ensure input, buy-in and ownership for the NSMP from the citizenry. In this regard, the following activities were undertaken:

- Four National Social Dialogues were held in East, South and Central Trinidad and Tobago;
- Surveys were conducted in rural areas;
- Focus group sessions were held with youths, NGOs, CBOs and FBOs;
- Interviews were undertaken with social sector experts.
- Questionnaires were administered to Social Sector Ministries, Regional Corporations and professional associations.

Gwendoline Williams and Associates was the key consultant for the first phase of data collection. The Health Economics Unit of the University of the West Indies, led by Professor Karl Theodore, provided the technical support for the development of the Plan in the second phase.

In view of the rigorous participatory process pursued in the development of the document, I am assured that the requisite collective support and commitment are in place to effectively implement and operationalise this Plan.

In conclusion, I take the opportunity to recognise the efforts and record my appreciation to the staff of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and all other participating Ministries and agencies, who worked tirelessly in the preparation of the Plan.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I urge citizens of our beloved nation to continue to contribute towards the successful implementation and fulfilment of the goals within this very important plan, as we seek to build a resilient nation for present and future generations.

The Honourable Cherrie-Ann Crichtlow-Cockburn
Minister of Social Development and Family Services

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank	NEC	National Examination Council
A2O	Adversity to Opportunity Programme	NES	National Employment Service
CARICOM	Caribbean Community	NFLP	National Financial Literacy Programme
CARIRI	Caribbean Industrial Research Institute	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
CBOs	Community Based Organisations	NOP	National Oncology Programme
CBTT	Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago	OJT	On the Job Training
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps	OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfers	PDO	Personal Development Officer
CDAP	Chronic Disease Assistance Programme	PEC	Piparo Empowerment Centre
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank	PLAR Programme	Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition
CDERA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency	PSA	Population Situation Analysis
CED	Centre for Enterprise Development	PYC	Police Youth Clubs
CSO	Central Statistical Office	RAPP	Retiree Adolescent Partnership Programme
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations	SCP	Senior Citizen Pension
CSP	Citizen Security Programme	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
CXC	Caribbean Examination Council	SEED	Sowing Empowerment through Entrepreneurship Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education	SIDS	Small Island Developing States
EDAB	Economic Development Advisory Board	SLC	Survey of Living Conditions
ETIIC	Entrepreneurial Training Institute and Incubation Centre	SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound
FBOs	Faith Based Organisations	NSMP	National Social Mitigation Plan
GAPP	Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme	SSE	Social Support and Empowerment
GATE	Government Assisted Tuition Expenses	SSP	Social Sector Programme
GDP	Real Gross Domestic Product	SSIP	Social Sector Investment Programme
GoRTT	Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago	TCCTP	Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme
HDC	Housing Development Corporation	TDCs	Transformation and Development Centres
IADB	Inter- American Development Bank	TTNVQ	Trinidad and Tobago Vocational Qualifications
IBIS	National Integrated Business Incubator System	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank	UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime
IDS	Institute of Development Studies	UNISDR	United Nations Office for Disaster Reduction
IEC	Information, Education and Communication	URP	Unemployment Relief Programme
IMF	International Monetary Fund	VABs	Values, Attitudes and Behaviours
IP	Intellectual Property	WB	World Bank
ISEMS	Integrated Social Enterprise Management System	WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organisation
ITES	Information Technology- enabled Services	YAPA	Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation	YDAC	Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centre
MILAT	Military-Led Academic Training	YTEPP	Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme
MLSED	Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development		
MOE	Ministry of Education		
MPAC	Ministry of Public Administration & Communication		
MPD	Ministry of Planning and Development		
MSDFS	Ministry of Social Development & Family Services		
MUST	Multisectoral Skills Training Programme		
NADAPP	National Alcohol & Drug Abuse Prevention Programme		
NCPP	National Crime Prevention Programme		
NDGs	National Development Goals		
NDS	National Development Strategy		

GLOSSARY

Absorptive capacities - The coping strategies adopted by individuals and households to protect their ability to meet their basic needs from the effects of shocks and stressful events

Adaptive capacities - The ability of individuals and households to be flexible in their decision making as it relates to their livelihood in the face of changing circumstances.

Basic needs - A minimal list of those things which are required by human beings for bare survival, such as food, shelter, and clothing. Also, there is an emphasis that human needs are not only physical but also psychological, not absolute but relative to what is enjoyed by other people in society, not finite but expanding as the satisfaction of one need gives rise to another. At this inclusive extreme basic needs also include public utilities such as water and electricity.

Capacity Building - The strengthening and developing of the country's human, scientific, technological, organizational, and institutional resource capabilities. A fundamental goal of capacity building is to enhance people's ability to adapt, as well as to evaluate and address crucial situations that may have arisen because of national policy or personal decisions, or environmental and economic changes.

Civil Society - Non-governmental organisations and institutions connected by common interests and collective actions for society.

Central Repository - A central location where data is aggregated, kept and maintained in an organized way.

Community Action - The initiatives include a variety of services and capacity building taken by CBO's or organised groups living in the same area or neighbourhood.

Continuous Improvement - Ongoing actions taken to improve services, programmes and processes based on evaluations and recommendations.

Dependents - Persons who rely on someone else for support. Taxpayers may be able to claim tax relief or some categories of dependents.

Economic Downturn - A slump in the growth cycle of the economy leading to fall in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and investments and increase unemployment rates.

Economically vulnerable/vulnerable economic positions - Persons who are at risks of falling below the poverty line or not able to satisfy their basic needs in times of economic downturns.

Education - Empowering unemployed persons by providing them with the education, skills and experiences needed to lawfully earn an income.

Effectiveness - The degree to which objectives are achieved and the extent to which targeted problems are solved.

Efficiency - A level of performance that allows for the lowest amount of inputs to be used to create the largest amount of outputs. Economic efficiency implies an economic state in which every resource is optimally allocated to serve each individual or entity in the best way while minimizing waste and inefficiency.

Employment - Creating new avenues of income generation for persons whether they work for themselves or for others

Empowerment - An interactive process through which people are equipped with skills and resources, which enable them to take action which positively influence their lives and the communities in which they live.

Endogenous - An endogenous variable is an internal factor that affects outcomes. For the Social Mitigation Plan (NSMP) this includes factors such as administrative inefficiencies, resource shortages etc.

Enterprise Development - Increase in the number of self-employed persons and increase in the number of new businesses registered facilitate the diversification of the economy

Exogenous - This refers to factors that are external to an entity/process but impact its output/outcome. In the context of the NSMP, this includes factors such as the economic downturn, natural disasters etc.

Financial Security - Financial planning, saving and investing, sensible spending and strategies in which persons can use what is available to them to generate an income or fulfil basic needs.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) - A measure of the total output of the country and is used as a measure of national income.

Health and Wellness - Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Wellness is the process of becoming aware of and making choices which optimizes one's well-being.

Human Development - This involves expanding the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live. It is an approach that is focused on creating fair opportunities and choices for all people.

Innovation - The act of creating new ideas and methods to increase the value of goods and services. Innovation under NSMP includes all levels—individual, family, entrepreneur, private and public sector. It is the essence through which everyone can conduct everyday life choices in the most valuable manner.

Integration - The linking and co-ordination of organizations through the use of an IT platform to facilitate communication and data sharing among various units.

Mitigation - Mitigation is the effort to reduce losses by lessening the impact of disasters. It entails analysing, reducing and insuring against risks that society faces.

Mitigation Planning - The identification of policies and actions that can be implemented over the long term to reduce risk and future losses based on an assessment of vulnerabilities and risks faced by, or are likely to be faced by, the population in the event of negative shocks to the economy and its systems.

Monitoring and Evaluation - Monitoring can be defined as continuous process of systematic data collection on pre-specified indicators. Evaluation process is an ongoing dynamic function which seeks to objectively and systematically assess the design, implementation, relevance and sustainability of a plan, project or programme.

Newly-Retrenched Worker - Persons who have been 'laid off' or retrenched within the past 6 months to a year.

Poverty - The condition or state in which a person or a household lacks the financial resources to meet basic needs such as food, proper shelter, water, utilities and health care.

Poverty Prevention - Ensuring that persons do not fall below the national poverty line.

Productivity - A measure of efficiency of labour and capital in converting inputs into outputs.

Resilience - The capacity that ensures stressors and shocks do not have lasting adverse consequences. The ability of certain groups and individuals to deal with both exogenous and endogenous shocks and stressors,

Re-tooling - Retraining programmes to ensure that unemployed persons develop new and/or necessary skills to match vacant positions and/or develop their entrepreneurial skills.

Safety and Security - Ensuring that the nation is not put at greater safety and security risk due to increasing levels of unemployment.

Safety Nets - Non-contributory, transfer programmes targeted mainly to the poor and vulnerable.

Skills Training - Programmes to ensure unemployed persons receive the necessary capacities to become legally employed and/or develop business enterprises.

Social Action - Steps taken to deal with the challenges faced by society to bring about positive changes.

Social Infrastructure - A subset of the infrastructure sector and typically includes assets that accommodate social services. Examples of Social Infrastructure Assets include schools, universities, hospitals, prisons and community housing. Social In-

frastructure does not typically extend to the provision of social services, such as the provision of teachers at a school or custodial services at a prison.

Social Mitigation Plan - The process of identifying, analysing and managing the intended and unintended social consequences of both endogenous and exogenous shocks to an economic system. Its main objective is to bring about a more sustainable and equitable biophysical and human environment (International Association of Impact Assessment).

Social Programme - Programme designed and provided mainly by the government to ensure that citizens' welfare is maintained in times of economic misfortunes and other socio-economic challenges that impact on their basic needs.

Social Protection System - Policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability of citizens by ensuring they are financially secured, resilient to shocks and have the capacity to deal with unexpected challenges that may impact on their welfare.

Sustainability - Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Three broad categories include economic, social and environmental.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 - Otherwise known as the Global Goals, these are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. These 17 Goals build on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals, while including new areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities.

Transaction Cost - Transaction costs are expenses incurred when buying or selling a good or service.

Transformative Capacities - A special type of adaptive capacity which enables persons and communities to adopt transformative actions to deal with changes.

Unemployment Relief - Relief and support to unemployed persons (and their dependents) while they are actively seeking employment.

Vision 2030 - The Vision 2030 National Development Strategy (2016-2030) for Trinidad and Tobago, aims to provide a broad socio-economic development framework to the year 2030. It is intended to provide for an orderly long-term development process, inclusive of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Vulnerable Population - Those persons who are only able to meet their basic needs currently, but may not be able to do so in the event of any shocks to their income.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

E.1 Introduction

In December 2015, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago addressed the nation on the state of the economy and expressed concern about the impact of the decline in energy revenue on the economy and in particular, the effect on the most vulnerable in society. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, as the line Ministry with responsibility for social development policy and social services delivery, was subsequently mandated to develop a National Social Mitigation Plan (NSMP). Accordingly, the National Social Mitigation Plan for Trinidad and Tobago was developed as a response to the potential psychosocial, social and economic effects associated with the current economic downturn, as it was evident that persons were already being affected in a myriad of ways.

The NSMP outlines the strategies and actions to cushion the effects of the economic downturn on vulnerable groups and create opportunities for them to cope and recover in the short-term and to build the resilience of the citizenry in the long term. The Plan emerged out of the conduct of robust impact assessment studies conducted by and on behalf of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services; which included impact identification and risk assessment, stakeholder engagements and expert advice in developing the mitigation strategies. The development of the Plan was also informed by the lessons learnt from the Asian experience. Thailand in the late 1990s, after a significant financial crisis and economic downturn, implemented a comprehensive Social Sector Programme (SSP) that mitigated the adverse social impacts associated with the crisis. The National Social Mitigation Plan for Trinidad and Tobago is similarly intended to alleviate and manage the potential impacts of the economic downturn on Trinidad and Tobago over the next five years.

E.2 Contextual Framework

The current economic downturn has seen real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate on a constant decline for the last four years, falling from 2.7 percent in 2013 to -2.3 percent in 2016. Given the large role the energy sector plays in welfare of the country, there have been negative spillover effects felt in non-energy sectors, government revenue, and also the social welfare of the country.

It is in this context the Government finds itself at a critical juncture of cushioning the socioeconomic impacts of the downturn on poor and marginalized populations, including those affected by unemployment, while maintaining its focus on building a resilient population – all on a reduced resource base.

It is certainly true that the infrastructure for building a resilient population through social programmes has been in place. A review of the Social Sector Investment Programme

2017 reveals that the country has approximately 100 social programmes, and supports more than 100 NGOs, which provide economic and social support to citizens in need. Yet despite this, there is still a sizeable population living in poverty, 16.7 percent in fact, according to the most recent official estimates. A key question that must be asked is why many persons are not yet resilient given the array of support programmes that have been available for some time. Another disturbing reality is that as the downturn progresses, more persons are expected to fall below the poverty line, or at the very least become more vulnerable due to unemployment.

E.3 Objectives of the National Social Mitigation Plan (NSMP)

In this context, the overarching goal of the National Social Mitigation Plan (NSMP) is to mitigate the negative social impacts of the economic downturn in the Trinidad and Tobago economy. It has as its theme: “Building Resilience to Secure our Nation” and is focused on achieving three main objectives, namely:

1. **Strengthening the Social Protection System;**
2. **Promoting Community and Civil Society Action; and**
3. **Enhancing Productivity and Innovation**

The approach guiding the NSMP recognizes the balance between assisting targeted populations to cope with shocks while maintaining a focus on national development goals (NDGs) and resilience building. It is motivated by the principles of sustainability, empowerment and continuous improvement and constitutes a coordinated response that combines existing programmes with recommendations for improvements. The proposed NSMP also aims to improve access to social protection programmes in order to improve persons’ capacities to better manage risks and shocks. It will also seek to enhance co-ordination and integration of existing social protection programmes, thereby creating an evidenced-based response package for persons requiring assistance.

Achievement of the afore-mentioned three objectives requires a combination of programmes and activities and seven (7) Key Action Areas have been selected:

1. **Unemployment Relief/Basic Needs Provision;**
2. **Health and Wellness;**
3. **Education, Skills Training and Re-tooling;**
4. **Employment & Productivity and Innovation & Enterprise Development;**
5. **Safety and Security;**
6. **Poverty Prevention through Financial Security Awareness; and**
7. **Community and Civil Society Action.**

Each Action Area is defined by its own specific set of objectives aimed among other things, at mobilizing priority social programmes in a more targeted and effective manner.

E.4 The Social Support and Empowerment (SSE) Unit

To facilitate the implementation of the NSMP it is recommended that a special unit - The Social Support and Empowerment Unit (SSE) be established within the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS). This Unit will be the

interface between the public and all Ministries that provide social services. The SSE Unit will give the MSDFS the opportunity to adopt a ‘new style of management’ and to ‘re-brand its outreach image’. The advent of the Unit would also allow for organizational rationalisation and restructuring to address overlaps, as well as take the steps necessary to unearth and remedy the weaknesses of existing programmes under the Ministry’s purview and across the social sector.

Goal of the SSE Unit. To provide a timely and convenient one-stop service for persons seeking relief from the challenges presented by the economic downturn and persons in, or threatened by, unavoidable economic hardship. This report delves further into the specific objectives of the SSE.

Function of the SSE Unit. The proposed SSE Unit will function in a decentralized manner and will be the first point of contact for persons who wish to access any social programme. Its success will be hinged on co-ordination, timeliness and convenience. The Unit will act as the sole point where the applications for social programmes are accepted, with the other Ministries focusing only on processing these applications and delivering the benefits. As such this will enable the MSDFS to become the recognized repository of information on clients and their use of programmes, including the duration and tracking of benefit period, and the conducting of tracer studies to monitor and evaluate the impact of programmes on clients over the medium to long term. More importantly, the SSE is positioned to contribute to in-depth analysis that will inform necessary policy adjustments over time, promoting evidence-based decision making.

Administration and Governance Structure of the SSE Unit. The SSE Unit should be staffed by persons who are skilled and experienced. It is proposed that the SSE Unit be guided by two committees. The first is a Policy & Programmatic Oversight Committee. This committee will focus on effective and efficient delivery of necessary support services to those negatively impacted by the changing socio-economic landscape. The second committee to guide the operations of the SSE Unit is an Intersectoral Advisory Committee. This committee’s focus is resilience building, which aims to minimize the impact of the negative shocks on the population in general, and those most vulnerable in particular.

E.5 The IT/Server System for the NSMP

Clients who visit the unit for assistance in accessing the services will be required to complete a registration form, which will also be accessible online. The IT system in place, through a query, will be able to access information on all Government social programmes and this information could be used by the assessment officer to select the most appropriate programme(s) for the applicant. Trained personnel at the SSE offices will then determine whether the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for the programmes and a first level approval will be granted. This information will then be sent to the various Ministries providing these programmes for final approval based on further checks and investigations such as authentication of documents and home visits.

E.6 Integrated Social Enterprise Management (ISEMS)

The SSE Unit will be guided by the Integrated Social Enterprise Management System (ISEMS). This system is based on a philosophy of a single door approach to social services delivery. The ISEMS project proposal was accepted by Cabinet in February 2008 as the technological framework for the integration of social services in the MSDFS. This project is included as a key component of the NSMP and involves two phases. Phase I involves the establishment of the online portal for facilitating client communication and access to the required social services. Phase II includes extending screening for programmes in different phases and fully automate the operations for the implementation of online applications with end to end processing-from intake to decision making.

The implementation of the Integrated Social Enterprise Management System (ISEMS) Project under the MSDFS will assist in fulfilling the IT server requirements for the NSMP.

E.7 Communications Plan

The communications strategy is one of the key underpinnings for the success of the NSMP and will be implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications. There are seven proposed steps in the Communications Plan:

- (1) **Analysis of the Environment;**
- (2) **Determining/Segmenting the Target Audience;**
- (3) **Defining the Communication Objectives;**
- (4) **Establishing the Strategic Approaches to reaching the audience;**
- (5) **Developing the Positioning statement and Strategy Outline;**
- (6) **Crafting the Implementation Plan and**
- (7) **Establishing Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks.**

E.8 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Frameworks

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks have been largely absent in the social policy environment of the country. This comes as no surprise given the muted results from continual social investments. Monitoring may be defined as a continuous process of systematic data collection on pre-specified indicators (OECD 2002), and provides progress updates on the achievement of outlined objectives and outcomes. The evaluation process is an ongoing dynamic function which seeks to objectively and systematically assess the design, implementation, relevance and sustainability of a plan, project or programme (OECD 2002).

Under the NSMP, M&E must be both National Policy oriented and Programmatic based. A National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy for the Trinidad and Tobago public sector was approved in 2015. The policy envisioned M&E units in all Ministries, with the National Transformation Unit, Ministry of Planning and Development having oversight over the National M&E system. At the country level, it is assumed that the M&E Unit in the MSDFS will cooperate and consult with the Auditor General, Central Statistical office (CSO), Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD) and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) to assess whether it is achieving national social policy objectives.

At the programme level, the MSDFS will utilize a logic model articulated in the M&E framework/matrix, and chart the progress of the NSMP's implementation and assess its results over time. The logic model articulates the reasoning behind the plan and aids in the dispensation of monitoring and evaluation functions, and allows for the conceptualization of the entire plan process from inputs to desired impact. It also charts the progression and relationship among inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact. The M&E Framework will align the Plan's Outcomes by the seven Action Areas, with indicators and performance criteria to facilitate monitoring and evaluation.

E.9 Recommendations

Having viewed the national picture in its entirety and noted the report on the research undertaken in the first phase of the development of the Plan and the gaps in social programme delivery and design, the following recommendations are put forth in this report:

General Recommendations:

1. Review of Current Social Programmes. A comprehensive review of priority social programmes listed under the Action Areas of the NSMP should be done to assess their efficiency, effectiveness and relevance in meeting their intended objectives and to take the requisite action to effect improvements.

2. Review of the Legislative and Policy Frameworks. A review of the legislative and policy framework of priority social programmes to determine necessary amendments of existing legislation or policies and/or the need for drafting of new legislation or policy.

3. Conduct of a Situation Analysis. Conduct a situational analysis to determine the economic and social burden of the shifting economic conditions on the individual, family and community.

4. Introduction of a Component in State-Funded Social Programmes to Transform Values, Attitudes and Behaviours. Introduce a component in the social programmes across the sector to engender the transformation in values, attitudes and behaviours necessary to build the appropriate socio-cultural values of the society for the attainment of Vision 2030.

5. Conduct of an Assessment of the Disability Sector. Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the disability sector to identify what initiatives and services are available to persons with disabilities, what resources and capacities exist to cater to the needs of the community and to determine the appropriate and expeditious ways to address the gaps.

6 Development of a Communication Plan for the implementation of the NSMP.

7. Development of an M&E Framework for the implementation of the NSMP.

8. Implementation of Measures to Minimise the Transaction Costs of Participating in Social Programmes. Identify and implement measures to minimise the transaction costs associated with participating in social programmes across the sector, such as utilising the IT platform and its network and having field officers of the various initiatives adopt strategies to 'find the poor and vulnerable', rather than wait for them to come to the office.

9. Provision of Temporary Short-Term Programming Measures for Retrenched Workers. To implement a package of short-term temporary programme measures to provide immediate assistance to recently retrenched workers. Project proposals and operations documents for these initiatives will have to be developed.

Recommendations under Action Area 1 - Unemployment Relief/Basic Needs Provision

10. Maintenance of Synergies with the Adversity to Opportunity (A2O) Programme. All retrenched and unemployed persons should be directed to register with the A2O programme under the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (MLSED). Additionally, in order to ensure that the system captures all retrenched persons, companies and Government Ministries and Agencies should be mandated to forward a list of retrenched persons and their CVs to the MLSED, to facilitate automatic registration with the A2O programme. Personnel from this programme should also set up mobile units at the job sites to facilitate registration by retrenched workers.

11. Exploration of Unemployment Insurance. The Government should commission a study to determine the feasibility of introducing an Unemployment Insurance system suitable for Trinidad and Tobago.

12. Enhancement and Extensive Implementation of the Social Transformation and Empowerment Programme, Uplifting People (STEP UP) Developmental Model for Social Programmes. Aspects of the STEP UP developmental model should be incorporated into other social/training programmes which target the vulnerable, in particular URP and CEPEP. A 'grow your own food' element of the Programme should also be introduced in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

13. Provision of Support to CSOs Offering Food Assistance to Vulnerable Groups. The Government should encourage and support any immediate food assistance initiatives targeting vulnerable persons that are operated by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) based on appropriate assessment.

14. Implementation of a Nation-Wide Campaign on Strategies to Ensure Personal Food Security. The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries should be encouraged to launch a country-wide campaign that features information

and training on home gardening, food production, animal husbandry, and aquaponics to build resilience and empower citizens to grow their own food, reduce their food expenditure and/or supplement their income.

15 Expedite the Implementation of the Social Housing Policy. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, with responsibility for the provision of Social Housing or low-cost housing for vulnerable citizens, should take the necessary steps to expedite the formulation and implementation of this initiative.

16. Extension of the Electricity Subsidy to the Recently Retrenched. As a short term measure, the Electricity Subsidy, under the Utilities Assistance Programme of the Ministry of Public Utilities, should be extended to other vulnerable persons, such as the recently retrenched and take into account their Needs Assessment results, previous incomes levels (recommended ceiling of \$3,000 per month) and the level of electrical consumption prior to the period of unemployment.

17. Implementation of a Cap on the number of times a Household Can Access Relief Initiatives. The initiatives for Basic Needs and Unemployment Relief should only be proposed as short term measures and with mandatory re-assessments at appropriate intervals. A cap should be placed on the number of times a household can access these services, with appropriate exceptions. This will enable the programmes to reach more households and also reduce the risk of dependency.

Recommendations under Action Area 2 - Health and Wellness

18. Establishment of Community Health and Wellness Centres. Community Health and Wellness Centres should be established to promote the issue of mental health and of wellness, while providing access to these services at the community level.

Recommendations under Action Area 4 - Employment & Productivity and Innovation & Enterprise Development

19. Provision of Greater Training and Entrepreneurial Opportunities for Small Scale Producers and Persons in Rural Areas. Efforts should be taken to provide greater support to small scale producers to provide a higher quality and quantity of goods through enterprise development and to capitalize on opportunities in the wider local and foreign market.

20. Expedite the Finalisation and Implementation of the Policy and Plans for Innovation. Steps should be taken to finalise the draft Innovation Policy developed by the previous Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, and fast-track plans for nurturing innovation, under the current Ministry of Education (MOE). The NSMP should also main-

tain linkages with the Plans and Policies of other agencies responsible for building the capacity for innovation nationally.

Recommendations under Action Area 5 - Safety and Security

21 Maintenance and Acceleration of Plans and Initiatives focusing on Gender-Related Issues. The OPM is currently focusing on plans and activities to build mutual respect among men and women and encourage behaviour modification that should be sustained and accelerated.

22. Expansion of the Police Youth Clubs (PYC). This initiative of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) is designed to positively engage young people between the ages 5-25 years and should be expanded to other high-needs communities and similar programmes be encouraged in schools.

23. Expedite the implementation of the National Crime Prevention Programme (NCP). Steps should be taken to expedite the implementation of the National Crime Prevention Programme under the Ministry of National Security to assist in reducing crime and criminal activity.

Recommendations under Action Area 6 - Poverty Prevention through Financial Security Awareness

24. Implementation of Nation-Wide Public Education Campaign on Financial Security. A mass Information, Education and Communication (IEC) strategy should be launched to provide information and educate the population on areas such as financial planning, saving and investing, sensible spending, economic recession etc. This IEC strategy should be done in collaboration with other Ministries that provide social and economic support programmes.

25. Expansion of the National Financial Literacy Programme (NFLP). This programme should be utilised by public and private sector organizations to provide information to its employees on proper financial planning and management. The medium for this programme should also be expanded to include television and radio.

Recommendations under Action Area 7 - Community and Civil Society Action

26. Assessment of Civil Society Sector. Conduct an assessment of the sector to identify the organisations which comprise it, the services provided, the capacities and gaps in services, and to determine how the sector can be strengthened to contribute to national development. The assessment should also explore mechanisms for organisations in the sector to become a part of the social services IT network.

Recommendations for Implementation and Administration of the NSMP

27. Establishment of SSE Unit: The establishment of the SSE Unit, which will be a one-stop service for persons seeking relief from the challenges presented by the economic downturn or any other unavoidable economic hardship. The Unit will interface with the person in need of assistance, co-ordinate the application process for all programmes provided by the social sector, and monitor and track their progress over-time, as well as evaluate the impact of programmes on clients. Establishing the unit will involve initial collaboration with MSDFS and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to launch field offices in each Regional Corporation in the longer term.

28. Establishment of Two Committees to Support and Guide the Operations of the SSE. The establishment of a Policy & Programmatic Oversight Committee and an Intersectoral Advisory Committee to coordinate implementation of the Plan.

29. Establishment of an Integrated IT System.

E.10 Implementation Plan

It is anticipated that the main components of the NSMP can be implemented over a five-year time period, with some activities ongoing beyond this timeframe. This schedule is disaggregated into six timeframes, referred to as Parts A, B, C, D, E and F. Part A of the schedule refers to the NSMP framework, which contains existing social programmes and activities organized under seven action areas. Given that these programmes already exist, the proposed implementation activities relate to a review of their efficiency and effectiveness and adjustments, if any, which may be required to meet the objectives of the NSMP.

While activities in Part A are ongoing, the establishment of the SSE should also begin. This is the focus of Part B of the Implementation Schedule. Constituting the proposed Inter-sectoral Advisory Committee should be done at the initial stages of the NSMP since the Committee's input will be required in several areas. Part C of the schedule constitutes all the activities related to the establishment of the IT system. Part D of the schedule deals with activities related to Policy and Legislation while Parts E and F refer to the drafting of Communication and Monitoring and Evaluation plans, which should contain activities that are scheduled to be performed at regular intervals throughout the five-year timeline and beyond. The implementation plan and its related activities are outlined in its entirety in this report.

E.11 Conclusion

The National Social Mitigation Plan provides an opportunity for Trinidad and Tobago to proactively respond to the current economic downturn in ways that will strengthen the overall socioeconomic framework in the country. It further provides an opportunity for national introspection that as the country becomes a year older it can critically and objectively assess its systems and institutions to see what is working and what needs to be fixed. It is the view that the NSMP outlines actions and strategies that will support the citizenry in need of assistance in the short term to cope and recover from the effects of the economic situation, while simultaneously providing the foundation for shaping and building a better and more resilient Trinidad and Tobago. The NSMP therefore supports the development agenda of Trinidad and Tobago in achieving its National (i.e. Vision 2030) and International Goals (i.e. Sustainable Development Goals) and will require for successful implementation the full buy-in and cooperation of key stakeholder agencies in all sectors.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Trinidad and Tobago is a relatively young nation, having gained independence from Britain in 1962. It is, however, one of the leading economies in the Caribbean. But like other Caribbean countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) it is economically, socially, and environmentally vulnerable to external shocks, much like the current global economic fall-out associated with the decline in oil and gas prices.

Over the past fifty-five years the economic experiences of the country have been diverse, much in line with having a mixed, open economy, which is dominated by a petrochemical sector. This sector continues to be the main vehicle for the economic progress and development in the country. The country, however, is subjected to the volatility and instability associated with the market.

The economic history of the country as determined by the performance of the sector shows:

1. a period (1950-1973) of relatively high growth based on stable oil prices;
2. a period of high growth with high oil prices (1974-1982);
3. a long depression with negative real GDP growth (1983-1993) due to weakening oil prices, declining global economic activity and gluts in the market;
4. a recent growth boom (2004-2008) due to speculation and favorable market conditions; and
5. the current economic downturn (2010 - present), which was triggered by macroeconomic uncertainties, global social unrests, and shale oil and gas production (Inter-American Development Bank 2007).

The economic downturn has seen real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate on a constant decline for the last four years, falling from 2.7 percent in 2013 to 2.3 percent in 2016 (CSO Website 2017). The economic situation has also been exacerbated by the strong negative spill over impacts of the energy sector on the non-energy sector and government revenue.

Furthermore, the fall in the real GDP growth rate has been coupled with a constant increase in gross public sector debt to GDP ratio for the same period. This rate increased by over 20 percent from 56.2 percent in 2013 to 77.2 percent in 2016 (CBTT Website 2017).

It is therefore no surprise that labour market conditions have been adversely affected by the economic downturn. The unemployment rate moved from 3.7 percent in 2013 to approximately 4.4 percent in 2016 (second quarter) (CSO website 2017). Further evidence is also provided by the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago's (CBTT) Monetary Policy Report (CBTT 2016), which detailed the impacts of the economic constraints on males, females and youths in the labour market. According to this report, between the second quarter of 2015 and the corresponding period in 2016, male unemployment rose from 2.1 percent to 4.1 percent while female unemployment rose from 4.4 to 4.9 percent. Additionally, the youth unemployment rate rose from 8.1 to 11.6 percent over the same period (CBTT 2016). These trends point to gender disparities in the labour market since even though male unemployment increased at a higher rate (2 percent), overall female unemployment rates are consistently higher than that of males. Further, the existing higher than national average youth unemployment rate cannot be ignored.

The increase in the number of retrenchment notices received by the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (MLSED) also points to unfavorable shifts in the labour market. Retrenchment notices numbered 767 period July to October 2015, more than doubling the 360 such notices in the corresponding period in 2014 (CBTT 2015). From April to September, 2016 a reported 741 workers received retrenchment notices (CBTT 2016). There has also been a fall in labour demand as evidenced by fewer notices of job vacancies. Conclusively, from all ends of the labour market, individual and household incomes are under threat by the economic downturn, reinforcing the need for social mitigation planning.

Adversity in the social sphere also characterises the current scenario, as these economic challenges have implications for the welfare of individuals, households and families. Research suggests that the global economic slowdown can result in a slower pace of poverty reduction and the stagnation of growth of the middle class (Calvo-Gonzalez et al., World Bank Group 2017). As such, this period can mark a time of increased uncertainty resulting in an increase in the vulnerable population as persons can be at greater risk of falling into poverty. Essen-

tially it means that social gains in poverty reduction can be stymied and government has to find increased sources of revenue to support the poor and indigent. Current poverty estimates in Trinidad and Tobago, as of 2005, indicate that at least 16.7% (1.25% indigent, 15.5% poor) of the population is living below the poverty line (Kairi Consultants Limited 2007). It therefore becomes a critical focus of the strategy to alleviate the effects of the economic adjustment on the poor and vulnerable groups.

It has also been reported that economic downturns can also negatively influence the population's health and well-being, and in particular among vulnerable groups. The World Health Organisation (2011) suggest that downturns can produce secondary mental health effects such as an increase in depression, suicide and alcohol use. Persons can also be at an increased risk of psychological distress, anxiety and somatization which can affect their psychological well-being years after the downturn (David Russell, Psychology Today 2011). Other studies indicate that strains and stressors from the downturn can have profound family effects such as increased family conflict, child neglect and abuse and intimate partner violence, which also need to be responded to as the economic situation is expected to deepen in the near future.



Additionally, an unprecedented increase in the level of crime and criminality has been experienced by Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean region over the last decade. Hence, mitigation measures must also take in to account social challenges, since evidence suggests that crime levels respond to shifts in economic conditions, both at an individual and country level. Criminal motivation theory suggests that economic stress may increase the incentive for individuals to engage in illicit behaviours. According to a draft report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), whether in times of economic crisis or non-economic crisis, economic factors play an important role in the evolution of crime trends (UNODC undated). The report further states that changes in economic factors were associated with changes in crime, and consequently

crime 'peaks' during times of crisis. The authors posited that violent property crimes including robbery, increases in homicide and motor vehicle thefts were crimes most associated with an economic crisis.

However, it is interesting to note that the mitigation plan is being developed in an environment where the Government's recurrent expenditure on social programmes has increased steadily over time. Table 1.1 show that this expenditure rose from almost TT\$3 billion in 2005 to TT\$6.2 billion in 2010, and to almost TT\$9 billion five years later.

Table 1.1: Estimates of Expenditure on Social Programmes (2005 - 2016)

Year	Recurrent Expenditure TT\$ Mn.
2005	2,999.2
2006	4,102.1
2007	4,395.2
2008	5,057.7
2009	6,054.1
2010	6,223.0
2011	7,101.2
2012	7,868.1
2013	7,834.0
2014	7,945.0
2015	8,997.8
2016	9,891.7

Source: Social Sector Investment Programme, 2005 - 2016

Although this expenditure does not include social infrastructure expenditure, it does, however, include the financing of a broad cross section of social services, interventions and initiatives targeting poverty and vulnerability in the society. These services, interventions and initiatives are spread across a number of Government Ministries and supplemented by the engagement of a number of NGOs.

Consequently, it is in this context of declining economic fortunes and the resultant worsening social conditions that the Government is faced with the task of finding the equilibrium between adopting social mitigation strategies that buffer the effects of the economic downturn on the existing poor and vulnerable, on one side; and build individual capacity to cope with future shocks and economic challenges, on the other; and to do so at a time when its resources have been severely reduced.

It is against this backdrop of social and economic challenges and fiscal austerity that the government of Trinidad and Tobago has sought to proactively respond to the economic downturn with the development of a National Social Mitigation Plan (NSMP).

1.2 WHAT IS A SOCIAL MITIGATION PLAN (NSMP)

An examination of empirical studies indicates that social mitigation planning has not been widely explored, especially in the context of an economic downturn. Studies often refer to closely related concepts that are more related to natural disasters, Poverty Reduction, Resilience Programming, Social Risk Management, Safety Nets and Sustainable Development. The concept of mitigation especially in disaster preparedness language really refers to understanding the risks and weaknesses in an environment and taking steps to strengthen or introduce new measures to prevent, eliminate or reduce the negative effects when disasters do occur.

The Local Mitigation Planning Handbook (FEMA 2013, 8) describes mitigation planning as the "identification of policies and actions that can be implemented over the long term to reduce risk and future losses based on an assessment of vulnerabilities and risks faced by, or are likely to be faced by, the population in the event of negative shocks to the economy and its systems." The process of developing a social mitigation plan essentially involves: identifying, analyzing and managing the intended and unintended social consequences of both endogenous and exogenous shocks to an economic system.

Internationally, Thailand's experience during the Asian financial crisis, presents a case where a country underwent social sector adjustment in response to economic declines. Up until 1997, Thailand's economy was viewed as stable, since the country had experienced a decade of economic growth. Post 1997, the financial crisis destabilized the economy and triggered a series of negative economic shocks: GDP decreased drastically, the country's currency weakened against the United States dollar, the stock market collapsed, financial institutions became insolvent and the fiscal deficit continuously escalated (Asian Development Bank 2005).

During the crisis, vulnerable groups were most affected, such that, approximately two million persons fell into poverty. Some of the major shocks to the country that were recorded include: high levels of unemployment, rising costs of medical care, school dropouts, severe cuts in social programmes among other negative social impacts.

Thailand's Social Sector Programme (SSP) was developed over a three-month period and a \$500 million Asian Development Bank (ADB) loan was received - \$300 million was earmarked to the financial sector and \$200 million to the social sector.

The three core focus areas of the SSP were labour and social welfare, education and health. Both the ADB and the Thai Government approached the SSP in a strategic manner by ensuring that their objectives were in alignment with the country's



Some of the key underpinnings of the SSP that were responsible for mitigating the initial social welfare impacts of the crisis include: (1) developing a more robust social safety net; (2) improved management of poverty funding; (3) better targeting of healthcare services to the poor and (4) improving the inclusiveness of social security coverage. The structural adjustment impacted the four areas of governance: transparency, predictability, accountability, and participation.

Some of the key strategies used by the Thai Government and other stakeholders in their collaborative approach to the crisis involved:

- agreement on reduced working hours and benefits among employers, employees and the Government to prevent layoffs;
- provision of tax deductions for worker trainings to create a better trained workforce;
- private sector education on the provision of social services, which helped to reduce inefficiencies and;
- the reduction of the Central Government's role in the social sectors in favour of stronger participation of the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), provincial governments, and local communities.

In this context, a Social Mitigation Plan is therefore defined as a set of organized policies, procedures, strategies and actions that are designed to assist individuals, households, families, organisations and communities, in both the short and long-term, to eliminate, prevent, reduce, cope with and/or recover from the effects of the social risks or threats associated with the economic

downturn currently being experienced in Trinidad and Tobago. Key benefits of mitigation planning include reducing vulnerability, lessening the demand for post-crisis assistance and recovery, reducing the financial burden and committing to the improvement of the lives of citizens.

1.3 TOWARDS A SOCIAL MITIGATION PLAN FOR TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

A snapshot of Trinidad and Tobago paints the country as a rich, high income country with a dynamic petrochemical sector—the lifeline of its wealth. From 2000 to 2008, the country experienced eight consecutive years of positive economic growth, at an average real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 7 percent. Yet, despite this wealth and a small population of just 1.35 million inhabitants, there is still a sizeable portion of the population that live in poverty.

A review of the Social Sector Investment Programme (SSIP) 2017 reveals that the country has approximately 100 social programmes, and supports more than 100 NGOs, which provide economic and social support to citizens in need. A key question that must also be asked is: why are many persons not yet resilient given the array of social, economic, education and other support programmes that have been available for some time? This points to a need to understand the underlying causes that result in some individuals requiring continuous socio-economic support while others, who may have experienced similar negative economic and social circumstances, are able to withstand and rise above those negative situations. Additionally it can be asked: How then can the state facilitate the resilience of a people in the face of adverse socioeconomic situations? One way to begin to understand this phenomenon is to analyse data on existing and new clients of the various social programmes, the output of which can be used to inform programme design and interventions at an individual, family or community level.

This level of analysis is both critical and necessary as several systemic and endemic challenges currently confront the social protection system in Trinidad and Tobago in its current configuration. These include :

- **Lack of information being disseminated on and about the programmes;**
- **The application processes are tedious and lengthy;**
- **The quality of information provided is sometimes conflicting and piecemeal;**
- **There are shortcomings in the targeting mechanisms, & Systemic inefficiencies exist.**

Another major challenge that can be identified is that beneficiaries become dependent on the social programmes for long periods, with little or no effort to 'wean off' the programmes. This does not only create a burden on State resources, threatening the sustainability of the safety net, but also undermines the very objectives of many of these social programmes, which are often times aimed at thrusting beneficiaries out of their negative economic situation. Exit strategies should therefore be regarded as essential components of the programme design.

In this context therefore, close monitoring and assessment of clients is required to ensure that they are engaged in activities that will allow them to graduate out of the programmes and build their resilience to cope with future challenges. This means that their demographic data, level of education and training, work experience and the number and types of programmes accessed over time should be routinely collected and systematically analyzed in order to track each client's progress through the system.

However, it should be noted that even when programmes are appropriately designed as a short and medium term solution to empower beneficiaries to become socially and economically independent, with an inherent rehabilitative and developmental component, there may be some administrative barriers and systemic inadequacies that prohibit the programmes from operating as intended. Both the State and the beneficiary stand to lose in such a scenario. As such, developmental programmes within the sector, such as the STEP UP Component under the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP) must be enhanced and incorporated into other social programmes to enable true transformation and improvement in the quality of life of the individual and his/her family.

Additionally, on the demand side, one of the challenges highlighted by stakeholders is a lack of knowledge about the array of social programmes offered to the population. This in itself acts as a barrier to accessing such services. In fact, the existence of a safety net may come into question if potential beneficiaries are not aware of the programmes they can access if the need arises. It is therefore of paramount importance that focus be placed on information dissemination as it relates to the availability and requirements for existing and proposed social programmes, if the safety net is to serve its purpose in providing relief and support to vulnerable populations.

Perhaps linked to the challenge outlined above are the unintended obstacles faced by potential beneficiaries during the

application and qualification processes. These processes should not cause difficulty for persons wishing to access the programmes or act as deterrents to vulnerable persons when they wish to access services. The aim should therefore be to simplify the application process and make it more user-friendly.

Another issue that arises is that the social programmes are currently scattered throughout various Ministries and this appears to inhibit efficient coordination among Ministries. There is merit in having a central repository where a person in need of any type of social support, regardless of the line Ministry, can access information and complete and submit his/her application. This simplifies the process in that it consolidates information on the existing social programmes making it easier for potential beneficiaries to access information. This also creates a central database where information on existing, new or potential clients are collected and stored.



It has also been expressed that there exist a "values crisis" in Trinidad and Tobago (Civic Council on Social Equity, undated) and that our underperformance in some key socio-economic areas is partly as a result of our values, attitudes and behaviours (Vision 2030, 2017). Informally, we have also heard reference made to a "hand-out mentality", "dependency syndrome", "sense of entitlement", "poor work ethic", "lack of productivity", "poor customer service", and so on. At a personal and familial level, these attributes do not engender an individual who is resilient, self-reliant, productive, and aspiring to reach his/her fullest potential. At a nationally strategic level, there is therefore recognition that our culture, values and attitudes require crucial transformations for greater institutional efficiencies and effectiveness and for personal and national development. As a consequence, the NSMP must also seek to provide opportunities for citizens to acquire positive values, attitudes and behaviours as a necessary part of building a resilient nation.

Recognizing these national and programmatic challenges, as well as the need for reform, there is a real opportunity for this period of adjustment ushered in by the current economic situation, to enable cultural and institutional transformations that supports the overall development agenda of the country. The development of the NSMP for Trinidad and Tobago is therefore guided by these considerations that underpin its objectives, design and content.

1.3.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL SOCIAL MITIGATION PLAN (NSMP)

Given the foregoing, the proposed NSMP is geared towards ensuring that the current programmes are effective and relevant and structured in a way that builds resilience in the population. It also envisages the exploration and development of new initiatives in some key areas of intervention. In this context, the overarching goal of the proposed NSMP is to mitigate the negative social impacts of the economic downturn in the Trinidad and Tobago economy. It has as its theme: “Building Resilience to Secure our Nation”, and is focused on achieving three main objectives, namely:

1. Strengthening the Social Protection System
2. Promoting Community and Civil Society Action; and
3. Enhancing Productivity and Innovation.

The NSMP will also be positioned at the critical juncture of helping populations cope with the current economic downturn in keeping with the national development objectives, while incorporating components of the National Development Strategy (NDS) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), some of which are listed in Appendix 1.

The NSMP is guided by the principles of sustainability, empowerment and continuous improvement and constitutes a coordinated response that combines existing programmes with recommendations for improvements and proposes exploration of some new initiatives to fill some gaps in areas which require particular interventions.

This NSMP covers a roll out period of five years. However, once implemented, the programmes will continue and be amended as needed, based on periodic evaluations.

1.4 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY OF THE NATIONAL SOCIAL MITIGATION PLAN

The development of the National Social Mitigation Plan is the first of its kind in Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) was the lead agency developing the Plan in conjunction with local Consultants, and with support from other social sector and international partners. An internal planning team was convened at the MSDFS, which comprised of Heads of delivery divisions and senior technical officers. Regular meetings were held to discuss the approach to social mitigation, commencing as early as March 2016.

The Ministry in seeking to ensure a robust, inclusive and participatory approach to the development of the Social Mitigation Plan embarked upon a comprehensive multi-pronged and multi-layered methodological strategy to inform the design and content of the Plan. As such every opportunity was taken to consult the members of the general public in the development of the Plan, not only to solicit “buy-in” from those most directly affected, but to ensure citizens were involved in the decision making process. The stages of the data collection are outlined below.

Stage 1:

In the early stages of the Plan development, the following research and data collection strategies were undertaken:

- Community Outreach Surveys in rural communities in Trinidad, including areas deemed to have high levels of poverty;
- Survey of Ministries, Regional Corporations and Professional Associations, with specially designed instruments,
- Public Consultations in St. Augustine, San Fernando, Chaguanas and Tobago,
- Focus Group Discussions, with Clients of the Ministry, Youth, Faith-Based Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, the Elderly, Persons with Disabilities, Academics, etc.
- Key Informant Interviews with social and economic experts,
- Comments/Feedback via Social Media,
- Mitigation/Institutional Capacity Assessments of NGOs and Social Sector Ministries; and
- Contributions from the MSDFS Staff.

Data was collected over the period May to September 2016. The findings of the data analysis was subsequently prepared into two working papers: A Working Paper for the Compilation of a National Social Mitigation Plan for Trinidad and A Working

Paper for the Compilation of a National Social Mitigation Plan for Tobago, which were utilised as base documents for the development of the actual Plan.

Stage 2:

The actual development of the Plan commenced in stage 2 of the project and involved the following activities:

- Strategic meetings between the Consulting Team and technocrats of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS), which were instrumental in crafting the preliminary content of the NSMP;
- Reviews of documentation provided by the MSDFS, which included Ministerial plans and policies;
- Desk review of the current social protection programmes;
- Stakeholder feedback on presentations and draft versions of the Plan document. Stakeholders included social sector ministries (e.g. Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts), international agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB),
- Comments and critiques from social and economic experts, such as representatives from the Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB), Academics, Social Workers, Social Activist.

Given the nature of the Plan, it was also necessary to share the contents with some of the initial stakeholders before the Plan was made final. As a consequence, the draft Plan was also circulated to various participants of the public consultations to elicit their feedback on the document.

All comments and recommendations received from stakeholders and partners were duly considered towards the finalisation of the Plan. In particular, the comments received from the review of the first draft of the NSMP document were especially useful for the preparation of the Final Draft. These comments are attached in Appendix 2.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE NSMP

The findings of the consultative process revealed that people, institutions, infrastructure, budgets, whole sectors, as well as the social and natural environments have all been affected by the current economic downturn. As it relates to people, the risk assessment revealed that the economic downturn has placed all citizens and all sectors of the society at different levels of risk with the heaviest burdens being placed on the poor and indigent, the middle class and other vulnerable groups such as the elderly, single parent households, persons with disabilities,

women and children, and unemployed workers. There was also the view that persons on fixed incomes, the self-employed, contract workers, small and medium sized business owners, pregnant women, sick persons, university graduates, skilled workers, landlords and tenants, rural residents and recipients of grants, transfers, remittances and subsidies are also heavily impacted by the downturn .

Accordingly, the NSMP is designed to address the needs of any person requiring social and economic support, especially those deemed to be in vulnerable economic positions such as retrenched workers, the unemployed and under-employed, low-income and fixed earners, older persons and pensioners, persons with disabilities and the poor and indigent. It is further noted that even in these special groups, persons may be affected differently and may require unique and/or customised assistance.

The Plan will provide assistance in the immediate and short-term as persons seek to cope with and recover from the consequences of negative economic circumstances. However, given the overarching aim of the Plan to improve the citizen’s ability or build their resilience overtime, some strategies are intended to be more long term.

Given that the economic downturn over the last few years has resulted in less resources being available to the State, and on the assumption that the economic downturn will follow a J-curve pattern, that is, it is expected to get worse before it gets better, the NSMP will need to explore greater involvement of other stakeholders in its efforts. Accordingly, the Plan recognizes that partnerships and collaborations are integral to this agenda and therefore seeks to maintain and extend relationships with international partners and agencies, as well as the private sector and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

Given the range of services currently offered, coupled with the intensified scarcity of resources, the NSMP also highlights increasing the usage, access and effectiveness of existing social programmes provided by the State. This requires a comprehensive audit of the existing programmes. It will further require a well-integrated IT system and a supportive communications and Plan and M&E strategy. The NSMP will therefore treat with a holistic and comprehensive approach towards strengthening the social protection system, while simultaneously outlining supportive strategies for building the innovation, competitiveness and resilience of the citizens of the nation, as ultimately the thrust is also about human capital development.

2. MITIGATION PLAN: GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

2.1 THE SOCIAL MITIGATION FRAMEWORK FOR TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT) has decisively responded to the current economic downturn by developing a National Social Mitigation Plan for Trinidad and Tobago. In its development the government has taken into account the social and psychosocial implications of the economic situation on the citizenry, and in particular the most vulnerable. The NSMP is therefore intended to mitigate the negative consequences of the economic downturn and facilitate the empowerment and building of resilience of the citizenry to withstand any future national adversity. The development of the NSMP was guided by a proposed NSMP framework that is diagrammatically expressed in Figure 2 and further outlined in this section.

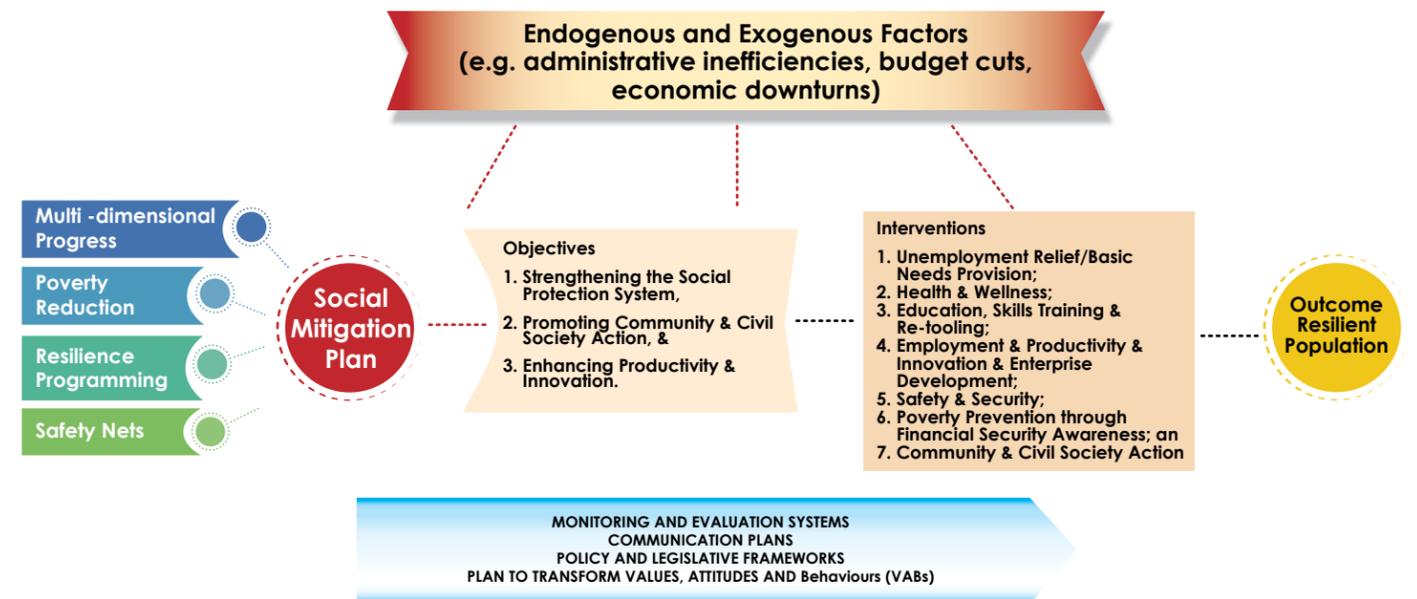
This framework takes into account exogenous factors such as the current economic decline and volatility of the oil and gas market, in addition to resultant endogenous shocks such as increasing unemployment and worsening poverty levels. To confront these shocks and bearing in mind the novelty of social mitigation planning in the country, the NSMP must borrow from related areas such as resilience programming, safety nets designing, poverty reduction and multi-dimensional approaches to human development (Appendix 3).

Several types of interventions/programmes were identified for inclusion in the NSMP. Some were selected due to their ability to immediately alleviate some of the negative fallouts of the economic downturn on the population and are geared towards helping persons meet their basic needs. Others were selected because they help build the beneficiaries' capacity and resilience, and support them during their transition out of social programmes to a path of independence. These include programmes with training and learning components. Successful implementation of these programmes will serve to strengthen individuals and households and no doubt, lessen the financial burden. It is envisioned that a natural outcome of this process will be a population that is resilient and experiencing a higher level of human development.

These interventions/programmes fall under 7 key Action Areas namely: (i) Unemployment Relief/Basic Needs Provision; (ii) Health and Wellness; (iii) Education, Skills Training and Re-tooling; (iv) Employment and Productivity and Innovation and Enterprise Development; (v) Safety and Security; (vi) Poverty Prevention through Financial Security Awareness; and (vii) Community and Civil Society Action. Each of these will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

Finally, the intricacies and complexities of the NSMP framework mandate the establishment of reliable M&E systems to monitor outcomes and objectives. Additionally, communication plans that transmit transparent and consistent messages, as well as responsive policy and legislative frameworks, will be necessary to create a conducive environment for the implementation of the NSMP proposals. Attention is also paid to the need to transform the Values, Attitudes and Behaviours of the citizens as an indispensable and omnipresent component of the Plan that also has implications for the acceptance and implementation of the NSMP.

Figure 2.1: Proposed Framework for Social Mitigation in Trinidad and Tobago (HEU-UWI, 2017)



2.2.1.2 Basic Needs

In times of economic downturn, an individual's ability to continue to meet their basic needs, as well as that of their family may be significantly compromised. During the consultative process, participants pointed to the inability to meet basic needs due to unemployment, under-employment and wage reductions. As a consequence, persons raised issues such as "hunger", "poor nutrition", inability to afford three daily meals, inability to pay rent and utilities, home evictions etc. as direct impacts of the economic situation. Enabling vulnerable groups, particularly the economically challenged due to recent unemployment or retrenchment, to have access to essential goods and services, such as food, water, shelter and clothing is a necessary part of supporting individuals and families through these economic times. Some priority programmes available to address the immediate needs of persons and their families in this area include the following:

Table 2.1.2: Priority Programmes/Initiatives under Action Area 1- Unemployment Relief/Basic Needs Provision (Objective 2)

Programmes/ Initiatives	Implementing Agency
Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP)	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
School Feeding Programme	Ministry of Education
Agricultural Information and Training in Food Production.	Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries
National Social Development Programme (NSDP)	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Housing Grants Social Housing (PROPOSED)	Ministry of Housing and Urban Development Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
The Electricity Subsidy	Ministry of Public Utilities
The Public Assistance Grant (PAG)	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Disability Assistance Grant (DAG)	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Senior Citizen Pension (SCP)	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
General Assistance Grant	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
National Insurance Benefits	National Insurance Board

2.2.2. ACTION AREA 2 – HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Objective 1 – Assist vulnerable persons and their dependents with access to essential health care services



Trinidad and Tobago's public health sector has a far-reaching network of primary and secondary health care facilities that provide a comprehensive range of services, at no charge to persons at the point of delivery. Economic pressures precipitate a host of unhealthy behaviours such as - bingeing on unhealthy foods, smoking, alcoholism, poor sleep patterns, depression and chronic anxiety (Harvard Public Health Journal, 2012). Additionally, unemployed persons may require special medical and wellness services such as individual and family mental health support, family planning and even food and nutrition planning. Some priority programmes available to address the immediate needs of persons and their families in this area include the following:

Table 2.2: Priority Programmes/Initiatives under Action Area 2- Health and Wellness

Programmes/ Initiatives	Implementing Agency
Objective 1 – Assist vulnerable persons and their dependents with access to essential health care services	
Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (CDAP)	Ministry of Health
Psychosocial Support and Counselling	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Community Development, Culture & the Arts.
Support for Victims of Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence	Gender and Child Affairs of the Office of the Prime Minister Division of Health and Social Services, (Tobago House of Assembly)
National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme (NADAPP)	Ministry of Health
Piparo Empowerment Centre and Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Centre at Caura Hospital	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, Ministry of Health
External Patient Programme National Oncology Programme	Ministry of Health
Community Wellness Centres (PROPOSED)	Ministry of Health, Social Sector Ministries

2.2.3 ACTION AREA 3 – EDUCATION, SKILLS TRAINING AND RE-TOOLING

Objective 1 – Empower persons by providing them with the skills needed to earn an income



The Survey of Living Condition (SLC) 2005 showed that 30.6% of the sample surveyed did not pursue or attain education certificates beyond the primary level (Kairi Consultants Limited, 2007).



Additionally, there are natural correlations among educational attainment and socio economic status where education is progressively pursued among those in the higher income quartiles. Additionally, elementary level occupations requiring a basic to limited level of education, were mainly occupied by the poor. Thus, in order to improve the employability, income level and resulting resilience of persons, they must be provided with a combination of skills, training and more importantly, certification.

Young People (aged 15 – 24 years old) are also uniquely affected by economic crises due to their youth-specific vulnerabilities (Marcus and Gavrilovic 2010). This is largely because of their developmental stage which results in effects which can be potentially lifelong, they have higher rates of income poverty, have higher unemployment rates and weave limited political influence.

An acute or protracted economic crisis can have the effect of trapping youth in unemployment, under-employment or in low productivity jobs. They are also affected disproportionately in labour markets in times of crisis, as they are particularly vulnerable to layoffs, are more likely to suffer declining wages and are frequently pushed into informal sector work with very poor pay and conditions and very few protective rights. Some priority programmes available to address the immediate needs of persons and their families in this area include the following:

Table 2.3: Priority Programmes/Initiatives under Action Area 3- Education, Skills Training and Re-Tooling

Programmes/ Initiatives	Implementing Agency
Objective 1 – Empower persons by providing them with the skills needed to earn an income.	
On the Job Training (OJT)	The main objective of this programme is to assist the employability and sustainability of the 16-35 cohorts in the labour market. Since this programme targets mainly new entrants into the job market, it should be maintained as a stepping stone into permanent employment.
Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme (GAPP)	The programme develops geriatric care skills among adolescents while providing companionship for the old. This programme can benefit not only economically displaced persons but also the elderly population who may require affordable care.
Adult Education Programme	Provides opportunities for adults to complete primary and secondary level education. It also allows for training and education in Technical and Vocational skills.
Community Education (Skills Development) Programme	It is designed to address the domestic needs of householders by equipping them with skills to enable them to engage in home-based production of goods and services that reduce household expenditure and allow for the more effective use of financial resources.
Retraining Programme	This programme targets unemployed persons between the ages of 30 and 45 years and provides skills training to increase their opportunities for employment or self-employment. Programme trainees are certified to National Occupational Standards through the Trinidad and Tobago Vocational Qualifications (TTNVQ) Framework, the national accreditation system for vocational education, which provides a platform for further education and training.
Workforce Assessment Centres	It targets both employers and employees by providing training in areas where employees have competencies and experience but lack certification. Employers who participate in this programme benefit from a pool of skilled employees.
Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Programme	The PLAR Programme is designed to accommodate the schedules of working adults and provides the formal certification that can be the key to better job opportunities, job reclassification or promotion.
Military-Led Academic Training (MILAT)	The purpose of the programme is to provide a positive environment and provide training and skills for entry in the workforce and targets at risk youths between the ages of 15-24 years.
Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP)	The aim of the programme is to equip citizens with the requisite skills and training for pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities.
The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)	The programme provides training to promote personal development and life skills, on-the-job-training and temporary employment for participants and targets young persons between the ages of 18-25 years.
Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres (YDAC Youth Camps)	Targets young men who have been deemed “at risk” and are between the ages of 15- 18 years. The institutions are residential vocational training centres facilitating at risk young men including those who may have dropped out of the formal education system for a 2-year period
Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture (YAPA)	Provides youths aged 17-25 with the opportunity to become involved in farming, demonstrating to them that agriculture can be pursued successfully as a business.
Craft Training Programme for Women	This programme is designed to promote employment through training in various craft disciplines, as well as initiatives geared towards the revitalisation of the handicraft industry of Trinidad and Tobago. It promotes the development of the craft, business and life skills necessary to facilitate the establishment of successful, home based craft businesses for Single, unskilled or unemployed mothers, between 25 - 50 years.
Non-Traditional Skills Training Programme for Women	This programme is designed to provide specialised technical and vocational education and training to unemployed, low-income and unskilled women between the ages of 18 - 50 in the following areas: Construction, Woodwork/Furniture, Automotive, Technology, Industrial Maintenance, as well as, Entrepreneurship, Life Skills, Gender Issues, Remedial Literacy and Numeracy and other non-traditional skills based on community needs.
Women in Harmony Programme	The aim of this programme is to equip participants with marketable skills, which can be used to provide them better employment options and enhance their economic choices. Training is offered in two disciplines; Agricultural Production Grow Box Technology / Landscaping and in Elderly Care.

Increased Focus on Vulnerable Groups

Economic crisis can affect vulnerable groups in a myriad of ways. World leaders, within the last decade, have also recognized the importance of addressing the concerns of the most vulnerable in interventions designed to support inclusive social and economic development¹. Inclusive social protection measures are critical design elements to ensure that the most marginalized and excluded are not left behind even in times of fiscal uncertainty (Institute of Development Studies UK 2015). Accordingly, the NSMP will seek to ensure that vulnerable populations, such as children, older persons, persons living with HIV, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups will have access to key empowerment programmes that will reduce exclusion and increase resilience.



Persons with Disabilities

Special attention, however, is given to the effect of the economic situation on persons with disabilities. This is largely because persons with disabilities, in particular, can face increasing poverty, accentuated exclusion and discrimination. The quantity and quality of support and services provided to them can also be reduced due to budget cuts. Their rights to live independently and participate in society can also be hindered. There is therefore a need to adopt the necessary policies and actions to protect persons with disabilities from these situations and to promote conditions for inclusiveness and participation. This includes:

1. **Provide greater opportunities for labour market participation;**
2. **Continue to support and expand vocational rehabilitation and skills development initiatives;**
3. **Improve accessibility and mobility;**
4. **Collect more reliable, comprehensive and consistent data about persons with disabilities and their participation in training, employment and all aspect of their life;**
5. **Raise awareness about disability issues and advocate for upholding the rights and dignities of persons with disabilities.**

¹ Social Protection for Inclusive Development – the 2010 European Report on Development.

Accordingly, there is a need to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the disability sector to identify what initiatives and services are available to persons with disabilities, what resources and capacities exist to cater to the needs of the community and to determine the appropriate and expeditious ways to address the gaps. These efforts must also be underpinned by a reliable count of the population of persons with disabilities and other issues about the community of persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is currently reviewing the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities and is in the embryonic stage of developing a National Disability Register. These initiatives auger well for the considerations of the NSMP.

The Ministry of Labour and Enterprise Development is also developing an initiative entitled “Project Enable”, which seeks to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The project focuses on empowerment through training, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. The soon-to-be piloted project will see the roll out of a Sensitisation Campaign to encourage persons with disabilities to register with the National Employment Service (NES), and to educate and inform employers about providing work opportunities for persons with disabilities. The project also has as its agenda the strengthening of the relationship between employers, ministries and the private sector to facilitate greater accessibility at places of work.

2.2.4 ACTION AREA 4 – EMPLOYMENT & PRODUCTIVITY, INNOVATION & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Objective 1 - To create new avenues of income generation for persons and facilitate the diversification of the economy.
Objective 2 - To encourage persons to become more engaged in creativity and innovation.



2.2.4.1 Employment and Enterprise Development

In times of economic downturn, even highly skilled and highly specialised persons may become unemployed. It therefore becomes difficult to find alternative employment as the markets for their particular skills may be limited. Thus, the need for an alternative avenue for income generation becomes necessary either by the acquisition of a new skill or the creation of opportunities through entrepreneurship and enterprise development. Some priority programmes available to address the immediate needs of persons and their families in this area include the following:

Table 2.4.1: Priority Programmes/Initiatives under Action Area 4- Employment & Enterprise Development and Productivity & Innovation (Objective 1)

Programmes/ Initiatives	Implementing Agency
Objective 1 – To create new avenues of income generation for persons and facilitate the diversification of the economy	
2.2.4.1. Employment and Enterprise Development	
Business Advisory Services	Offer business advice and support. Ministry of Labour and Enterprise Development
Entrepreneurial Training	Provides training in areas such as: Entrepreneurship; Business Start-up; Recordkeeping and Cash Management; Savings and Investments; and Costing and Pricing. Ministry of Labour and Enterprise Development
Fair Share Programme	Provides opportunities for small businesses to procure contracts from Government agencies up to \$1 million. It also offers training to certified FairShare Businesses. Ministry of Labour and Enterprise Development
National Integrated Business Incubator System (IBIS)	The main goal is to assist new entrepreneurs develop their business ideas into small and microenterprises. It provides training and access to a range of services including mentoring; infrastructural, operational and information technology support; and networking opportunities for access to local and foreign markets. Ministry of Labour and Enterprise Development
Sowing Empowerment through Entrepreneurial Development (SEED) programme	Provides training, as well as funding to vulnerable persons who wish purchase equipment to start a new business or expand an existing one and transition it from the informal to the formal economy. Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Cooperative Societies in Trinidad and Tobago	Individuals who are desirous of starting a business but do not have sufficient resources should be steered in the direction of joining a cooperative which supports their needs. Persons who are 18 years and over can become a member of a cooperative, which is a jointly owned business where members make equal contributions towards the capital of the business and share similar risks. Ministry of Labour and Enterprise Development

2.2.4.2. INNOVATION & PRODUCTIVITY

Innovation

Innovation is a fundamental driver of increasing competitiveness and fostering sustainable economic growth. Strategies to promote innovation in the society are therefore critical to developing a culture of resilience, but also to provide new opportunities for socioeconomic development and improving quality of life. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in its 2015 study, Integrating Intellectual Property into Innovation Policy Formulation in Trinidad and Tobago, made several observations about innovation in Trinidad and Tobago, including: there is currently no all-encompassing central innovation strategy or innovation policy for T&T; overall innovation and Intellectual Property (IP) performance is low; and incentive systems for researchers at universities are based mostly on academic performance only (publications), which is a barrier for IP-related commercialization activities.

In this regard, to strengthen the framework for innovation, recommendations were proffered, including: decrease the fragmentation of the T&T innovation system; increase access to private /equity funding, such as, the creation and maintenance of an investor-friendly climate or tax incentives for rich individuals and companies making investments in innova-

tion-driven firms and start-ups; increase the capacity of the innovation support system to deal with business issues. Some current and proposed initiatives focusing on innovation and centred on building capacity and capability for enterprise creation should also be supported.

Productivity

The National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (VISION 2030 identifies) ‘Improving Productivity through Quality Infrastructure and Transportation’ as one of the five (5) development themes. It identifies that high quality infrastructure unlocks our economic potential and ensure that growth and opportunities are distributed throughout the country and creates networks that binds us together. It also boosts productivity and competitiveness, allowing businesses to create employment, collaborate and attract investment, and grow and prosper. A number of initiatives are outlined in the NDS which will be undertaken by the relevant Ministries and department.

It is the intention that under the NSMP, agencies responsible for innovation and productivity will guide the delivery of these services and as such, the NSMP maintains linkages with these plans and policies.

The following table outlines priority programmes available to tackle the area of Innovation and Productivity:

Table 2.4.2: Priority Programmes/Initiatives under Action Area 4- Employment & Enterprise Development and Productivity & Innovation (Objective 2)

Programmes/ Initiatives	Implementing Agency
Draft Innovation Policy	Ministry of Education
A Draft Innovation Policy was also developed by the previous Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development and should be finalized. The Ministry of Education (MOE) in the current governance structure has responsibility for innovation. The NSMP will rely on the plans and initiatives articulated by the MOE for nurturing innovation. These plans should be expedited.	
Centre For Enterprise Development (CED)	Caribbean Industrial Research Institute
CED is a flagship development of the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute (CARIRI) aimed at facilitating Research, Development and Innovation capacity building and fostering business creation and expansion through the Incubation process. It constitutes a unique environment in which hi-tech entrepreneurs, world-class business people, academics, researchers, venture capitalists and people with ideas can meet, network and grow.	
Skills for Global Services	Ministry of Planning and Development
This initiative focuses on businesses throughout the Information Technology-enabled Services (ITeS) sector where they are invited to partner with academic institutions and training providers to present proposals to develop skills, create jobs, and ensure the pipeline of talent that Trinidad and Tobago needs to transform the economy. This focus is expected to increase exports and employment in the ITeS sector in Trinidad and Tobago.	
Entrepreneurial Talent Grant	Ministry of Planning and Development
In an effort to stimulate creativity and bring relief, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is expected to utilise a national talent search methodology, and a national competition, whereby citizens will be invited and encouraged to present innovative business ideas for evaluation by a panel of accomplished businessmen and entrepreneurs. The implementation of this initiative should be expedited.	
The Productivity Council	Ministry of Labour and Enterprise Development
The Council was appointed in May 2017 and comprises representatives from Government, Trade Unions, Employers, Academia and Civil Society. The term of reference for the Council include: promote and develop greater productivity and quality awareness and consciousness of the people of Trinidad and Tobago in collaboration with key stakeholders; inculcate new values and attitudes in Trinidad and Tobago regarding productivity, quality and competitiveness; develop guidelines for the establishment and operation of a National Productivity; and identify constraints to the improvement of productivity, quality and competitiveness and propose remedial measures to be taken.	

2.2.5. ACTION AREA 5 – SAFETY AND SECURITY

Objective 1 – To enhance the safety and security of the nation to reduce the risk of instability due to increasing levels of unemployment



The successful implementation of mitigation strategies will alleviate some of the burden placed on economically displaced persons and thus the temptation to earn an income from unlawful means should also be reduced. A risk assessment should also be done during the initial interview by the SSE Unit to identify persons who may require further psychological evaluation. These persons should then be referred to the appropriate professionals for further assessment and interventions.

Table 2.5: Priority Programmes/Initiatives under Action Area 5- Safety and Security

Programmes/ Initiatives	Implementing Agency
<i>Objective 1 – To enhance the safety and security of the nation to reduce the risk of instability due to increasing levels of unemployment</i>	
Conflict Resolution Initiatives	Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts
These initiatives aim to address the issue of personal security, crime prevention and conflict resolution They provide conflict resolution in a non-threatening environment to individuals, families and communities and include programmes such as Community Mediation, Mediation and Social Work Intervention Cases and Peer Mediation.	
Citizen Security Programme (CSP)	Ministry of National Security
The main aim is to reduce crime and crime related activities in communities and targets high needs communities.	
National Crime Prevention Programme	Ministry of National Security
Offers opportunities for community participation in reducing crime and criminal activity through community developmental initiatives. It is recommended that this initiative be expedited.	
Victim Witness and Support Unit	Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
Provides support to victims and witnesses of crimes. It also works with other organizations with the similar objectives, as well as with the police service.	
Projects and programmes to address gender based violence	Gender and Child Affairs, Office of the Prime Minister
The provision of specific programmes such as Defining Masculine Excellence and Home Management and Food Preparation for Men and Boys, Barbershop programmes; These programme are intended to promote gender equity by taking into account the needs of men, their perspective and expectations, as well as facilitating a level of awareness, which deconstructs the stereotyping, which take place in society; Support is also provided for NGOs that promote programmes with similar outcomes such as the 'Heforshe' campaigns;	
Plans and activities to build mutual respect among men and women (PROPOSED)	Gender and Child Affairs, Office of the Prime Minister
A Community Based Action Plan to end Gender Based Violence in Trinidad and Tobago. This proposal focuses on reducing Gender Based Violence specifically violence against women and girls in communities and providing help to potential perpetrators; Amending the Domestic Violence Act to provide greater protection for victims of domestic violence; Strengthening the law enforcement response to violence against women through the implementation of sustained training programmes; and Creating safe places with the necessary services for victims of violence, both male and female.	
Police Youth Club (PYC)	Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
This initiative of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) is designed to positively engage youths between the age 5-25 years in activities that guide them away from crime and criminal activities, and towards a positive and productive lifestyles.	
Retiree Adolescent Partnership Programme (RAPP)	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
This programme is a community-oriented programme and provides a platform for learning, enrichment and mentoring through utilising the skill and expertise of retired persons to provide assistance and supervision for school aged youth (9-21yrs). This programme is geared towards helping adolescents especially "at risk youth" to appreciate the learning experience by providing a stimulating environment for social interactions.	

2.2.6.
ACTION AREA 6 – POVERTY PREVENTION THROUGH FINANCIAL SECURITY AWARENESS

Objective 1 – To build a self-sustaining and financially resilient population and workforce



Financial empowerment is a relatively new approach to poverty reduction that focuses on improving the financial security of low income individuals through a series of community-led interventions (SEDI 2013). Key areas include providing financial information, education and counselling, as well as connecting persons to safe and affordable financial products and services. Financial empowerment strategies are meant to complement interventions to improve the financial outcomes of low income households, as well as build their financial security (Prosper Canada, 2013). In the context of the NSMP, some priority initiatives to improve the financial security awareness include:

Table 2.6: Priority Programmes/Initiatives under Action Area 6- Poverty Prevention through Financial Security Awareness

Programmes/ Initiatives	Implementing Agency
<i>Objective 1 – To build a self-sustaining and financially resilient population and workforce</i>	
National Financial Literacy Programme (NFLP)	Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago
Information, Education and Communication (IEC) strategy- (PROPOSED)	Ministry of Public Administration and Communications, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

2.2.7.
ACTION AREA 7 – COMMUNITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY ACTION

Objective 1 – To strengthen the working relationship between Government and Civil Society Organisations

Objective 2 – To build the capacity of Civil Society Organisations to contribute to national development



Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are a critical necessity during any form of natural, political, social and/or economic crisis. It is a recognised medium through which non-governmental, private, voluntarily organized associations or institutions of the people, endeavour to secure their needs, desires and objectives. In Trinidad and Tobago, CSOs have always been very important partners in the delivery of social services to several targeted and vulnerable groups. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

(GoRTT) recognises and acknowledges that the development of a robust and effective social protection system compels working partnerships and collaboration with all civil society groups to achieve its desired mitigation strategy.

Table 2.7: Priority Programmes/Initiatives under Action Area 7- Community and Civil Society Action

Programmes/ Initiatives	Implementing Agency
<i>Objective 1 – To strengthen the working relationship between Government and Civil Society Organisations</i>	
Provision of Financial Support to CSOs	Social Sector Ministries
<i>Objective 2 – To build the capacity of Civil Society Organisations to contribute to national development</i>	
Assessment of Civil Society Sector (PROPOSED)	Ministry of Planning and Development, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

2.3. PROPOSED SHORT-TERM MEASURES TO DEAL WITH RETRENCHED WORKERS

One of the highly visible ways in which the country has been impacted through the economic downturn is through increasing levels of retrenchment. Retrenchment can have deleterious financial, social, psychological and health effects on the individual who has lost his/her job. Accordingly, some immediate and temporary assistance is necessary to enable workers to cope with the challenging period. The following short term measures are proposed to specifically assist retrenched workers:

1. TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE.

Eligible retrenched workers who meet a certain criteria should have automatic access to a basket of services for a period not exceeding six (6) months to be reviewed/terminated on re-employment. Services that may be included are:

- ◆ Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme;
- ◆ Public Assistance Grant;
- ◆ General Assistance Grant;
- ◆ The Electricity subsidy. This benefit should be up to a maximum of \$3,000 for a 6 month period taking into account the level of electrical consumption prior to the period of unemployment;
- ◆ Enrolment in a training programme. This should be based on the current level of training, qualification and experience of clients.

With respect to programmes listed in (i) to (iii), exceptions will need to be made in terms of the eligibility criteria that may require policy or legislative amendments.

Eligible Retrenched workers' may mean:-

- ◆ Persons who have lost their jobs within the last 6 months.
- ◆ Persons who were receiving an income less than \$5,000 per month.
- ◆ Persons who did not receive a retrenchment package or benefit.



2. YOU GROW, WE BUY INITIATIVE

This initiative is geared towards sustainable job creation, entrepreneurship and economic diversification in the Agricultural sector. Eligible persons should be provided with seedlings, fertilizers and a grant of \$10,000 (or to be determined based on needs assessment) and more importantly, a guaranteed market for their produce. The Government will need to persuade private businesses, such as hotels, restaurants and supermarkets to enter into contracts with persons under this initiative for the supply of goods for a minimum period to be determined. This initiative could also include locally manufactured food products such as pepper sauce, preserved fruits etc.

'Eligible persons' may mean

- ◆ Persons who have lost their jobs within the last 6 months;
- ◆ Persons who earned a monthly income of \$5,000 or less; and
- ◆ Persons with at least one acre of land.

Note, if this initiative is considered, a project plan should be developed to include eligibility and selection criteria, as well as process, monitoring and evaluation and the requisite legal framework. This should also be treated as a pilot project, which if successful, should be made available to the wider population. Close collaboration with the Agricultural Development Bank should be sought in developing and implementing this initiative.

3. MITIGATION PLAN: IMPLEMENTATION & ADMINISTRATION

The National Social Mitigation Plan for Trinidad and Tobago will have a five-year life. Implementation of the mitigation strategies and actions will run over the short-term and long-term and is estimated to cost \$3,615,000. Full details of the Estimated Expenditure is attached at Appendix 8.

The main thrust of the NSMP is to improve the co-ordination and integration of existing social protection programmes to increase the usage, access and effectiveness of existing social programmes provided by the State. It is recommended that this can be achieved through the establishment of Social Support and Empowerment Unit (SSEU) and an integrated IT server system utilised across the social sector. The details of this administrative re-organisation and streamlining of interventions/programmes are outlined in this section.

3.1. RE-STRUCTURING FOR EFFICIENT ACCESS: SOCIAL SUPPORT AND EMPOWERMENT (SSE) UNIT

It is recommended that the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) establishes a special unit to, inter alia, implement the Social Mitigation Plan. The name suggested for the unit is the Social Support and Empowerment (SSE) Unit.

Given the overall mandate of the MSDFS, it is the government agency best positioned to operate a unit of this nature, providing a one-stop service or business function. In this way any person who is in need of any type of social support can access information and apply for the benefits of any of the social programmes available across the various Ministries. The main advantage for the establishment of a new unit is to provide the MSDFS with the opportunity to adopt a 'new style of management' and to 're-brand its outreach image'. A new unit will also allow the MSDFS to rationalize the functions of several of its existing units, especially where there may be overlaps. Additionally, the SSE Unit is expected to address perceived weaknesses of existing programmes and establish focal points, through which all social programmes will become readily accessible.



3.2. PROPOSED GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SSE UNIT

Goal of the SSEU: To provide a timely and convenient one-stop service for persons seeking relief from the challenges presented by the economic downturn and persons in, or threatened by, unavoidable economic hardship.

The main objectives of the SSE Unit are:

1. to be the interface between persons in need of relief and support and the social services sector;
2. to be the primary information source and central repository on existing social programmes, application process and requirements for accessing programmes across the social protection landscape;
3. to facilitate the compilation of a database through registration of all vulnerable persons including the poor, unemployed and recently retrenched workers;
4. to create a combination of benefits that addresses the specific needs of the client, drawing from programmes under seven Action Areas; and
5. to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the social programmes with the best interest of the beneficiaries in mind.

The SSE Unit will be the agency aimed at fostering each of these objectives with a reach that will extend to programmes outside of the MSDFS.

3.3. PROPOSED FUNCTIONS OF THE SSE UNIT

The functions of the proposed SSE Unit will be two-pronged. Firstly, the Unit will comprise a centralized system from which information will be collated and analysed as it pertains to clients' information and usage of programmes. The Unit will also operate in a decentralised manner from all offices under the purview of the MSDFS throughout the country, in the first instance, and will be the first point of contact for persons who wish to access any social programme. Its success is hinged on co-ordination, timeliness and convenience.

When a client enters the proposed unit, the first phase should include an initial interview, followed by assessment and registration of the client. This will enable the interviewer to identify a range of social programmes to address the client's needs. Through advertising of the services persons should be made aware of the basic documents and information they require to initiate the application process prior to the first meeting. However, if the client requires additional time to present these documents and information, a second meeting should be scheduled within 48 hours for the express purpose of applying for the various benefits offered by the prescribed range of programmes. Upon successful qualification, the client should be referred to the relevant technical officer in the source Ministry in which the programme is located, to begin receiving the benefits.

The proposed Unit, will become the sole point where the applications for social programmes are accepted, with the other Ministries only focusing on processing these applications and delivering the benefits. This will enable the MSDFS to become the recognized repository of information on clients and their use of programmes, including the duration and tracking of benefit period, and the conducting of tracer studies to monitor and evaluate the impact of programmes on clients over the medium to long term. In other words the SSE Unit will be able to undertake in-depth analysis that will inform necessary policy adjustments over time, promoting evidence-based decision making.

In the medium and long term, field offices will be established throughout the country, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and community and religious groups, in an effort to ensure that appropriate services are accessible to clients given local circumstances of communities across the country. Consideration would also be given to expediting access in those areas where most of the poor reside, which according to the SLC 2005, are in the north-east and south-western ends of the island.

In one sense the SSE Unit can be seen as the logical outcome of ongoing reform efforts by the MSDFS. Phases I and II of the MSDFS's proposed plan involve the standardization of application forms, uploading of these onto the website and training of personnel to assist persons with the application process as well as, assessing these applications. Phase III focuses on integration, which is characterized by simplified access, customized, holistic support, faster response times and enhanced user experience. The MSDFS has given precise meaning to each of these terms:

"Simplified access: The integrated service delivery approach enables clients to benefit from common entry points into the social protection system. They no longer have to navigate the maze of services to locate the support they need, many of which they did not know that they qualify for given their life situation.

Holistic and customized support: This will allow for a better understanding of the needs of the clients. Instead of serving the needs of clients along programme lines, service can now be client centric which sees case workers coordinate the relevant response around the expressed needs of clients. A strengths based approach will be utilized allowing clients to take responsibility for the decisions made about their care plans and the services which they receive.

Faster response times: Processing time will be decreased allowing deserving clients access to support in a timely manner.

Enhance User Experience: Integration will result in a new kind of relationship between citizens needing support and the providers of this support. Service will be easier to access and provided in a timelier manner."

(Ministry of Social Development and Family Services-Discussion Paper. Improving Service Delivery in the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services)

3.4. ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE OF THE SSE UNIT

The SSE Unit will be staffed appropriately. Programmes should be designed and managed with consideration being given to:

- ◆ eligibility rules;
- ◆ beneficiary outreach (field social workers are key in this);
- ◆ beneficiary identification system;
- ◆ enrolment;
- ◆ payments/benefits – form; quantity; timing;
- ◆ audit and control; and
- ◆ programme exit/graduation of beneficiary.

It is also proposed that the SSE Unit be guided by two committees.

The first is a Policy & Programmatic Oversight Committee. This committee will focus on effective and efficient delivery of necessary support services to those negatively impacted by the changing socio-economic landscape. It will comprise senior representatives of various social support programmes under the different Ministries and be charged with:

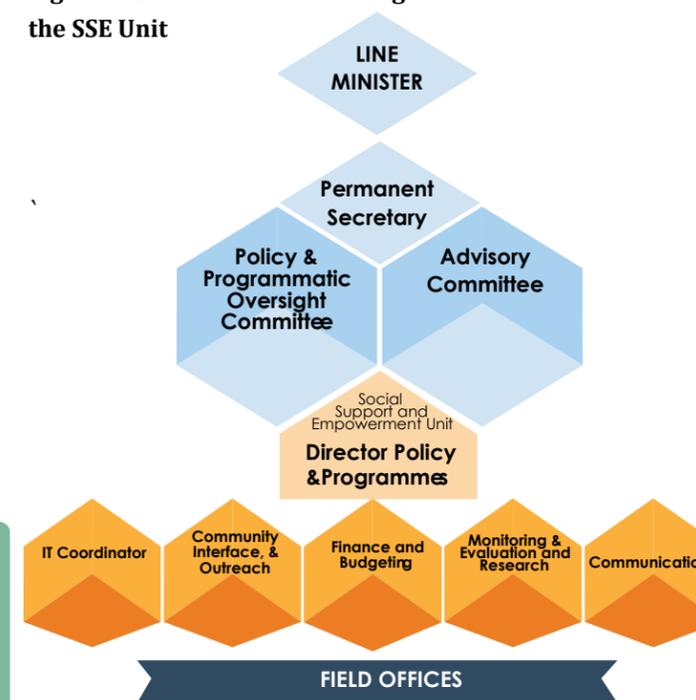
- ◆ ensuring the efficient implementation of the programmes and services to the clients;
- ◆ flagging all bottlenecks that can affect the dispensing of the services and programmes to clients;
- ◆ receiving complaints and appeals;
- ◆ ensuring information transparency; and
- ◆ identifying structural and related factors that facilitate achievement of, as well as negatively impact the goal of the SSE Unit and the wider vision of the NSMP.

A key function of this committee will also be reporting and accountability. This will be guided by a strong communications strategy.

The second committee is an Intersectoral Advisory Committee. This committee's focus is resilience building, which aims to minimize the impact of the negative shocks on the population in general, and those most vulnerable in particular. This committee will therefore focus on preventative and restorative interventions and strategies that are ultimately geared towards sustainable human development. The Intersectoral Advisory Committee will include the chair of the Policy & Programmatic Oversight Committee, as well senior technical representatives from the various Ministries, the NGO Sector, the Corporate Sector and academia. A key function of this committee is ensuring that there is alignment between the programmes and plans identified and the priority areas and sectors that are articulated by the National Development Plan. Figure 3.1 refers.

A major requirement for an improved alignment between programmes in a manner which responds to the efficiency desideratum would be the incorporation of the NSMP on an information technology platform. The NSMP will be rolled out on a new server-supported client system.

Figure 3.1: Governance and Organizational Structure for the SSE Unit



3.5. IT CLIENT/SERVER SYSTEM FOR THE SOCIAL MITIGATION PLAN

3.5.1. Description of the IT platform

The proposed SSE Unit will be responsible for assisting clients to access the social services offered by the different social programmes provided by the various Ministries of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Clients who visit the unit for assistance in accessing the services will be required to complete a registration form, with the assistance of a data entry clerk. The IT programme, through a query, will be able to access information on all Government social programmes and use this information to select the most appropriate programme(s) for the applicant. Trained personnel at the SSE offices will then determine whether the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for the programmes and a first level approval will be granted. This information will then be sent to the various Ministries providing these programmes for final approval based on further checks and investigations such as authentication of documents and home visits.

3.5.2 RESOURCES NEEDED FOR THE SSE UNIT

This report assumes that the human resources needed by the SSE Unit will come from deployment of existing staff in the public service, who will be provided with the relevant training. The main new requirement by the proposed unit will be the equipment needed for a multi-user client/server database system. A client/server database system is a server with resources used by other computers. In these systems, the client computer makes a request to the server computer, which completes the request. Although, there are advantages of using a distributed database system, it is recommended that a centralized database system be utilized for this programme. The advantage of this system is that all the data on the various social programmes will be stored in one system managed and maintained by the proposed unit. This will also facilitate and improve the security of the data. The centralized database system will make it easier to prevent data breaches and make it more difficult for data to be leaked out disclosed to unauthorized persons.

The system can be designed so that the various Ministries are able to enter information about the social programmes in the database, which can be accessed by the authorized staff of the unit. Alternatively, the Ministries can forward the information on the social programmes under their purview to the unit, where it will then be entered into the database by the unit's staff. The information stored should include basic information such as the name of the programme, social services offered by the programme, the names and number of people using the services of the programme, the Ministry offering the programme, the amount of resources allocated for the programme, the director of the programme, and contact information on the personnel responsible for implementing the programme.

A profile of each applicant should also be stored on the database. The profile for each client will contain demographic information (date of birth, marriage status, number of dependents, ID numbers, and email address), income level or income level of last job held, employment status, and educational level. The data entry clerk will request that information during the application process.

3.5.3 COMMUNICATION BETWEEN APPLICANT AND SSE UNIT

The database will be designed so that automatic reminders will be sent to an applicant's email address or mobile device at predetermined intervals, to indicate the status of their application.

The idea of introducing cloud computing to communicate with applicants can also be explored. A cloud server could be set up to help applicants monitor the progress of their applications online. Applicants can also use cloud computing to respond to queries.

3.5.4 INTEGRATED SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT (ISEMS)

"ISEMS is based on the philosophy of a single door approach to social services delivery". (Ministry of Social Development and Family Services Social Services Business Modernization Project). The ISEMS project proposal was accepted by Cabinet in February 2008 as the technological framework for the integration of social services in the MSDFS. Phase I of the project includes:

- ♦ online portal for accessing critical services;
- ♦ online eligibility determination-allowing citizens the ability to access and screen for programme eligibility from home, kiosk, internet cafe or any office of the Ministry ;
- ♦ provision of a single view of clients-allowing case workers operational efficiency through strong case management tools; provision of a foundation for working with citizens to become self-reliant and independent;
- ♦ provision of the appropriate benefit in the specified amount on a timely basis to citizens; and
- ♦ establishment of a platform that can be leveraged to accommodate new services with relative ease in future phases (Ministry of Social Development and Family Services Social Services Business Modernization Project).

Phase II includes extending screening for programmes in different phases and fully automate the operations for the implementation of online applications with end to end processing-from intake to decision making. (Ministry of Social Development and Family Services Social Services Business Modernization Project).

The ISEMS project should be placed on the short-term agenda of the MSDFS as this appears to fulfill the requirements of an IT system to support the integration and co-ordination of social programmes across all stakeholders in the sector.

3.6 EFFICIENT DELIVERY OF PROGRAMMES

Any benefit that requires a 6 month time frame for delivery is of no benefit for at risk persons and those in desperate situations. This summary statement clearly points to a need for a reorganization of the way services are delivered by the MSDFS, and may necessitate some type of integration and collaboration of/between departments to ensure efficiency. This reorganization for efficiency must also take on board external partners such as other government departments initially, and in the longer term, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the private sector.

This is a complex task, especially in light of the fact that while this exercise is being undertaken, the benefits to the population must continue to be efficiently delivered. A key ingredient for the success of this task is the information system and the SSE Unit, which will provide real time data for the processing and approval of applications. It is also important that the MSDFS, as well as other Ministries that provide social programmes, undertake a comprehensive evaluation of their programmes to identify the bottlenecks and any other weaknesses that might hamper timely delivery of benefits to those in need.





4. SUPPORTING FRAMEWORKS AND SYSTEMS

The National Mitigation Plan for Trinidad and Tobago is underscored by supporting frameworks and systems which include: Policy and Legislative Frameworks (to be determined)

- ◆ A Communication Plan
- ◆ A Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
- ◆ A Values, Attitudes and Behaviours Plan

Full details of these Plans are attached as Appendices 4 – 6.

4.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND LEGISLATION

The establishment of the proposed SSE Unit may have policy, as well as legislative implications in terms of its design and functions. A review of the existing policy and legislative frameworks of the priority social programmes will have to be undertaken to determine if amendments or new frameworks are required.

The following table provides further details of policy implications.

Table 4.1: Policy Implications for the SSE Unit

Issue	Description	Policy Implications
Purpose	The establishment of a unit through which a person in need of any type of social support, regardless of the line ministry, can access information, have his/her eligibility determined and complete and submit his/her application.	Key stakeholder ministries must have clearly established linkages and agreements on the process flow.
Eligibility	Any citizen or national of Trinidad and Tobago who need to access some type of socioeconomic or psychosocial support.	Eligibility criteria that have been established by legislation or policy may need harmonization.
Registration and Application	Persons who visit the Social Support and Empowerment (SSE) Unit will be registered on the system however this does not guarantee acceptance to any benefits provided by the social programmes at the various Ministries. Applications will be filled out on behalf of the clients and submitted to the Ministry responsible for the selected programmes	A clearly defined feedback mechanism and appeals process must be established, whereby applicants are given adequate information about rejections and the procedure for appeals. There must be connectivity between the various Ministries.

Issue	Description	Policy Implications
Access to Information	The SSE will require access to information on the various programmes from the various Ministries. Clients will also be required to furnish the SSE with personal information including demographic information, data on income etc. Persons must be encouraged to furnish the SSE with accurate information given the legal consequence in circumstances when false or fraudulent information is provided. Applications will be filled out on behalf of the clients and submitted to the Ministry responsible for the selected programmes.	Data confidentiality and protection as well as fraud legislation would be required to protect both client and provider and ensure that violators are penalized.
Benefit Package	Benefits are determined by the Ministry/agency providing them as well as the eligibility criteria for each.	Harmonization of programmes and eligibility criteria may be necessary to minimize variance as it relates to the application requirements.
Approval Process	The selection/approval of clients for benefits should be required in a timelier manner as the SSE will facilitate real-time access to clients' application information.	ICT connectivity agreements between partnering ministries would be critical for this to be fulfilled. The system and process challenges experienced with the various programmes must be addressed.
Exit Strategy	There should be clearly defined and enforceable conditions to ensure that persons receiving benefits graduate out of the programmes when stipulated.	A policy that holds beneficiaries and providers accountable for exiting programmes must be established and enforced.
IT System	The SSE unit will require an IT platform that allows the integration and access to programmes across the various Ministries. The IT system should also allow clients to access information and submit applications online from any computer or smart device.	ICT agreements and procedural guidelines for partner ministries and users must be established.
Governance and Administration	The SSE Unit will be under the aegis of the MSDFS with a Technical Advisory Committee comprising key members of Ministries that are providers of social services. The Unit should have a central administration office with sub-offices set up in each of the regional or borough corporations to facilitate easier access	All the necessary steps must be followed and approvals received for the Unit and Committee to function effectively. There will be need to secure suitable accommodation.

4.2 COMMUNICATION PLAN

The communications strategy is one of the key underpinnings of the NSMP that is necessary for ensuring success. Given the national scope of the NSMP, the communications strategy is expected to be undertaken in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications (MPAC). The key steps of the communication strategy is outlined in Appendix 4. A detailed Communication Plan will be developed to support the implementation of the NSMP.

4.3 MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLAN

The M&E system is expected to support the successful implementation of the NSMP. The M&E framework is a critical component to measure the progress and achievement of the Plan and the level of impact it is having on the targeted groups. Details of the M&E System are provided in Appendix 5.

4.4 VALUES, ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS PLAN

The NSMP recognizes the VABs as an essential element in the objective of building resilience in the nation. As a consequence a national programme to focus on the transformation of non-progressive values, attitudes and behaviours is necessary to support the implementation of the NSMP. The NSMP will utilize and build on the work done by other agencies to transform VABs in Trinidad and Tobago. These efforts will be done in collaboration with other partners and stakeholders, in particular the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts. A Report prepared by the then Civic Council for Social Equity that is useful to these endeavours is attached at Appendix 6.



5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations proposed throughout the various sections of the report are summarized hereunder.

General Recommendations:

1. REVIEW OF CURRENT PROGRAMMES:

A comprehensive review of the priority social programmes should be done to assess their efficiency, effectiveness and relevance in meeting their intended objectives. This review will also reveal the structural and systemic barriers which exist in the current suite of social programmes, and facilitate the development of an action plan to address barriers and issues of access, transparency and accountability.

2. REVIEW OF THE LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS:

A review of the legislative and policy framework of priority social programmes to determine necessary amendments of existing legislation or policies and/or the need for drafting of new legislation or policy.

3. SITUATION ANALYSIS:

The conduct of a situational analysis to determine the economic and social burden of the shifting economic conditions on the individual, family and community. This should be done at regional or district levels to gain an understanding of the peculiar situations that prevail in various communities, which may be exacerbated by economic downturns.

4. ASSESSMENT OF THE DISABILITY SECTOR.

The conduct of a comprehensive assessment of the disability sector to identify what initiatives and services are available to persons with disabilities, what resources and capacities exist to cater to the needs of the community and to determine the appropriate and expeditious ways to address the gaps.

5. COMMUNICATIONS PLAN:

Develop and implement a comprehensive communication plan in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Administration and Communication.

6. M&E PLAN:

Develop and implement a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan with details on targets and measurable indicators for each programme area.

7. COMPONENT IN STATE-FUNDED SOCIAL PROGRAMMES TO TRANSFORM VALUES, ATTITUDES AND Behaviours.

Introduce a component in the social programmes across the sector to engender the transformation in values, attitudes and behaviours necessary to build the appropriate socio-cultural values of the society.

8. MEASURES TO MINIMISE THE TRANSACTION COSTS OF PARTICIPATING IN SOCIAL PROGRAMMES.

Identify and implement measures to minimise the transaction costs associated with participating in social programmes across the sector, such as utilising the IT platform and its network and having field officers of the various initiatives adopt strategies to 'find the poor and vulnerable', rather than wait for them to come to the office.

9. TEMPORARY SHORT-TERM PROGRAMMING MEASURES FOR RETRENCHED WORKERS.

To implement a package of short-term temporary programme measures to provide immediate assistance to recently retrenched workers. Project proposals and operations documents for these initiatives will have to be developed.

Recommendations under Action Area 1 – Unemployment Relief/Basic Needs Provision

10. THE A20 PROGRAMME:

All retrenched persons should be directed to register with the A20 programme under the MLSED. In order to ensure that the system captures all retrenched persons, companies should also be mandated to forward a list of retrenched persons and their CVs to the MLSED, to facilitate automatic registration with the A20 programme. Personnel from this programme should also set up mobile units at the job sites to facilitate registration by retrenched workers. This would require communication and planning between the private organizations and the MLSED.

11. UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE:

The Government should commission a study to determine the feasibility of introducing Unemployment Insurance in Trinidad and Tobago, which has the potential to secure sustainability of relief to the unemployed as it is a contributory scheme. Other possible benefits include reduced dependency on state safety nets, promotion of saving habits and financial management since benefits are for a short term, shared responsibility, and reduced pressure on the State's resources.

12. ENHANCEMENT AND EXTENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STEP UP DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL FOR SOCIAL PROGRAMMES.

Aspects of the STEP UP developmental model should be incorporated into other social/training programmes which target the vulnerable, in particular URP and CEPEP.



13. INTRODUCTION OF A 'GROW YOUR OWN FOOD' PROGRAMME FOR THE INDIGENT AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS.

14. SUPPORT TO CSOs OFFERING FOOD ASSISTANCE TO VULNERABLE GROUPS.

The Government should encourage and support any immediate food assistance initiatives targeting vulnerable persons that are operated by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

15. A NATION-WIDE CAMPAIGN ON STRATEGIES TO ENSURE PERSONAL FOOD SECURITY.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries should be encouraged to launch a country-wide campaign that features information and training on home gardening, food production, animal husbandry, and aquaponics to build resilience and empower citizens to grow their own food, reduce their food expenditure and/or supplement their income.

16. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOCIAL HOUSING POLICY.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, with responsibility for the provision of Social Housing or low-cost housing for vulnerable citizens, should take the necessary steps to expedite the formulation and implementation of this initiative.



21. FINALISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY AND PLANS FOR INNOVATION.

Steps should be taken to finalise the draft Innovation Policy developed by the previous Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, and fast-track plans for nurturing innovation, under the current Ministry of Education (MOE). The NSMP should also maintain linkages with the Plans and Policies of other agencies responsible for building the capacity for innovation nationally.

Recommendations under Action Area 5 – Safety and Security

22. PLANS AND INITIATIVES FOCUSING ON GENDER-RELATED ISSUES.

The OPM is currently focusing on plans and activities to build mutual respect among men and women and encourage behaviour modification that should be sustained and accelerated.

23. POLICE YOUTH CLUBS (PYC).

This initiative of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) is designed to positively engage youths between the ages 5-25 years and should be expanded to other high-needs communities and similar programmes be encouraged in schools.

24. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMME (NCP).

Steps should be taken to expedite the implementation of the National Crime Prevention Programme under the Ministry of National Security to assist in reducing crime and criminal activity.

Recommendations under Action Area 6 – Poverty Prevention through Financial Security Awareness

25. A NATION-WIDE PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN ON FINANCIAL SECURITY.

A mass Information, Education and Communication (IEC) strategy should be launched to provide information and educate the population on areas such as financial planning, saving and investing, sensible spending, economic recession etc. This IEC strategy should be done in collaboration with other Ministries that provide social and economic support programmes.

26. EXPANSION OF THE NATIONAL FINANCIAL LITERACY PROGRAMME (NFLP).

This programme should be utilised by public and private sector organizations to provide information to its employees on proper financial planning and management. The medium for this programme should also be expanded to include television and radio.

17. EXTENSION OF THE ELECTRICITY SUBSIDY TO THE RECENTLY RETRENCHED.

As a short term measure, the Electricity Subsidy, under the Utilities Assistance Programme of the Ministry of Public Utilities, should be extended to other vulnerable persons, such as the recently retrenched and take into account their Needs Assessment results, previous incomes levels (recommended ceiling of \$3,000 per month) and the level of electrical consumption prior to the period of unemployment.

18. A CAP ON THE NUMBER OF TIMES A HOUSEHOLD CAN ACCESS RELIEF INITIATIVES.

The initiatives for Basic Needs and Unemployment Relief should only be proposed as short term measures and with mandatory re-assessments at appropriate intervals. A cap should be placed on the number of times a household can access these services, with appropriate exceptions. This will enable the programmes to reach more households and also reduce the risk of dependency.

Recommendations under Action Area 2 – Health and Wellness

19. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY WELLNESS CENTRES. Community Wellness Centres should be established to promote the issue of mental health and of wellness, while providing access to these services at the community level.

Recommendations under Action Area 4 – Employment & Productivity and Innovation & Enterprise Development

20. GREATER TRAINING AND ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL SCALE PRODUCERS AND PERSONS IN RURAL AREAS.

Efforts should be taken to provide greater support to small scale producers to provide a higher quality and quantity of goods through enterprise development and to capitalize on opportunities in the wider local and foreign market.

Recommendations under Action Area 7 – Community and Civil Society Action

27. ASSESSMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY SECTOR:

Conduct a needs assessment of CBOs to determine gaps in financial and human resources that should be addressed in order to improve the ability of CBOs to expand their role and also become a part of the social services IT network.

Recommendations for Implementation and Administration of the NSMP

28. ESTABLISHMENT OF SSE UNIT:

The establishment of the SSE Unit to co-ordinate the application process for all programmes provided by the social sector. This will involve collaboration with the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to set up field offices in each district. The MSDFS should also consider the prospect of partnerships and collaborations with the private sector and CSOs in the long term, based on the need to re-structure existing programmes or introduce new ones to effectively meet the populations' needs.

29. ESTABLISHMENT OF TWO COMMITTEES TO SUPPORT AND GUIDE THE OPERATIONS OF THE SSE:

The establishment of a Policy & Programmatic Oversight Committee and an Intersectoral Advisory Committee.

30. INTEGRATED IT SYSTEM:

The implementation of an IT system that integrates all programmes throughout the social sector and generates data that is utilized by the monitoring and evaluation function.



6. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

6.1 OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The following tables present the proposed Implementation Schedule for the main components of the NSMP for Trinidad and Tobago. It is important to note that some of the activities related to the NSMP, once initially implemented, will continue beyond the proposed five year timeline.

National Social Mitigation Plan: Initiatives Proposed For Implementation In Phase I

Project/Initiative	Objective	Timeline	Responsibility
Commencement of activities for the establishment of a Social Support and Empowerment (SSE) Unit	To provide timely and convenient one-stop service for persons seeking relief from the challenges presented by the economic downturn, and persons in or threatened by unavoidable economic hardship.	2018	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Establish an Intersectoral Advisory Committee	Building resilience, with the aim of minimizing the impact of the negative shocks on the population in general, and those most vulnerable in particular	2018	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Establish a Policy and Programmatic Oversight Committee	Effective and efficient delivery of the necessary support services to those negatively impacted by the changing socio-economic landscape.	2018	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Launch of the NSMP	To introduce the Plan to the population and to begin to sensitise the public on its content and intent	2019	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Review of Current Social Programmes	To assess the efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of programmes in meeting their intended objectives and to take requisite action to effect improvements.	2018	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Conduct of Socio-economic Situational Analysis of the effects of the economic downturn	To determine the economic and social burdens of shifting economic conditions on individuals, family and the community.	2018	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Conduct an Assessment of the Disability Sector	To identify the initiatives that are available for persons with disabilities, the resources and capacities that exist to cater to the community and to address gaps which may exist.	2018	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Assessment of the Civil Society Sector	To identify organisations that comprise the sector, the services they provide, their capacities and gaps in services, and to determine how the sector can be strengthened to contribute to national development.		Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Introduce a Component in State-Funded Social Programmes to Transform Values, Attitudes and Behaviours	To engender the transformation in values, attitudes and behaviours necessary to build the appropriate socio-cultural values for the attainment of Vision 2030.	2018-2019	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Provision of Temporary Short-Term Programming Measures for Retrenched Workers	To provide immediate assistance/relief to retrenched workers.	2017-2018	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Enhancement and Extensive Implementation of the STEP UP Development Model for Social Programmes	To enhance the capacity of participants to self-sustainable.	2018-2019	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Provision of Support to CSOs Offering Food Assistance to Vulnerable Groups	To provide support to facilitate immediate food support for the vulnerable.	2018-2019	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Nation-Wide Campaign on Strategies to Ensure Personal Food Security	To build resilience and empower citizens to grow their own food, reduce their food expenditure and/or supplement their income.	2018-2019	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Implement Nation-Wide Public Education Campaign on Financial Security	To inform and educate the general population in several areas including financial planning, saving and investing, sensible spending and general financial and economic issues, that would equip them to make more informed financial decisions.	2019-2020	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Project/Initiative	Objective	Timeline	Responsibility
Establishment of two (2) pilot projects for the Community Health and Wellness Centres	To promote mental health and wellness issues and provision of related services in communities.	2018-2019	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Review of Legislative and Policy Frameworks	To determine necessary amendments to existing legislation or policies and/or the need for drafting new legislation	2018-2019	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Collaborate with MLSED to strengthen the A2O Programme	To improve the programme to better address the needs of the retrenched	2018	Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries; Ministry of Social Development and Family Services .
Extension of the Electricity subsidy to the recently retrenched	To improve the programme to better address the needs of the retrenched	2018	Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Trinidad & Tobago
Expedite implementation of the National Crime Prevention Programme (NCP)	To reduce crime and criminal activity	2018	Ministry of Health; Ministry of Community Development Culture and the Arts; Ministry of Social Development and Family Services; Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government
Development of a Communications Plan for the Implementation of the NSMP	To begin to sensitise the public on the Plan and its content and intent	2018	Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs; Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (Legal Unit)
Implement a Cap on the Number of times Household can Access Relief Initiatives	To minimise inappropriate access to programme and services and to enable programmes to reach more household in need and also reduce the risk of the 'dependency syndrome'	2018	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

National Social Mitigation Plan: Initiatives To Be Implemented In Phase II

Project/Initiative	Goal	Timeline	Responsibility
Provision of Greater Training and Entrepreneurial Opportunities for Small Scale Producers and Persons in Rural Areas	To provide support for small producers to produce higher quality and quantity of products and to enhance opportunities to take advantage of local and foreign markets.	2019-2022	Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development
Expedite the Finalisation and Implementation of the Policy and Plans for Innovation	To enhance the national capacity to innovate.	2019-2020	Ministry of Planning and Development.
Maintenance and Acceleration of Plans and Initiatives Focusing on Gender-Related Issues	To foster mutual respect among men and women and encourage corresponding behaviour modification.	2019-2020	Gender and Child Affairs Division of the Office of the Prime Minister
Expansion of National Financial Literacy Programme	To provide information to employees of public and private sector organisations on effective financial planning and management.	2019-2020	Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago
Expedite Implementation of the Social Housing Policy	Provision of Social Housing or low-cost housing for vulnerable citizens.	2019-2020	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services; Ministry of Housing

National Social Mitigation Plan: Initiatives To Be Implemented In Phase III

Project/Initiative	Goal	Timeline	Responsibility
Implement Measures to Minimise the Transaction Costs of Participating in Social Programmes	To decrease that economic burden on the poor and vulnerable as they attempt to access social services.	2020-2022	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Conduct a study to determine the feasibility of introducing Unemployment Insurance	To determine the most appropriate unemployment insurance system for Trinidad and Tobago.	2019-2020	National Insurance Board
Develop a Monitoring & Evaluation framework for the implementation of the NSMP	To measure the progress of the Plan and the expected achievements	2019-2020	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Expansion of Police Youth Clubs	To expand the initiative to high-need communities and schools to positively engage youths between the ages of 5-25 years old in these locations.	2020-2022	Ministry of National Security

7. CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

Overall, a mitigation plan is meant to do two things—provide support and relief when risks are realized in the form of untoward events, and reduce exposure to these risks in the future. These two objectives are linked to the recognition of the human rights of the beneficiaries of the plan. It is important to note that the compassionate response embodied in the NSMP for Trinidad and Tobago is fully complemented by a commitment to build resilience both at the individual and the community level. In other words, far from becoming a permanent source of income for affected individuals the NSMP is intended to become a platform of transformation for these persons.

It must also be pointed out that because of the multiplicity of causes that determine the vulnerability of different persons, the NSMP must be seen as but one of the key instruments to address the dysfunctions and the dislocations, which warrant a public policy response. It should be noted that the NSMP by itself will not be the answer to all the problems that present themselves.

In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, with its proliferation of social programmes and with a large number of supporting NGOs, the expectation is that there should be an adequate safety net already in place. The call for an NSMP in 2017 suggests that there are still some missing links. The proposed NSMP therefore aims to address two important gaps. The first gap has to do with the efficiency of the delivery of the existing programmes and with the measurable impacts of these programmes. At the present these two requirements have not been addressed effectively. The second gap is linked to the vision of a small-island society characterized by the resilience of its population. The intention is for resilience to be the thread that connects all parts of the proposed NSMP – the *pièce de résistance*, as it were.

Finally, the issue now is how the NSMP will be implemented to accomplish its key objectives. There are essentially three pillars to the strategy. The first pillar is the incorporation of a modern information system which will not only link all the different programmes, but will uniquely identify each beneficiary in a way that will track not only the extent of the support proffered but also the outcomes of this support. The potential here is for improved efficiency and for a significant boost in the effectiveness of the different programmes. The second pillar is the integration of the delivery of the programmes and reengineering of processes to make them more efficient. Finally, the third pillar for ensuring the success of the NSMP will be the close collaboration with the Local Government structures in the country. In a way, the Local Government system can be the vehicle, which makes the accessibility to the programmes even more effective. Since the plan to reform the Local Government structures is about to be implemented, a win-win relationship between the NSMP and Local Government is eminently possible here. The expeditious and effective implementation of the NSMP over the next five years could be linchpin of the development agenda, that key element which, coupled with the diversification drive, could propel the country into a new phase of prosperity.



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**APPENDIX 1
COMPONENTS OF THE NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (NDS)
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
GOALS (SDGS)**

Reduce poverty levels with the long term goal of elimination. This goal was identified as the Goal 1 in the SDGs and calls for an end to all forms of poverty by the year 2030. In Trinidad and Tobago, most recent official estimates put this at around 16.7% of the population². The current downturn, if not mitigated, can exacerbate the poverty cycle.

Promote efficiency and effectiveness of the social safety net. The NDS advocates a paradigm shift in the way social services are delivered. The shift focuses on better targeting and accuracy of reaching the populations in need.

Empower vulnerable populations and promote sustainable employment. The entitlement and dependency mindset of some of our citizens needs to be eradicated. Social programmes through their conditionality components, need to empower marginalized populations to make key decisions about livelihoods, nutrition, health and personal development.

² Kairi Consultants Limited (2007)- Analysis of Survey of the Trinidad and Tobago Survey of Living Conditions 2005

Promote rehabilitation and reintegration of vulnerable populations such as ex-prisoners, deportees and persons with disabilities. It is important that these populations, which have a tendency to be cast on the fringes of society, be integrated into the social fabric of the country and positioned to contribute to development. Disability can also be a precursor to poverty, therefore persons who are permanently disabled must have access to essential services to meet their needs.

Provide comprehensive social protection for the elderly. According to the Population Situation Analysis (PSA)³ Report, Trinidad and Tobago has an ageing population. The estimates show that the median age is 32.6 years and 13 percent of the population is 60 years and over. Additionally, the national birth rate between 2010 and 2011 was just 0.4 percent. These demographic trends have policy implications for healthcare, social services and pensions.

Promote food security. Despite the economic growth the country has enjoyed over the decade preceding the current economic downturn, there are still pockets of society that cannot meet their basic nutritional requirements. If current poverty estimates were used as a proxy, it would mean that roughly 16 percent of the population is having chal-

³ Sourced: Trinidad and Tobago National Population and Development Policy

lenges in accessing sufficient nutritious food. In the current economic climate, these estimates might increase due to higher unemployment rates.

Ensure healthy lives and well being. A healthy population is considered the wealth of a nation. Though significant strides have been made in providing robust public health care services, persistent health issues in the form of lifestyles diseases (diabetes, hypertension and cancer) are still on the rise. Such health challenges, as with most health related matters, tend to disproportionately affect the poor and vulnerable.

Promote inclusive education and life-long learning. This objective corresponds directly with Goal 4 of the SDGs. Poverty in its most basic form, refers to the absence of choices. Education and learning expand the horizon for individuals to improve their well being and make concrete life choices. In Trinidad and Tobago, universal education was achieved at the primary and secondary levels. On the other hand, adult learning and literacy remain challenges to sustainable development. Equity in education also presents an emerging dynamic where females outnumber males in the education system.

Promote sustainable economic growth through access to decent work. One of the country's responses to a lack of decent job opportunities has been to create "make work" programmes. Though initially designed to be short term in nature, they have evolved into long term, endemic schemes with unintended consequences such as corruption, a stimulus for unproductivity and distortions in the labour market.

Creating new avenues of income generation for persons and facilitate the diversification of the economy.

Ensuring that the safety and security of the nation is not put at greater risk due to increasing levels of unemployment.



APPENDIX 2 COMMENTS FROM STAKEHOLDERS ON DRAFT SOCIAL MITIGATION PLAN

1. COMMENTS ON DRAFT NSMP FROM IADB

In general, we find that that the proposed Social Mitigation Plan proposes several useful mechanisms and strategies that are in line with international trends and best practices in social protection systems. Within this context, we wish to comment specifically on the following:

We concur that **the establishment of a New Unit** to manage the entry of beneficiaries into the social protection system can contribute to improving efficiencies in the system, especially when clear selection criteria and information systems are in place to aggregate information about the supply of social services in the country. However, for clarification during implementation, it might be worthwhile to elaborate in the Plan how this new unit will interface with the existing Units in the Ministry that work within the social protection area. For example, the TCCTP and Public Assistance Grants Units will likely be affected by the new role of this Unit and it is not clear whether this new Unit will replace the existing TCCTP and Public Assistance Grants Units or work in complementary fashion.

With respect to the **IT solution**, the Plan describes the optimal IT solution that many countries have been trying to build over several years. However, to determine the best IT solution, it is necessary to have a good understanding of the existing situation in terms of data and norms for sharing data. Common problems in this area are that many social protection programmes: (i) do not have the information in databases but rather the information is captured on paper files (ii) the unit of analysis is different (children, businesses, households, heads of household) and (iii) existing databases are hard to integrate into a central database. Other common problems include confidentiality of data which can pose significant limitations with respect to programmes providing key beneficiary information into one central database. In addition in our experience, design and procurement of these type of IT solutions can be a long-drawn-out process and as such, there is need for close supervision in order to avoid having a final IT solution that does not adequately match the specific requirements of the client.

Consultation Process. There may be need for further consultations with other key service provider Ministries. From our experience, some provider Ministries (Ministry of Health for example) may not view periodization of beneficiaries as part of their core mandate because they are required to provide services to all citizens regardless of their economic condition. As such, all the programmes included in the Plan may have their own specific particularities regarding their service mandate to the population and to this end, it might be useful to have further consultations to ensure that there is common consensus how to operationalize the programmes outlined in the Plan.

The implementation of a National Monitoring and Evaluation strategy is also a solid initiative and one that the IDB has been supporting for a long time. An M&E Unit can certainly contribute to ensuring that the programmes outlined in the Plan have a coherent logical framework which would also help to improve social policy in general. However, more detail is needed regarding the structure and budget proposed for the implementation of the strategy. For example, to calculate the indicators of “percentage of population that is financial literate” and “net household savings” household surveys need to be done in the field. That can be costly and require personnel with specific skills to ensure quality of the data as part of the responsible Unit. In addition, no details are provided on the IT solution that will serve as the source of information for the M&E Unit (the ICT).

Planning. The proposed timing for implementation of the Plan seems to be overly optimistic and may lead to overpromising in terms of when specific programmes/services are expected to be delivered. For example, procurement of the IT solution has been scheduled to be done in 10 days and in our experience no procurement of this type of solution has taken less than 6 months. We recommend that further planning be done to develop and sequence the detailed steps for implementation.

Conditional Cash Transfers. While the Plan includes the TCCTP as part of addressing basic needs, it seems that it is being positioned as a program to provide relief in the face of unemployment. However, in our experience, successful CCT programmes seek to provide long term support for the structurally poor rather than addressing unemployment. To this end, it might be useful to consider redesigning the TCCTP to focus on providing long term support rather than short term unemployment relief.

2. COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT NATIONAL SOCIAL MITIGATION PLAN (COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING COMMITTEE)

These comments are submitted for your consideration. The comments outlined below are the result of a focus group meeting (referred to below as the working committee) made up of Social Work Practitioners and Educators. The meeting was facilitated by Elizabeth Solomon (Research Fellow, IIR, UWI, St. Augustine for the purposes of providing comments on the Draft Social Mitigation Plan the the members of the Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB). Special thanks to Dr Boodram for pulling together the focus group members and for compiling the comments.

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Context of the Report:

This report details comments made by a group of social work practitioners and educators on the Draft Social Mitigation Plan (DNSMP). The plan developed by the lead, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, articulates its focus as ‘equipping persons affected by the economic downturn with resources and tools to cope with the short-term consequences and overcome these in the medium to long term’ (p 42).

Summary of Findings:

The overarching intent of the DNSMP is indeed commendable. The development of a plan to mitigate the effects of the negative shifts in economic conditions facing the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago is forward thinking. In this regard, the working committee praises the efforts and ethos of the DNSMP in identifying support and actions that reduce risk and vulnerabilities likely to surface due to the shocks to the economy and its systems.

Bearing this in mind, the working committee’s analysis of the document raises serious concerns which it was felt should be given due consideration in finalizing the DNSMP before its adoption as a guiding policy document. These concerns are outlined:

1. Need for articulating the Plan’s overall guiding philosophy (ies).

While a clear philosophical framework is clearly established in Appendix 3, there is a need to migrate this to an early part of the plan and to infuse the language and thinking articulate there into the Plan. It may also be useful to link this philosophy to an articulation of the type of individual which this plan hopes to produce as an outcome of the mitigation strategy. In so doing the document would be constructed in ways which present the ethos of the plan and threads through the entire document as a focus and as the guiding principles of the approach. A suggestion then is to foreground elements of Appendix 3 in the introduction of the plan.

2. One approach to identifying a workable philosophical framework could be to employ a Human Rights Based Approach which operates on the following elements:

- a. Assessments and analysis in order to identify the human rights claims of rights holders and the corresponding obligations as well as the immediate, underlying and structural causes of the non-realization of rights;
- b. Programmes assess the capacity of individuals to claim their rights and of the duty bearers to fulfill their obligations. They then develop strategies to build these capacities;
- c. Programmes monitor and evaluate both outcomes and processes guided by human rights standards and principles;
- d. Programming is informed by the recommendations of international human rights bodies and mechanisms;
- e. Furthermore, people are recognized as key actors in their own development, rather than passive recipients- dependents;
- f. Strategies become empowering, not disempowerment;
- g. Analysis includes stakeholders;
- h. Strategic partnerships are developed and maintained.

3. With #1 in mind, there is a need for a situational analysis that goes beyond an economic analysis to an assessment of the deep social effects of the shifting economic conditions on different groups in the society. In so doing, the plan will move beyond first levels of individuals affected (such as those who suffer loss of jobs) to a deeper understanding of how the networks to which these individuals belong within the society, including their family members (children, youth, aging parents etc. are/ will be affected). The need to move beyond an economic analysis to an analysis/ language that constructs the situation in terms of social work is thus highly recommended.

4. The presentation of statistics outlining an increasing allocation to social services needs to be re-examined as the figures and sentiments presented can be very misleading. It is suggested that an examination of exactly what percentage of this increase is directed towards benefits to individuals as opposed to the percentages hemorrhaging in order to hire top-heavy consultants and administrative costs. The working committee described a reality that puts even greater stress on practitioners to find the resources to provide allocations to recipients.

5. The identification of promoting efficiency and effectiveness of the social safety net is commendable, but the working committee argues that there is need to mainstream a paradigm shift that moves towards the creation of a 'safety floor' as articulated in Scandinavian models which argues that safety nets still provides spaces through which vulnerable individuals may fall.

6. The scope of the DNSMP aims at addressing the needs of persons deemed to be in vulnerable economic positions such as retrenched workers, the unemployed and low-income and poor persons" however, further reading of the document shows that no new product or service is proposed to specifically target the needs of this group. The one-stop-shop concept articulated later in the document pre-supposes the sufficiency of existing programmes to meet the current needs AND that of the increasing number of vulnerable individuals.

As social work practitioners, members of the working committee recognized that the current delivery of services are inadequate to support current beneficiaries. They see this plan, therefore, as being insufficient to addressing the needs of the growing number of retrenched, unemployed and low-income persons and are concerned that there is nothing planned to absorb further shocks to the already inadequate system.

The working committee strongly agrees that there are structural and systemic barriers that prevent a large group of vulnerable persons from accessing the services. Additionally, services outlined in the programme are done so in a manner which suggests that they are adequate in reach and scope. However, many of the persons targeted as recipients in the plan (retrenched, unemployed and poor) will not be able to access these services because of some criteria which may exist in accessing the services. In other words, as people become less able to cope they may not be able to satisfy the range of criteria necessary to qualify for the assistance on offer. As such, people must fall deeper into economic and psychological distress before accessing help, which serves to make recovery more difficult.

The working committee felt that there was real potential for the proposed one stop shop system to add a bureaucratic step if not managed well, which will result in further delays in accessing services etc. Throughout the plan a call is made to address structural and systemic barriers which exist in the current suite of social programmes. However, no mechanism is suggested to streamline the services, address barriers and issues of access, transparency and accountability.

7. While the plan voices a desire for persons to be 'less dependent', the working committee saw no opportunity to break cycles of poverty as there are no projections or models for beneficiaries to exit from the programmes. The working committee was very concerned that the proposed provisions do not provide support for persons to be 'empowered' or to become self-sufficient. In fact, the DNSMP appears to perpetuate the underlying ethos that individuals who find themselves in poverty are failures and not capable of anything other than hand-outs. This should be addressed as a central feature of the philosophical framework at the beginning of the document.

8. The need to streamline programmes is commendable, but can be cumbersome since there is overlap of services delivered by various Ministries and agencies and efforts must first be made to reduce these overlaps and streamline the delivery across Ministries and agencies.

9. The notion of the one-stop shop is commendable, but caution should be made to:

a. Recognize that the work allocated to data entry clerks require some level of social work training, and as such this should be re-examined. It appears that data entry may be considered an IT function, which is worrying.

b. It should be noted with lessons learned in mind that attempts had been made to pilot a one-stop shop system in the early 2000's and several challenges emerged. Further investigation into this pilot should be done to learn and correct structural issues which proved to be barriers to this methodology (the Leaf report)

10. Informed by the fact that Trinidad and Tobago as a SIDS is experiencing a convergence of the nexus between underdevelopment and insecurity, there is need for increased conceptual clarity in order to provide the Social Mitigation Plan with more contextual accuracy with regard to the suggestion that such a plan could mitigate against increased crime. In other words, the Plan does not speak in a sufficiently decisive conceptual framework about what social intervention (development) is

supposed to be mitigating against (e.g. what threats to national security should the plan be mitigating against). A plan is not the end...it is the means to some end state. Perhaps a clearer conceptual framework of what the plan is intended to mitigate against, can increase the accuracy of contextualizing the design of the Social Mitigation Plan

Recommendations

Foreground elements of Appendix 1 during the introduction of the plan. Provide an overarching philosophy and highlight the values of the plan in the introduction.

Address the inconsistencies throughout the report.

Re-examine the Leaf Report and the previous iteration of the one-stop shop, piloted in Sangre Grande during the early 2000's.

Agree that there are structural and systemic barriers which exist in the current suite of social programmes, and include as an action point the need to stream line the services, address barriers and issues of access, transparency and accountability. Propose a mechanism for doing this in the plan.

Elizabeth Solomon

29 May 2017

3. RESPONSE TO THE SOCIAL MITIGATION PLAN (COMMENTS FROM ACADEMIA)

The plan aims to provide vulnerable persons affected by the down turn in the economy, for example, retrenched workers (who previously had a salary of less than \$5000), and poor persons, with a path to stability and productivity. It consists of "increasing the use, access and effectiveness of existing social programmes provided by the state". It considers enabling partnerships with civil society Organizations and the private sector to improve current circumstances caused by the present down turn in the economy. Improved access would be facilitated by the establishment of a Social Mitigation Support and Empowerment Unit under the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, serving as a one stop shop for accessing information and the benefits of the national social safety net.

The theoretical framework used to design the plan recommended a triad of intervention capacities to build resilience among the affected population. These are: Absorptive capacities, adaptive capacities and transformative capacities. A short, medium and long term approach has been identified, however, only the short term recommendations were developed. Whereas the plan notes the importance of the three capacities mainly absorptive capacities via the existing social safety net are mentioned.

The expansion of the beneficiaries of social benefits to include the unemployed will prove to be difficult to sustain and contradicts current principles of delivering social welfare in Trinidad and Tobago. It will also increase the risks of developing intergenerational dependency on welfare for a section of the population unused to the culture of poverty.

The plan has underlying assumptions such as the continued functioning of training programmes like OJT, GAPP, MUST and youth camps; the existence of financial resources to support the proposed unit; persons using the National Employment Service are computer literate with access to computers; and efforts at empowering welfare recipients have worked e.g. RISE UP and the Poverty Reduction Unit

Increasing productivity in agriculture, services and industry are the primary means of reducing poverty. Social safety nets and building human capital through education and health are important and required of all modern societies that recognize human rights, which include social rights. There remains a cost for these activities. With reduced revenue how can the state expand and finance the social sector? Therein lies the problem of a focus on absorptive capacities.

To reduce poverty among vulnerable groups requires their participation in income generating activities and developing individual and household self-reliance. Small businesses need to be developed to service population needs and build on areas of national strengths. It is noteworthy however that one area of strength, Trinidad carnival bands are importing their costumes from China. The global environment which can mass produce goods and services will compete against small scale local production. Earning foreign exchange is key in the process employment creation and poverty reduction especially for the "new poor", who have been retrenched. Diversification has to be in keeping with national development goals and improved national well being.

The initiative in agriculture "You grow We buy" will need start up support. The advice and experience of the Agricultural Development Bank would assist in ensuring the success of this effort.

The SSE Unit will increase the administrative size of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, and it is unclear how "it will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the social programmes with the best interest of the beneficiaries in mind".

A whole new system of social services is being introduced. Staff of this unit are expected to be experts on the range of services to families, welfare benefits, and training programmes, develop new products for resilience while monitoring and evaluating service delivery. They will approve clients for benefits, implement the unit's communication strategy, conduct social mobilization in communities and manage the budget and expenditure. Existing staff of different social services will be trained for the new roles. It will be difficult for the unit's personnel to have so many skills. This will be a tall order for the staff who would need at a minimum communication and financial specialists. There may be need for sub units for communications and finance, thus duplicating work already done within the Ministry.

This social mitigation plan is much needed and is a courageous effort to respond to the growing national despondency. It serves to reduce pressures experienced by members of the population today. A visible and useful response by the state is needed so that the population does not make choices that could lead the country into chaos. This response has to keep in mind our crime and murder rate, and responses of the past when the country faced economic downturns. E.g. 1970 and 1990.

In recognition of the very daunting task ahead I wish to propose the following suggestions:

1. The Unit should not be called the Social Mitigation Support and Empowerment Unit. If it is a proposal to restructure the delivery of social services let the name reflect such. E.g. Social services division, social development unit, Social services delivery reception center etc. The use of the term Social Mitigation and Support Unit will not be long lasting should the economy change. Also there will probably be an election before this plan can be implemented Depending on the results this plan could be aborted. However a proposal which implies an improvement in the delivery of social services may stand the test of time.
2. A key sector for development and employment creation must be identified and supported. Tourism could be considered with an aggressive marketing strategy to bring tourists who spend money in the country. This may require identifying special niche markets which set us apart from our neighbours e.g. yachting, culture, bird watching, nature trails. Also servicing the needs of the West Indian Diaspora with local products.

Respectfully submitted
Dr. Innette Cambridge
Social Policy Programme
Department of Behavioural Sciences
5th June 2017



APPENDIX 3 THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section is intended to provide an overview of the frameworks and benchmarks that have been employed in developing the NSMP. Its main objective is to provide a foundation for assessing the proposed recommendations ascertained from the public consultations⁴ and thus provide further evidence for the recommendations contained in the proposed NSMP.

Poverty Reduction

Echevaria (1998) asserted that in Latin America and the Caribbean region, poverty is essentially a rural phenomenon. He posited that the rural poor faced unique and diverse circumstances that are both difficult to understand and find possible solutions for. According to the study, the poor in the Caribbean faced three fundamental problems: (1) few opportunities for productive employment in agricultural or non-agricultural activities; (2) inadequate nutrition, poor health and lack of educational opportunities and (3) lack of sufficient levels of organization needed to lobby effectively for rural interests.

To confront these challenges five strategic approaches have been proposed: (i) Favorable institutional and policy framework; (ii) Affirmative action programmes to assist the poor; (iii) Sustainability; (iv) Investments in human capital and (v) Greater participation by communities in designing and carrying out strategies. Each strategy will be discussed, in turn.

Favorable Institutional and Policy Framework: According to Echevaria (1998), low prioritization has been given to land regularization. A natural consequence of this is an increase in squatting, communal disputes, unsustainable agricultural practices, and environmental degradation. Without any guarantee of long term access, the occupant cannot obtain credit to invest in infrastructure or long term agricultural projects. Unfortunately, most times, agricultural policies are focused on larger farms, providing infrastructural support and technical advice and discriminate against the small, rural farmers. For rural poverty to be alleviated, policies must address issues of land ownership and the access to funding and support to invest in ideas.

⁴ A series of public consultations were used by the consulting team Dr. Gwendoline Williams and Maria Mason- Roberts, in developing the Working Paper on mitigation planning for the MSDFS

Affirmative Action: Lipton (1993) proposed that rural poverty reduction must involve the removal of urban bias, which is the inclination to allocate resources in urban centres. This historical tendency is manifested in the manner in which key facilities such as schools, hospital and administrative centres are constructed. The rural poor are widely dispersed and disorganized in patterns of settlement, which mean that access to key facilities will be difficult.

Affirmative action calls for establishing basic rural infrastructure, creating training programmes and providing access routes to services typically found in urban centres. These actions will also stimulate private interest in the form of investments and provision of services. It's important however, that such programmes are targeted to the poorest areas and vulnerable households so it is not just a general transfer of resources to the sector.

Sustainability: The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB, 1996) defines sustainable rural development as

“the steady improvement of standards of living among the rural population which does not require continuous infusions of external financial aid, and does degrade natural resources”.

Hence the strategy must engage the poorest groups to help them find their own way out. It will also include expansion and diversification of job opportunities and helping marginalized segments to increase their earning capacity in order to reduce the pressure on natural resources and break the vicious cycle of poverty. This approach is in sharp contrast to the usual approach of welfare programmes to meet basic needs.

These programmes, which have been implemented in Europe and the United States and more recently in Mexico, have two main features- (1) a long term incentive plan for families in the form of bonus per unit of land taken out of production and included in the programme to restore deleted resources and (2) a loan for investment in the conversion of a land area set aside

or forestation, combined livestock and forestry operations, and other soil restoration practices. These are long term programmes other than emergency programmes for job creation. **Investment in Human Capital:** The progress made in health care and education has been widely uneven. The quality of education in rural areas is markedly lower owing to the distribution of populations, inability to attract teaching staff, low enrolment rates and lack of incentive in the rural landscape. In view of this marginalization, steps must be taken to build capacity among rural groups including the vulnerable such as women, against whom education programmes have discriminated against. Human resource training programmes in rural communities must be designed with interests, skills and ability in mind. Studies have shown that standard education programmes yield surprisingly low returns in rural areas (Lopez and Valdes, 1997) and many see it as preparation for urban migration. On the other hand, investment in the social aspects of infrastructure through tailored training, act as equalizers that builds capacity in these sectors.

Participation of Beneficiaries: Rural development programmes require the involvement of local population, both in the design phase and continuing through the execution of the activities. Globally, in projects that have been implemented by the Bank and many NGOs, experiences have shown that when communities are consulted and participate fully in programmes, the rates of success and sustainability are higher. The community must be viewed as an autonomous space through which State policies and programmes operate and the community helps direct the improvement of social and physical infrastructure.

For effective involvement to take place, steps must be taken to ensure that external resources (finance, training and programmes) are used to strengthen capacity. Outside technical assistance must also not displace local efforts to sustainable development and management of community resources. Other important requirements for participation include getting consensus, providing complete and transparent information on initiatives and programme available, consultations, workshops and meetings, cooperation with State officials and increasing the technical capacity of local civic and non-governmental societies.

It is worth noting that this study was conducted almost two decades ago in 1998. Since then, Latin America and the Caribbean region has experienced dramatic shifts in demographics, economic growth and development, and policy developments. Further, Trinidad and Tobago is considered one of the more



industrialized territories in the region and hence may not have the same degree of marginalization among its inhabitants and characteristics of poverty as hypothesized in this study. As a result, the relevance of these recommendations needs to be further rationalized in the present local context, both in terms of demographic patterns and economic feasibility.

Despite these caveats, a key lesson from this study is that poverty can vary across geography within a country due to the unique characteristics of the subpopulations and infrastructure of an area. Policies must capture these nuances and in effect, treat each segment as distinct, while keeping in mind the overarching objective of parity and human capital development. These considerations should underscore the policies and work of the MSDFS as well as the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

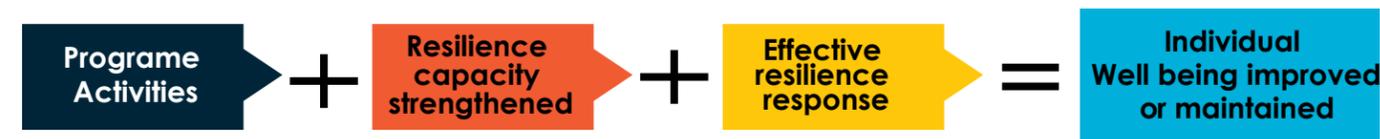
Resilience Programming

The Resilience Measurement Technical Working Group (USAID)⁵ defines resilience as “the capacity that ensures stressors and shocks do not have lasting adverse consequences (Constas, Frankenberger and Hoddinott, 2014a:6). In summary, resilience is the ability of certain groups and individuals to deal with shocks and stressors, both exogenous and endogenous. However despite the interest, it is an embryonic concept and its practical applications are still not fully understood. This provides further support for the view that social mitigation planning is a growing concept in our region.

In this paper, Bene et al (2015) posit that resilience should not be seen as an end point in a programme, but rather a means to an end. In other words, resilience should be categorized as an intermediate or short term outcome required for the achievement of more ambitious goals, such as sustainable development or improvement in overall well-being of citizens (e.g. health care, education, security etc.)

⁵ The Resilience Measurement Technical Working Group is an FAO-WFP-IFPRI joint coordinated effort that is funded by the EU and USAID

Figure 4.1: A Generic Concept of Resilience



Source: Béné, Frankenberger, Nelson, 2015b

Figure 3.1 gives a visual of the authors’ interpretation a generic concept of resilience. Based on its sequence, the authors asserted that resilience should be located within the broader framework of a theory of change⁶, with the ultimate objective of improving the well - being of citizens. For this long term goal to be realized, resilience involves three main activities: (1) Designing effective programme activities to promote long term well-being; (2) Strengthening the resilience capacities of populations and (3) Developing effective response mechanisms in individuals and households to crises.

National objectives of well-being and human development require a “resilient” population. The latter is realized through the development of absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities in people. These dimensions are discussed hereafter.

The country’s energy dependent economy suggests that it is susceptible to the cyclical “booms and busts” associated with the typical commodity cycle. A reasonable expectation is that as long as Trinidad and Tobago remains an energy based economy, it will continue to be associated with exogenous shocks such as the current decline. This possibility has consequences for the manner in which mitigation programmes are designed and implemented and the extent to which it prepares populations withstand these shocks. Ultimately resilience programmes such as the NSMP, should in effect, equip vulnerable groups to make key decisions to minimize consequences to their well-being and in the long term, contribute to national objectives.

Another implication of this proposal is the need for evaluation or measurement at each phase, to determine if outcomes are being achieved. This recommendation is particularly relevant in periods of economic downturns, when resources need to be channeled in an effective manner to minimize wastage.

⁶ Theory of Change (ToC) is a process of planning, mapping and evaluating long term goals that is typically used by organizations such as NGOs, philanthropists and Governments

In the study four key factors are recommended when measuring resilience:

Identify the wellbeing outcomes to be achieved, and measure resilience in relation to these outcomes.

Identify the shocks and stressors that individuals, households, communities and larger systems are exposed to and the severity and duration of these shocks and stressors.

Measure the absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities in relation to these shocks and stressors at different levels. Identify the responses of individuals, households, communities and larger systems to these shocks and stressors and trajectories of wellbeing outcomes.

Based on the definition provided at the onset and the authors’ explanation of the steps in resilience planning, policy activities should focus on preparing groups to adopt the appropriate responses to deal with shocks and stressful events. According to this study resilience comes from absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities.

The following interventions are proposed to build this recommended triad of capacities:

Absorptive capacities – This includes all the coping strategies adopted by individuals and households to protect their ability to meet their basic needs from the effects of shocks and stressful events. Improving the absorptive capacity of the poor and vulnerable through preventative and coping measures, enhances their ability to weather the domestic economic downturn without suffering permanent, negative effects on their personal security. Interventions often include risk-financing mechanisms (insurances) improved access to savings, and informal safety nets (i.e., bonding social capital). Additionally, cash, grants or in-kind transfers contribute to absorptive capacity by helping protect household assets and food security. Under this heading, current social programmes such as the public grants, CDAP, subsidies and food cards have relevance.

Adaptive capacities - Reflect the capacity to “learn and apply knowledge and experiences to changing environments to protect or maintain lifestyles” (Berkes et al. 2003). Adaptive capacities of households and communities, as the name implies, are connected to the ability of individuals to be flexible in their decision making as it relates to their livelihood in the face of changing circumstances (Levine, Ludi and Jones, 2011). Interventions typically focus on livelihoods diversification, human capital (e.g., skills building, health and nutrition status, and education), diversification, sustainable agriculture, and access to financial services (e.g., credit). In this circumstance, Unemployment Relief (URP) Programmes, National Employment Services (NES), Seasonal Workers’ Programme, On-the-Job Training (OJT) Programmes, MIC Institute of Technology, Agricultural Development Bank programmes, and public health-care services can contribute.

Transformative capacities - Sustainable resilience requires building transformative capacity, which “addresses the underlying drivers of risk and vulnerability, and promotes social cohesion through public assets and human capital (Tango, 2015)”. This is a long term perspective of a social policy which aims at creating an enabling environment through social, legal and economic infrastructures. Examples of investments include good governance, infrastructure (roads, transportation networks), social protection mechanisms, basic service delivery, and policies/regulations that create the enabling environment necessary for households to maintain good health, control their livelihoods, and to exercise their rights. These components were addressed by Echevarria in his recommended framework for rural poverty reduction. Some existing local programmes that are starting points for building transformative capacities are the Government Assisted Tertiary Education (GATE) Programme, programmes managed by the Ministry of Works and Transport and Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, Housing Development Corporation (HDC), and programmes aimed at promoting enterprise development and diversification.

Resilience and mitigation can be viewed as interchangeable concepts, based on the shared objective of reducing the effects of crises on the welfare of the populations. Domestically, there is a plethora of social interventions that are already in place to build the absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacity of the poor and vulnerable and by extension the wider population. This study however, helped to categorize these social interventions under appropriate headings and further emphasize the need for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) at intervals.

Conclusively, while the current focus is to mitigate the effects of the downturn of the poor, the long term objective should be the improvement of overall wellbeing and consequently sustainable development.

Safety Nets

“Safety nets” or “Social Assistance” refers to non-contributory, transfer programmes targeted mainly to the poor or vulnerable. Some of these include grants, food stamps or food cards, school-feeding programmes, price subsidies for utilities, jobs on labour-intensive public works schemes, such as URP and CEPEP etc. Note, however, that for the full effects of safety net programmes to be realized interventions must be synergistic with each other and other elements of public policy such as social insurance, health, education and financial services, well developed public goods and other products that are focused on reducing poverty and risk. A good safety net programme is one that addresses the needs of the poor and vulnerable by being appropriate, adequate, equitable, cost effective, incentive compatible, sustainable and dynamic (Grosh et al., 2008). Each of these terms is explained.

Appropriate- Appropriateness is assessed by the extent interventions complement each other and the fit within the overall public policy framework. Safety nets are also appropriate if they take into account the macroeconomic conditions of the country.

Adequate- Safety nets should be adequate or sufficient in their coverage, benefit levels and duration. Coverage describes the number of persons that benefit from an intervention. It is recommended that policy makers further define this coverage along dimensions that are of interest such as the number and demographic characteristics of persons below the poverty line, the characteristics of the poverty (chronic, transient, rural or urban), and the coverage offered by other social policies.

The fundamental concern regarding benefit level is whether it allows recipients to meet their basic needs. As a general rule, benefits should at the very least, narrow the gap between the recipient’s income and the poverty line. This can be achieved through in-kind transfers or conditional cash transfers and food cards to meet nutritional needs. It is valuable to analyse the full range of assistance offered by all safety interventions and develop corresponding disincentives to “graduate” clients off the programmes.



Equitable- Beneficiaries must be treated in a fair and equitable manner, both in horizontal terms, where similar groups receive the same benefits, and vertical terms, where the poorest segments receive relatively more benefits. The benchmarks to assess equitability are often difficult to measure and not standardized. This is owing to the fact that the characteristics of the target group can change over time and across locations within the same country. Policy makers therefore, will have to consistently analyze participation and exclusion rates at intervals and ascertain the groups that are most affected at that point in time. Additionally, investigations should be undertaken at the point of crisis to determine how certain groups are affected and use their characteristics as proxies when designing safety nets.

Cost-effective- Safety net programmes must be designed to use the least resources yet make the greatest impact. Efficiency in procurement and service delivery are often used as indicators of cost-efficiency for in-kind transfer programmes such as public works and school feeding programmes. In such cases, the benchmark is that inputs should ideally represent no more than fifty per cent (50%) of costs and accessed at the best price possible, thereby reducing overall costs. To meet these conditions, the procurement process needs to be transparent and well modeled.

Another approach to cost analysis calls for an examination of the rate at which net benefits are produced from the inputs. A fundamental expression of this would be a ratio comparing inputs to outputs in monetary terms.

Incentive compatible - Safety nets should be composed of a balance of voluntary and mandatory client obligations to stimulate work and building of personal capital and in so doing reduce dependency and poverty levels. Some forms of incentives that create independence include training, entrepreneurship programmes, and microloans.

Sustainable- State policies should be fiscally, politically and administratively sustainable. Fiscal sustainability directly relates to the financing of programmes. Domestically, programmes are financed through tax revenues and in some instances, deficit borrowing- the latter is likely to be on the rise based on the current downturn and consequent declining income bases. Political sustainability is quite often a contentious issue, as perceptions about poverty and social issues can differ across demographics and political administrations. As a way to circumvent this subjectivity, programmes should ultimately generate good results that can be substantiated by data. Administrative sustainability requires a minimalistic but effective approach to designing administrative capacity and infrastructure. Should the need to scale up interventions arise, functions can be subcontracted to external agencies to limit the payroll and infrastructural costs of the programme. Additionally, having systems centralized can lead to economies of scale.

Dynamic- It should naturally be expected that safety net programmes will change in response to economic shifts, changes in public policy and needs of target populations. As problems are solved, new targets should be set for programmes.

In summation, an adequate transfer programme at the very least, registers clients, pays the benefits and eventually removes them from the beneficiary listing. An exceptional programme, according to Grosh et al. (2008), has the minimal registry of clients supplemented by strong outreach campaigns to ensure non-exclusion, a strong vetting system to ensure that the ineligible are removed and a capable administrative unit to handle grievances and monitoring.

Reducing dependency through disincentives

Safety nets are not a panacea for major social issues. Their rightful position is to act as a complement to social policy, and, to an extent, public policy. If left unregulated, safety nets can create unintended negative incentives and become a financial and administrative watershed. These concerns can be managed through the prudent use of social programme disincentives that transition clients from safety nets at appropriate intervals. The following suggestions were put forth for reducing dependency:

- ◆ Limit programmes to the “deservedly poor” i.e. persons who are not expected to work under any circumstances such as the very young, very old, and disabled;
- ◆ Link transfers to programme elements such as job training, education and job placements, meant to transition households out of assistance. The administrative demand under this mechanism may be greater but they support social and to some extent economic policy objectives;
- ◆ Choose a targeting mechanism that is not directly tied to earnings- leaving the incentive to work intact. Under this measure recertification can be included to ensure that households are not permanently on the benefits. Stringent means testing is mandatory under this measure;
- ◆ Set benefits at low levels to maintain work incentives. This is fiscally prudent in economically challenging times.

Concerns over work efforts tend to occur where transfers are generous and programmes lack proper evaluation mechanisms. Policy makers therefore should consider the range of benefits across all social programmes and develop a balance among the initiatives.

Sustainable Human Development

The theme of the 2016 Caribbean Human Development Report (UNDP) was “Multidimensional Progress: human resilience beyond income”. The key ideas contained in the report were rooted in its title and encouraged the reader to adopt a plural and holistic approach to understanding progress and resilience. Unlike the foregoing empirical works considered, this

report was a response to the current economic decline on the Caribbean region. To further build understanding and appreciation for the policy recommendations, the report also probed the structural and circumstantial challenges that prevented human development and economic transformation in the region. A major benefit of the study was the inclusion of Trinidad and Tobago in the data collection process.

Similar to the field work executed in the development of the MSDFS Working Paper, the UNDP report utilised qualitative data from focus groups, in this case, from nine countries. The main purpose of the anecdotal data was to gain insight into distinct perceptions of progress and goals, and situate policy recommendations in this context.

Caribbean peoples described progress as “a process—both a journey and a destination”. A general perspective also described it as “an outcome and the result of deliberate action”. Progress at the personal level related to self-actualization and more tangible outcomes such as asset ownership. Another consensus coming out of the discussions was that education is a catalyst for progress, while at the national level the stimuli for development will include- housing, employment, infrastructural works, health facilities and technology.

Against this understanding, recommendations of the researchers included policies to reduce human vulnerability such as increasing opportunities for employment and youth empowerment.

i. Increase Opportunities for Decent and Productive Employment:

Employment creation in the public sector is a key feature in Trinidad and Tobago’s economic policy and response to reducing unemployment levels among the youth population. Going beyond job creation, the government has also established an agency which assists persons in locating job opportunities in the public and private sector. Despite the advancements made under this intervention, public employment agency services are not sufficiently used by job seekers. In fact, findings suggested that persons were more attracted to informal sources of labour or simply to remain unemployed. Further job creation programmes such as URP and CEPEP, though initially established as short term measures, have evolved into more endemic schemes thereby giving rise some of the following issues:

- ◆ In the current economic climate of declining resources and deficits, such interventions are not fiscally sustainable
- ◆ Competitiveness in the labour market is reduced with the diversion of labour from the private sector to public sector

due to competitive salaries and reduced job requirements and demands such as working hours and technical capabilities.

- ◆ The tendency of public sectors jobs to not provide training to promote transitions to more lucrative and long term job positions.
- ◆ Entrenched negative perceptions of public sector employees being unproductive

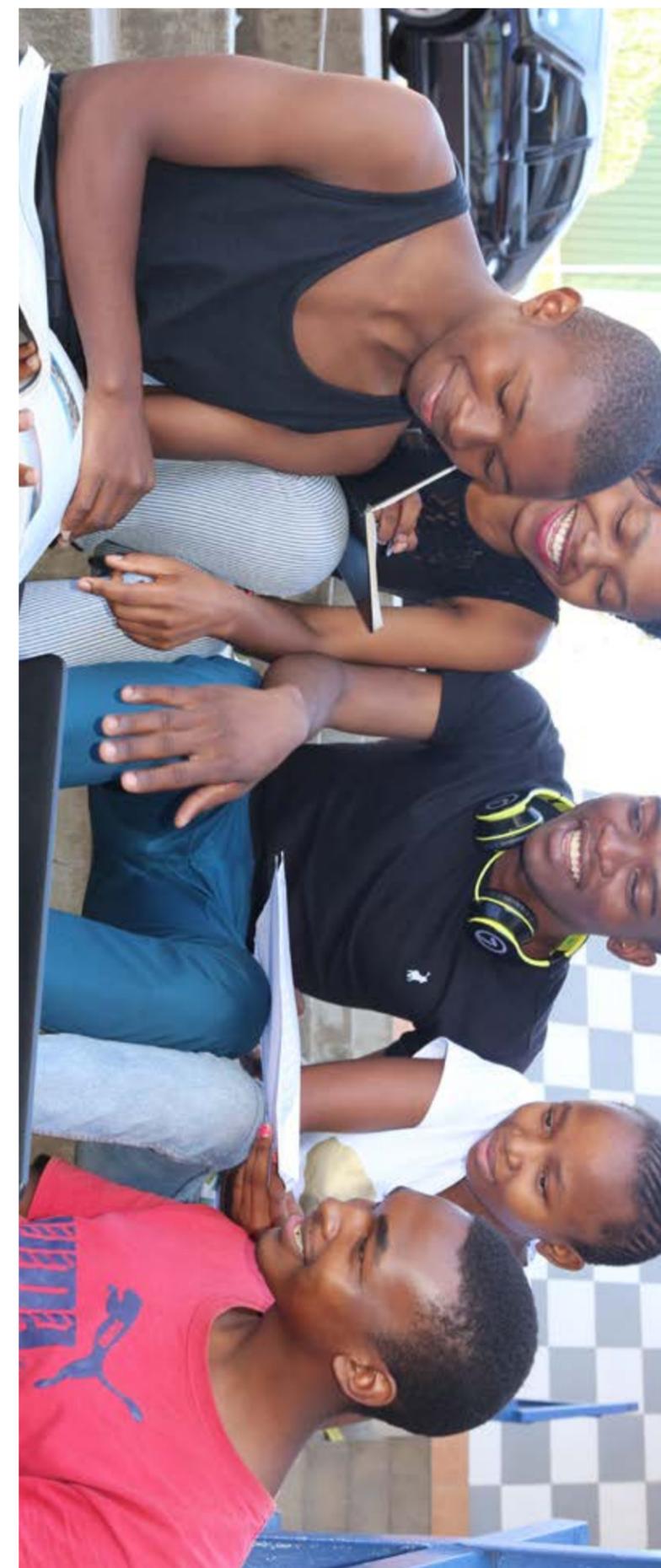
Thus, with such perceptions and circumstances circulating in the public sector labour market, the impetus is great for policy makers to adjust their approach and consider other means for sustainable job creation.

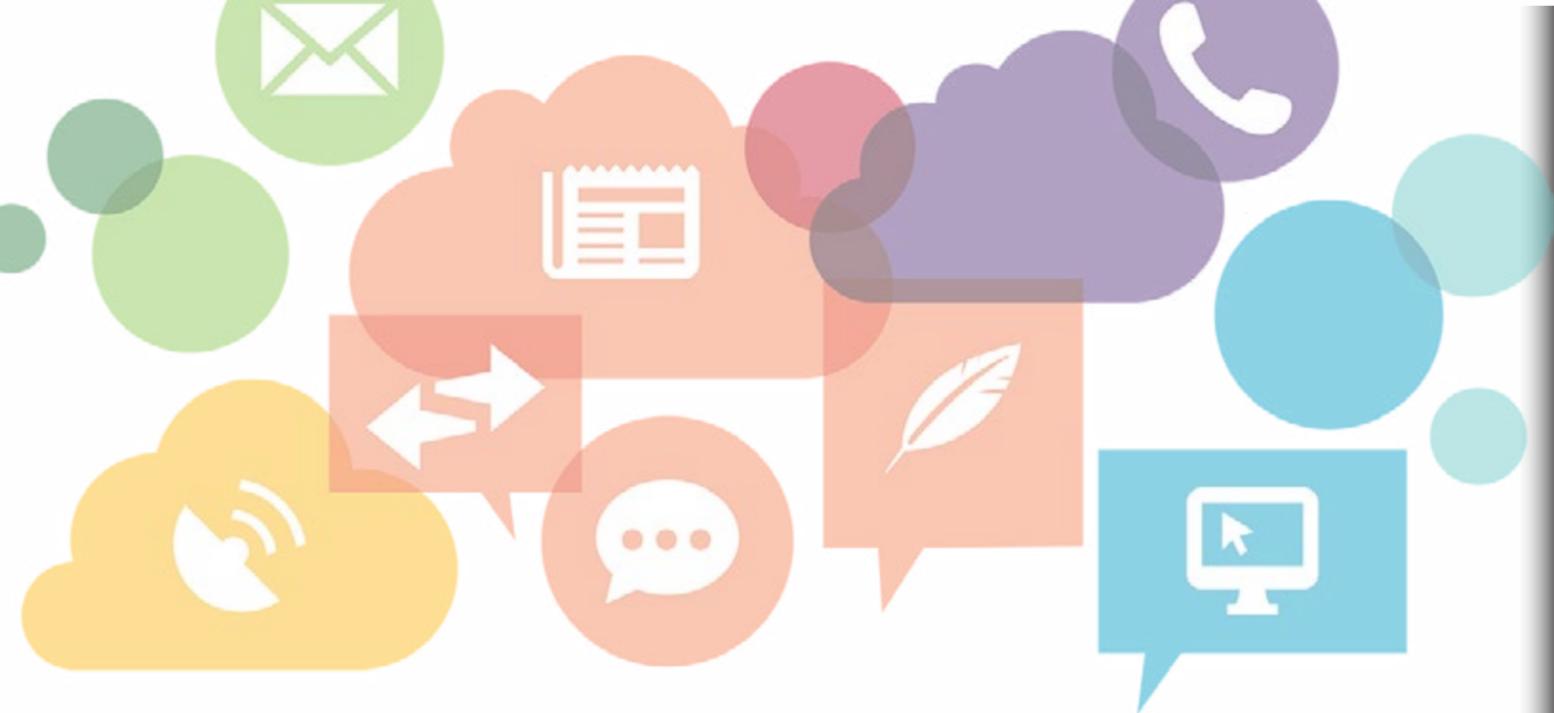
ii. Youth empowerment, economic enfranchisement and holistic development:

A holistic approach to dealing with youths requires the inclusion of diverse agents such as family, school, communities and peers. The initiatives noted in the Caribbean have inherent weaknesses that go against this philosophy such as:

- ◆ Youth focused initiatives are often not included in the mandate of government agencies that focus on youth. The placement is often with sports and cultural development focused ministries
- ◆ To further compound the aforementioned, the social issues that impact the youth such as crime and unemployment, are splintered among the mandates of several other ministries, leading to coordination issues and execution failures.
- ◆ Lashley and Marshall (2016) described regional initiatives as “remedial because the target group is already at risk having exited the education system”. They advocated the inclusion of appropriate training at the school level to mentally prepare young persons for employment.

In Trinidad and Tobago there is a plethora of youth focused initiatives such as the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP), Multisectoral Skills Training Programme (MUST) and OJT among others. Hence there is no shortage of youth employment and training initiatives. However in light of the abovementioned weaknesses, it was advocated that future interventions should be incorporated into the academic framework to act as a precursor to the existing initiatives. A combination of these efforts will assist in achieving holistic youth development.





APPENDIX 4 COMMUNICATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

An effective communication strategy is identified by key steps. These steps are discussed in the following sections.

EXECUTION OF THE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Step 1: Analysis of the Environment

This analysis calls for a good understanding of the vision of the NSMP and the key challenges that it aims to address. Additionally, it must determine the target group affected by the economic and other challenges, and key partners that can assist in meeting the goals of the NSMP.

Step 2: Determining/Segmenting the Target Audience

Specifically, the plan should pinpoint the:

Primary Audience. Those that are directly affected by the challenges and also decision makers who can directly and positively impact the desired outcomes.

Influencing Audiences. Agents affiliated with the target population such as family members and community actors such as service providers and community leaders.

Further, the priority groups should be determined by the expected outcomes of the NSMP and resources available for the programmes. Socio-demographic information about the target audience is required for the prioritization process.

Step 3: Communication Objectives

The objectives should incorporate Specific, Measurable, Appropriate, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART) targets. Some of the key objectives of the Communication Plan would be to: Create public awareness of the NSMP;

Highlight the various inter-sectoral social programmes available to the targeted publics;

Help build and maintain a coordinated multi-sectoral response to mitigate the negative impact of the economic downturn; and Educate and build awareness of financial management practices such as budgeting, financial planning and prioritizing.

Consideration should be given to prior experience in introducing similar plans, available resources and timeframe, and the expected outcome of the change.

Step 4: Strategic Approaches

The communication strategy will involve several strategic approaches some of which are detailed hereafter.

Advocacy. Advocacy operates at the political, social and individual levels and works to mobilize resources and political and social commitment for social change and/or policy change. This may include efforts to have commitments from the private sector to be actively involved in the mitigation programme.

Community Based Media. Public meetings, community newspapers and liaising with community leaders.

Information and Communication Technology. The use of digital media such as websites and e-mails. Social media can also be used Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Mass Media. Television and radio programmes, newspapers.

Social Mobilization. This brings together the relevant sectors such as organizations, policy makers, networks and communities. Such cooperative efforts will be necessary for the success of the NSMP.

Support Media. Billboards, posters, brochures.

The selection process will ultimately be determined by the demographic and psychographic characteristics of the segment. The MSDFS may have to consult secondary sources of data to ascertain these profiles and then assess the appropriateness of the approach for the respective target audiences. In some cases, a mixed approach may be effective.

Step 5: Positioning and Strategy Outline

In this step the MSDFS should develop a positioning statement that would answer the following questions:

(1) What are the intentions of the NSMP for each group?

(2) What messages would each group receive to communicate that they are catered for by the NSMP?

(3) How can each person identify with the Plan? and

(4) How would the population be informed of the long-term benefits of the NSMP? In answering these questions several actions, as detailed following, will have to be initiated.

Identify the key benefits of the plan. Examples include better targeted programmes, faster response rate by the MSDFS, saving of resources and less cumbersome processes since the MSDFS would be the central facilitator for the various programmes.

Define the Support. The target groups should be educated on the benefits and purpose of the mitigation plan.

Develop an overall impression statement. Communication messages need to be clear, consistent and minimize confusion surrounding the mission of the NSMP. The sentiments used in the messages should ensure that the importance of social mitigation is recognized, without instilling fear of being removed from the social programme.

Key message points should be developed, ensuring that the major pieces of information are communicated to the specific target groups.

Finalize the various approaches to be used.

List of proposed activities for each group should be identified.

Step 6: Implementation Plan

The Communications Plan requires a framework for implementation which involves:

- ♦ determining the responsibilities and roles of key partners i.e. - what would be needed to carry out the communication strategies (creative design of concepts and materials, media placement, community mobilization, training, advocacy, service delivery, monitoring and evaluation), and how would the actions of partners be coordinated;
- ♦ outlining the various activities;
- ♦ establishing a timeline;
- ♦ determining a budget based on the various approaches used for each group; and
- ♦ finalizing the implementation plan.

Step 7: Monitoring and Evaluation

An M&E framework is necessary for measuring the success of the communications strategy. This will include:

- ♦ identifying key indicators to track the progress of the Communications Plan;
- ♦ developing Monitoring Plans; and
- ♦ developing an Evaluation Plan.

CONCLUSION

The communications plan offers a significant opportunity for the social sector to rebrand its image, business processes and ultimately the social services. The communications strategy offers the Ministry the opportunity to not only provide information about the benefits of the various programmes that are available, but to also promote strategic messages that focus on financial and budgetary planning, as well as decision-making in various areas.

Execution is important since it shapes the public's understanding of the role of the NSMP and the wider social services sector, begin to affect attitudinal and behavioral tendencies, ensure efficient use of resources, bridges the gap between the target population and the SSE Unit and ultimately positively impact the lives of the subscribers of the various services.



APPENDIX 5 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) are an integral part of programme design, implementation and management. Monitoring may be defined as a continuous process of systematic data collection on pre-specified indicators (OECD 2002), and provides progress updates on the achievement of outlined objectives and outcomes. Monitoring allows for tracking of plan indicators, outcomes and targets.

On the other hand, the evaluation process is an ongoing dynamic function which seeks to objectively and systematically assess the design, implementation, relevance and sustainability of a plan, project or programme (OECD 2002). Evaluation facilitates institutional learning by assessing performance as well as any unintended consequences of the plan, programme or intervention. In this way, these ‘lessons learned’—the output of the M&E process— can provide support for evidenced-based policy making and results-based budgeting as well as enhance the accountability and transparency of programmes to tax payers and beneficiaries. Though distinct, M&E are complimentary functions (Table 6.1).

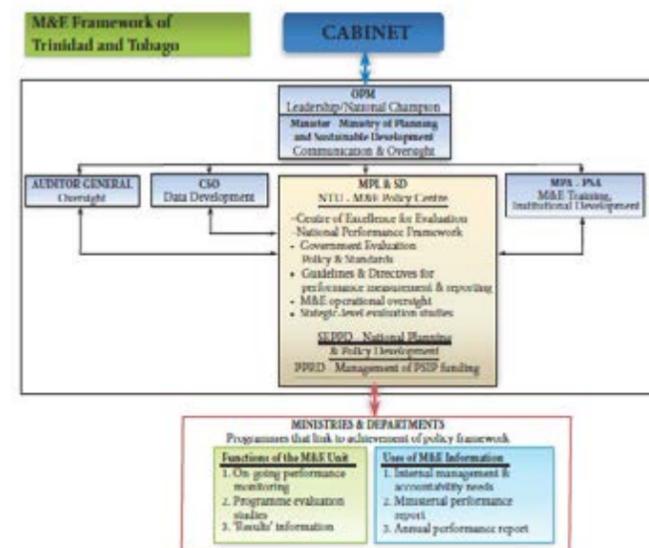
Table 6.1: Complementarity of Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring	Evaluation
Clarifies programme objectives	Analyses why intended results were or were not achieved
Links activities and their resources to objectives	Assesses specific causal contributions of activities to results
Translates objectives into performance indicators and sets targets	Examines implementation process
Routinely collects data on these indicators, compares actual results	Explores unintended results
Reports progress to managers and alerts them to problems	Provides lessons, highlights significant accomplishment or program potential, and offers recommendations for improvement

Source: Kusek and Rist 2004

THE NATIONAL MONITORING & EVALUATION POLICY
A National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy for the Trinidad and Tobago public sector was approved in 2015. This policy underpins Monitoring and Evaluation across all government ministries. The policy envisioned M&E units in all Ministries, with the Ministry of Planning and Development having oversight over the National M&E system. This framework is reproduced below.

Figure 5.1: National M&E Framework Trinidad and Tobago (2015)



Source: Ministry of Planning National Performance Framework 2012-2015

In line with the national framework, the NSMP’s M&E approach is crafted with the assumption that the M&E function will be discharged by an M&E unit in the MSDFS.

NSMP MONITORING & EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The NSMP is a vehicle for the implementation of short, medium and long term interventions. The purpose of M&E framework is to both chart the progress of the NSMP’s implementation and to assess its results over time. Additionally, this framework will identify how the NSMP should work, as well as the performance indicators, which will be the subject for monitoring and evaluation.

Due to the multi-faceted nature of the Framework which spans several action areas, collaboration with other government agencies and non-governmental organizations will be necessary to ensure effective monitoring and reporting of the selected performance indicators.

Since the NSMP will be implemented over a five year period, these indicators should be introduced on a phased basis with consideration given to allocation of resources, feasibility of data collection and priority.

THE LOGIC MODEL

As a first step in crafting a M & E framework, a logic model of the proposed plan or programme is created. A logic model is a graphic, which identifies the causal links amongst inputs, activities, outcomes and impact. It provides a visual representation of how the plan should work, linking plan activities to final impact (Figure 6.1).

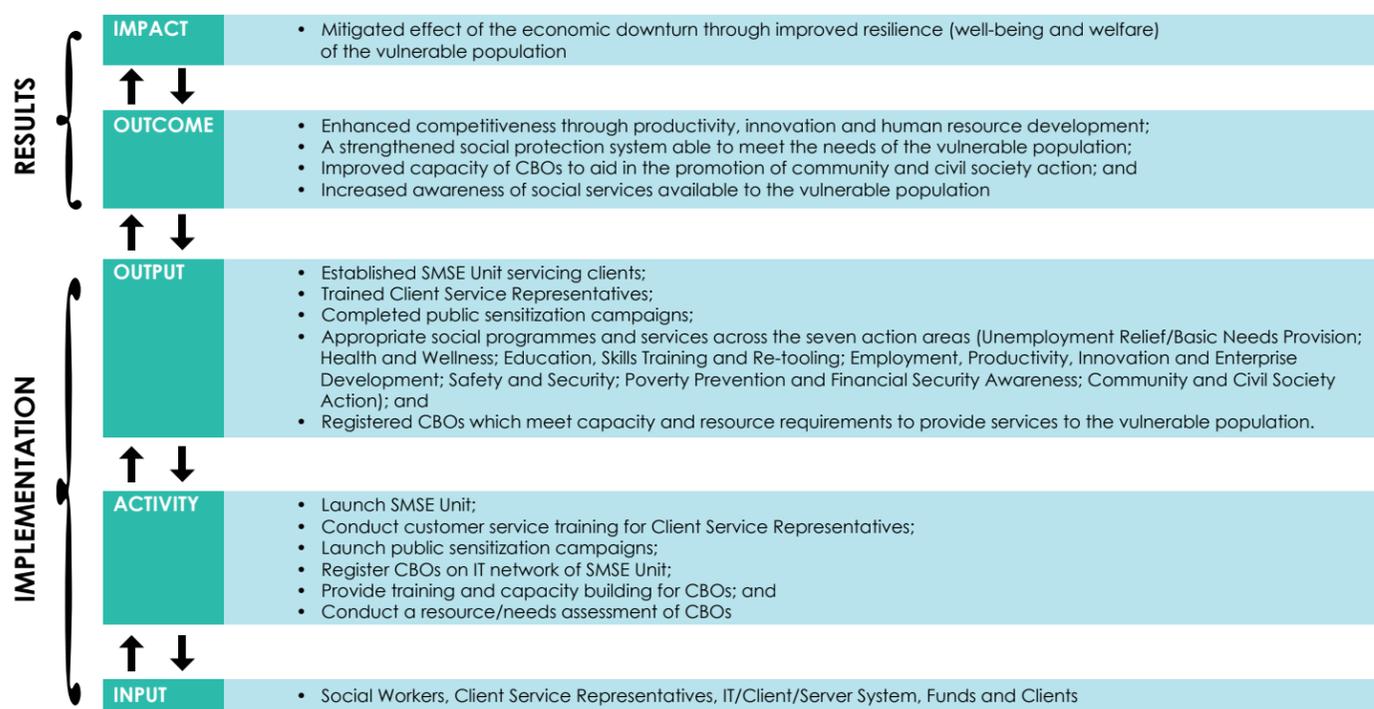
Figure 6.1: Simple Logic Model



Adapted from UNDP Handbook on Planning and Monitoring and Evaluation for Development Results (2009)

The logic model articulates the reasoning behind the plan and aids in the dispensation of monitoring and evaluation functions. The logic model allows for the conceptualization of the entire plan process from inputs to desired impact. The different components follow a logic train as it were. Inputs are the resources required to carry out the activities (tasks) which produce goods or services—the outputs. The outcomes are the short and medium term results of the plan’s outputs. The impact incorporates the intended or unintended changes caused by the plan’s implementation. A simple logic model for the NSMP is articulated in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Illustrative Simple Logic Model for Social Mitigation Plan



It should be noted that Objectives 1 and 2, Strengthening the Social Protection System and Promoting Community and Civil Society Action fall within the remit of the MSDFS. Objective 3, Enhancing Productivity and Innovation is dependent upon collaboration with other governmental and non-governmental agencies.

Following on from the logic model, the M&E framework can be articulated. The framework is essentially a standardized summary of the plan's outputs, outcomes, activities and the indicators that will be monitored and evaluated. It identifies what is to be achieved, that is, what are the criteria for its achievement and how achievement is measured and verified. The determination of baseline data, targets, means of verification and responsibility are to be agreed upon by all agencies charged with the effective implementation of the Plan.

The M&E Framework for the NSMP is captured in Table 6.2. The Matrix aligns the Plan's Outcomes by Action Area with indicators and performance criteria to facilitate monitoring and evaluation.

Table 6.2: M&E Matrix for the NSMP

	Indicator	Base-line	Target	Means of Verification	Assumption	Agency Responsible
Outcomes						
Enhanced competitiveness through productivity, innovation and human resource development	Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita	TBD	TBD	Ministry of Finance/Central Bank Reports		MOF/Central Bank
	Change in labour productivity	TBD	TBD			CSO
	Change in rank on global competitiveness index	TBD	TBD	Competitiveness index	Enhanced competitiveness through productivity, innovation and human resource development can be attributed to the NSMP	MOF
	Percentage of new businesses registered					SMSE ICT System
A strengthened social protection system able to meet the needs of the vulnerable population	Change in social status of vulnerable population evidenced by: -Poverty rate -Unemployment rate -Crime rate	TBD	TBD	Tracer studies on vulnerable persons		
Improved capacity of CBOs to aid in the promotion of community and civil society action	Percentage of CBOs present in communities (disaggregated by specialist area e.g. Treating with PLHIV, youth, persons with disabilities and community)	TBD	TBD	CBO Reports	CBOs will be adequately equipped to promote community and civil society action There will be greater collaboration between the MSDFS and CBOs in this effort	CBOs MSDFS
	Percentage of CBOs registered with the SMSE which are able to acquire support from donor agencies (by type of support-financial, infrastructural, technical)	TBD	TBD	CBO Financial statements/records	Donor agencies will lend support	CBOs MSDFS
Improved capacity of CBOs to aid in the promotion of community and civil society action cont'd	Percentage of vulnerable persons who have completed a programme offered by a CBO (disaggregated by type of programme, community and gender)	TBD	TBD	Vulnerable persons in the community will be able to complete CBO programmes offered		CBOs MSDFS
	Change in employment status of vulnerable persons enrolled in a CBO-run programme(-disaggregated by type of programme, community and gender)	TBD	TBD	Change in employment status is attributable to CBO-run programme		CBOs MSDFS
Increased awareness of social services available to the vulnerable population	Percentage of the population reporting that they are aware of social services (disaggregated by type of social service)	TBD	TBD	Pre and Post test administered before and after campaigns	Vulnerable population are more aware of social services as a result of public sensitization campaigns	MSDFS-Corporate Communications

	Indicator	Base-line	Target	Means of Verification	Assumption	Agency Responsible
Outcomes						
	Percentage change in the use of social services by vulnerable population (disaggregated by type of service)	TBD	TBD	Utilization records	There will be greater use of social services by vulnerable population because they are more aware of services	MSDFS
Established SMSE Unit servicing clients	Percentage of positions filled at SMSE Unit from total positions	TBD	TBD	Organization structure HR Documentation		
	Evidence of establishment of Unit	TBD	TBD	Cabinet Note/Approval		
	Percentage of vulnerable persons registered as having accessed a particular service or programme	TBD	TBD	Client records		
Trained Client Service Representatives	No. of Client Services representatives trained	TBD	TBD			
Completed public sensitization campaigns	No. of public sensitization campaigns completed from total planned campaigns (disaggregated by type of media-print, social media etc.)	TBD	TBD	Report prepared by Corporate Communications	Planned campaigns will be completed	MSDFS- Corporate Communications
	Average length of duration of campaigns in media (timeframe to be decided)	TBD	TBD			
Appropriate social programmes and services across the seven action areas	Percentage of social services selected from total number of services rationalized (disaggregated by Action Area)	TBD	TBD	Report on rationalization exercise	Programmes and services selected will be adequate to meet the needs of the vulnerable population	All agencies involved
	Percentage of social programmes selected from total number of programmes rationalized (disaggregated by Action Area)					
Registered CBOs which meet the capacity and resource requirements to provide services to the vulnerable population	Percentage CBOs registered with the SMSE Unit which meet the stated capacity and resource requirements from total number of CBOs			Assessment report of CBOs Registration documents	CBOs will meet the stated requirements to become registered with the SMSE Unit	MSDFS

	Indicator	Base-line	Target	Means of Verification	Assumption	Agency Responsible
Activities						
Launch SMSE Unit	Ceremony conducted within stipulated time-frame	TBD	TBD	Media coverage/press release	The process to launch the SMSE Unit will be seamless	MSDFS
Conduct customer service training for Client Service Representatives	No. of customer service training sessions conducted for Client Service Representatives	TBD	TBD	Attendance register Facilitator's report	Client Service Representatives will be hired once SMSE Unit is approved	MSDFS
Launch public sensitization campaigns	No. of public sensitization campaigns launched	TBD	TBD	Media coverage	Campaigns will be approved Launch will be seamless	MSDFS
Rationalize existing social programmes and services	No. of programmes to be rationalized	TBD	TBD	List of social programmes	Rationalization exercise will be seamless	MSDFS
	No. of services to be rationalized	TBD	TBD	List of social services		
Register CBOs on IT network of SMSE Unit	No. of CBOs registered on IT network of SMSE Unit	TBD	TBD	Database of Registered CBOs	IT network will be in place for registration of CBOs CBOs will take part in registration exercise	MSDFS
Provide training and capacity building for CBOs	No. of sessions conducted for CBOs	TBD	TBD	Facilitator's report Training register	Adequate funding will be allocated for training and capacity building of CBOs	MSDFS
Conduct a resource/needs assessment of CBOs	Average length of time taken to complete resource/needs assessment	TBD	TBD		Resource/needs assessment will be undertaken in a timely manner	MSDFS
	Established criteria for determining resources/needs				Appropriate criteria will be established for determining resources/needs	MSDFS

*In instances, where no baseline data exists, the first year of implementation should be used as the baseline.

Table 6.3: Measures Associated with the Action Areas of the NSMP

Plan Description	Outcomes	Performance Criteria	Indicators (unit of Measurement)	Data Collection (Method/Source)
ACTION AREA 1 UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF/BASIC NEEDS PROVISION	Relief and support to vulnerable persons (and their dependents) while they are actively seeking employment	Increased use of social services by vulnerable persons and their dependents	Percentage of vulnerable persons accessing social services from total vulnerable population	ICT System, MSDFS, MOWT, MCDCA, MOLSMED
	Lessening the impact of poverty on economically vulnerable populations through the provision of basic needs.	Improved provision of basic needs to the vulnerable population	No. of recipients of social assistance by type of service accessed	ICT System MSDFS, MPU, MOE MOWT, MCDCA
ACTION AREA 2 HEALTH AND WELLNESS	Ensuring that vulnerable persons and their dependents are provided with essential health care services	Increased access to health care by the vulnerable and their dependents	No. of vulnerable clients accessing health services by type of health services accessed No. of vulnerable clients accessing health services who have been diagnosed with chronic diseases (by type of chronic disease, age and gender) Percentage change in cases of reported chronic diseases amongst vulnerable clients who access health services	ICT System MOH

Plan Description	Outcomes	Performance Criteria	Indicators (unit of Measurement)	Data Collection (Method/Source)
ACTION AREA 2 HEALTH AND WELLNESS	Assisting vulnerable persons and their dependents to access health care services	Increased access to health care provided for vulnerable individuals and their dependents Increased use of health care services by vulnerable individuals and their dependents	No. of vulnerable individuals accessing health services by type of health service accessed.	MOH ICT System
ACTION AREA 3 EDUCATION, SKILLS TRAINING AND RE-TOOLING	Empowering vulnerable persons by providing them with the skills needed to lawfully earn an income.	Reduction in unemployed persons	Percentage of clients who graduate from a retraining or skills training programme from total no. of clients who enrolled in programme (by skill area) Percentage of clients becoming employed in a 6mth period from date of graduation from education programmes; Percentage of clients becoming employed in a 1 year period from date of graduation from education programmes	ICT system Central Statistical Office MOE MCDCA MNS MSDFS MSYA
ACTION AREA 4 EMPLOYMENT, PRODUCTIVITY, INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT	Creating new avenues of income generation for persons and facilitate the diversification of the economy	Increase in the number of self-employed persons Increase in the number of new business registered	Percentage of skilled programme graduates becoming self-employed from total number of graduates Percentage of skilled programme graduates registering new businesses from total number of graduates who are self employed	CSO ICT System MOLSMED MLA
ACTION AREA 5 SAFETY AND SECURITY	Minimizing threats to the safety and security of the nation due to increasing levels of unemployment	Reduction in serious crimes	No. of serious crimes committed by vulnerable persons by type of serious crime, age and gender	TTPS
ACTION AREA 6 POVERTY PREVENTION AND FINANCIAL SECURITY AWARENESS	To build a self-sustaining and financially resilient population and workforce	Increase in net household savings Increase in population knowledge of financial planning, saving, investing and prudent spending	Net household savings Percentage of population financially literate	Central Bank Survey
ACTION AREA 7 SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY ACTION	To strengthen the working relationship between Government and Civil Society Organisations To build the capacity of Civil Society Organisations to contribute to national development	Improved ability of CBOs to expand their role and to respond to social needs of vulnerable citizens within the social services network.	Number of Persons receiving services from CBOs Number of CBO's trained or provided with capacity building resources	CBOs/NGOs

Plan Description	Outcomes	Performance Criteria	Indicators (unit of Measurement)	Data Collection (Method/Source)
SMSE Unit	Facilitate the registration of all vulnerable persons including the poor, vulnerable and recently retrenched workers	Vulnerable population registered	No. of persons registered in system	ICT System
	An appropriate suite of benefits that addresses the specific needs of the client, drawing from programmes under six Action Areas	Benefits package which meets the needs of target population Better targeting	No. of clients referred to programmes for assistance by identified need Percentage of clients satisfied with benefits received from total no. of clients referred to programmes	ICT System Client Satisfaction Survey
	Ensure that each client has effective access to the programmes he/he needs	Clients' needs matched to appropriate programme	Percentage of clients accessing programmes to which they were matched from total no. of clients referred to programmes Percentage of clients satisfied with access to programmes needed from total no. of clients who accessed programmes	ICT System Client Satisfaction Survey

To be useful, indicators must identify current status, targeted or desired position and the path to getting there. Thus, baseline data must be collected, targets for indicators must be set and indicators must be monitored periodically. These data also provide a benchmark against which current performance may be assessed. Thus, within the context of the NSMP, it is important that where possible, baseline data on current beneficiaries and existing programmes under the present system be recorded. Table 6.3 provides a tracking matrix for each action area and the main vehicle of the plan the SSE unit.

Table 6.4: M & E Indicator Tracking Matrix

Action Area	Indicator
IMPROVED USAGE, EFFECTIVENESS AND ACCESS OF SOCIAL PROGRAMMES	Percentage of vulnerable population utilizing social support services
ACTION AREA 1 UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF/BASIC NEEDS PROVISION	Percentage of vulnerable persons accessing social services from total vulnerable population No. of recipients of social assistance by type of service accessed
ACTION AREA 2 HEALTH AND WELLNESS	No. of vulnerable clients accessing health services by type of health services accessed No. of vulnerable clients accessing health services who have been diagnosed with chronic diseases (by type of chronic disease, age and gender) Percentage change in cases of reported chronic diseases amongst vulnerable clients who access health services
ACTION AREA 3 EDUCATION, SKILLS TRAINING & RE-TOOLING	Percentage of clients who graduate from a retraining or skills training programme from total no. of clients who enrolled in programme (by skill area) Percentage of clients becoming employed in a 6mth period from date of graduation from education programmes; Percentage of clients becoming employed in a 1 year period from date of graduation from education programmes

Action Area	Indicator
ACTION AREA 4 EMPLOYMENT & PRODUCTIVITY & INNOVATION & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT	Percentage of skilled programme graduates becoming self-employed from total number of graduates
	Percentage of skilled programme graduates registering new businesses from total number of graduates who are self employed
ACTION AREA 5 SAFETY AND SECURITY	No. of serious crimes committed by vulnerable persons by type of serious crime, age and gender
ACTION AREA 6 POVERTY PREVENTION THROUGH FINANCIAL SECURITY AWARENESS	Net household savings
	Percentage of population financially literate
ACTION AREA 7 SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY ACTION	Number of Persons receiving services from CBOs
	Number of CBO's trained or provided with capacity building resources
SSE UNIT	No. of persons registered in system
	No. of clients referred to programmes for assistance by identified need
	Percentage of clients satisfied with benefits received from total no. of clients referred to programmes
	Percentage of clients accessing programmes to which they were matched from total no. of clients referred to programmes
	Percentage of clients satisfied with access to programmes needed from total no. of clients who accessed programmes

DATA COLLECTION, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The IT system will be the mechanism for data collection, supplemented by client surveys over stipulated intervals. The M&E unit of the MSDFS will be responsible for tracking indicators and targets and preparing, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual activity reports.

REPORTING

To ensure that objectives are met, during the implementation phase reporting should be done on a monthly basis during the first six months, followed by quarterly and annual reports.



APPENDIX 6 A STRATEGY TO REBUILD SOCIETAL VALUES IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Commissioned by
The Civic Council on Social Equity

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Trinidad and Tobago is pursuing a strategy to address poverty and inequity, which recognizes the need for an approach between Government and civil society in a comprehensive, collaborative and holistic manner.

The strategy is being propelled by two councils, a Ministerial Council on Social Development comprised of thirteen (13) Government Ministers and the Tobago House of Assembly and the Civic Council on Social Equity (CCSE) chaired by Senator Diana Mahabir-Wyatt. The membership of the CCSE includes representatives of a range of national civil society organisations.

The objectives of the CCSE include devising new innovative strategies for addressing poverty as well as identifying non-governmental resources, which could be harnessed effectively to support poverty eradication initiatives.

The Council has had the benefit of two excellent sources of information from the citizenry on their views and perspectives for addressing poverty and inequity. The first is the report of the seven regional participatory workshops, which was hosted by the Change Management Unit for Poverty Eradication and

Equity Building (CMU/PEEB) in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning & Development in 1997.

The workshops were held in seven combined regions of Trinidad and Tobago and sought to obtain from participants their vision/strategies for addressing poverty. The report highlighted the commonality of visions, concerns and solutions that cut across geographical location and racial lines. It also indicated that participants tended to see poverty, unemployment, crime and the deterioration of the environment as inter-related symptoms of a wider malaise, which requires a "holistic response". The participants examined the critical issues from the perspective of a breakdown in the values and fabric of life our communities.

At the June 1999 Caribbean Civil Society Symposium, it was also recognised that part of the value crisis lay in the fact that our values were being led and driven by external influences. Regional representatives at the Symposium noted that "the participation of all social partners including the media, was critical to creating an environment which could nurture in each individual, an appreciation of his/her intrinsic worth and potential, thereby encouraging their contribution to development of Civil Society."

The following critical issues have been extrapolated from the reports of the Seven Regional Participatory Workshops Section C. "Rebuilding Socio-Cultural Values and the Caribbean Civil Society Symposium are as follows:

- Parenting Education, including
- Responsible parenting by men
- Parent/Child relationships
- Support/Guidance for the Single Parent

- Promoting the value of education and literacy
- Challenging double standards within the society
- Promoting spiritual values
- Clarifying an acceptable common value system/moral code
- Promoting commitment to nation building
- Promoting personal and national integrity
- Promoting values of self actualisation/empowerment
- Promoting recognition of cultural diversity as a benefit to all citizens and to the nation as a whole
- Promoting mutual respect and equal rights for all citizens
- Promoting values of sexual responsibility
- Promoting positive choices
- De-emphasising conspicuous consumption
- Promoting non-violent solutions among adults/youth
- Promoting respect for the elderly and the harnessing of their experiences
- Promoting respect for diverse culture/value sets
- Promoting return to a sense of community



- ♦ examine and document issues relevant to rebuilding community and social values in the context of poverty eradication and equity building.
- ♦ review local perspectives on socio-cultural values in Trinidad and Tobago
- ♦ develop and prioritise clear themes, issues and positions on all of the areas to be addressed
- ♦ recommend approaches to addressing themes and issues raised relevant to various targets consistent with public education focus.
- ♦ recommend an approach to the management of the process of public education and sensitisation

The Consultancy was expected to conclude with the preparation of a document detailing the range of issues/concerns to be highlighted and an action plan covering an approximate period of three-years, outlining approaches for the effective promotion of the desired values (with an emphasis on community based/driven initiatives) using resources which are available, locally and internationally.

1.4 Membership

The persons appointed by the CCSE to undertake this consultancy included the following:

Mrs. Deborah Jean-Baptiste-Samuel	Orator
Ms. Joan Bishop	Development Consultant
Dr. Hamid Farrabi	Religious Representative
Mr. Franklyn Dolly	Family Therapist
Mr. Hal Greaves	Dramatist
Mr. Gerald Popplewell	Rotary Club

It must be noted that Mr. Farrabi was unable to attend any of the meetings due to his heavy schedule. The team was supported by Ms. Donna-Mae Knights Ag. Coordinator Development Projects and Mrs. Sharon Lee Assang, Communications Specialist in the Change Management Unit for Poverty Eradication and Equity Building (CMU/PEEB). The report has been compiled after ten team meetings and three sub-group meetings over the period January - November 2000.

1.2 Strategy

The Civic Council on Social Equity recognised that while individual agencies - Ministry of Education, Family Planning Association and others -are mounting programmes to address facets of this malaise, there was need for a comprehensive national strategy over a 3 – 5 year period. The strategy would systematically address the need to rediscover and rebuild socio-cultural values through public education activities.

1.3 Terms of Reference

The Consultancy Team was engaged to develop a conceptual framework for public education and sensitisation designed to rediscover and rebuild socio-cultural values in Trinidad and Tobago. The framework which would engage the wider society, the media, the service clubs, the corporate sector, educational institutions etc. in a comprehensive programme of value rebuilding. The team was therefore required to:

2. APPROACH

The critical issues identified by our citizens as part of the value crisis, were carefully reviewed as the Consultancy Team sought to structure its approach to the task. The theme of non-violence was identified as one that is pervasive and multi-dimensional. Fully addressing the theme of non-violence, it was felt, would impact positively on a wide range of issues, many of which have also been seen as symptomatic of the malaise spoken of.

Violence is defined by the Team, as anything that hurts another person. In this context, it calls into question every relationship. It includes those which are horizontal for instance; marriage, friendships, peer relationships, colleagues, as well as those vertical relationships of parent-child, teacher-student, politician-electorate among others.

Accordingly, non-violence was used as the platform from which to re-evaluate the messages, mores, and positions presented and acted out on a daily basis. It would then be necessary to seek to identify, using the participatory process interventions that would facilitate a questioning of actions and adjusting of behaviours.

The Consultancy team focussed on the mechanisms through which messages were communicated in Trinidad and Tobago, especially those channels considered to have the greatest impact on dissemination e.g. the media, the institutions, music, language. Having looked at the communication channels, attention was addressed to the gatekeepers, major custodians or contributors attached to these channels which have the power to influence the messages sent.

This was with a view to identifying the various sources of communication who would need to be engaged in values clarification and questioning, as to what would make for a healthy peaceful and productive society.

2.1 Informal Learning in Trinidad & Tobago

The recognized gatekeepers of formal education i.e. the government, the church, the schools and the family have long had assistance in raising the next generation as is evident from the now popular 'It takes a Village to raise a child' concept. Yet because these other teachers in our society are mainly unmonitored their messages are not usually factored into the education and information equation. This is a brief attempt to identify and gauge some of these informal educators in Trinidad and Tobago in an attempt to better understand the impact of media and mass education campaigns as the following factors



hold unprecedented sway over the culture and self beliefs of this nation.

2.1.1 Calypso:

Kitchner's 'Anytime is Trinidad Time' this song title is now the national belief, Shadow's 'Poverty is Hell', Preacher's 'Bacchanal Time' (Jump and Wave) are but a few of the calypso messages that have become integral components of our national psyche.

2.1.2 Commercials:

A particular advertisement may espouse a value that could be contrary to national development. The mass media is supported by advertising yet the influence of advertisements remain unevaluated.

2.1.3 Cable:

Globalisation has brought imported values with it. 'Be like Mike' and so our youth drink Gatorade and wear Nike, while we wonder at this new 'sneakers' mentality.

2.1.4 Computers:

Children (even the poor) have email addresses, video arcades and game vending machines are occupied by the youth even in the most remote villages of the nation, yet the adults make assumptions of their level of computer literacy.

2.1.5 "Corner" and its Characters:

Every community in the republic has a 'corner' at which the 'lime takes place. To often this is the venue for learning the 'life'. There is a local saying 'that is good for book not the barber green.' Children especially in their teenage years iconize many a neighbourhood character. The corner and its characters are the teachers of the nations' streets.

National information or education campaigns that do not make allies of these aforementioned gatekeepers sometimes fail because of these factors working against the values being espoused.

3. CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.1 Core Assumption:

Trinidad and Tobago is well served by widespread communication channels so that all messages can reach the population quickly and effectively. However, there is need for the population to engage in a very focused values clarifying agenda to counteract apparent erosion of standards and mores that have been traditionally held dear.

3.2 Overriding Philosophy:

The Committee affirms the intelligence and integrity of our people and is persuaded that the society as a whole is disenchanted with the current ethos and earnestly aspires to higher standards of behaviour at every level.

3.3 Guiding Principles:

In view of the foregoing, the Consultancy Team adopted the following guiding principles:

- ◆ That public education is a dynamic ongoing process.
- ◆ That understanding this dynamic process will require an appreciation of the source, the content and target of existing public education
- ◆ That many opportunities for influencing values through the use of existing channels of communication
- ◆ That possibly the most effective mechanism available for influencing values is to encourage and positively reward acceptable messages and be less accepting of messages which convey questionable values, e.g. target show promoters and encourage the provision of rewards for a change in the lyrical content in keeping with the objectives of values clarification
- ◆ That values clarification can best be achieved through community based participatory processes
- ◆ That respectful democratic communications are more impactful than authoritative and moralistic ones, in eliciting behaviour change.
- ◆ That the approach should raise awareness of higher order values, such as the spiritual qualities inherent in citizens, regardless of political, economic, cultural, professional and ethnic background.

The Consultancy team has adopted the universal values developed by the Brahma Kumari and embraced by the United Nations System as core values that could be communicated and promoted. These include:

Respect: Self, spouse, children, elders, laws

Honesty: Integrity in personal relationships and public life

Happiness Self-development (ongoing), service to others, recreation, creativity

Simplicity: Avoiding conspicuous consumption

Responsibility: To and for self, children, family, neighbourhood, environment, safety on road, employer

Love: For God, self/ family, neighbour

Peace: Non-violent communication, seeking win-win outcomes

Unity: Shared vision, common goals, collaborative action

Freedom: To choose when rights are balanced with responsibilities in all relationships

3.4. Themes of the Consultancy

3.4.1 Focus on Male Empowerment

Over the last three decades much attention has been paid to the status of women. Today increasingly, much attention is being drawn to the issues affecting men, particularly as they impact on their complementary role to women.



While men may not have been ready in the past to be as analytical as the Women's Movement has been about gender issues, increasingly they feel the need to reexamine widely held assumptions about their roles and relationships in this period of rapid change.

The team has extrapolated from various documents and identified a number of core areas of concern, with respect to the role of the male in our society. Among the concerns recommended for reexamination and public debate are:

- **Male roles and responsibilities in the family**
- **Male "marginalisation"**
- **Male participation in education and training**
- **Male adaptation to the world of work**
- **Male contribution to crime, violence and accidents**
- **Male involvement in unsafe sexual practices**
- **Male's preparation for leadership in civil society**

3.4.2. Unsupported Parents

Parenting is a challenging task that requires support from family members and the wider society. Many errors in parenting result not necessarily from ill will, but rather from immaturity and lack of relational skills. It is felt however that these attributes can be developed in a supportive environment.

While many parents are managing effectively, many others are unsupported and at risk of effecting emotional scars on their children. Accordingly, supportive groups at the community level must reinforce messages presented through the media and other sources.

3.4.3. Education and Literacy

Education and literacy are among the most fundamental vehicles for promoting behaviour change in the population. Accordingly, interventions such as ALTA, ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education), Moms for Literacy are strategically important in bringing about desired mores and standards. In this regard, support for these and other programmes must be expanded.

3.4.4. Double Standards (Personal and National Integrity)

There are serious contraventions of ethical standards at the highest levels and these are impacting negatively on the psyche of national community and creating a level of disenchantment with leadership. Therefore, leaders, managers at all levels in all realms must engage in self-analysis. The national community must share responsibility for giving feedback on inappropriate conduct in every sphere.

3.4.5 Spiritual Values/Promotion of a Common Moral Code/Mutual Respect and Equal Rights

All religions support core living values, which are enshrined in our United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. These must be vigorously pursued and demonstrated in all human relationships. The core values as referred to above are as follows; Mutual Respect, Responsibility, Freedom, Honesty, Love, Humility, Happiness, Peace, Cooperation, Simplicity Unity, Tolerance⁷¹.

3.4.6 Promotion of Commitment to Nation Building/ Recognise Cultural Diversity as a Benefit to all Citizenry

The strength of our nation lies in the rich diversity of our population and therefore we must create opportunities for greater understanding of cultural, racial and religious differences.



We must therefore celebrate our diversity to counter balance any attempts at divisiveness within the society.

Media personnel and entertainers are very influential in forming values. They must be actively engaged in an analysis of the content of their programmes and potential effect on the society. A proactive strategy would be to reward them for positive efforts in promoting cultural harmony.

3.4.7 Self Actualisation, Empowerment and Sexual Responsibility

The participation of our citizens in the management of their own lives and that of their communities, is reflected in their ownership of responsibility for their personal well being and safety. Sharing information and raising community consciousness about unsafe sexual practices must become a priority issue.

3.4.8. Promoting Participation in community Life

Socially integrated and healthy communities facilitate the formation of quality people, therefore opportunities for participation in governance and development as well as life long learning must be stimulated and ensured at the level of the community.



4. GOAL

To develop a conceptual framework for public education and sensitisation designed to rediscover and rebuild socio-cultural values in Trinidad and Tobago. The framework would engage the wider society, the media, the service clubs, the corporate sector, educational institutions etc. in a comprehensive programme of value rebuilding.

5. OBJECTIVES

Short Term

- ♦ Using the participatory process, conduct environmental scans and identify opportunities for intervention
- ♦ To identify and raise the consciousness of gatekeepers of their potential for impacting positively on the value systems within the society
- ♦ To elicit the co-operation of the gatekeepers in this undertaking

Medium

- ♦ To engage the entire population in a reflective process aimed at self examination and values clarification.
- ♦ To stimulate a dynamic creative thrust on the part of gatekeepers in promoting moral values.

Long Term

- ♦ To inspire behavior change at all levels of the society, based on a common set of moral values

6. ANALYSIS OF TARGET POPULATION

The team developed a matrix exploration of the following elements in determining and analysing the components of the strategy. Presented here under are the components of the matrix.

Issue

The Team discussed in-depth, the options for engaging the public in values clarification and concluded that the issue of violence was the most emotive and therefore likely to stimulate the discussion of the whole range of moral issues. It recognised that implied in the choice of non-violence as a focal areas, is the appreciation of the whole gamut of values identified earlier including; mutual respect, responsibility, honesty, peace, simplicity, equality etc.

Gatekeepers/Target

The Team began the process of identifying the various sources from which messages that impact on the population originate and are disseminated. These must become the focus of conscientisation and are therefore the target of the public education strategy. The Team identified as priority, the persons who control as well as those who package and propagate the message; for example News Editors - Print/TV/Radio; Political Leaders; Advertisers; Religious and Civil Leaders; Musicians. Special attention was also paid to sponsors and show-promoters as well as persons in education both formal and informal.

The media houses were strongly indicted for their heroic portrayal of violence. At the personal level, the Team recognised the urgency to engage parents in a re-examination of their responsibility.

Strategy

The strategy includes maximum utilisation of a participatory iterative process for analysis, sensitisation and problem solving across mixed groups of gatekeepers and the wider population. It would include Grounded Research to provide information on the impact of current channels and messages and to obtain youth inspired solutions regarding the most effective means of bringing about behaviour change.

Among the strategies are; the use of incentives to gatekeepers to reward activities that promote positive values; the promotion of a system of peer monitoring by which all levels of society could reinforce desired behaviours; the widespread use of local examples of transcendence to inspire excellence in the citizenry at all levels.

Success Indicators

Benchmark data on existing situation with respect to commonly held values is not available and difficult to obtain. Change is a long term process. Selectively scrutinise micro changes in small populations to guide the process.



APPENDIX 7 DETAILS OF INITIATIVES & PROGRAMMES UNDER THE SEVEN (7) ACTION AREAS AS OUTLINED IN SECTION 2

7.1 Action Area 1 – Unemployment Relief/Basic Needs Provision

Objective 1

– Provide relief and support to persons (and their dependents) in need of assistance.

Objective 2 – Reduce the impact of poverty on the economically vulnerable population through the provision of basic needs (food, shelter, water and sanitation, and income support).

7.1.1 UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF

Unemployment affects not only the life of the person who lost his/her job but also their entire family. The situation may be even more severe in single-parent, female headed households. While the impact may not be felt immediately if the household has savings, given the low propensity for savings among lower income segments, unemployment can also severely constrict the ability of the poor and vulnerable to meet their basic needs. The unemployed also need to be immediately registered for employment opportunities or be exposed to temporary employment initiatives until more sustainable opportunities arise. Some priority programmes available to address the immediate needs of persons and their families in this area include the following:

Transformation and Development Centres (TDCs)- These centres are an initiative of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts. The aim of this programme is to address issues such as hunger, homelessness, unemployment and the absence of marketable skills among vulnerable citizens of the nation. Currently, however, the programme has not been able to fulfill this aim and instead focuses on the provision of meals to destitute persons at the three Centres in north Trinidad located at Duncan Street, Eastern Main Road (Spree Simon Centre) and Cocorite.

It is certainly worthwhile to investigate if this is the result of a resource limitation or administrative issues. Following this, the next step should be for the Ministry to either rebrand the TDC's purpose or abandon the programme altogether.

The Unemployment Relief Programme (URP)- falls under the Ministry of Works and Transport and provides short-term employment to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago including Senior Citizens, unemployed



single parents, persons with disabilities and persons living below the poverty line. Despite its positioning as a “short term” programme, there is no fixed time frame for employment under the URP. Another key attribute of the programme is that it employs Personnel Development Officers (PDOs), who aid persons in finding long-term employment based on their skill levels.

It is recommended that the URP operate as originally purposed, that is, as a short term employment programme. An evaluation of the URP and the functions of the PDOs should also be carried out to ensure that employment and training objectives for URP beneficiaries are being met. There is also opportunity for close collaborations between the PDOs and the National Employment Services (NES) (discussed hereafter) to promote synergy across public employments programmes.

A final and key recommendation for the URP calls for applicants to be enrolled in a training programme while being employed. There is a wide range of training programmes already on stream for applicants to access. Appropriate programmes can be selected following an assessment of individual learning capacities and interests. It is also recommended that the STEP UP developmental component of the TCCTP of the MSDFS be introduced in the URP.

Such conditionalities would promote personal development and transitioning to other more lucrative, long term employment opportunities (UNDP, 2016). On a broader scale, adaptive capacities and human capital development are both promoted (IDS, 2015).

The National Employment Service (NES)- also called the Manpower Unit, operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (MLSED). It is responsible for providing employment opportunities for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago by providing services such as:

- online registration of jobseekers and employers, and job vacancies;
- unemployment counseling and career guidance;
- job interviews and referrals;
- assistance with resume preparation and interviewing techniques; and
- recruitment of workers for overseas employment.

Enrolment in this programme should be mandatory for all eligible persons accessing other social services such as the food card, the electricity subsidy and URP.

Adversity to Opportunity- This Programme is operated by the Manpower Unit of the MLSED. It seeks to provide preferential access to unemployed persons to available job opportunities. Also, it refers clients to various Government Ministries and Agencies to receive the appropriate financial, social service and counseling support as may be requested or determined in each case, or provide referrals for entrepreneurship or co-operatives development. All retrenched persons should be directed to register with the Adversity to Opportunity (A2O) programme. Additionally, in order to ensure that the system captures all retrenched persons, companies and Government Ministries and Agencies should be mandated to forward a list of retrenched persons and their CVs to the MLSED, to facilitate automatic registration with the A2O programme.

Personnel from this programme should also set up mobile units at the job sites to facilitate registration by retrenched workers. This would require communication and planning between the private organizations and the MLSED.

Commonwealth/Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Programme- This also falls under the aegis of the MLSED and recruits workers from Trinidad and Tobago to temporarily work on Canadian farms in the Provinces of Ontario and Alberta from January 01 to December 15. Workers are engaged in cultivating and harvesting fruits and vegetable crops, tobacco (flue and black), flowers and ginseng, as well as greenhouse industry - nurseries and hydroponics.

(PROPOSED) Unemployment Insurance- The Government should also commission a study to determine the feasibility of introducing Unemployment Insurance in Trinidad and Tobago, which has the potential to secure sustainability of relief to the unemployed as it is a contributory scheme. Other possible benefits include reduced dependency on state safety nets, promotion of saving habits and financial management since benefits are for a short term, shared responsibility, and reduced pressure on the State's resources. Countries in the Caribbean which have unemployment insurance are Barbados and the Bahamas, which are managed by the NIB. It may be useful to look at the experiences of these countries in this regard.

7.1.2 BASIC NEEDS

In times of economic downturn, an individual's ability to continue to meet their basic needs, as well as that of their family may be significantly compromised. During the consultative process, participants pointed to the inability to meet basic needs due to unemployment, under-employment and wage reductions. As a consequence, persons raised issues such as "hunger", "poor nutrition", inability to afford three daily meals, inability to pay rent and utilities, home evictions etc. as direct impacts of the economic situation. Enabling vulnerable groups,

particularly the economically challenged due to recent unemployment or retrenchment, to have access to essential goods and services, such as food, water, shelter and clothing is a necessary part of supporting individuals and families through these economic times. Some priority programmes available to address the immediate needs of persons and their families in this area include the following:

FOOD SUPPORT

Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme - TCCTP also known as the Food Card Initiative. This is a short-term food assistance programme that provides a cash transfer to assist in meeting nutritional needs of the household. The programme targets families in need and other vulnerable persons who experience difficulty in attaining their daily nutritional requirements due to limited or no income.

The TCCTP also has a development/conditional component entitled STEP UP - Social Transformation and Empowerment Programme- Uplifting People. This aspect of the programme seeks to empower families by providing them with access to services that would allow them to holistically alleviate their socio-economic circumstances and improve their quality of life. The most distinctive feature of the intervention is the emphasis on psychosocial support that is provided to each household, to enable them to adjust and meet their commitments for improving their situation in a framework of co-responsibility. Participants are therefore exposed to a suite of developmental programmes, life skills training, social protection programmes and employment opportunities all catered to the specific needs of the client.

Given the tenets of this programme, the intention is to enhance and widely implement the STEP UP component, with particular focus on the psychosocial aspect, to treat with the dependency syndrome. It is also the intent to include a component which promotes growing one's own food in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

It is further recommended that this developmental aspect of the programme be incorporated into other social/training programmes which target the vulnerable, in particular URP and CEPEP.

Other forms of immediate food support initiatives provided by Civil Society Organizations through the operations of soup kitchens targeting vulnerable persons who are unable to prepare daily family meals are also recommended for inclusion. Government should encourage and support these efforts.

School Feeding Programme- Each school day, over 40,000 breakfast and almost 100,000 lunches are served to students under the age of 21 years throughout Trinidad and Tobago⁸ in institutions such as Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centres, government and government assisted primary schools, private primary schools, government and government assisted secondary schools, private secondary schools and institutions or centres designated by the State for educational purposes. Eligibility is assessed using the student's socio-economic data submitted by parents or guardians upon enrolment and a supporting recommendation from the school's principal or Head Administrator.

Agricultural Information and Training in Food Production-The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries provides information to members of the farming community and persons interested in being trained in agriculture, food production, home gardening, animal husbandry, and aquaponics entrepreneurship. It therefore forms a critical element in the thrust towards resilience and ensuring food security as persons can be empowered with the knowledge, skills and tools to grow food at home, reduce their food consumption expenditure and/or supplement their income. A country-wide information and training campaign should be planned and implemented.

HOUSING & UTILITIES SUPPORT

National Social Development Programme- An initiative to ensure that vulnerable persons have access to House Wiring, Minor House Repairs and Sanitary Plumbing and is administered by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services.

8 Ministry of Education website < <http://moe.edu.tt/services/assistance/school-feeding-programme>> accessed 23rd February 2017

Housing Grants- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development offers two home improvement programmes that provide grants to eligible homeowners who want to renovate their homes. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) offers a grant of TT\$20,000 for applicants whose annual household incomes does not exceed TT\$84,000 and a Home Improvement Grant of TT\$15,000 for those with total annual household incomes not exceeding TT\$60,000. Both do not require repayment.

In addition, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is responsible for the provision of Social Housing or low-cost housing for vulnerable citizens. The development of policy prescriptions for this area is not novel to Government's social intervention activity but has become increasingly necessary especially with the economic downturn. The MSDFS must take steps to expedite the formulation and implementation of this initiative.

The Electricity Subsidy- falls under the Utilities Assistance Programme of the Ministry of Public Utilities. The subsidy applies to households whose electrical consumption is 500kwh or less, up to a maximum of \$870 per year. Persons eligible for the Electricity Subsidy include those accessing the Senior Citizens' Pension, the Disability or Public Assistance Grant, the TT Food Card and persons with a certified disability, who earn a monthly income of not more than \$3,500⁹.

As a short term measure, this benefit should be extended to other vulnerable persons, such as the recently retrenched and take into account their Needs Assessment results, previous incomes levels (recommended ceiling of \$3,000 per month) and the level of electrical consumption prior to the period of unemployment.

INCOME SUPPORT

The Public Assistance Grant- is a financial transfer paid to adults who cannot actively participate in the labour force due to health issues. Other vulnerable groups that benefit from the grant are "...needy children whose father, mother or both parents are dead, incarcerated, disabled and unable to work, or has deserted the family and cannot be found". (Government of Trinidad and Tobago website, 2017).

Disability Assistance Grant- Beneficiaries of this grant are individuals 18-64 years of age who are unable to work due to a disability and have been certified by a Government medical officer.

9 Ministry of Public Utilities website. < <http://www.mpu.gov.tt/home/node/94>> accessed 23rd February 2017



Senior Citizen Pension (SCP)- The SCP programme provides a monthly grant to citizens who are 65 years and over. The programme aims to improve social protection for the elderly who do not have income from other sources (National Insurance Board (NIB excepted).

These programmes if implemented in an effective and timely manner, can help persons build their absorptive capacities. Grants and conditional cash transfer systems provide a foundation for preventative and coping strategies among target groups by enabling them to meet their basic needs and, by extension, narrow the gap between their incomes and the poverty line. Most importantly, it prevents persons at risk from responding to the economic downturn using undesirable measures that can have irreversible consequences (IDS, 2015).

General Assistance Grant- This grant can assist with several different needs, including food, housing and income support. It was established to provide relief to persons who are in need of temporary assistance, including clients of the MSDFS, needy persons in crisis or persons who have been affected by natural or man-made disasters. Persons can also access this grant for Children with special needs, House rent assistance, Household items, Clothing, Dietary needs, and School supplies.

All of the above initiatives are key mitigation activities and can be expanded to include more vulnerable households as the need arises. Note, however, transfer based strategies that provide cash and cash equivalents or goods and services for persons not facing chronic situations (disability and old age),

should only be proposed as short term measures and with mandatory re-assessments at appropriate intervals. It is recommended that a cap should be placed on the number of times a household can access these services, with appropriate exceptions. This will enable the programmes to reach more households and also reduce the risk of dependency.

Eligibility must not just take into account the afflicted person, but also their overall living circumstances, including the status of other household occupants and projections for socio-economic mobility. This is important for ensuring that the most deserving households receive the benefits and promoting equity across target groups.

It is also important that transaction costs for participating in the programme are low for these populations as this will determine the real coverage and benefits obtained from the grant (Grosh et al., 2008). This has implications for efficiency among programme administrators and field officers in providing information and assessing applications. The IT platform and its network can no doubt assist in ensuring this process is efficient. The adoption of a new approach to service delivery, where field officers of the various social sector Ministries which provide grants and programmes, utilize strategies to 'find the poor and vulnerable', rather than wait for them to come to the office would be an important initiative to address the issue of transaction costs.



7.2 Action Area 2 – Health and Wellness

Objective 1 – Assist vulnerable persons and their dependents with access to essential health care services.

Trinidad and Tobago's public health sector has a far-reaching network of primary and secondary health care facilities that provide a comprehensive range of services, at no charge to persons at the point of delivery.

The Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (CDAP)- also allows citizens to access, at no direct cost to themselves, 47 pharmaceuticals and prescription drugs for several chronic diseases at private pharmacies throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Economic pressures precipitate a host of unhealthy behaviours such as - bingeing on unhealthy foods, smoking, alcoholism, poor sleep patterns, depression and chronic anxiety (Harvard Public Health Journal, 2012). This is also compounded by a lack of resources to attend to one's health. Conclusively, public health declines and the resultant increase in the demands for healthcare services should be expected during the downturn. In anticipation of this and as a means of circumvention, primary healthcare centres could be expanded to include more preventative care. This would enable persons to take a more proactive approach in managing their health before conditions reach a critical stage—reducing personal costs and pressures

on public healthcare services. On a per capita basis, there are a sufficient number of health care centres that are geographically dispersed to facilitate this. Such an initiative can easily be promoted through the database of social programme users.

Additionally, unemployed persons may require special medical and wellness services such as individual and family mental health support, family planning and even food and nutrition planning. The need for these services should be assessed during the initial interview and assessment stage at the SSE Unit. Following this, arrangements can then be made with the relevant health centres to set up sessions and appointments for these individuals.

Other interventions/programmes that should be considered include:

Psychosocial Support and Counselling- to individuals and families to be provided by the National Family Services Division of the MSDFS, Student Support Services of the Ministry of Education, Mental Health Centres of the Ministry of Health, and Community Mediation Services Division of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts. Given the expertise of these various divisions, they should be explored as an avenue, through which individuals and families who are psychologically impacted by the downturn can access psychosocial support and counselling.

Support for Victims of Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence- The Domestic Violence Unit of Gender and Child Affairs of the Office of the Prime Minister aims to design and implement programmes to address the issues of domestic violence. In Tobago, the Domestic Violence Shelter of the Division of Health and Social Services (Tobago House of Assembly), targets victims of domestic violence. The project aims to empower women and families through sensitization and access to shelter and safety. The National Domestic Violence Hotline also provides a 24-hour hotline service counselling services, crisis intervention and referrals to appropriate agencies.

National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme (NADAPP)- The Ministry of Health manages this programme, which is charged with the coordination of legal and illegal drug abuse prevention and reduction strategies in Trinidad and Tobago. The programme, which partners with NGOs with the same purpose, should be encouraged to expand collaboration activities and work with unemployed, recently retrenched and vulnerable families to prevent or reduce drug and alcohol abuse and build awareness of its multidimensional negative impacts.

Piparo Empowerment Centre and Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Centre at Caura Hospital- The Piparo Empowerment Centre (PEC) and the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Centre at Caura Hospital are state operated substance abuse rehabilitation facilities. The Piparo Empowerment Centre provides long-term residential treatment, rehabilitation and skills training for male substance abusers based on the Therapeutic Community Model, over a nine to twelve month period. Rehabilitation services include therapy, counselling, remedial education, vocational and occupational skills development and social reintegration training. Clients are also provided with follow-up and post-rehabilitation support and are assisted with job placement. The Substance Abuse



Prevention and Treatment Centre offers treatment, counselling, and rehabilitation for people diagnosed with tuberculosis and others with substance abuse problems. However, it should be noted that there is an absence of rehabilitation programmes for persons with dual diagnosis-persons who are diagnosed with a mental disorder who are substance abusers. There is need to pay focused attention to expanding programming offerings to treat with persons experiencing dual diagnosis.

External Patient Programme- This initiative of the Ministry of Health is aimed at ensuring quality and timely healthcare to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The Programme seeks to provide immediate relief to our citizens who have been waiting on listed surgical procedures for a minimum of three (3) months in our public healthcare facilities for surgical procedures.

National Oncology Programme- The National Oncology Programme (NOP) has as its main focus treatment, education, awareness, prevention, screening and early diagnosis, palliation and supportive care. These services are available to all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago free of charge.

Community Wellness Centres- The Government should consider the prospect of establishing Community Wellness Centres in communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago to promote the issue of mental health and of wellness, while providing access to these services at the community level. It is intended that the Centres would be a one-stop shop providing a variety of community-based services that holistically support healthy lifestyles and overall wellness. Services will include health promotional activities such as physical fitness, nutrition advice, counselling and other psychosocial support, addictions and mental health programmes, group and peer support programmes, health and wellness learning sessions, wellness assessments, health screening and other such initiatives. In the initial stages, these centres can be operated from existing social infrastructure by Government and civil society organizations. The Centre will also benefit the public by having services closer to their homes, thereby making it affordable and accessible. A model for the Community Wellness Centre will have to be developed and piloted in a community.



7.3 Action Area 3 – Education, Skills Training and Re-Tooling

Objective 1 – Empower persons by providing them with the skills needed to earn an income.

The Survey of Living Condition (SLC) 2005 showed that 30.6% of the sample surveyed did not pursue or attain education certificates beyond the primary level (Kairi Consultants Limited, 2007). Additionally, there are natural correlations among educational attainment and socio economic status where education is progressively pursued among those in the higher income quartiles. Additionally, elementary level occupations requiring a basic to limited level of education, were mainly occupied by the poor. Thus, in order to improve the employability, income level and resulting resilience of persons, they must be provided with a combination of skills, training and more importantly, certification.

There are several on-going programmes under the aegis of the MIC Institute of Technology and by extension, the Ministry of Education, which provide training and certification for eligible citizens. A mass communication strategy should be undertaken to increase the awareness of these programmes and their benefits. Additionally, during the initial assessment and interview, persons should be introduced to these programmes and in certain cases enrolled as a pre-requisite for other benefits. The geographic dispersion of poverty should also be consid-

ered in the delivery and location of these programmes. Under the MLSED, programmes such as the **On the Job Training (OJT)**, also have the potential to provide relief to vulnerable, retrenched and unemployed persons. The main objective of this programme is to assist the employability and sustainability of the 16-35 cohorts in the labour market. Since this programme targets mainly new entrants into the job market, it should be maintained as a stepping stone into permanent employment. In this regard, employers should be encouraged to retain a certain percentage of the trainees following their completion. However, companies may also use the OJT programme to secure lower labour costs, as the Government reimburses participating small and large businesses 60% of the stipends paid to employees. Therefore, an evaluation of the programme's objectives and outcomes is necessary to ensure there is no abuse.

One of the perceptions facing OJT programmes is the belief that they serve as “catchment” jobs for graduates who cannot find employment in their particular field of study. It is suggested that candidates are simply being provided with employ in public sector organizations and required to perform tasks that are unrelated to their technical field or capabilities. This can be a demotivating experience for persons and stymie their personal growth and adaptive capacities (IDS, 2015).

Since it is not fiscally feasible to provide all applicants with their “ideal job”, the Government can form partnerships with



private sector organizations, both local and foreign, and recommend candidates based on their profile. To support this, employees should be evaluated at interims using psychometric testing and other interview techniques to keep their profile updated in the Government's database. The objective under this recommendation is to help employees transition out of OJT programmes if it is not a best fit for their technical capabilities and personal aspirations.

On an individual level it can promote self-actualization, and on a broader scale, contribute to the enhancement of the human resource base of the country. It should be noted however, these adjustments to the OJT programme and the like should take place over a long term period.

The Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme (GAPP) is a current initiative of the MSDFS that bridges the gap between the young and the ageing population. The programme develops geriatric care skills among adolescents while providing companionship for the old. There are two levels of training based on age groups: Level I 17 -25 years and Level II 18 - 30 years. This programme can benefit not only economically displaced persons but also the elderly population who may require affordable care.

The rationale for having two levels of training should be evaluated and if possible, the training should be standardized.

The programme should also be expanded to increase the number of persons employed as well as the accessibility of this service to the elderly population. It may also be necessary to investigate the feasibility of increasing the stipend paid to the caregivers, with some shared costs from the persons accessing the services.

Another initiative of the MSDFS is the **Adult Education Programme** that provides opportunities for adults to complete primary and secondary level education. It also allows for training and education in Technical and Vocational skills. In considering the location and delivery of these programmes, the geographic areas where poverty levels are concentrated should be specially targeted given that there is a natural correlation between education and socioeconomic status.

Community Education (Skills Development) Programme- This programme seeks to focus on the needs of householders, the unemployed, the under-employed, the vulnerable, the less fortunate and "at risk" in our society. It is designed to address the domestic needs of householders by equipping them with skills to enable them to engage in home-based production of goods and services that reduce household expenditure and allow for the more effective use of financial resources. The programme provides equitable educational opportunities for the people in local communities by harnessing their latent talents, skills and creative energies and re directing them into paths that lead to empowerment.

Other interventions/programmes that should be considered under this Action Area include:

The Retraining Programme- This programme falls under the Tertiary Division of the Ministry of Education. This programme targets unemployed persons between the ages of 30 and 45 years and provides skills training to increase their opportunities for employment or self-employment. Programme trainees are certified to National Occupational Standards through the Trinidad and Tobago Vocational Qualifications (TTNVQ) Framework, the national accreditation system for vocational education, which provides a platform for further education and training.

Workforce Assessment Centres- This programme is operationalized by the National Training Agency under the Ministry of Education. It targets both employers and employees by providing training in areas where employees have competencies and experience but lack certification. Employers who participate in this programme benefit from a pool of skilled employees. A registry of skills needed in the private sector should be continuously updated and publicized to stimulate interest in the programme among workers and private organizations.

These two initiatives should be positioned in the market as key programmes for persons wishing to enhance their technical capabilities through certification.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Programme- This is provided by the National Training Agency (NTA). Experienced workers 21 years of age or older with at least one year of work experience but no formal educational or training qualifications in their field can obtain certification based on skills acquired on the job through the PLAR Programme. The PLAR Programme is designed to accommodate the schedules of working adults and provides the formal certification that can be the key to better job opportunities, job reclassification or promotion.

Youth focused programmes that should be components in the



YOUTH FOCUSED PROGRAMMES

Young People (aged 15 – 24 years old) are also uniquely affected by economic crises due to their youth-specific vulnerabilities (Marcus and Gavrilovic 2010). This is largely because of their developmental stage which results in effects which can be potentially lifelong, they have higher rates of income poverty, have higher unemployment rates and weave limited political influence. An acute or protracted economic crisis can have the effect of trapping youth in unemployment, under-employment or in low productivity jobs.

Young people are also affected disproportionately in labour markets in times of crisis, as they are particularly vulnerable to layoffs, are more likely to suffer declining wages and are frequently pushed into informal sector work with very poor pay and conditions and very few protective rights.

Given that the Trinidad and Tobago youth unemployment level has increased to 11.6 per cent in the second quarter of 2016 and remains higher than the overall unemployment level, the particular vulnerabilities of youth must be addressed in the NSMP through the avenue of education and training.

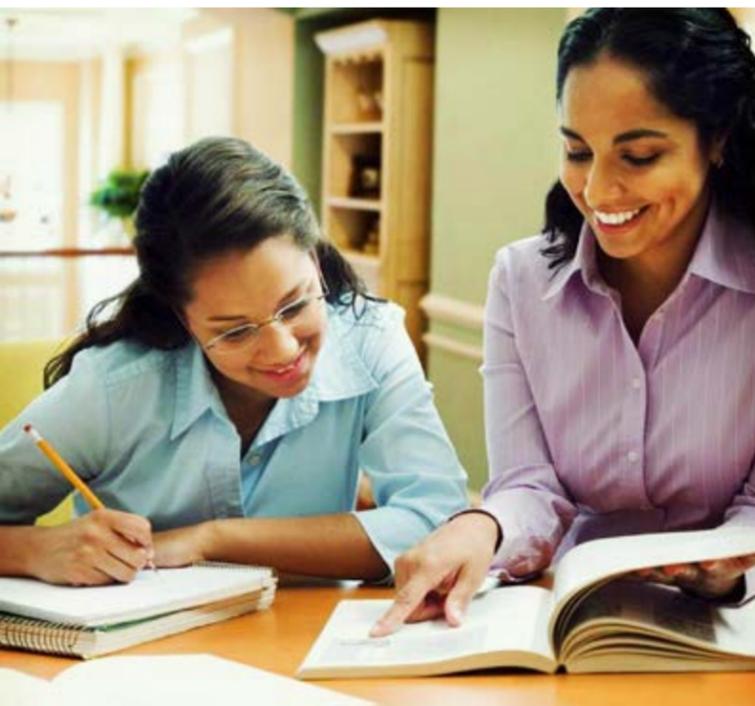
Military-Led Academic Training (MILAT) is provided by The Ministry of National Security and targets at risk youths between the ages of 15-24 years. The purpose of the programme is to provide a positive environment and provide training and skills for entry in the workforce.

Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) is overseen by the Ministry of Education. The aim of the programme is to equip citizens with the requisite skills and training for pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities. There are approximately 70 programmes in 13 broad occupational areas that are currently being offered at training centres.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) is operated under the Ministry of National Security and targets young persons between the ages of 18-25 years. The programme provides training to promote personal development and life skills, on-the-job-training and temporary employment for participants.

The Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres (YDAC Youth Camps), target young men who have been deemed "at risk" and are between the ages of 15- 18 years. The institutions are residential vocational training centres facilitating at risk young men including those who may have dropped out of the formal education system for a 2-year period.

Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture (YAPA) This programme provides youths aged 17-25 with the opportunity to become involved in farming, demonstrating to them that agriculture can be pursued successfully as a business.



PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN

Craft Training Programme for Women- This programme is designed to promote employment through training in various craft disciplines, as well as initiatives geared towards the revitalisation of the handicraft industry of Trinidad and Tobago. The programme promotes the development of the craft, business and life skills necessary to facilitate the establishment of successful, home based craft businesses. Single, unskilled or unemployed mothers, between 25 - 50 years old can apply to access the Craft Training Programme for Women.

Non-Traditional Skills Training Programme for Women- This programme is designed to provide specialised technical and vocational education and training to unemployed, low-income and unskilled women between the ages of 18 - 50 in the following areas: Construction, Woodwork/Furniture, Automotive, Technology, Industrial Maintenance . Training also includes:
Entrepreneurship, Life Skills, Gender Issues, Remedial Literacy and Numeracy.

Other non-traditional skills based on community needs. The programme provides a total of 320 hours of training on a six-month, part-time basis, and offers a stipend of TT\$50.00 per day for three days per week over this period.

Women in Harmony Programme- This programme is designed to help increase employment opportunities for low-income women between the ages of 26-45 years with limited or no skills, particularly single female head of households. The aim of this programme is to equip participants with marketable skills, which can be used to provide them better employment options and enhance their economic choices. Training is offered in two disciplines; Agricultural Production Grow Box Technology / Landscaping and in Elderly Care. Participants are given a stipend while undergoing training to offset the cost of transportation, meals and upkeep. Modules on self-development and life-skills are also included to enhance the participants' capacity to deal with their circumstances.

7.4 Action Area 4 – Employment & Productivity, Innovation & Enterprise Development

Objective 1 – To create new avenues of income generation for persons and facilitate the diversification of the economy

Objective 2 – To encourage persons to become more engaged in creativity and innovation

In times of economic downturn, even highly skilled and highly specialised persons may become unemployed. It therefore becomes difficult to find alternative employment as the markets for their particular skills may be limited. Thus, the need for an alternative avenue for income generation becomes necessary either by the acquisition of a new skill or the creation of opportunities through entrepreneurship and enterprise development. The MLSED currently provides several initiatives that support persons interested in widening their income generating abilities. Some of these include the following:

EMPLOYMENT & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT
Business Advisory Services- which offer business advice and support.

Entrepreneurial Training- through the Entrepreneurial Training Institute and Incubation Centre (ETTIC), with training in areas such as: Entrepreneurship; Business Start-up; Recordkeeping and Cash Management; Savings and Investments; and Costing and Pricing.

FairShare Programme- which provides opportunities for small businesses to procure contracts from Government agencies up to \$1 million. It also offers training to certified FairShare Businesses.

The main goal of the **National Integrated Business Incubator System (IBIS)** is to assist new entrepreneurs develop their business ideas into small and microenterprises. The programme provides training and access to a range of services including mentoring; infrastructural, operational and information technology support; and networking opportunities for access to local and foreign markets. Financing is also made available upon the completion of the final training component of the programme.

In addition to the above, there is also the **Sowing Empowerment through Entrepreneurial Development (SEED)** programme of the MSDFS that provides training, as well as funding to vulnerable persons who wish purchase equipment to start a new business or expand an existing one and transition it from the informal to the formal economy.

The MLSED oversees the **Cooperative Societies** in Trinidad and Tobago. Persons who are 18 years and over can become a member of a cooperative, which is a jointly owned business where members make equal contributions towards the capital of the business and share similar risks. There are credit unions, agricultural co-operatives, consumer co-operatives, junior co-operatives as well as others. Individuals who are desirous of starting a business but do not have sufficient resources should be steered in the direction of joining a cooperative which supports their needs.

Echevarria (2008) found that some of the innate issues facing rural populations relate to lack of opportunities for entrepreneurship, training and support mechanisms. Most times, rural areas are supported by small cottage businesses that provide goods and services needed to meet their basic needs. The initiatives outlined under this action area, can propel these small scale producers to provide a higher quality and quantity of goods through enterprise development.

The training under these schemes, however, will have to be tailored to meet the needs of the community with a focus on expanding the market in these communities and capitalizing on opportunities in the wider local and foreign market. A desired outcome from this recommendation is to create the right conditions for sustainable development thereby reducing poverty levels and the need for continuous transfer of resources from the State.

INNOVATION

Innovation is a fundamental driver of increasing competitiveness and fostering sustainable economic growth. Strategies to promote innovation in the society are therefore critical to developing a culture of resilience, but also to provide new opportunities for socioeconomic development and improving quality of life. The Ministry of Education (MOE) in the current governance structure has responsibility for innovation. A draft Innovation Policy was also developed by the previous Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development and should be finalized. The NSMP will rely on the plans and initiatives articulated by the MOE for nurturing innovation. These plans should be expedited.

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in its 2015 study, Integrating Intellectual Property into Innovation Policy Formulation in Trinidad and Tobago, made several observations about innovation in Trinidad and Tobago, including:

The innovation system of T&T is a very fragmented one, with little coordination among actors. Several ministries have some responsibilities pertaining to science, technology and innovation. This limits the possibilities and endangers success of overarching policies;

There is currently no all-encompassing central innovation strategy or innovation policy for T&T;

Overall innovation and Intellectual Property (IP) performance is low;

Incentive systems for researchers at universities are based mostly on academic performance only (publications), which is a barrier for IP-related commercialization activities;

Access to finance and funding sources are an issue.

In this regard, to strengthen the framework for innovation, the recommendations proffered by WIPO should be adopted, namely:

Consider means to decrease the fragmentation of the T&T innovation system. Consideration should be given to merging Government offices dealing with innovation issues, such that only one to two are responsible for science, technology and innovation policy. At the operational level, one could also consider mergers and the creation of only few select (one to two) innovation/funding agencies, which operate support programmes designed by the various ministries;

Consider options to increase access to private /equity funding, such as, the creation and maintenance of an investor-friendly

climate or tax incentives for rich individuals and companies making investments in innovation-driven firms and start-ups.

Consider means, including training, to increase the capacity of the innovation support system to deal with business issues. Some current and proposed initiatives focusing on innovation and centred on building capacity and capability for enterprise creation should also be supported. These include:

Centre for Enterprise Development (CED) is a flagship development of the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute (CARIRI) aimed at facilitating Research, Development and Innovation capacity building and fostering business creation and expansion through the Incubation process. It constitutes a unique environment in which hi-tech entrepreneurs, world-class business people, academics, researchers, venture capitalists and people with ideas can meet, network and grow. It caters for all persons with a passion to succeed with their ideas and who want to move forward with them. In this regard, the CED can serve to stimulate interaction and engagement among entrepreneurs, small and medium enterprises, and academic and research organizations.

The Centre is operationalised to accommodate the full gamut of activities along the enterprise creation spectrum, i.e. from Idea to Market. It provides accommodation, technical and business advisory support services to individuals and enterprises with innovative ideas/projects wishing to take these through the incubation process to commercialization. The CED comprises of the following facilities, each of which lends support to a particular stage of enterprise development:

INNOVATION INCUBATOR - This incubator caters to the needs of any individual with an innovative idea that they believe has the potential to be commercialized.

BUSINESS INCUBATOR - This incubator, which can accommodate 5 in-house and 7 virtual tenants, aims to provide access to the full range of support services that growing small businesses require.

TECHNOLOGY INCUBATOR - This takes the form of 10 bays which will each initially accommodate projects currently being developed by CARIRI such as garlic, soy, cassava and pepper processing technologies, as well as ICT related products.

ICT CENTRE/ TEKMANIA - This accommodates information and communication technology (ICT) project initiatives being undertaken by CARIRI that are geared towards enhancing the operational efficiencies of SME's.

Skills for Global Services- This initiative focuses on businesses throughout the Information Technology-enabled Services (ITeS) sector where they are invited to partner with academic institutions and training providers to present proposals to develop skills, create jobs, and ensure the pipeline of talent that Trinidad and Tobago needs to transform the economy. This focus is expected to increase exports and employment in the ITeS sector in Trinidad and Tobago. This is to be done through sector-specific training and support services, investment promotion, branding and capacity building to improve the business climate and regulatory framework. The IT-enabled Services sector covers an array of cross-border services delivered over electronic/digital networks. These services provide employment options in areas such as application and content development; contact/call centers; transcription, billing, processing, and other back office services; data warehousing; logistics management and geographical information systems (GIS).

Entrepreneurial Talent Grant- In an effort to stimulate creativity and bring relief, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is expected to utilise a national talent search methodology, and a national competition, whereby citizens will be invited and encouraged to present innovative business ideas for evaluation by a panel of accomplished businessmen and entrepreneurs. The top five projects annually will receive a \$1 million grant to facilitate the development and implementation of their business concepts. The implementation of this initiative should be expedited.

It is the intention that under the NSMP, agencies responsible for innovation will guide the delivery of these services and as such, the NSMP maintains linkages with these plans and policies.





7.5 Action Area 5 – Safety and Security

Objective 1 – to enhance the safety and security of the nation to reduce the risk of instability due to increasing levels of unemployment

The successful implementation of mitigation strategies will alleviate some of the burden placed on economically displaced persons and thus the temptation to earn an income from unlawful means should also be reduced. A risk assessment should also be done during the initial interview by the SSE Unit to identify persons who may require further psychological evaluation. These persons should then be referred to the appropriate professionals for further assessment and interventions.

Some initiatives that aim to address the issue of personal security, crime prevention and conflict resolution include programmes under the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts. These programmes aim to provide conflict resolution in a non-threatening environment to individuals, families and communities and include programmes such as Community Mediation, Mediation and Social Work Intervention Cases and Peer Mediation.

Other interventions/programmes which should be included are:

Citizen Security Programme (CSP) - This programme falls under the aegis of the Ministry of National Security and targets high needs communities. The main aim is to reduce crime and crime related activities in communities.

Victim Witness and Support Unit- Another initiative under the Ministry of National Security which provides support to victims and witnesses of crimes. It also works with other organizations with the similar objectives, as well as with the police service.

The Office of the Prime Minister, the Gender Affairs Division continues to develop **projects and programmes to address gender based violence** and build mutual respect between men and women. These include:

- ◆ The provision of specific programmes such as Defining Masculine Excellence and Home Management and Food Preparation for Men and Boys, Barbershop programmes;
- ◆ These programme are intended to promote gender equity by taking into account the needs of men, their perspective and expectations, as well as facilitating a level of awareness, which deconstructs the stereotyping, which take place in society;

PRODUCTIVITY

The National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (VISION 2030 identifies) 'Improving Productivity through Quality Infrastructure and Transportation' as one of the five (5) development themes. It identifies that high quality infrastructure unlocks our economic potential and ensure that growth and opportunities are distributed throughout the country and creates networks that binds us together. It also boosts productivity and competitiveness, allowing businesses to create employment, collaborate and attract investment, and grow and prosper. A number of initiatives are outlined in the NDS which will be undertaken by the relevant Ministries and department.

In addition the Productivity Council: was appointed in May 2017 and comprises representatives from Government, Trade Unions, Employers, Academia and Civil Society. The term of reference for the Council includes:

- ◆ To promote and develop greater productivity and quality awareness and consciousness of the people of Trinidad and Tobago in collaboration with key stakeholders.
- ◆ To inculcate new values and attitudes in Trinidad and Tobago regarding productivity, quality and competitiveness.
- ◆ To develop guidelines for the establishment and operation of a National Productivity Centre.
- ◆ To establish a system of documentation and dissemination of information relating to productivity.
- ◆ To advise Government on the formulation of national policies and strategies on all aspects of productivity, quality and competitiveness.
- ◆ To identify constraints to the improvement of productivity, quality and competitiveness and propose remedial measures to be taken.

- ◆ Support is also provided for NGOs that promote programmes with similar outcomes such as the 'Heforshe' campaigns;

The OPM is currently focusing on other plans and activities to build mutual respect among men and women and encourage behaviour modification that should be sustained and accelerated. These include the following:

- ◆ **A Community Based Action Plan** to end Gender Based Violence in Trinidad and Tobago. This proposal focuses on reducing Gender Based Violence specifically violence against women and girls in communities and providing help to potential perpetrators;
- ◆ **Amending the Domestic Violence Act** to provide greater protection for victims of domestic violence;
- ◆ **Strengthening the law enforcement** response to violence against women through the implementation of sustained training programmes; and
- ◆ **Creating safe places** with the necessary services for victims of violence, both male and female.

Programmes focusing on youth development also needed to be supported and ramped up.

Police Youth Club (PYC)- This initiative of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) is designed to positively engage youths between the age 5-25 years in activities that guide them away from crime and criminal activities, and towards a positive and productive lifestyles. PYCs are established in each geographical division across Trinidad and Tobago and involve interaction the youths, their families and other community members. This programme should be expanded to other high-needs communities and similar programmes to be encouraged in schools.

Retiree Adolescent Partnership Programme (RAPP)- This programme is a community-oriented programme is implemented under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and provides a platform for learning, enrichment and mentoring through utilising the skill and expertise of retired persons to provide assistance and supervision for school aged youth (9-21yrs). This programme is geared towards helping adolescents especially "at risk youth" to appreciate the learning experience by providing a stimulating environment for social interactions. The key objectives of the programme include:

To provide youths aged (9-21) with access to supplemental and remedial classes and guidance in character formation. To expose participants to sports, culture and life skills in order to facilitate their holistic development.

To engage retired persons in the process of nation building. To promote mentoring and support for our youth within the Community Environment.



Expedite the implementation of the **National Crime Prevention Programme** under the Ministry of National Security to offer opportunities for community participation in reducing crime and criminal activity through community developmental initiatives.



7.6 Action Area 6 – Poverty Prevention through Financial Security Awareness

Objective 1 – To build a self-sustaining and financially resilient population and workforce.

A mass Information, Education and Communication (IEC) strategy should be launched to provide information and educate the population on areas such as financial planning, saving and investing, sensible spending, economic recession etc. The objectives and strategies of this NSMP should also be highlighted and marketed at a national level, as well as at the level of communities and places of employment, to encourage participation, which is the first step in its success.

The IEC strategy should also include ways in which persons can use what is available to them to generate an income or fulfill basic needs. For instance, the fact that pipe borne water in Trinidad and Tobago is safe for drinking¹⁰ and thus there

¹⁰ Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) of Trinidad and Tobago. http://www.wasa.gov.tt/WASA_Media_Press.html <accessed 1st June 2017>

could include generating an income by selling local fruits and vegetables such as limes, coconuts, avocados that are in high supply and readily available to some persons. A reflection on how things were done in the ‘good ole days’ and where many persons exhibited a degree of resilience that was able to propel them out of poverty, should be highlighted. This might contribute to generating the spark that is needed to create the change in the mindset of individuals, which is necessary before any substantial change in behaviours is realized.

This IEC strategy should be done in collaboration with other Ministries that provide social and economic support programmes. The IEC strategy can also highlight and promote the awareness and benefits of the various programmes that currently exist, especially as it relates to those under Action Areas 3 and 4.

The National Financial Literacy Programme (NFLP) of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago builds public awareness in financial management through group presentations, the production of articles and other forms of public education material. Public and private sector organizations should be encouraged to utilize this service to provide information to its employees on proper financial planning and management. The medium for this programme should also be expanded to include television and radio.

7.7 Action Area 7 –Community and Civil Society Action

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are a critical necessity during any form of natural, political, social and/or economic crisis. It is a recognised medium through which non-governmental, private, voluntarily organized associations or institutions of the people, endeavour to secure their needs, desires and objectives. In Trinidad and Tobago, CSOs have always been very important partners in the delivery of social services to several targeted and vulnerable groups. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT) recognises and acknowledges that the development of a robust and effective social protection system compels working partnerships and collaboration with all civil society groups to achieve its desired mitigation strategy.

At present, financial support is provided to a total of 151 CSOs in the form of an annual government subvention to assist in covering recurrent expenditure. These organisations provide services in the following categories: services for persons with disabilities, socially displaced, family life and counselling services, substance abuse rehabilitation, homes and activity centres for senior citizens, hostels/halfway houses, rehabilitation for ex-prisoners, HIV/AIDS, youths, children homes and industrial schools, national sporting organisations, culture and the arts, and health and wellness.

As part of its strategy, the GoRTT recognizes and appreciates the role and work of civil society in addressing the needs of

those requiring their assistance. Civil society participation remains a cornerstone of overall national development and continued engagement, interaction and liaison with CSOs must be a critical element of the mitigation strategy. However, it is necessary to facilitate a supportive and favourable environment for the development of civil society as the government seeks to work more closely with its partners on the ground who are better poised to respond more immediately in times of adversity.

An economic downturn not only touches the life of an individual but also has an impact on the family and community. On the flip side, the community to which an individual belongs may also influence how an economic downturn affects him/her. In communities that are characterized by high levels of poverty, crime and violence, for instance, it may be more difficult for persons to be employed or re-employed given the stigma of these communities. There may also be insufficient services available for training and re-tooling as providers may be hesitant to enter these communities. This may also be true for rural communities that are relatively sparsely populated and located far distances away from the main town areas.

CBOs are best positioned to fill the gap in these areas as they have relevant information on the challenges faced by these communities and their needs. Public sector collaborations with CBOs that are focused on specific vulnerable groups such as Persons Living with HIV, youth, persons with disabilities etc. should also be strengthened as economic challenges may have a greater impact on these groups.



Thus, given that CSOs often have a much more direct and driving role in providing immediate responses to individuals and families in need, through the NSMP, a strengthening of this working relationship is envisioned; as there is a clear role for CSOs at the microcosmic level, in a way in which government agencies due to bureaucratic structures may be unable to access. As a consequence there are opportunities to sustain working relationships with CSOs that can facilitate:

- ◆ Community sensitisation and outreach;
- ◆ Community needs assessment and surveillance;
- ◆ The design and implementation of community-based initiatives and solutions and;
- ◆ The monitoring and evaluation of community based efforts.

There is further recognition that it is critical that, in expending resources, efficiency and effectiveness and value-for-money are factored into how CSOs conduct their affairs. As such, building and strengthening the capacity of the CSOs would be critical in this regard to enable them to judiciously manage financial resources and to properly manage project and programmes.

CSOs are also a rich source of data for social policy and programme planning. Accordingly, it would also be necessary to build their capacity in the area of data management.

It would be necessary for CSOs to build capacity and supported with the necessary training and development in the following areas:

- ◆ Financial Management.
- ◆ Programme and Project Planning and Implementation.
- ◆ Data Capture, Database Development and Maintenance.

CSOs should also be supported in obtaining the necessary ICT infrastructure (hardware and software) to facilitate their efforts in data management. Focus should be placed on what capacities and resources are needed for the CBO to be registered on the IT network to facilitate its services being accessible through the SSE Unit and to enable the transfer of information. Additionally, to ensure effective and structured ways of communication and cooperation with CSOs, basic guidelines and mechanisms will be developed. Chief among them being the development and maintenance of a civil society database, as well as the establishment of CSO networks.

Supporting CSOs would also necessitate an assessment of the civil society sector to identify the nature of the services provided by the various organisations, identify the strengths and weaknesses, and determine the capacity gaps, all with a view to strengthening the reciprocal relationship between CSOs and the government and enhancing CSOs' capacity to support government's social development objectives and contribute towards national development.



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