

# **CELEBRATING THE CIVIC SPIRIT**

## **A Crime Prevention Project**

**In partnership with the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODC)**

**Ramesh Deosaran**  
**Ian K. Ramdhanie**  
**Vidya Lall**

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by

Ramesh Deosaran, Ian K. Ramdhanie and Vidya Lall

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O'Meara Campus, Arima, Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies

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ISBN: 978-976-8223-96-8

Cover design by Shayam Karim

Printed by Trinpad Limited

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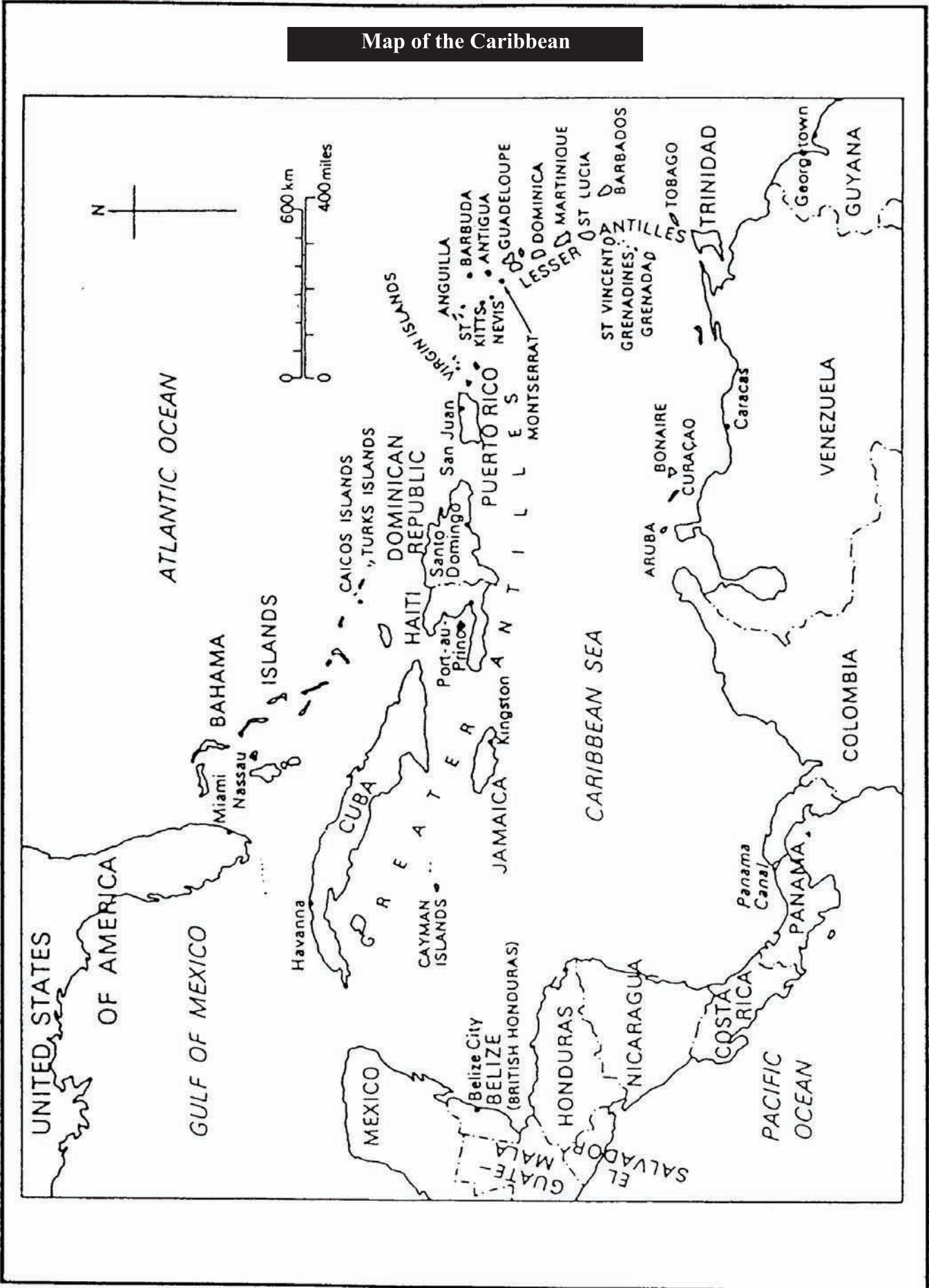
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# Foreword

## **DEVELOPING KEY PARTNERSHIPS: THE CIVIL SOCIETY-GOVERNMENT CONNECTION** *by Dr. the Hon. Amery Browne*

Crime is a pervasive problem that threatens to undermine the social and economic development of many countries; Trinidad and Tobago is no exception.

According to the MORI Caribbean Opinion Leader's Panel (Wave 7, 2008), crime, law and order and vandalism were viewed as major issues for most nationals in Trinidad and Tobago. The poll revealed that most people believed that crime and delinquency had increased in frequency over the twelve (12) months prior to the survey in Trinidad and Tobago. Particular concern was placed on issues such as drug abuse or drug dealing, kidnapping and burglaries/house breaking. The fact that crime, theft and corruption featured so highly in the concerns of the country's citizens thoroughly reaffirms the need to strengthen our commitment to a sustained and strategic multi-sectoral response.

Key partners in this national effort must include Government, civil society, private sector, developmental agencies and the international community. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago recognises the importance of the work of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other civil society organisations as a potent force for social and economic development. One of the major advantages cited for the greater utilisation of NGOs by governments is the fact that they possess a comprehensive understanding of problems faced by disadvantaged and vulnerable populations. This characteristic becomes even more relevant in the current global climate.

Cognizant of this fact, we are initiating a progressive shift in Government's policy on service delivery, with Government assuming more of the role of facilitator and enabler, and NGOs that of service providers. Government has therefore sought through partnerships with these organisations to ensure the more effective delivery of services to our citizens. To date, the Ministry of Social Development provides support to a wide range of NGOs administering services in areas such as family life and counselling; rehabilitation of substance abusers and ex-prisoners; youth development; hostels and halfway homes; industrial schools and children's homes.

This collaborative approach to service delivery towards improving the quality of life of our people is of paramount importance. This was reflected by the topics considered at the *Civil Society Forum* of the *Fifth Summit of the Americas* held in Port-of-Spain in 2009; these topics included the importance of the *civil society consultation process* and *strategies for strengthening the implementation capacity of civil society organisations*.

This publication produced by Professor Ramesh Deosaran (Emeritus), is a volume of ten (10) working papers that examine the operation of ten (10) organisations, with nine (9) in Trinidad and one (1) in Tobago, with interventions in the area of crime and violence prevention, and rehabilitation. The results of this initiative emphasise the valuable contributions that NGOs can make, particularly, with the support of Government and its national policies to improve crime prevention and social development work.

Professor Deosaran is one of Trinidad and Tobago's top criminologists and has pioneered work in Criminology and Criminal Justice at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus since February 1997. He is an Independent Senator in the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Programme Professor at The University of Trinidad and Tobago. Professor Deosaran has conducted extensive research in the areas of crime prevention and management, criminal justice, school violence and juvenile delinquency, poverty, educational administration and equity, community policing and police reform, penal reform, governance and civil society over the past twenty (20) years. He has also been a Consultant/Advisor to several regional and international organisations on matters of crime prevention, institutional strengthening, poverty reduction and civil society.

The findings and recommendations outlined in this document provide valuable information for use by NGOs, Government agencies, researchers, academic institutions, private organisations and donor agencies. It provides insight to the genesis of these organisations and their responsibilities and activities, the process of partnering with other organisations, the obstacles and challenges of service delivery, suggestions of the way forward and specific recommendations.

The inputs and recommendations made by civil society agencies are quite important to the full development of our country. Through its various strategies to improve the governance structures within the society, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to building and fostering trust with our civil society partners through meaningful dialogue and action. The appointment of a number of individuals representative of civil society organisations on various Cabinet-appointed, policy-focused Committees attests to this approach to national policy development.

This reference document is pivotal to the work of the Ministry of Social Development and other stakeholders in crime prevention, rehabilitation and social development. It demonstrates the high quality of work which is being carried out by our partners in the social sector and will be valuable in informing the way forward.

It is my hope that it will be thoroughly utilised by University lecturers, researchers, policy makers and the like, including the many individuals and agencies working toward improvement of our criminal justice system, to serve as a rich source of information and direction in the critical area of crime prevention and mitigation.

*Dr. the Hon. Amery Browne  
Minister of Social Development*



# Introduction

## Celebrating the Civic Spirit:

A PROJECT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE  
UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR DRUGS AND CRIME

by Professor Ramesh Deosaran

### The Civic Partnership

One of the most challenging features of a democracy like ours is the assumption, in fact the requirement, that citizens organized in various civic organizations will help refresh, strengthen and even direct the way we are governed. But there is more. Given the wide range of social, economic and political challenges that arise in a society like ours, so too a range of civic organizations rise with passion, patriotism, volunteerism and remarkable endurance to deal with this variety.

This publication describes and celebrates the labour and passionate commitment of ten (10) organizations - eight (8) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and two (2) Government-managed (that is, the School Intervention Unit of the Ministry of Education and Piparo Empowerment Centre of the Ministry of Social Development were examined but not counted as NGOs for obvious reasons (see list on page xii).

I also emphasise “endurance” because, from my own experiences, I know the kind of personal sacrifice, hurdles and dedication such civic work requires, but kept alive because of that durable love for community and country. One of the greatest rewards from such work, be it with ex-convicts, drug addicts, distressed parents, stubborn delinquents, the differently-abled or abused women and children, is to watch the grateful smile of those who have been comforted or rescued. Quite often done so quietly and without much celebration.

### NGOs: The Three Types

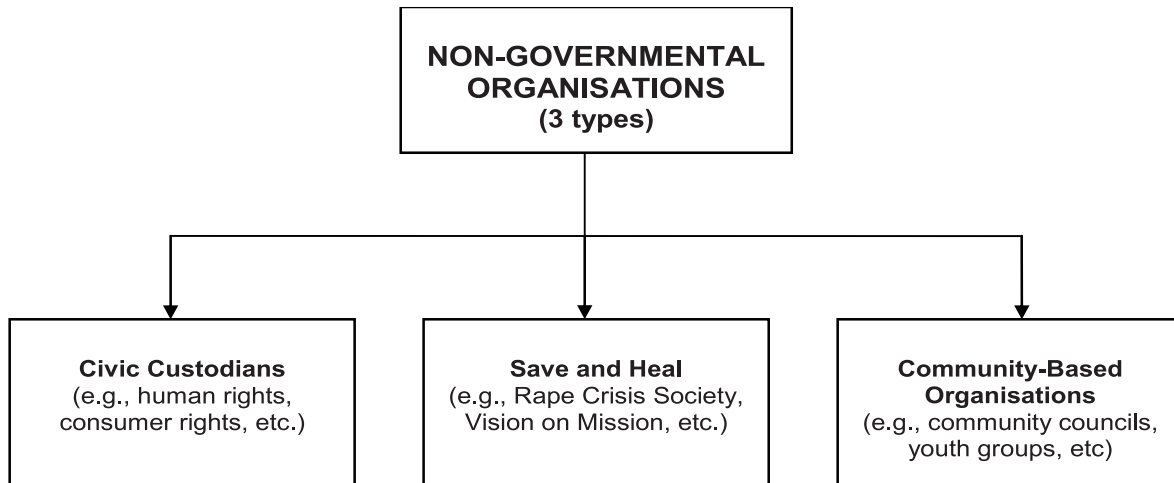
In fact, all this reminds me of that immortal song of inspiration, “*If I could help somebody as I pass along.*” But there are civic organizations and civic organizations. There are civic groups, watchmen groups which vigilantly look after human rights, strive after good governance, protect consumer interests or challenge the self-serving *status quo*.

These are our “**civic custodians**,” front-line, crusading and passionately idealistic, but somewhat different from the eight organizations examined in this publication. This latter type, we call “**save and heal**” ministries - healing victims from abuse, re-directing wasted lives, empowering the weak and defenceless.

All these are called Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), an umbrella title which seeks to distinguish them from being under direct political or governmental control. In this large grouping, however, there is yet another type, the more grassroots type

called “community-based” organizations (CBOs) which rest on community membership and generally focus on specific community needs and facilities. We term this type the **“community providers.”**

This project gave us an opportunity to develop this gross description of civic organizations, and provide a three-type typology which can help prevent wasteful redundancy and press for consolidation, focus and evidence-based programming.



How did this project begin? Firstly, in 2005, the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODC) invited me to evaluate the objectives, operations, outcomes and status of ten (10) NGOs which deal with crime prevention and related problems. Another group of ten (10) NGOs was also being studied in Jamaica. This was all part of what the UNODC called the “UN South-South” project since at the same time a similar evaluation was taking place in South Africa with twenty (20) NGOs.

A Caribbean-South Africa Conference was subsequently organized by the UNODC in February 2006 when both sides of the Atlantic presented reports for critical review and policy development. We chose to review, edit and publish the ten (10) reports from Trinidad and Tobago to help build knowledge and a platform for continued labour in the distressed fields of society.

### **Challenges for the Missionaries**

I do not think the “drug problem” will go away completely, but the effort to save as many as we can is imperative - which is exactly what these civic organizations try to do. That is why, organizations like the New Life Ministries Drug Rehabilitation Centre and Piparo Empowerment Centre are not flinching from the complex challenges, even with limited resources. Addiction creates mental paralysis and doors locked so tightly that counselors must fight very hard to find the right keys.

Bringing back dignity and purpose to the lives of ex-convicts is one of the perennial tasks of government, business and society as a whole. For those willing to change, an opportunity is all they often ask for and this is what Vision on Mission and Transform Life Ministries are seeking to provide for the dozens of prisoners freed every year.

The Police Youth Club, in my view, is a strategic vehicle not only for creating civic attitudes and lifestyles for young people, but for securing yet another police-citizen partnership. These clubs can help bring back the kind of respect which young people once had for the police. And all this is part of what the Roxborough Police Youth Club set out to do. From what we examined with the above organizations, we were impressed and pray that the appeal for resources do not go unheeded.

Then there are Families in Action and the Rape Crisis Society which seek to heal, build and empower the deficient and distressed. The situation with families, contaminated with misguided lifestyles, civic irresponsibility or sheer poverty, is the challenge which Families in Action seeks to remedy – an uphill battle since the demand side outruns the success rate of this noble “care and heal” organization.

In this matter of family stability – however a family is defined – the need for NGO-Government partnership is quite strong. To heal the broken self-esteem and feelings of shame and hurt which follow rape and abuse – that is part of the task, a rather daunting one, taken up by the Rape Crisis Society. The work undertaken, however, is more than mere healing. It has a holistic configuration which once again is a case for increased support.

The persistent and controversial problem of school violence and delinquency is part of the focus of the School Intervention Strategies Unit. The success could be improved by policy review and a change in methods. The delinquency-prevention programmes of the Ministry of Education appear too episodic, needing more evidence-based ground-up strategies for sustained improvements.

The “carnival-time” project we examined does hold promise, but given the breadth and depth of this school violence and delinquency challenge, we cannot resist the opportunity to call for a more strategic, well-rounded policy framework. The Ministry of Education is quite different from the rest, at least in one important respect. It could afford the required resources.

The Ministry of Education is well advised to review its strategies, rework its policies and ensure that the administrative framework facilitates the much needed interventions which so far have been overloaded with foreign consultants. If not, the work by this Unit, as dedicated as it might appear, will continue to have limited results. And the problem of school violence and delinquency will become more and more intractable.

The major point of this ***“Celebrating the Civic Spirit”*** project is that if NGOs like these eight (8) obtain sufficient resources – accountable and appropriate – and if they work effectively according to objectives, this country would surely be a much more civil, safe, peaceful and prosperous one. The social and psychological capital provided by the work of such NGOs is a critical contribution.

### **The Salt of the Earth**

This overall project naturally required a lot of time, detailed record-keeping, travel, coordination, negotiation and team-work. Knowing the sensitivity over the term “evaluation,” especially for resource-strapped NGOs, I was nevertheless much surprised when the head of each NGO responded with such open arms and hearts to our request for access. My admiration and respect for their work remains quite secure in my own heart.

The publication of this report is an expression of our gratitude to the ten (10) organizations (*eight (8) NGO's, two (2) government-controlled*) which participated, especially since it will help reveal the importance, relevance and value of their own contribution to civil society and the necessary partnership which Government requires for social development.

There have been some unevenness and gaps in the work by these ten (10) groups - some less than others. In order to fill such gaps, we have indeed indicated that, among other things, these organizations should set up a tighter administrative machinery to have proper records of their work and outcomes in order to facilitate appropriate evaluation and continued improvements. This will be to the benefit not only for their own organizational stability and credibility, but also for the satisfaction of their funders. In addition, each chapter contains a list of lessons learnt which serves as a base for continued improvement and assessment.

But all in all, this overview helps convince us that there is much that is good, willing and able in this country, and if tapped properly, life in this country could be so much better. Our democracy is enriched by such self-starters, such enterprising citizens. They help to activate the democratic assumptions of civic participation and partnership.

Working so much behind closed doors, so willingly in the fields and with such perseverance over the years, the front-line leaders of these ten (10) projects deserve a warm commendation from their fellow-citizens. I am grateful for their participation. On behalf of the team which worked so soulfully and steadfastly, I also salute them:

### **Gratitude**

To Fr. Gerard Pantin and Sister Ruth Montrichard, SERVOL; then Chief Justice Satnarine Sharma, Justice Gregory Smith and Ms. Donna Boucaud of the Judiciary and Family Court of Trinidad and Tobago; then Minister of Social Development Mr. Anthony Roberts, then Permanent Secretary Ms. Margaret Farray and Mr. Ralph LeGendre of the Piparo Empowerment Centre; Dr. Michael Alleyne, Ministry of Education; Mr. Wayne Chance, Vision on Mission; Pastor Glen Awong, Transform Life Ministries; Ms. Hulsie Bhaggan, New Life Ministries Drug Rehabilitation Centre; Ms. Marcella Alcalá, Rape Crisis Society; Ms. Ivis Gibson, Families in Action; then Police Commissioner Trevor Paul and then ACP (Tobago) Michael Thomas, Sergeant Collis Hazel and Mr. Arnold Lindow of the Roxborough Police Youth Club - all of whom in one way or another opened their respective organizations and perhaps more importantly in this kind of work, their hearts to us, we remain very grateful.

As project leader, I also wish to express my sincere thanks to our research team for their commitment to this important work – Ms. Arshiah Ali, Mr. Hasani Gulston, Ms. Rainah Seepersad, Ms. Petal Sampson, Ms. Vidya Lall and Mr. Ian Ramdhanie.

Our deep appreciation is extended to Mr. Slawomir Redo and the other officers of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODC) for the opportunity to learn more and share such knowledge with our own citizens.

Finally, to Professor Kenneth Julien (Emeritus) for providing the funds to assist in producing this publication.

*Professor Ramesh Deosaran  
(Emeritus)*

# CHAPTER 1

## THE CHALLENGE OF EVALUATION

### Selection of Ten (10) Organisations: Aims and Criteria

The general aims of this “south-south” project are to “evaluate on-going practices” in both the Caribbean and South Africa, and as far as possible “extract lessons and arrange to share these lessons with a view to improving practice.” To facilitate “sharing experiences,” twenty (20) organisations are selected from the Caribbean (ten (10) in Jamaica, ten (10) in Trinidad and Tobago, and twenty (20) in South Africa).

The major areas of concern are crime and violence, and the role that rehabilitation and other elements of restorative justice can play in bringing relief, prevention and reduction. Our selection was not based on public invitation, etc., but given the time constraints, on our knowledge of the work and status of NGO’s and the range of community-oriented projects in Trinidad and Tobago. We considered thirteen (13) groups and their respective projects in Trinidad and Tobago. Then we set up six (6) criteria. The following six (6) criteria were used to select the final ten (10) organisations (eight (8) NGOs and two (2) Government managed agencies):

**The general aims of this ‘south-south’ project are to “evaluate on-going practices” in both the Caribbean and South Africa, and as far as possible “extract lessons and arrange to share these lessons with a view to improving practice.”**

- (1) *Availability of pertinent records, documents, manuals, etc.*
- (2) *Accessibility to evaluation team and approval for interviews, etc.*
- (3) *A viable period of existence and community involvement*
- (4) *The operation of programmes relevant to the south-south terms of reference*
- (5) *The possibility of discovering useful lessons and data to share with other groups*
- (6) *The potential for improving practice and becoming stronger after getting feedback/guidance from this south-south evaluation exercise*

How can this evaluation project be framed so as to accommodate these ten (10) differing organisations? First of all, we wanted to have a framework, which could afford some comparisons with one group to another. Secondly, we wanted to set down an early framework, which could then be used to accommodate further evaluation data. Thirdly, the framework should be easily understood and operationalised by the ten (10) organisations themselves for their own improvement and sustainability.

### The Framework

We therefore used the framework set down by the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), Washington, USA (and as recommended by Slawomir Redo, UNODC). The framework, comprising seven (7) parts, traces the organisation’s project from its inception to “signs of success.” The following

are the “evaluation steps” which, with some modifications, we have applied to these ten (10) organisations.

- (1) *The Strategy: Project Initiation*
- (2) *Social Problem/Crime Problem Addressed*
- (3) *Key Components of Project*
- (4) *Key Partnerships*
- (5) *Potential Obstacles*
- (6) *Signs of Success*
- (7) *Applying the Strategy*

For our purpose, we added an Executive Summary and in many instances, a Conclusion for helping to point the way forward. And, of course, we also followed the guidelines (for example, number of words, etc.) set out by the South-South project itself.

### **Status of Organisations**

Nine (9) organisations are from Trinidad, the other, the Roxborough Police Youth Club, is from Tobago. These ten (10) organisations fall within a continuum, ranging from the purely voluntarily and community-managed to the purely government managed and funded. In all cases, however, government funding – in varying degrees – was provided. For example, the Piparo Empowerment Drug Rehabilitation Centre and the Pre-Carnival Delinquency Reduction Project enjoy guaranteed full funding by the government. However, other organisations, such as the Rape Crisis Society and New Life Drug Rehabilitation Ministries depend a lot on private funding with some government funding. The former must necessarily carry out government’s policies and be accountable to a particular ministry. As non-governmental organisations, the latter have much more flexibility in terms of objectives and management.

### **The Evaluation Dilemma for NGO’s**

When the six (6) criteria stated above are applied to these ten (10) organisations, on a scale of 1 to 5 for each one, the overall results do vary. That is, they are not all equally “prepared” for any systematic evaluation. A few organisations did have helpful reports and programme data. In fact, there are several good “signs of success.” Generally, a major well-known weakness in the operations of NGO’s is the lack of verifiable evaluation data. In varying degrees, this weakness exists among the organisations we selected. Still, however, we were able to gather a good amount of documentation, interview materials, site observations, etc., for these ten (10) reports. This south-south evaluation will certainly help them to improve.

### **The Benchmarking Option**

Further, if, as indicated by one organisation, an intervention is planned to deal with a target situation, that is, to change a problem situation, it is necessary to have data before the intervention and then a similar data collection method after the intervention so that you will know what change has likely resulted from the intervention. Benchmarking would be very helpful. In the case of this particular project, this absence is glaring.

There is also a need in most instances for more specific definitions of the problems targeted and the “criteria for success.” Merely “feeling good” about taking part in a project or having a project with a “nice sounding” name may be encouraging, but these elements do not make for systematic evaluation and for validly and reliably establishing “success.”

Further again, measures of success and outcomes should be connected to the stated objectives of the project. All these observations are not designed to discourage or belittle the groups' work. After all, it is quite evident that a lot of passion, energy, sincerity, personal sacrifice and hard work have gone and continue to go into these (10) ten projects.

### Solving the Evaluation Dilemma

While there is no doubt that their purpose and objectives are useful and relevant to the community, and while they have been in operation for some time, the work of these organisations can be helped if they gather time series data for example, or annual reports which show the proportion of persons who meet the objectives of the organisation and who did not, in which particular programmes, etc.

The difficulty in practicing this methodology is obviously a lack of appropriate staff (research assistant, data analyst, etc.), and funding. It is, however, a situation that is not beyond remedy. Perhaps, several of these NGO's can get together and have a centralised data centre to perform such functions at shared cost. They can also hire a consultant to raise funds, locally and internationally at a commission.

### Favourable Feedback

Of course, there is a lot of anecdotal evidence, impressions, positive feedback and "face value" operations – all of which have been used for this south-south evaluation and which do suggest that a lot of work is being done and with good results. More concretised, quantified data will certainly help the organisation recognise its strengths and weaknesses in a durable and instructive way, and so make for more effective management and funding proposals. The government-funded organisations, lodged within particular ministries, are in a stronger position to develop such evaluation frameworks. All in all, however, it is hoped that the tentative evaluation from this south-south project will certainly help these ten organisations, especially the NGO's, to improve in practice, outcomes and structure.

**All in all...it is hoped that the tentative evaluation from this south-south project will certainly help these ten organisations, especially the NGO's, to improve in practice, outcomes and structure.**

### The Value of Social Capital

Given the nature of their work, however, it is quite plausible that much of what these organisations have achieved is social capital. That is, they have created community partnerships, re-built people's self-confidence, provided hope and opportunity, established trust and harmony in some homes, etc. And these are very worthy results for building civility and democracy. Though it will take some distance to establish, these social capital elements do have some connection to reducing physical abuse, crime and violence.

**...much of what these organisations have achieved is social capital. That is, they have created community partnerships, re-built people's self-confidence, provided hope and opportunity, established trust and harmony...these are very worthy results for building civility and democracy...these social capital elements do have some connection to reducing physical abuse, crime and violence.**

Of course, the idea of being “evaluated” does sound threatening, especially to a voluntary group “raking and scraping” for financial help and volunteers. So maybe, a modified, more practical evaluation framework for such groups should be developed. And more than this, these ten (10) groups did not have any advanced warning that we were coming to evaluate them, or to discover “lessons and best practice” to share with others.

### **The Way Forward**

What can now happen is that with this south-south project experience, these (10) ten groups in Trinidad and Tobago, with the other ten (10) in Jamaica and the twenty (20) in South Africa, we can provide a set of guidelines and operational strategies to have these groups not only improve their services but to insert into their programming some form of evaluation methodology – with our continued help. Then see how this partnership works in a year or two from now.

# CHAPTER 2

## *CRIME IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO – SETTING THE CONTEXT*

### **Introduction**

This section provides some information on crime and crime-related matters to help us understand the context and relevance of the projects undertaken by the ten (10) organizations. However, since the project was implemented in 2005, much of the data is connected to that period.

To deal effectively with crime and security-related matters in any developed or developing society, it is paramount that all of the necessary stakeholders come together to fulfil their individual objectives in harmony with overall objectives for crime prevention, crime reduction and crime management. These stakeholders include the State or Government as well as civil society, for example, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, the private sector, and of great importance, the citizens themselves.

Each stakeholder, in the thrust to deal with crime and security, must have its own mandate, that is, its own objectives. However, there is the need for the strategic networking and interconnecting of the activities of the many stakeholders to deal effectively with the issues of crime and security. No one stakeholder has the responsibility to address crime and security concerns. The role of civil society, for example, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations and the private sector is of strategic importance in dealing with issues of crime prevention, crime reduction and crime management.

Their networking and collaborative efforts as well as their potential for such, must be emphasized. For not only do they collaborate with the government, they collaborate with one another as well. They interact with victims of crime, offenders and their families. They engage their programmes with “at-risk persons” (for example, distressed families, school dropouts and unemployed youths), and “risky persons” (for example, drug addicts, ex-prisoners, juvenile offenders). Further, they interact with potential victims and offenders. They provide some assistance and recourse to these persons. Before getting deep into an assessment of civil society entities in Trinidad and Tobago, it is good to start with an overall description of the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago.

### **From Independence to Today: The Overall Crime Picture**

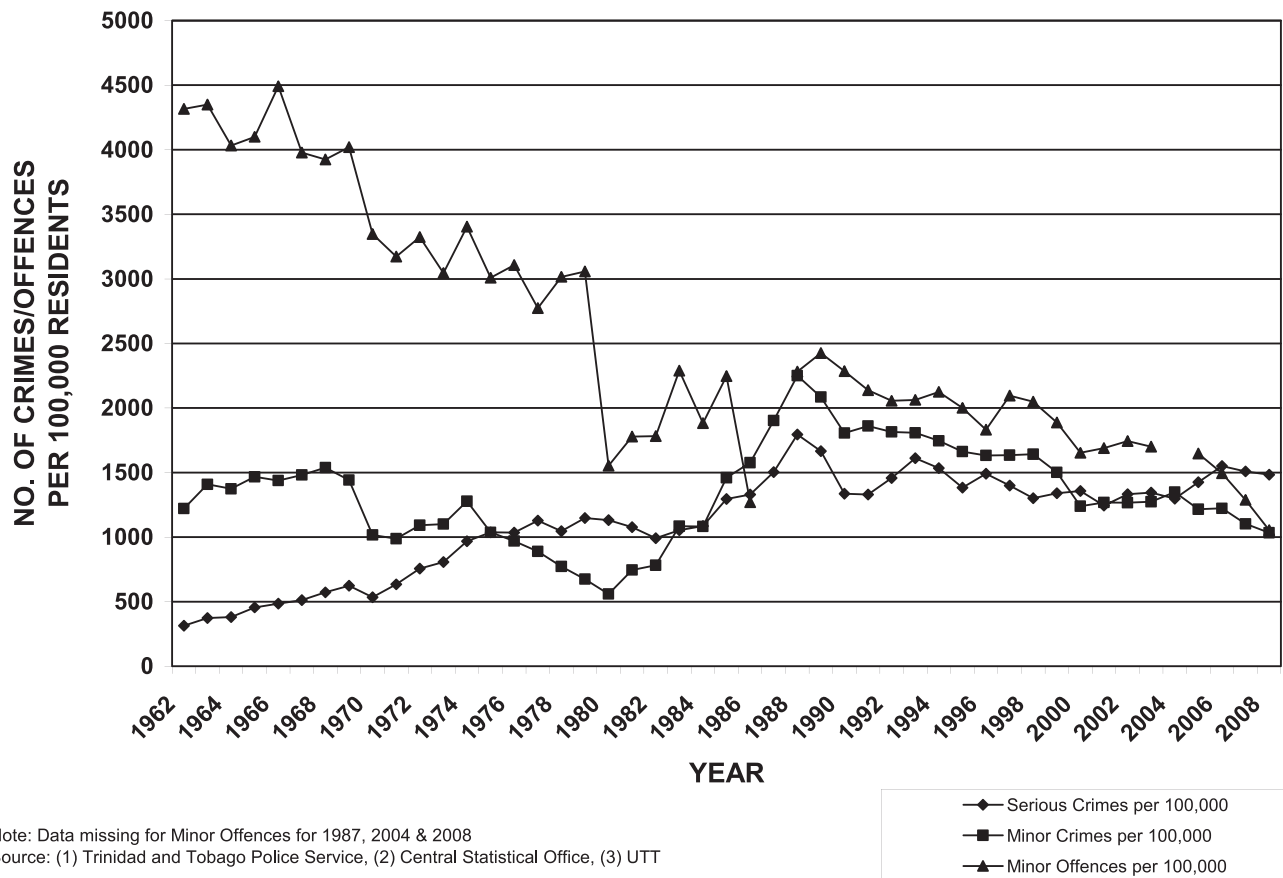
In 1962, Trinidad and Tobago gained its independence from the United Kingdom. Republican status was granted to Trinidad and Tobago fourteen years later (1976). How has crime changed from the birth of independent Trinidad and Tobago to the first five years into the twenty-first century? Were there increases, if so, for what crimes? Were there decreases, if so, for what crimes?

In the twin-island state of Trinidad and Tobago, crimes as reported to the Police are categorized into three groups. From most serious to least serious crimes, these groups are: (1) Serious Crimes, (2) Minor Crimes and (3) Minor Offences.

Trinidad and Tobago, a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nation with a population of approximately 1.3 million people in 2008, experienced an overall increase in criminal activity from Independence to 2008. For instance, there was an increase in its Serious Crimes Rate over the 47 year period (1962-2008). However, there were decreases in both the Minor Crimes Rate and the Minor Offences Rate. (The latest annual official crime figures are available for 2008). A closer look at the trends reveal that the Serious Crimes Rate increased by over 372% from 314 to 1,483 per 100,000 residents. The decrease in the Minor Crimes Rate was by 15% from 1,221 to 1,033 per 100,000 residents whilst the decrease in the Minor Offences Rate was by 76% from 4,316 to 1,053 per 100,000 residents (see Figure 2.1 ).

Taking a more contemporary analysis of the crime trends, serious crimes in Trinidad and Tobago increased over the last five years (2004-2008). The country’s Serious Crimes Rate increased by 14% over the last five years. However, the country experienced a decrease in the Minor Crimes Rate by 23% as well as the Minor Offences Rate by 38% (see Figure 2.1 ).

**FIGURE 2.1**  
**Total Serious Crimes, Total Minor Crimes and Total Minor Offences**  
**Per 100,000 Residents in Trinidad and Tobago: 1962-2008**



Note: Data missing for Minor Offences for 1987, 2004 & 2008  
 Source: (1) Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, (2) Central Statistical Office, (3) UTT

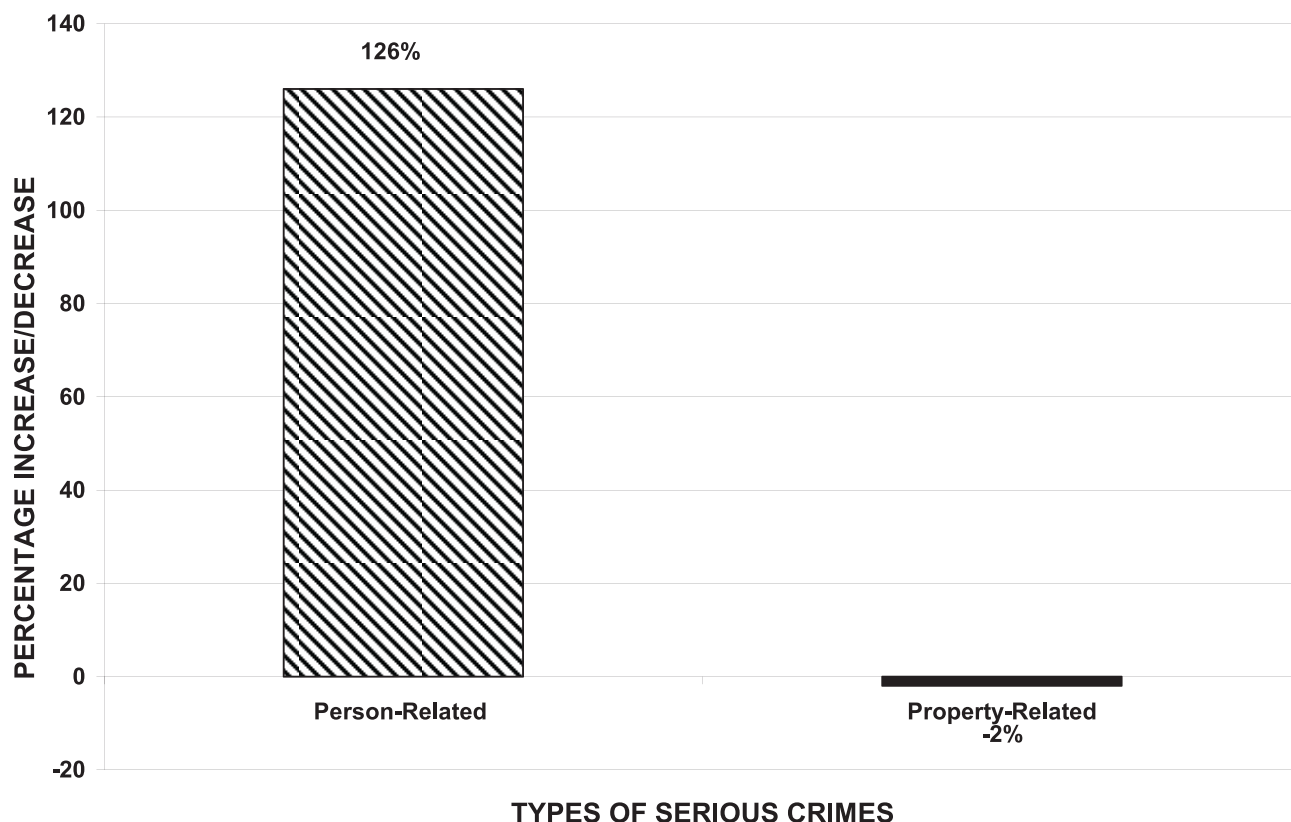
This increase combined with high criminal activity has resulted in deep public concern over the years. Not only have the Government and its relevant ministries, departments and agencies been called upon to play their role in crime prevention, crime reduction and crime management, but it has become more crucial for various entities of civil society, for example, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations and community-based organizations, to play their critical roles.

For instance, these organizations have been called upon to provide counselling services to victims of crimes, offenders and families; provide meals and accommodation venues for battered women, homeless persons, drug addicts, ex-prisoners; provide employment opportunities; provide community activities to keep youths off the streets and place them into productive skills development and training programmes; provide 24-hour hotlines; provide programmes such as anger management, employee support services, peer counselling in schools, drug rehabilitation, parenting; provide spiritual guidance; provide attitudinal and skills training for young people, etc.

### Taking Another Look at the Overall Crime Picture

Another way of categorizing crimes is by putting them into two major groups: (1) Person-related Crimes and (2) Property-related Crimes. Person-related crimes include murder, wounding, rape, serious indecency, kidnapping, etc., whilst Property-related crimes include break-in, robbery, fraud, larceny, etc. How have person-related crimes and property-related crimes changed over the last seventeen years in Trinidad and Tobago? For Trinidad and Tobago, the Person-related Serious Crimes Rate increased by over 126% from 74 to 167 per 100,000 residents, over the period 1992-2008. However, with regard to the Property-related Serious Crimes Rate, there was a small decrease of 2% from 1,242 to 1,215 per

**FIGURE 2.2**  
**Crime Rate Percent Increase/Decrease for Serious Crimes:**  
**Person-Related & Property-Related in Trinidad and Tobago 1992-2008**



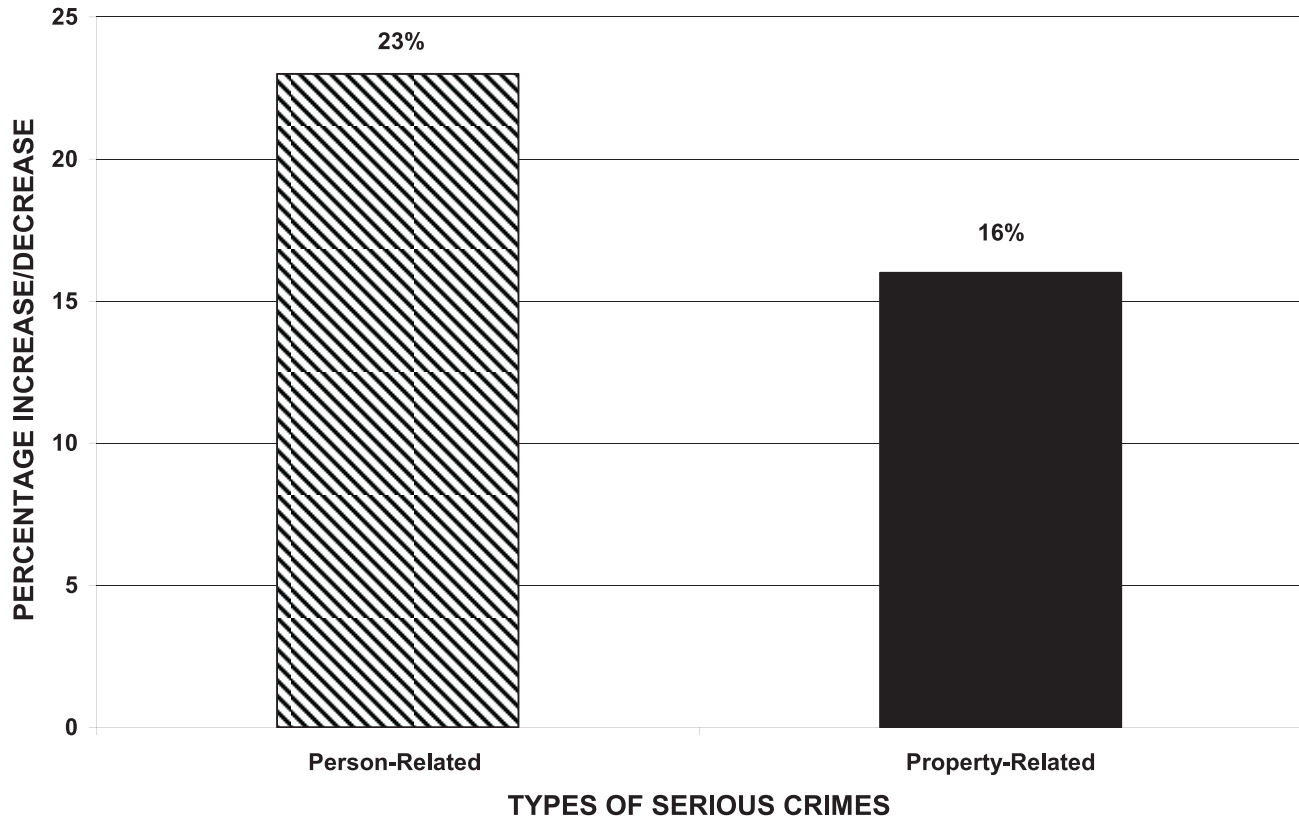
Source: (1) Trinidad and Tobago Police Service  
 (2) UTT

100,000 residents (see [Figure 2.2](#)). This phenomenal increase in the Person-related Serious Crimes Rate should be noted as the various governmental ministries, departments and agencies as well as non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations and community-based organizations had to increase their efforts as well.

When a more contemporary analysis of the crime figures was made for the last five years (2004-2008), once again, the Person-related Serious Crimes Rate for Trinidad and Tobago increased by 23% from 136

to 167 per 100,000 residents. In addition, there was an increase of 16% in the Property-related Serious Crimes Rate from 1,047 to 1,215 per 100,000 residents (see Figure 2.3).

**FIGURE 2.3**  
**Crime Rate Percent Increase/Decrease for Serious Crimes:**  
**Person-Related & Property-Related in Trinidad and Tobago 2004-2008**



Source: (1) Trinidad and Tobago Police Service  
 (2) UTT

This overall increase in criminal activity in Trinidad and Tobago over the years has resulted in an overburdened criminal justice system. Backlog of cases in the nation's courts, lengthy waiting periods for cases to be tried in court, witnesses not turning up in court because they have changed their minds over the long time period, witnesses migrating, etc. have been plaguing this country for some time. Lately, we have seen some improvements in the administration of justice, for example, computerized case tracking system. Another improvement is the pilot testing of a Family Court to deal with family-related issues in a non-adversarial manner with services of mediation, counselling, probation, etc.

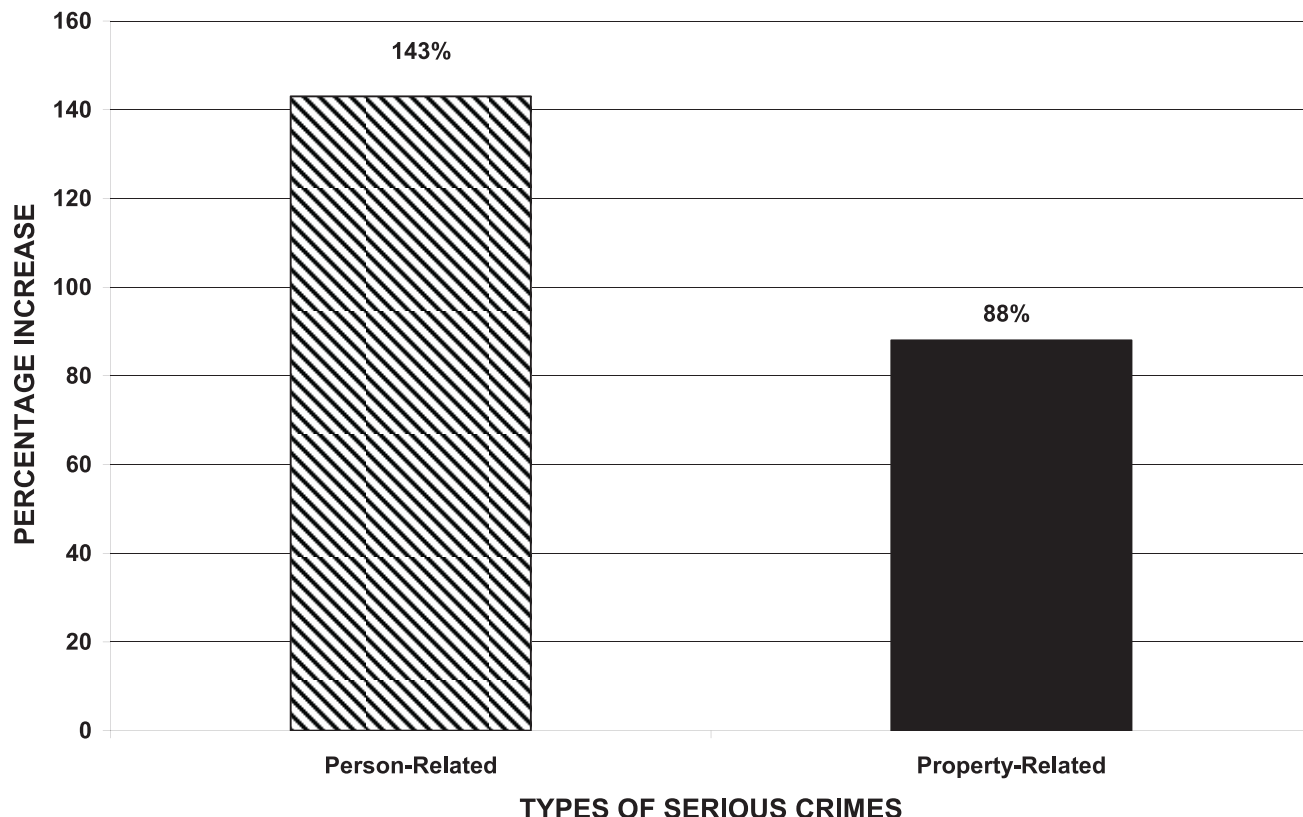
It should be noted that the victims and offenders of these Person-related and Property-related crimes must be seen as human beings. They are our brothers and sisters from our communities, from our society. And when a stakeholder has failed to take up its responsibility to deal with these individuals and crimes, the other stakeholders are forced to do so. And this is the case many a time. And more likely than not, the non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations and community-based organizations with very limited resources often take up the slack when the state or governmental agencies fail to do their part.

### **Crime in Trinidad vs. Crime in Tobago**

In the twin-island state of Trinidad and Tobago, how did the main island of Trinidad compare with its smaller "partner," Tobago over the last seventeen years with regard to Person-related and Property-related Serious Crimes? Trinidad is much more industrialized and commercially driven than Tobago, which is tourist-oriented.

Over the period 1992-2008 with regard to Person-related Serious Crimes, the smaller island of Tobago had an increase of more than twice that of the main island of Trinidad, that is, Trinidad increased by 57% and Tobago increased by 143%. With respect to Property-related Serious crimes, the picture was quite different. There was an increase of almost ninety percent (88%) in the island of Tobago but a decrease of just five percent (5%) for the island of Trinidad (see Figures 2.4 and 2.5). Therefore, **both** person-related serious crimes and property-related serious crimes in Tobago are definitely on the rise as well as person-related crimes in Trinidad.

**FIGURE 2.4**  
**Crime Rate Percent Increase for Serious Crimes:**  
**Person-Related & Property-Related for Tobago 1992-2008**

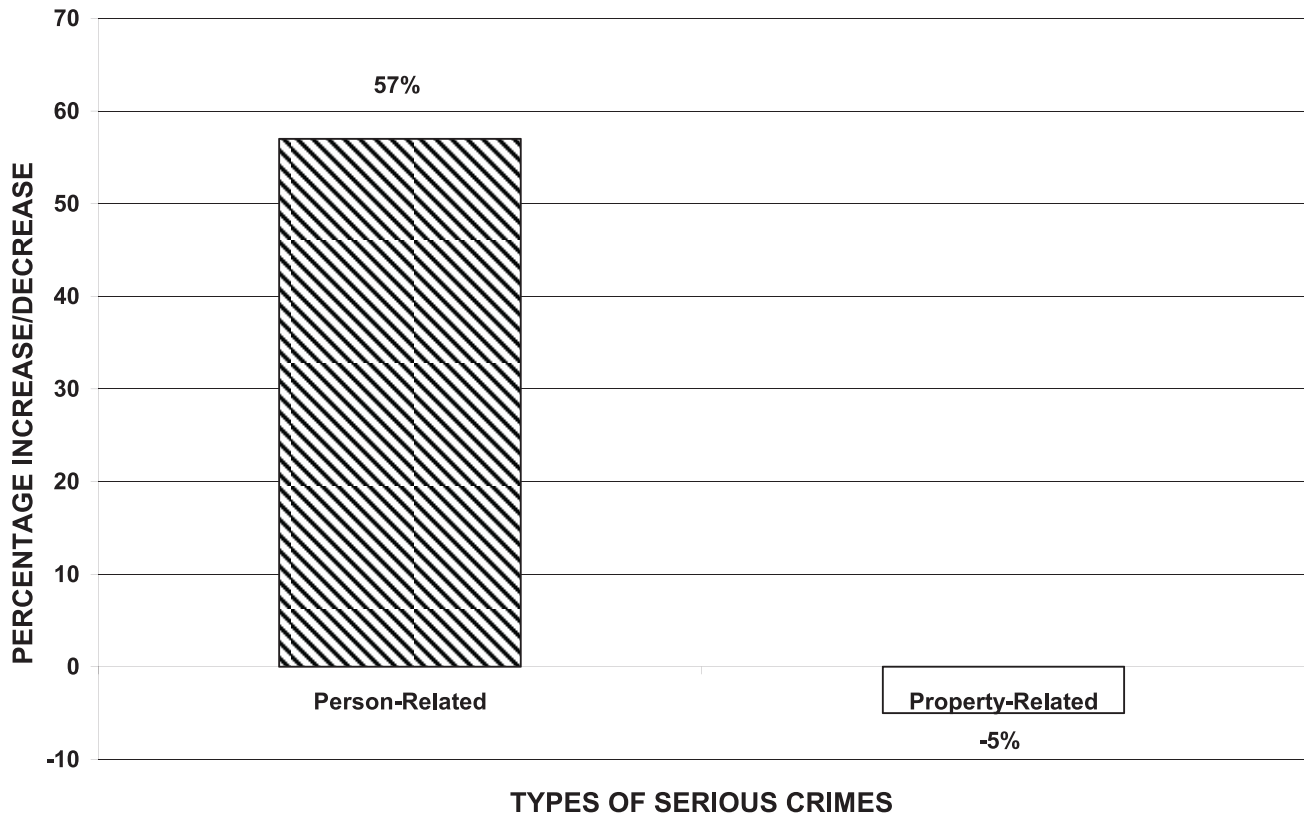


Source: (1) Trinidad and Tobago Police Service  
 (2) UTT

As a result, there is the compelling need for appropriate programmes to deal with the steadily escalating person-related and property-related serious crimes in both islands of Trinidad and Tobago. The various governmental ministries, departments and agencies as well as civil society entities must work together to bring about its prevention, reduction and management. This is the underlying message, which drives much of the work undertaken by the organisations selected in this south-south project.

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**FIGURE 2.5**  
**Crime Rate Percent Increase/Decrease for Serious Crimes:**  
**Person-Related & Property-Related for Trinidad 1992-2008**



Source: (1) Trinidad and Tobago Police Service  
 (2) UTT

### A Closer Look at Geography and Crime

Is the level of crime the same across Trinidad and Tobago? This country is divided into nine (9) Police Divisions or geographical regions. Over a seven-year period (1998 to 2004), how has the crime pattern changed across these Police Divisions? The official data revealed that in six (6) out of the nine (9) Police Divisions, there were increases in the Serious Crimes Rate per 100,000 residents. These Police Divisions were: (1) Port of Spain, (2) Western, (3) Tobago, (4) North Eastern, (5) Southern, and (6) Central.

The three (3) Police Divisions where the Serious Crimes Rate decreased over the seven-year period were: (1) Northern, (2) Eastern and (3) South Western. These latter three Police Divisions are more rural in nature in comparison to the other six (6) Police Divisions, which are more urbanized. As a result, there is need for both the state and civil society responses to crime to be appropriately distributed geographically across the country.

### Improving the Crime Detection Rates

After crimes are committed and reported to the Police, the next step is for the authorities to find the alleged person(s) and bring them before the courts. This is called the detection rate. From the official crime figures, the detection rate for Serious Crimes for Trinidad and Tobago fell by 43% over the period 1992 to 2008 from a 30% rate to a 17% rate. However, there were improvements in the detection rates for Minor Crimes and Minor Offences, that is, by 114% and 236% respectively over the same time period.

These improvements must be applauded but it is noticeable that the detection rate for Serious Crimes has

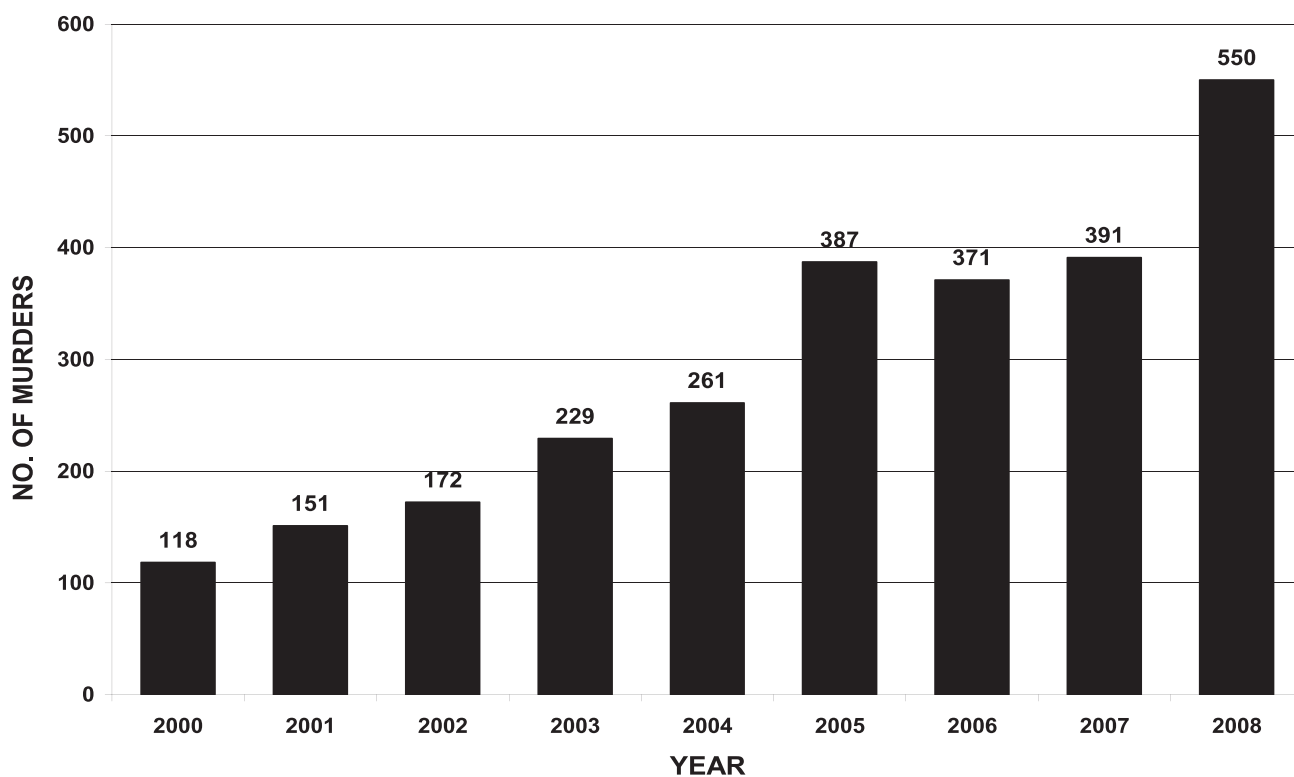
dropped as well as it is quite lower than the rates for Minor Crimes and Minor Offences. What should be done? There should be an amalgamation of efforts from the police service especially community policing initiatives, together with efforts by civil society entities in solving these crimes.

### Murder and Kidnapping: The Runaway Crimes

Over the past few years, Trinidad and Tobago has experienced a phenomenal increase in the crimes of murder and kidnapping. These crimes have led to widespread public fear and deep public concern. There has been clamouring calls from all sections of civil society for the Government to take corrective action. In fact, a historic agreement between Government and Opposition political parties to deal with kidnapping was reached in December 2005; this resulted in an Amendment to the Bail Act.

For instance in 1966, the number of **murders**, which took place in Trinidad and Tobago, was 52. In 1990, it was 94. In 2000, it was 118. It then increased every year to 151 in 2001, 172 in 2002, 229 in 2003, 261 in 2004, etc. and a whopping 550 in 2008 (see Figure 2.6). That is more than one murder a day for a country with 1.3 million people. The data suggest an almost one thousand percent (958%) increase in murders from 1966 to 2008!

**FIGURE 2.6**  
**Number of Murders Reported to the Police in Trinidad and Tobago: 2000-2008**



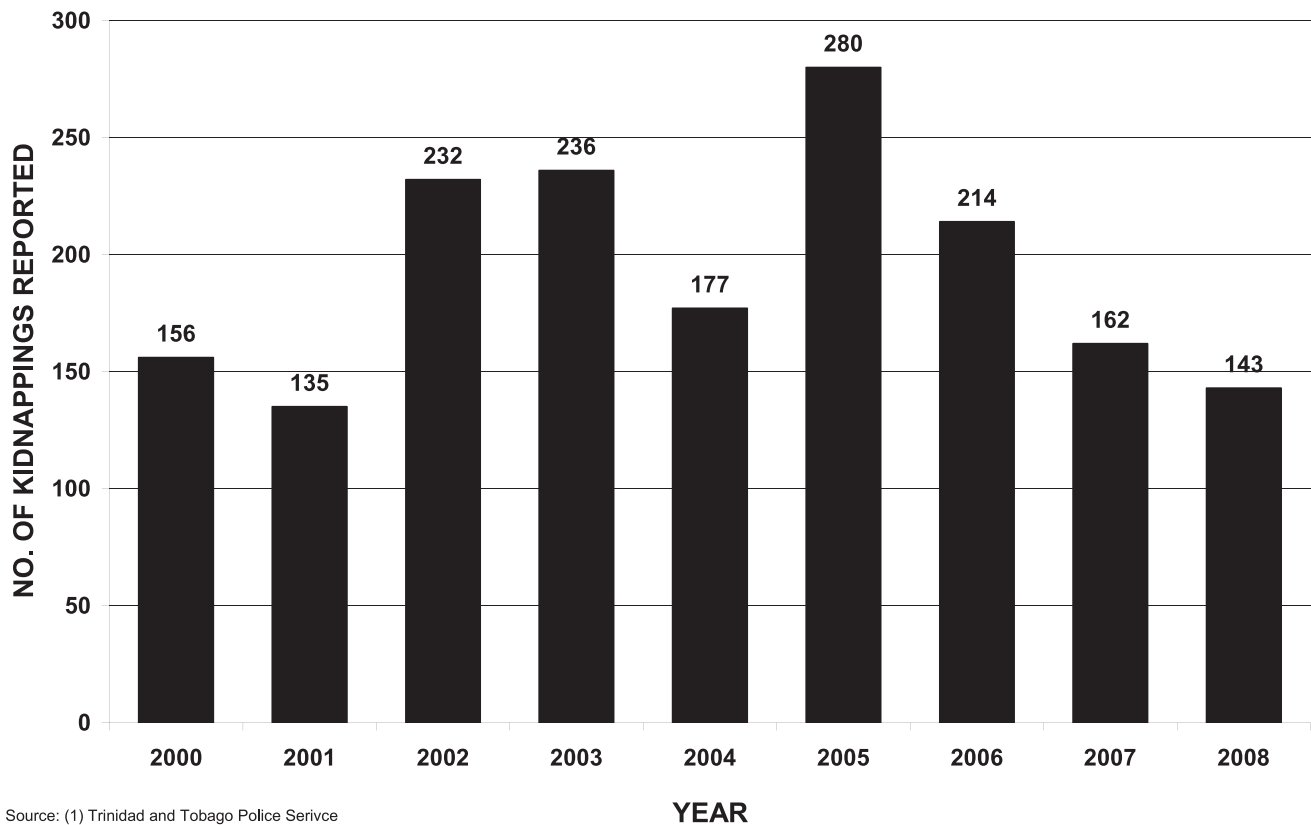
Source: (1) Trinidad and Tobago Police Service  
 (2) UTT

The pattern is quite similar for the crime of **kidnapping**. In 1994, there were 46 kidnappings reported. Four years later in 1998, there were 100 kidnappings. It then increased further. For example, it was 136 in 1999, 156 in 2000, 135 in 2001, 232 in 2002, 236 in 2003, 177 in 2004 and it was 280 in 2005 (see Figure 2.7). In fact, when these kidnapping figures for Trinidad and Tobago are compared with those from other countries of the world, Trinidad and Tobago has amongst the highest three kidnapping rates per 100,000 residents in the world! However, over the last three years, there are declines in kidnapping from 214 in 2006 to 143 in 2008.

It should be noted that there were also increases in the Serious Crimes of rapes, wounding, larceny and

robbery for the period 1992 to 2008. However, not all Serious Crimes increased over this period. Serious Crimes of Break-in and Burglary, for example, decreased.

**FIGURE 2.7**  
**Number of Kidnappings Reported to the Police in Trinidad and Tobago: 2000-2008**



For the public, it is as though not enough is being done at the right pace to deal with these two runaway crimes. Judging from widespread concerns and criticisms, the public seriously questions the ability of the government to deal effectively with these two crimes. The government itself has admitted failure but keeps promising, through new plans and expensive crime-fighting hardware, to improve its performance.

A key part of the “battle against crime,” however, is the active role of the relevant NGO’s, including those that we have selected for this project. The time is long overdue for civil society to play a more crucial role and be provided with the necessary resources to do so.

### **A View of the Penal System**

In Trinidad and Tobago, the role of civil society has been quite prominent alongside the efforts by the prison authorities when it comes to dealing with current and former prison inmates in their rehabilitative efforts. The stout-hearted efforts by the non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations and community-based organizations have been taking place both within and outside of the prison walls. Some of these services include spiritual counselling, literacy, skills and academic training and development, provision of basic amenities, provision of accommodation, provision of employment, etc.

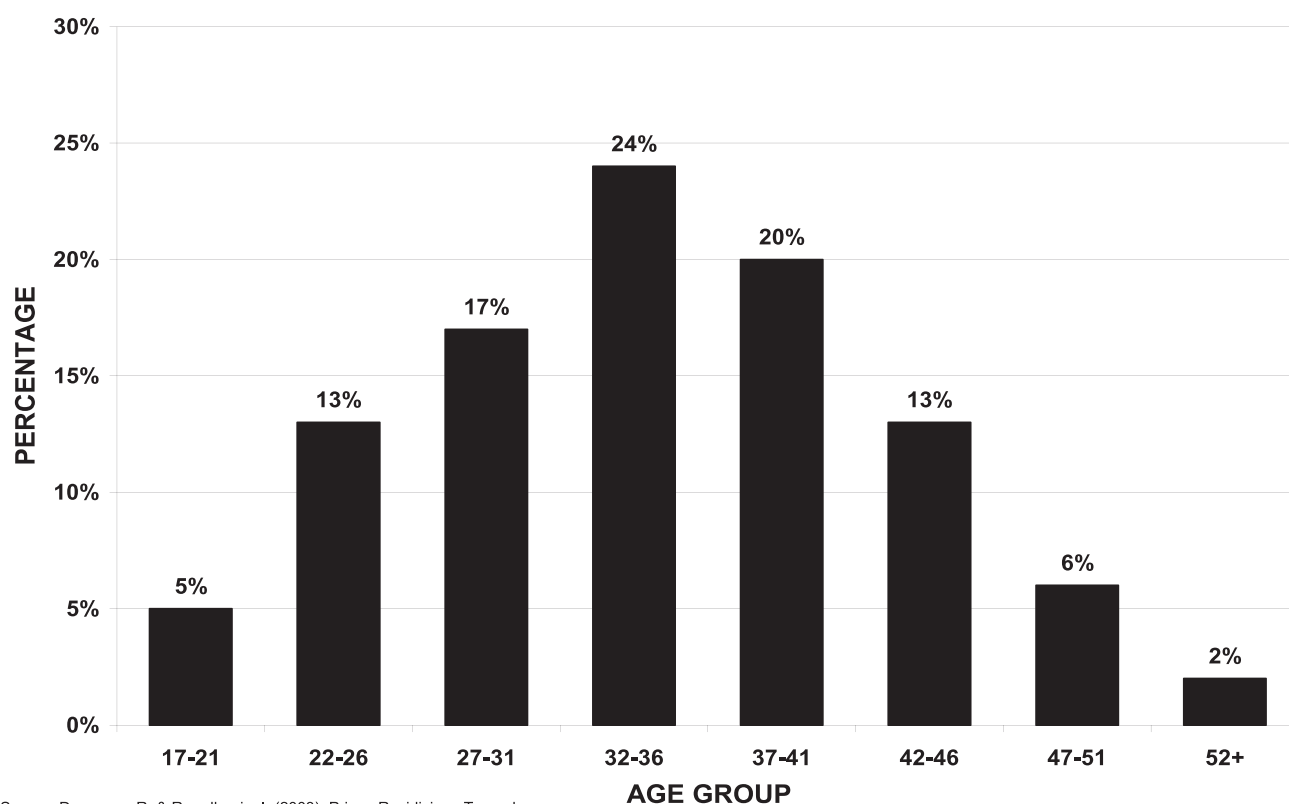
The Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service has not been able to fully implement its restorative justice and resettlement programme as yet. As such, the services provided by civil society entities are critical.

There are six prison institutions in Trinidad and Tobago where adults are held after being convicted by

the courts and given a custodial sentence. These are: (1) Carerra Convict Prison, (2) Port of Spain Prison, (3) Golden Grove Prison – Women, (4) Golden Grove Prison – Men, (5) Maximum Security Prison and (6) Tobago Convict Prison.

In 2003, the Centre for Criminology and Criminal Justice, UWI, St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago conducted for the first time in this country as well as in the entire Caribbean region a multi-phase, multi-dimensional research/policy project on “*Prison Recidivism: Towards Reduction, Rehabilitation and Reform.*” In this study, useful policy and planning data on recidivists were obtained which can be used by the authorities as well as civil society. For example, of all the recidivists in the six prisons, almost sixty percent were between 17-36 years old (see [Figure 2.8](#)), that is, young persons in society who have the potential to make meaningful contributions to society, to their families, to their communities.

**FIGURE 2.8**  
**Age Distribution (%) of All Prison Recidivists in Trinidad and Tobago**



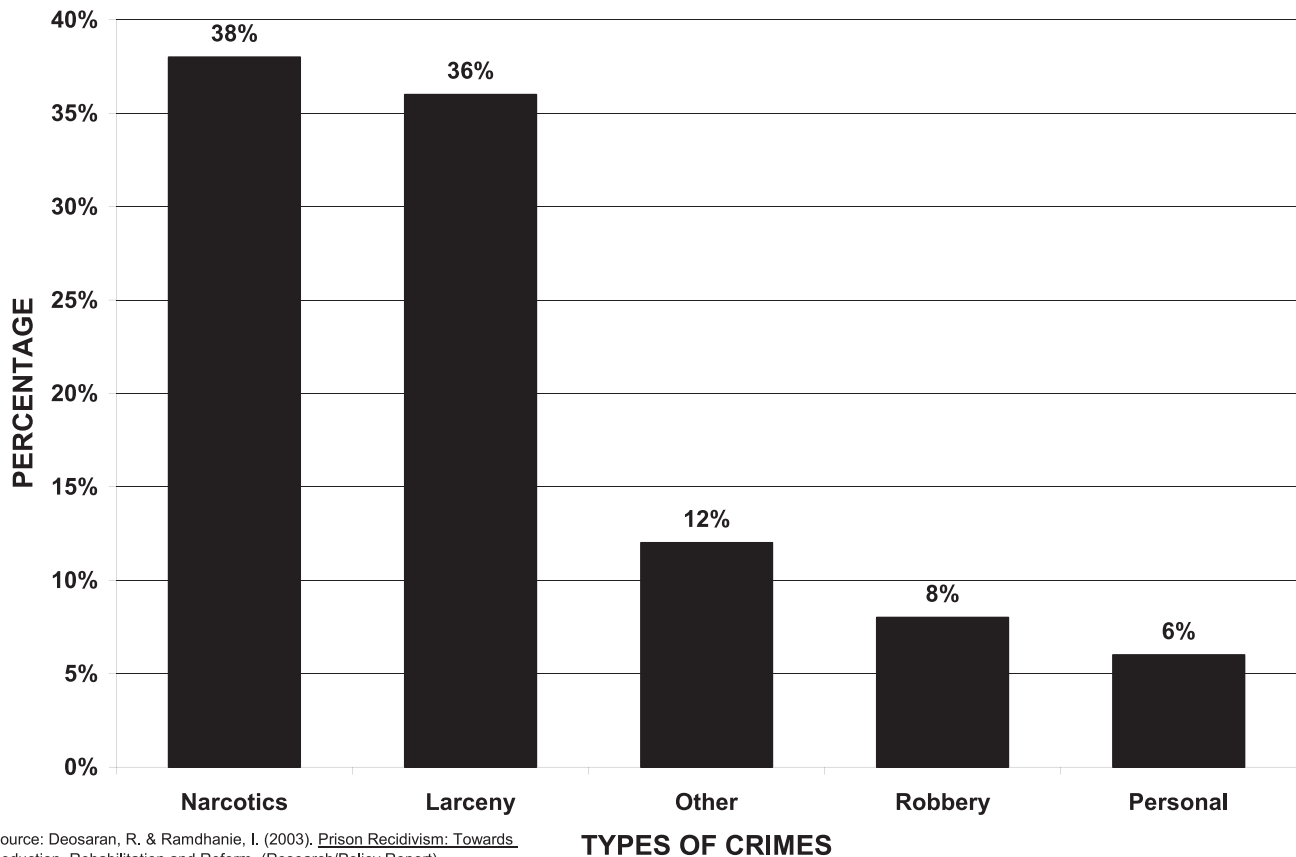
Source: Deosaran, R. & Ramdhanie, I. (2003). *Prison Recidivism: Towards Reduction, Rehabilitation and Reform.* (Research/Policy Report).

In Trinidad and Tobago, the prison authorities as well as civil society are forced to grapple with a high 60% prisoner recidivism rate, that is, six out of every ten prison inmates return to prison after they have served their sentences and have been released. In fact, these prisoners often return to prison six, seven and even ten times! This prison recidivism rate has contributed to serious problems of prison overcrowding, inability to provide adequate rehabilitation programmes to many of the prison inmates, a backlog in the nation’s courts, an increased national crime rate, etc. More than this, in terms of NGO intervention, it is important to note that with this number of prisoners, an estimated 8,000 spouses and children are left behind –most without viable economic support.

Further, of all the recidivists, almost forty percent committed narcotic-related crimes and a similar proportion committed larceny-related crimes (see [Figure 2.9](#)). What can be said from the above is that our young people in society are getting involved in drugs and stealing which results in their repeated

incarceration. The need to treat with drug addicts by government and civil society is vital in the fight against drugs.

**FIGURE 2.9**  
Types of Crimes Committed by All Prison Recidivists in Trinidad and Tobago

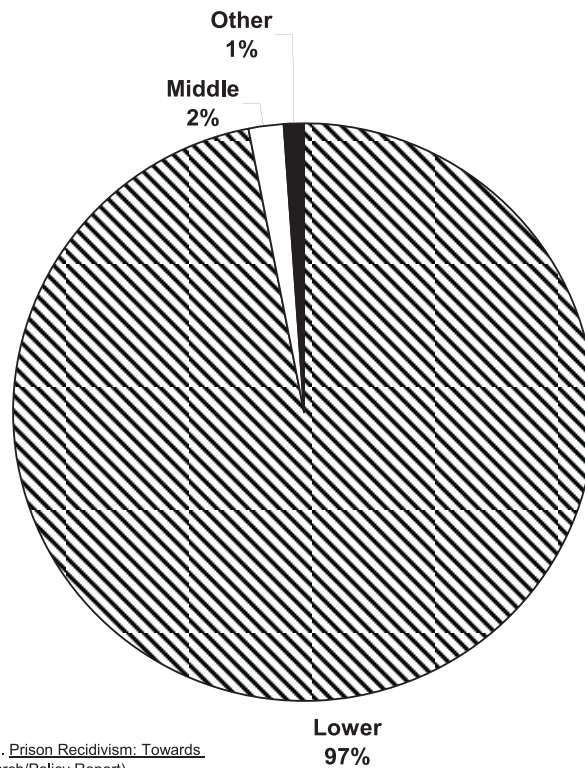


The study also revealed that for Trinidad and Tobago, two-thirds of all inmates in the adult convicted prisons were serving sentences for five years and less, that is, relatively short prison terms and will be out of prison after a short stay. What was the marital status of prison inmates? The vast majority of inmates were “single” (84%) with 15% being married. Almost all of the inmates belonged to the lower social class grouping (97%) (see [Figure 2.10](#)).

The highest proportions of inmates were Roman Catholics (29%), Baptists (14%), Hindus (13%) and Muslims (12%). In a multi-ethnic nation as Trinidad and Tobago, what was the ethnic composition of prison inmates? Just over sixty percent were of African descent, just over one-quarter was of East Indian descent and the balance were of “Mixed” ethnicity (see [Figure 2.11](#)).

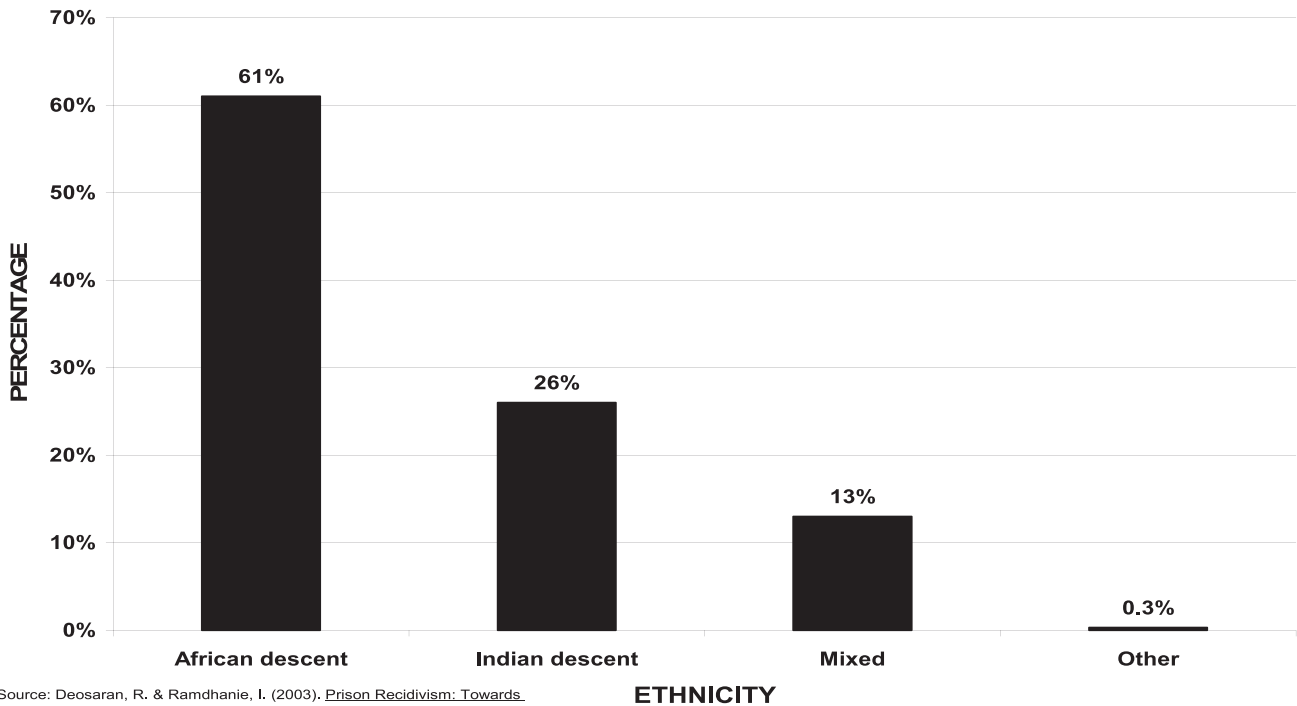
**In Trinidad and Tobago, the role of civil society has been quite prominent alongside the efforts by the prison authorities when it comes to dealing with current and former prison inmates in their rehabilitative efforts. The stout-hearted efforts by the non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations and community-based organizations have been taking place both within and outside of the prison walls. Some of these services include spiritual counseling, literacy, skills and academic training and development, provision of basic amenities, provision of accommodation, provision of employment, etc.**

**FIGURE 2.10**  
**Social Class of All Prison Inmates in Trinidad and Tobago**



Source: Deosaran, R. & Ramdhanie, I. (2003). *Prison Recidivism: Towards Reduction, Rehabilitation and Reform*. (Research/Policy Report).

**FIGURE 2.11**  
**Ethnicity of All Prison Inmates in Trinidad and Tobago**



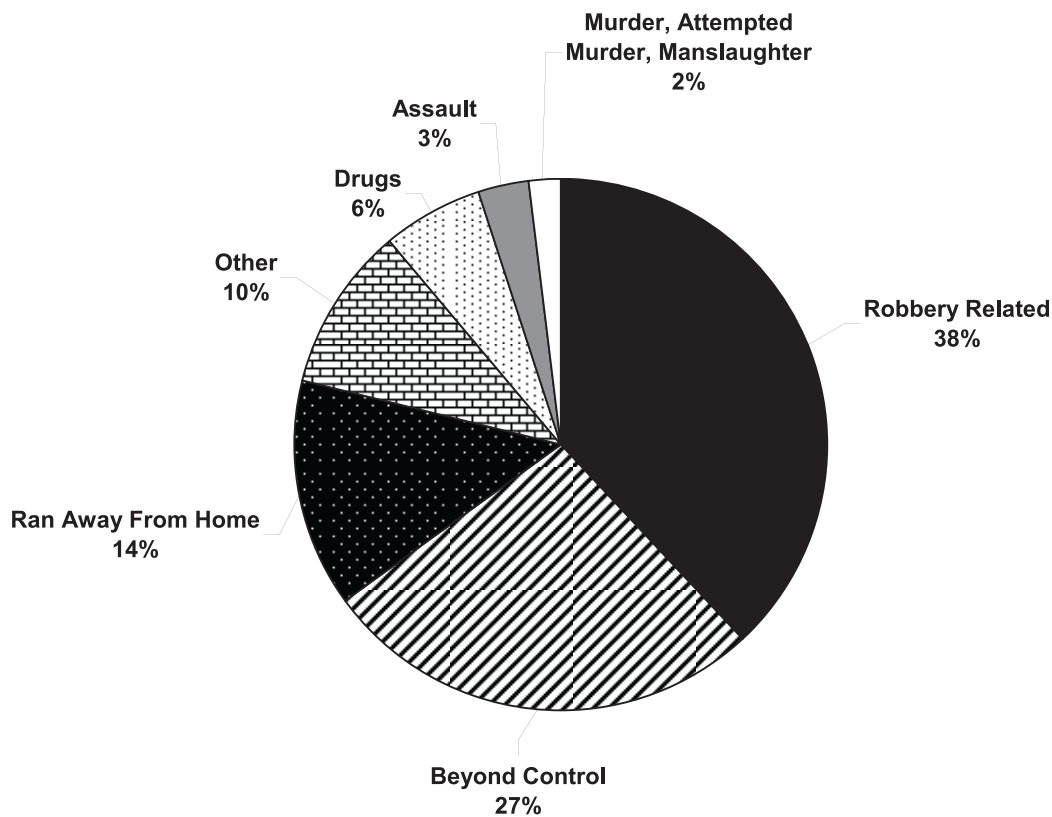
Source: Deosaran, R. & Ramdhanie, I. (2003). *Prison Recidivism: Towards Reduction, Rehabilitation and Reform*. (Research/Policy Report).

Such research information serves as a useful guide to the non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations and community-based organizations as well as government authorities on what kind of issues they will have to address with prisoners and ex-prisoners.

## Youth Crime and Violence

Criminal activities by the youth population in Trinidad and Tobago are not only high but it is increasing in our communities and schools. It is quite common to see and hear in the media of youths being involved in murders, robberies, shootings, woundings, drugs, etc. Further, our prison population is very “youthful.” In a 1997 study on the three juvenile homes for convicted juvenile offenders conducted by the Centre for Criminology and Criminal Justice, UWI, St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago, it was noted that almost forty percent of the youths were incarcerated for robbery-related crimes, almost thirty percent for being “beyond control” or behavioural problems, 6% for drugs, 3% for arms and ammunition, 3% for assault, 2% for murder and manslaughter, etc.; (see [Figure 2.12](#)).

**FIGURE 2.12**  
Types of Offences Committed by Youths  
at Three Juvenile Institutions in Trinidad and Tobago (1997)



Source: Deosaran, R. & Chadee, D. (1997). Juvenile Delinquency in Trinidad and Tobago: Challenges for Social Policy and Caribbean Criminology. *Caribbean Journal of Criminology and Social Psychology*. 1997, 2 (2):36-83.

In our secondary schools, the picture is not much brighter. In a study of secondary schools across Trinidad and Tobago (R.Deosaran, 2002, [Benchmarking Violence and Delinquency in the Secondary School: Towards a Culture of Peace and Civility](#)), the data indicated that almost half of the 1,800 students surveyed during the school term were victims of having something stolen from them, almost one-third were threatened with violence, one quarter was pushed around and taken advantage of, 6% were hit with a weapon and 6% were sexually molested. Further, over sixty percent said that for the term they stole something from school, almost forty percent said that they fought other students with a weapon, 60% used force to get something from other students, and 55% used illegal drugs.

These are some of the crime and security problems that the authorities, for example, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of National Security, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, etc. as well as non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations and community-based have to tackle in a preventative manner as well as in a management mode.

## Conclusion

As a result of the above crime and security situation in Trinidad and Tobago, there is the urgent need for an amalgamation of efforts by the government and civil society to effectively deal with issues of crime prevention, crime reduction and crime management. Government-civil partnerships are now vital. It is not

the responsibility

of any one entity but a collective one. However, it is often the case when one entity fails to play its role as it should, other entities are forced to take up the slack on matters left unattended. It should be noted that both the government and civil society have their peculiar roles to play. It is not that one has a more important role but each one's role is essential in its own right.

At times, however, it may be more strategic for certain crime prevention, reduction and management programmes that the government play a greater visible role, for example, in law enforcement, legislative reform, etc. And, it may also be so for certain programmes where the civil society should play a greater visible role, for example, in community crime prevention, spiritual counselling, etc. But, there are also times when both the government and civil society have to play an equally visible role, for example, community policing.

**To deal effectively with crime and security-related matters in any developed or developing society, it is paramount that all... stakeholders come together to fulfil their individual objectives in harmony with overall objectives for crime prevention, crime reduction and crime management. These stakeholders include the State or Government as well as civil society, for example, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, the private sector, and of great importance, the citizens themselves.**

# CHAPTER 3

## *GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO SOCIAL PROBLEMS - CHALLENGES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY*

### **Introduction**

While crime and violence are among the most severe social problems now faced by the Caribbean region, in this case Trinidad and Tobago, it is useful to provide a brief profile of the range of these other social problems, the ways in which the government is responding to them and the challenges which such problems now produce for civil society. In particular, such a social sector profile will help establish a road map for the kind of organisations selected for this south-south project and as well reveal the relevance of their respective programmes. In other words, this section seeks to put the ten (10) projects in the local context in which they are lodged.

Within recent times the Trinidad and Tobago, government (henceforth called the “government”) has placed a great emphasis on building the human capital of this country. It has also acknowledged that in order to achieve “developed country status” significant investments must be made in the social sector, especially for those social conditions that presumably lead to various forms of crime, violence and general lawlessness. This philosophy was most evident in the government’s budget presentation for 2005-2006, where the strengthening of the family was highlighted as being “an essential factor in dealing with social problems such as crime.”

During this presentation, the government noted that building the family unit “would lead to improvements in the communities and eventually in the society as a whole.” In addition to the emphasis placed on the family, the government has also placed a high priority on “fortifying the education, training and innovation systems, investing in quality healthcare, making affordable housing available as well as well as providing social support to the poor and vulnerable.” The Government has also espoused the view that all of these areas must be addressed if the social sector is to be enhanced.

This focus on the family and the social sector in general forms part of the Government’s plan to achieve developed status by the year 2020. In order to meet this target a Draft National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) has been created based on contributions from twenty-eight (28) sub-committees after consultations with professionals and citizens. This effort was “a partnership exercise.” It consists of two parts with the first articulating five (5) development priorities which are as follows: developing innovative people, nurturing a caring society, effective government, enabling competitive business and investing in sound infrastructure and environment. The latter part simply expounds on how these global goals can be achieved.

Of the five goals, two of them deal directly with the social sector - developing innovative people and nurturing a caring society. The Ministry of Social Development has been identified as having an important role in achieving these two aims. Its mandate includes planning, developing, and monitoring

social policy and programmes as well as performing social research and ensuring there is an effective system of social services delivery. It must be noted that the Ministry of Social Development is but one of several key social sector ministries. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Community Development, the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Health and Social Services Department of the Tobago House of Assembly all have significant roles in the provision of social services.

### Investing in the Social Sector

The government's focus on building human capital by focusing on the social sector can be seen by the budgetary allocations. For the fiscal year 2006 the government has allocated more than five billion dollars (TT\$5.6 billion) for social infrastructure and programming. This is a significant increase of 273% from the one point five billion dollars (TT\$1.5 billion) that was allocated for the fiscal year 2005 (Ministry of Social Development, 2005, Social Sector Investment Programme 2006: Vision 2020 Ensuring Our Future Prosperity, Addressing Basic Needs, p. 40). These funds will be allocated to the relevant social sector Ministries for programmes under their jurisdiction.

The Social Sector Investment Programme (SSIP) can be seen as one of the principal tools in fostering and enhancing the social sector. It can be defined as the "mechanism for monitoring and assessing the impact of social programmes and the level of investment by the Government in the social sector" (Ministry of Social Development, 2005, p. 9). This SSIP provides feedback on the performance of the various Ministries involved in the social sector.

Social programmes are seen as developmental, remedial or preventative. Developmental programmes simply refer to those that empower individuals and create plans to bring about social change so as to improve the welfare of the citizens of the country. The remedial programmes on the other hand seek to ameliorate the economic and social problems that confront persons in the country whilst preventative programmes focus on precluding social problems.

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In the implementation of social policy as well as the programmes themselves, several challenges have been noted such as insufficient funding, problems in monitoring and evaluation and a centralised system of social services delivery. In an effort to improve the quality of services the government is trying to ensure that there is continuous monitoring and evaluation along with greater cooperation between the Ministries. Within recent times, the government has also admitted that there is a need to decentralise the delivery of the services in an effort to provide a more efficient service. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been identified as one possible social partner to assist in this process, that is, the delivery of social services.

As was mentioned previously, in the draft National Strategic Development Plan two goals relating to the social sector have been identified – developing innovative people and a caring society. Under the larger goal of developing innovative people, three specific objectives have been highlighted. These three are as follows (Ministry of Social Development, 2005, p. 17):

- (1) *“a change in focus and relevance of the education system”*
- (2) *“the development of a capacity for research and development (R&D) and technological innovation”*
- (3) *“increased investment in worker education and training”*

Under these initiatives, there is a focus on education from early childhood straight to tertiary level education, on skills training and development as well as science, technology and innovation. Various programmes have been initiated in schools to achieve this such as the Continuous Assessment Programme (CAP) in the primary schools, de-shifting as well as continuous curriculum development training for teachers. Skills training programmes have also been recognised as a priority so as to provide an alternative for persons who have not been successful in the formal academic route. Consequently, seventeen (17) critical training programmes have been identified such as the Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme (GAPP), the Non-Traditional Skills Training for Women, the Helping Youth Prepare for Employment (HYPE), the Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme (MuST), the On the Job Training (OJT), the Programme Retraining Programme, and the Youth Training Enterprise Partnership Programme (YTEPP).

In the second social development goal of nurturing a caring society, several key areas have been identified, which are to be targeted. These areas are itemised below:

- (1) *Health*
- (2) *HIV/AIDS*
- (3) *Housing*
- (4) *Youth, Sport & Recreation*
- (5) *Labour & Social Security*
- (6) *Poverty Alleviation & Social Services*
- (7) *Gender & Development*
- (8) *Regional Development & Sustainable Communities*

The areas mentioned under these two broad development goals form the focus of the government’s work in the social sector arena.

The government has also placed great emphasis on conducting research, which would inform the creation of policy and programmes. This is in a new effort to have social policy and programmes that are based on empirical evidence rather than on assumptions. In 2005 several research projects were undertaken in areas under the social sector umbrella. For instance, there was a survey of socially displaced persons, a survey of children’s homes and a study on the status of ex-prisoners. Data from these studies will be used to improve the existing policies and programmes as well as to create new policies and programmes if they are needed. The government also plans to undertake several studies in the upcoming year (2006). Some examples of the planned initiatives are: a study to measure conformity to socially accepted norms and values in Trinidad and Tobago; a study to evaluate the levels of functional literacy as well as a project examining the status of males in society.

### **Future Plans**

In 2006, the Social Sector Investment Programme will seek to make investments in infrastructure and in institutional structure. Some of the proposed activities include improving the delivery of social services, institutional strengthening of the social sector Ministries as well as utilising NGOs to assist in the

delivery of social services. Some of the institutional initiatives would include the establishment of the Children's Authority as well as the establishment of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and Unit.

The government has also highlighted several policies that have been started or completed in 2005 and, which are to be continued during the course of the next year. It is believed that such policies would be vital in the development of the human capital of this country. Some of these policies are given below:

- *National Policy on Ageing (Draft)*
- *National Social Development Policy (Draft)*
- *National Plan of Action for children (Draft)*
- *National Policy on Deportees (Draft)*
- *Policy on NGO/Government Relations (Draft)*
- *National Gender Policy (Draft)*
- *Policy on Persons with Disability*
- *National Family Policy*

Several new programmes have also been targeted to commence in 2006. A National Parenting Programme is currently being planned, as well as a new Community Mediation Programme. Programmes to provide support for older persons and ex-prisoners are also being created. Furthermore, there are plans to develop the necessary infrastructure to assist in the identification and management of individual families.

The government has targeted several areas of the social sector that need to be further developed for this country to reach the developed status that is desired. One key area is the family and empowering this social unit. Additionally, in order to build human capital one must focus on reducing poverty as well as social integration and inclusion. Furthermore, to ensure that the people of this country access the varied social programmes that are currently offered, the government has placed an emphasis on improving the delivery of the social services, improving how the programmes target possible recipients as well as improving the monitoring and evaluating of the programmes to ensure that they provide the necessary services to the persons who need them most.

## **Conclusion**

The government has shown its commitment to "investing in the people of this country." As can be seen a number of initiatives have been created or have been conceptualised to address the social problems being experienced in the country. However, the government has also admitted that it "cannot effectively deliver all the necessary social services without assistance and has as a result identified NGOS as a possible social partner to aid in the delivery of social services."

While these governmental efforts can be applauded, it must also be noted that such investment in the social sector must continue and does not end here. The effectiveness and coverage of such social sector programmes will certainly benefit from strategic partnerships with NGO's such as the ones selected for this south-south project.

Further, the existing and new programmes must be continuously monitored and research must be ongoing so that new issues and concerns can be addressed through adjusted policies and programmes. Investment in the social sector must continue to be one of the main priorities of this government as well as future governments. This too is a crime prevention measure.

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# CHAPTER 4

## *SERVOL: FROM BEETHAM TO ISLANDWIDE - TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF YOUTHS*

### **Background, Philosophy and Mission**

This is an evaluative study done on SERVOL (Service Volunteered for All), a non-governmental organization located in one of the most depressed and crime-ridden areas in Trinidad and Tobago. Less than one mile from the commercially-vibrant capital city of Port-of-Spain, the main island of Trinidad, this area, the Beetham Estate in Laventille (the name “Beetham” was derived from one of the colonial governors of the country), reveals most of the psychological, social and political features of persistent poverty and violence. While it will be very interesting to examine the reasons why this area is so depressed and volatile, this study focuses on the emergence and role of SERVOL as a civic attempt to provide training, opportunity, and hope to Laventille. The major focus will be on SERVOL’s Adolescent Development Programme (ADP), one of its key training and youth empowerment programmes.

SERVOL was established in the 1970’s on the “Beetham Estate.” Its original founders were Father Gerard Pantin, a Roman Catholic priest and a teacher at St. Mary’s College, Mr. Wesley Hall who was a West Indian “fast-bowler” cricketer on coaching assignment with the West Indian Tobacco Company (WITCO) and Mr. Carl Weekes. At that time, Trinidad and Tobago was experiencing deplorable social conditions, financial hardships, high youth unemployment and severe dislocations in the educational system. In particular, the residents of the district of Laventille in which the Beetham Estate is lodged, felt that they were being “victimized the most,” and decided to take things into their own hands with several riots, marches and violent demonstrations. Buildings and businesses were smashed, looting followed with some young protestors jailed. The “grievances by the black urban youth” were sharply expressed through a guerrilla movement, the National Union of Freedom Fighters (NUFF), who allegedly engaged in robberies to support their movement.

These various forms of youth unrest and rebellion culminated in a politically charged “Black Power” march along the East-West corridor (an urban stretch of about ten miles leading into the capital city of Port-of-Spain, Trinidad). Engineered mainly by young, black leaders, the Black Power march into Port-of-Spain became a serious threat to the Government, so much so that the cabinet held several hurried meetings and felt compelled to declare a state of emergency. The Prime Minister gave several broadcasts to appease the population and made promises for social and economic reconstruction, especially for the black youths.

It was in such turbulent, restless circumstances that the three citizens stated above realized that they needed to take the initiative to provide some opportunity for the young residents of Laventille to build their self-esteem, improve their lives, and contribute to the civility of their neighbourhoods. Father Pantin, along with Mr. Hall and Mr. Weekes, personally visited the areas where these discontented and angry youths resided in order to determine with them, why they were so angry and

frustrated. The first “consultation” visit failed: the trio were met with community hostility and suspicion. They tried again and soon, they were able to “win over” a large number of the trouble youths in the area, enough to make “a start towards reconstruction.” And so, the name SERVOL emerged.

SERVOL realized that “the major problems to be addressed in Trinidad and Tobago at that time had to do with the breakdown in family life, criminal tendencies, lack of education and training, and lack of employment opportunities.” These were some of the challenges that fuelled the creation of SERVOL.

They trio saw that they needed to develop “an integrated human development programme

designed to alleviate poverty through the empowerment of children, adults, and communities who live in disadvantaged situations.” This meant the Beetham area in Laventille. The objectives of SERVOL were not only to work for the underprivileged, but also to “get the underprivileged to work for themselves.” The SERVOL strategy was to encourage the affected youths “to formulate goals and provide the motivation to help themselves.” SERVOL has also encouraged such “self development of people” by acting as “a small but important catalyst for change.” They also continuously search for “new models of development to be implemented on a larger scale.”

Unique to SERVOL is their philosophical approach to solving social problems. They believe those helping others must base their approach on a “philosophy of ignorance;” this is where one should “never presume the needs of others without asking.” They also believe that one should carefully listen to what an individual has to say, “before telling them what to do.” This approach also involves the “philosophy of attentive listening.”

Lastly, through the “philosophy of respectful intervention” one respects others fully, and so we are less likely to have an attitude of cultural arrogance. SERVOL’s mission statement encapsulates the goal of its founders. It reads as follows: “*SERVOL is an organization of weak, frail, ordinary, imperfect yet hope filled and committed people seeking to help weak, frail, ordinary, imperfect, hope drained people become agents of attitudinal and social change in a journey which leads to total human development. It does so through respectful intervention in the lives of others and seeks to empower individuals and communities to develop as role models for the nation.*”

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Father Pantin further explained that about three months after the group’s formation, Mr. Wesley Hall returned to Barbados. This meant one of the key attractions (cricket) for the youth had gone. Father Pantin then decided to make a formal request to the Commander in Chief at the time, of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, to allow some soldiers and sailors to be assigned to him in voluntary positions to

**The objectives of SERVOL were not only to work for the underprivileged, but also to “get the underprivileged to work for themselves.”**

help build and implement the SERVOL programme at Laventille. Given the prevailing mood “to do something for the youths,” his request was accepted and about twelve soldiers and sailors were seconded to work under SERVOL. They were exposed to the communities through on-site visits and were trained through this first-hand experience to be field workers, to collect the necessary information for SERVOL, and to make arrangements for those affected by the “rough social conditions.” Father Pantin stated that though SERVOL opens its doors to all those in society, the staff of SERVOL sees it as “an integrated human development programme designed to alleviate poverty through the empowerment of children, adults and communities who live in disadvantaged situations.”

### **The ADP and Financial Support**

SERVOL has moved on to develop many programmes to help the problems associated with the different age groups. The Adolescent Development Programme (ADP) was introduced and designed to meet the needs of persons aged 16-19 years old. These are individuals “without basic education, illiterate, unemployed, and the most volatile group.” This group is at “the age where they are easily influenced by peers, and something had to be done to inculcate socially adjusted habits.” SERVOL realized that the academically oriented education system in the schools was “not for everyone.” Hence, they developed technical and vocational skills classes. Some of the programmes geared towards this group were welding, plumbing, food preparation and garment construction. The development of these classes “reduced the 35% dropout rate to 5%.” That is, while in its early years, the programmes experienced a dropout rate of thirty five percent, this was eventually improved to only five percent by a number of “confidence-building” techniques.

The connectivity from one programme to another within the SERVOL model is quite interesting. For example, from its lower level Junior Life Centres in the 2002/3 period, one hundred and two of the four hundred and sixty four youths enrolled went into the ADP for skills and attitude change training. In this ADP, SERVOL’s annual report shows that over four hundred youths have graduated with full skill certificates. The ADP also prepares the youths for “advanced technical courses,” such as, computer technology and advanced electronics. Such courses are usually done in partnership with the private sector. It must be noted again that this ADP also serves as a “restoration centre” for those youths who find the academic work in the formal school system “a bit too frustrating.” After their stay at the ADP, such youths become empowered to deal with the challenges posed by the formal educational system.

Due to constant revisions and additions, many of SERVOL’s programme costs have been continuously rising. From their last budget, the Adolescent Development Programme, which can be seen as the major crime prevention programme, had a total expenditure of US\$3,000,000 or TT\$18,000,000. This, coupled with other programmes, amounts to a total of approximately US\$5,000,000 or TT\$30,000,000 per year, which suggests a cost of approximately US\$417,000 or TT\$2,500,000 per month needed to run SERVOL. Partnering with many other organizations has helped to reduce costs and alleviate problems which SERVOL are unable to solve on their own. Over the years, SERVOL has met many challenges, but have managed to overcome the majority of them. Today, they still witness “an unwillingness of young people to participate,” but this has been reduced from “the original open hostility and suspicions.” They often have the problem of placing individuals into training programmes that are suitable to them “because of space or lack of resources.” They see these problems as “being reduced daily but the problem of financial support has been increasing substantially.”

### **Tackling Community Problems and Spreading Its Wings**

The interviews that the field workers conducted over time highlighted many requests from the community to help the youths in terms of training and employment. The team listened carefully to these pleas from elders of the community, as well as the many stories from females and mothers about the breakdown in family life caused “by the fathers of their children.” They wanted their children to learn

differently and get out of “that mindset.” And so, SERVOL responded by seeking to address the four following major problems:

- (1) *Breakdown in Family Life*
- (2) *Criminal Tendencies*
- (3) *Lack of Education and Training*
- (4) *Employment Opportunities*

From the above categorization, SERVOL shaped three specific objectives and then moved to establish a series of SERVOL Life Centres throughout Trinidad. Their general objectives are as follows:

- (1) *SERVOL’s aim is not only to work for the underprivileged but to get the underprivileged to work for themselves, to get them “out of the stagnation” they were in and to help them formulate goals they could realize instead of sitting around and idly being pulled into “a life of crime.”*
- (2) *SERVOL is also interested in the self-development of people and made a point of stressing, “they were not there as a welfare organization or for the mass transformation of society.” Father Pantin said that they saw themselves as “a small but important catalyst for change.”*
- (3) *Another objective of SERVOL is to “continuously search for new models for development which were capable of being taken up by bigger organizations to be implemented on a larger scale.”*



***The Beetham Gardens  
SERVOL Life Centre***

***Father Pantin, one of the founders of  
SERVOL with interviewer Petal Sampson***



### **SERVOL’s Three-Step Philosophical Approach to Problem-Solving**

Father Pantin further explained that the objectives were based on helping communities towards self development, by knowing exactly what individuals want, and also based on strategies for helping individuals achieve and accomplish only what they can afford to pay for. This led to the question, “how

can we help you?” This enabled them to keep their objectives “tailored, but meaningful and effective.” In order to keep in line with the above objectives and keep the success of SERVOL sustained, Father Pantin stated that SERVOL works with a particular philosophical approach. It is helpful to recall the three steps in this general philosophy:

- (1) *Anyone trying to help disadvantaged people must base his/her approach on a philosophy of ignorance. This means that one should never presume the needs of others without asking them exactly what their needs are and what type of help they require.*
- (2) *The next step is that of attentive listening. One should listen carefully to what individuals tell them so that they are convinced that their voice is the most important element in their own development. This approach should be kept constant for effective results.*
- (3) *He also spoke of what SERVOL believes prevents man from helping others; it is the attitude of cultural arrogance. They believe that this tends to make people believe that “because they come from a certain background, ethnicity or certain income bracket, or benefited from a certain education they may be superior to those less fortunate.” But SERVOL believes that through respectful intervention, by respecting others fully, both parties can benefit.*

Now that SERVOL has fully established themselves, they are now able to meet the “needs of communities” outside of Beetham. They have established several Life Centres in rural districts. They believe that by concentrating on two age groups, children 0-5 years old and adolescents 13-19 years old, they could have “a better quality programme and a more effective use of available resources.” The choices for these two age groups were based on the following criteria:

- (1) The fact that the early years of a child’s life are “critical in helping inculcate values and morals.” By getting to this group before “the ills of society get to them,” and by introducing proper guidance, this would ensure a reduction in illiteracy and most importantly create an alternative to “a life of crime.”
- (2) The periods in which an adolescent leaves school and prepares to take his/her place in the world are also absolutely critical. This is the period “when individuals are easily persuaded into delinquent activities and are harder to change.” By getting through to this group, it would make them “less vulnerable to the temptations of delinquency and crime.”

They hoped that by helping these two groups “get on the right track,” good values, attitudes and “a good way of living” could be inculcated into their lives and maintained. This would thus help reduce the district’s rate of crime - from misdemeanours to major offences. Such intervention would also help those who graduate from SERVOL to take charge and uplift their own impoverished, crime-ridden and depressed areas. According to SERVOL, the 16-19 year old adolescents were “a crucial group that needed urgent attention.” These adolescents were the “future of Trinidad and Tobago, and they were “vastly under-educated, illiterate and without employment.” From past research over the years, SERVOL pointed out, there are serious consequences when youths “are not motivated or intellectually stimulated enough.” It often leads to “a life of crime and constant frustration and violence.”

Drawing on their early experience in Laventille, SERVOL stated that the people of Laventille cried out to them: “Help our 16-19 year old children who have either not succeeded in getting into a secondary school, or have dropped out of secondary school, or who have finished their schooling but are unable to find employment.” Thus, SERVOL began to develop programmes of study and workshops geared towards this major group. They opened centres in six skill areas:

- (1) A welding shop in 1971

- (2) A plumbing facility in 1972
- (3) A woodwork shop in 1973
- (4) An electrical training centre in 1974
- (5) Food preparation and garment construction in 1975
- (6) An auto mechanic's garage in 1976 to meet as many needs and interests as possible.



*Workshops at the Beetham Life Centre*

### **SERVOL's Self Evaluation**

With the introduction of these programmes, an internal study was done quite early to evaluate its success. It was found that there was “a 35% drop out rate and even those who succeeded were finding it hard to obtain employment.” This posed a problem because it would mean they would soon revert “to a life on the street with a very negative self image and low self esteem.” Father Pantin felt these were the same traits they had initially “acquired from their lack of success in the overly academic life of secondary education,” which characterized the current system of education in vogue. Father Pantin soon realized together with the other implementers at SERVOL that “the problem with these students was an internal one.” It had to do with “their attitude, the way they were thinking.” This spurred the development of a supplemental Attitude Development Programme (ADP), which helped these adolescents who had been “conditioned to failure by their life experiences.” Due to the programme's success, all students in the Adolescent Training Programme now go through this three month ADP that helps them answer questions such as “Who am I?” and “Why do I do certain things?” This psychological induction allows them to explain their problems “in relation to society.” It is essentially “a social psychological rite of passage.”



*Students listening attentively  
in the SERVOL  
self-awareness class*

### **Institutional Linkages to Reduce Crime and Delinquency**

SERVOL established strategies and sustainable linkages with government and NGOs to work towards the reduction of crime and delinquency in Trinidad and Tobago in several ways:

1. **The Youth Training Centre (YTC):** This is a SERVOL partnership with a juvenile home for convicted youths, males, 16 to 18 years old. In this programme, prison officers of the YTC are trained by SERVOL staff in the Adolescent Development Programme (ADP). This “training the partner” module is designed to prepare the YTC officers to work alongside SERVOL instructors in delivering the ADP for young people in the juvenile prison. This programme was initiated at the request of the Commissioner of Prisons. In other words, the restorative arm of SERVOL reaches into the youth prison through the techniques provided to these YTC officers.
2. **Rebirth House:** The ADP is also administered to recovering addicts at the Rebirth House, a drug rehabilitation centre, and, according to SERVOL staff, this programme has been “successful in helping the addicts switch from a life of crime to a functional life.”
3. **The Secondary School Transfer Programme:** Delinquent students from “high risk” secondary schools are put into the ADP at SERVOL “in order to change their habits and attitudes.” At the end of the programme, students are given the choice to continue skills training at SERVOL or to return to their original school. SERVOL has so far provided this programme to over five hundred and eighteen students who have successfully gone on to continue skills training at SERVOL, the alternative to the formal education system.

SERVOL continued its success into the 1990’s with the introduction of the ADP into many “high risk” secondary schools that were “experiencing rising levels of delinquency.” By keeping their programmes community-based and parent-oriented, they were able to get “the maximum benefits” of the programme. Members of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force again trained with them and worked in the inner city communities with the grassroots leaders, parents and the recalcitrant youths. This SERVOL/Defence Force/Community partnership focused on such areas as community development, sports, culture and creative activity. Due to its level of success with such programmes, SERVOL was able to assist NGO’s in several other countries such as The Bahamas, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Ireland and even South Africa.

### **The Organizational and Programme Layout**

Our interviews revealed that persons in the programme are generally involved in the decision making process. This strategy helps strengthen staff involvement and commitment to the programmes under their immediate charge. There is a Board of Directors at the top of the organizational structure with an Executive Committee below it. Their function is the same as in any organization; the Executive Committee examines data gathered from the field and makes recommendations, but “keeps tight quality control of what goes on and how plans are implemented.”

There are also spot checks that ensure that programmes are being executed properly in accordance with SERVOL’s mission. The Executive Committee is headed by Ruth Montrichard (chairperson), and comprises Father Gerard Pantin, Mr. Gerard D’Abreu, Mr. Henrick Hanomansingh, Mr. Rupert King (secretary), Mr. George McLean, Ms. Patricia Mosca, Mr. Martin Pacheco and Ms. Gillian Semper. Some of these members also head other programmes such as *The Early Childhood Centre, the Adolescent Development Programme and the Junior Life Centre.*

This Executive Committee is especially important since without them, implementation of plans cannot proceed. This Committee also facilitates any revisions that may have to be made in light of “changing circumstances and conditions.” SERVOL has also arranged for many of its central office staff to be part of the management structure at its various decentralised Life Centres – rural and urban. We gathered that major revisions concerning the philosophy and running of SERVOL “have not been made because of the success of the various programmes over the years.” They have, however, added a “consciousness-raising” event. This is the annual “Poor Man’s Christmas Dinner” which serves as a fund-raising event.

This takes place each year around Christmas at the Hilton Hotel, Trinidad. Guests give a donation to SERVOL for a Christmas meal of soup and bread.

Classes are conducted in each of SERVOL'S Life Centre's according to the respective programmes. Some of the educational classes available are:

- (1) Adolescent Development and Skills Programme: welding, plumbing, woodwork shop, electrical training, food preparation, garment construction and auto mechanic classes.
- (2) Teacher Training Programme for ADP
- (3) Hospitality Training Programme
- (4) Hi-tech Centre (Computer and Electronics)
- (5) Training to prison officers offered through ADP for counselling of young people in the juvenile prison, Youth Training Centre (YTC)

Data are collected from fieldwork exercises and plans are made according to the "needs of society in conjunction with resources available." According to the last budget that was produced by SERVOL, the Adolescent Development Programme had a total expenditure of US\$2,857,000 (TT\$18 million), the Early Childhood Programme expenses totalled US\$2,222,000 (TT\$14 million) and the Sunshine Hill Centre over US\$1 million. When all the administrative expenses of the other Life Centres are added, it costs about thirty million dollars a year to operate the entire organization.

### **Partnering for Success**

In order to keep SERVOL's programming effective and sustainable, some key partnerships are necessary. A list of these eight partnerships is presented below. These organizations have helped fund certain programmes and have provided SERVOL with "some wider recognition and support."

- (1) Institutions such as Oxford University act as their external examiner for their teacher training programme; over six hundred teachers have been trained and examined so far
- (2) They also have links with proprietors in the district of El Socorro where they once rented buildings at low costs, but which SERVOL now owns
- (3) They also link with the Inter-American Foundation of the U.S.A.
- (4) The Canadian International Development Agency and the George Bishops Fund help with the construction of Life Centres. This construction involved carpenters who have been trained by SERVOL
- (5) The Bernard Van Leer Foundation
- (6) CEBEMO of Holland
- (7) HELVETAS of Switzerland
- (8) SAVE THE CHILDREN of Canada

### **SERVOL: Prospects and Challenges**

Projects which begin with a vision accompanied by individual passion usually face a series of unexpected ups and downs. Quite often, the vision and passion are challenged by frustration and obstacles which are always around the corner. So it was with SERVOL and its community programmes. Some of these obstacles were, and to some degree still are:

#### **(1) Lack of Interest**

An unwillingness of the young people to participate, since the targeted youths saw Father Pantin and SERVOL staff as being "out of their element" and as a consequence, the suspicious youths did not take SERVOL seriously at the beginning. They perceived Father Pantin in particular as an individual "who was just going to be here today but gone tomorrow." Father Pantin therefore felt he had to

prove to them that he was indeed serious. He decided that the best way that this would be achieved was to have people from the area involved in the SERVOL mission. Today, some of that scepticism still exists, though to a much lesser extent since the organization has “proved itself several times over.”

## **(2) Recruitment**

A number of the men in the country’s army came from the Laventille area. When SERVOL wanted to start its training programmes, they decided to send these same “district men” to recruit the young people. SERVOL also utilised well-known athletes who were also from the area for this recruitment purpose. Together, these men who were considered role models and “grassroots people” by the Laventille youths joined in the SERVOL mission. The troubled minds of the marginalised youths found some ease. SERVOL and Father Pantin saw hope.

## **(3) Cultural and Learned Arrogance**

SERVOL was faced with cultural and learned arrogance from the persons in the community. Simply put, the people in the community thought that ‘they knew it all’ and as a result they felt that there was nothing anyone “from outside” could possibly teach them. Another factor that contributed to this “cultural and learned arrogance” syndrome was the fact that they “were comfortable in the conditions under which they lived” in, hence there was “nothing anybody could say that would change their minds.” From this experience, Father Pantin learnt that it is far better to ask such people first what they want, what their needs are and how they see themselves helping to bring about some fulfilment of those needs. The “cultural and learned arrogance” had to be softly neutralized, not hastily confronted.

## **(4) Community Investment**

In seeking to provide some assistance to the Laventille youths, SERVOL also provided a challenge to them. Some youths described this challenge as having “a catch to it.” The challenge was that the targeted youths had to supply part of the money for the programme, and they could provide such “investment” by doing “a minimum task” for which they would receive money. In using such a “co-opting technique,” the youths were made to understand that “nothing in this world comes for free,” thus signifying quite early that “everyone has to work to achieve something in life.”

## **(5) Target Group**

There was and still is the challenge of shaping a programme to ensure that it suits the present circumstances as well as the future plans of the targeted individual. This challenge required some familiarity with the individual’s home life and family structure. SERVOL organised some volunteers to go into the community, meet homes and conduct surveys to get a better understanding of the family structure in Laventille. What became evident to SERVOL quite early was that a number of the family units were made up of a single parent, with the parenting done mainly by the single mother.

## **(6) Deserted Homes**

In many cases, there was the absence of both parents, with the guardianship role being taken over by an older sibling, grandparent(s) or an uncle and aunt. It is questionable whether such parental substitution produces a wholesome youth. If the home is not reasonably regulated and bonded, it makes the work of training institutions harder. Recognising this domestic deficit, SERVOL immediately prepared a report and sent it to the Government making them aware of the state of

affairs so that “appropriate arrangements could be made” for family support, etc. Father Pantin saw that “this family structure would have a negative effect on a country’s society.” SERVOL sent this report in 1970, with recommendations to deal with the problem. However, nothing was done. Father Pantin regrets this since, as he indicated, the problems have grown worse. The SERVOL report stated: “*A society that is out of control since there are no father figures in the household to maintain discipline and instruct their children of their responsibility.*” Of course, the entire question of what is a “stable family,” what is a “proper family structure,” what are the Caribbean’s historical antecedents and norms in these respects are all very pertinent matters for a fuller discussion.

### **(7) Attitude Adjustment**

As SERVOL moved its mission into Laventille, this challenge was quickly recognized. It appeared as an “attitude problem.” What SERVOL then decided to do was to introduce the Attitude Development Problem (ADP) classes; here the students were taught “to improve an understanding of themselves, their needs, hence allowing for a change in their attitudes.” At the end of the classes, students were able to have “improved self-confidence and so face the world and not become easily intimidated.”

### **(8) Lack of Monetary Funds**

The continuous lack of monetary funds. The SERVOL programme helps a number of individuals, and as a result, their resources are stretched to the limits every month. Apart from government support, SERVOL upkeep itself by receiving funding from local sources as well as assistance from foreign groups and companies that have seen the quality of work that their programme is accomplishing. They also have a fund-raiser called the ‘*Poor Man’s Dinner,*’ which is their main annual fund-raiser and this is usually held during the Christmas season. Here patrons are served dinner that consists of a loaf of bread and a bowl of soup for which they pay about US\$50. They also have the assurance from the Government that it will pay the salaries of SERVOL’s teachers. This agreement has been maintained by each of the successive governments. SERVOL also receives US\$2,500 per year from the government, to help support administrative costs. There is a need to review this figure since the arrangement dates back to 1970. To SERVOL, their main obstacle will always be that of financial support since the fees paid by students “are not enough to fund the institutions.” However, it seems evident that SERVOL will continue to survive because there are individuals and companies who recognize the value of its programmes.

## **Four Features of SERVOL’s Success**

Four features of SERVOL’s success with the ADP are listed:

### **(1) Feedback**

There are several ways to gauge the success of SERVOL’s diverse programmes, especially its Adolescent Development Programme (ADP). The ADP programme can be judged by the feedback given by the young participants. It can be judged by the number of youths who find satisfactory employment after being trained at SERVOL. It can be judged by the number of youths who lived useful and crime-free lives at least five years after leaving SERVOL. It can also be judged by the number of youths who, having been trained at SERVOL, are now part of its teaching and management structure. Building civic and empowering attitudes is quite necessary. But in SERVOL’s case, it will be a rather convincing argument if these attitudes could be seen, that is, manifested in useful action by the youths. Father Pantin used several examples to indicate the success of the ADP. He pointed out the “many times” that graduates who have now entered “all walks of life” call out to him on the streets, expressing their appreciation and gratitude for having gotten the opportunity at SERVOL.

## (2) Intervention

One of the students he prominently remembers is a young lady who at first “had a lot of resentment towards anyone that got in her pathway.” It was because of this conduct that both teachers and students alike “treaded carefully when they came into contact with her.” After getting into a fight with another student, Father Pantin took her into a room and allowed her “to vent her frustration for almost three hours, at the end of which she was able to settle down and speak in a calm manner explaining to Father Pantin what happened in her family.” It was then that both teachers and student were able to gain a better understanding of the nature of her personality and learn how to deal with her peculiar circumstances. Such gentle intervention in her life led to positive changes. Instead of “a life of crime and destruction” she went on to get married and “live a normal life.” SERVOL can recall many other such positive individual transformations.

## (3) Job Placement

Apart from such psychological transformations, SERVOL seems to have some success with finding jobs for the youths from the ADP programme. And all in all, this helps keep them away from their prior delinquency or “hopelessness.” To expand on this particular point, Father Pantin explained, when a young person is educated under the SERVOL programme, they become a well-formed individual since SERVOL’s ADP is aimed at developing a “holistic individual.” SERVOL focuses on both the academic and vocational aspect of the individual as well as the behavioural attitude of the individual. The companies in turn, know that when they employ individuals who trained with SERVOL, they would be employing an individual who came into the company with a vision in mind to be the best that he/she could be always putting their best foot forward. For this reason, several companies in the city come to SERVOL for skilled graduates from the ADP. The search for quantified accounts of success can be helped if a tracer study is implemented. That is, track the dropouts, and also trace the graduates of SERVOL over a five to ten year period in the first instance.

## Gaining the Highest National Award

It should be noted that Father Pantin has also been recognised for his role in creating and sustaining SERVOL. This was seen when he was awarded the Trinity Cross, which is Trinidad and Tobago’s highest national award (for his work at SERVOL). This award demonstrates that the society is aware and appreciates the work being done by this organization. This too can be viewed as a sign of success.



*The Trinity Cross being presented to Father Pantin for his work at SERVOL*

## Sustaining SERVOL’s Servitude

SERVOL will always be sustained by the funding of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, private companies as well as foreign companies. Furthermore, the passion, dedication and obvious commitment of SERVOL leadership and staff help ensure that it will survive and continue to serve.

SERVOL's style of teaching in the ADP differs from that of the standardized version in the other schools. In SERVOL's method, there is a lot of student interaction. In fact, SERVOL has recommended that this "unique style of teaching" be widely implemented since this student "responsive approach" has contributed "so much to its success." This responsive approach to teaching allows the students to converse with their teachers "one on one." This in turn allows for the teacher to have an enhanced understanding of the personality of each student and allows for the student-teacher relationship to be far above average.



*Teachers conduct a class at the  
SERVOL Beetham Gardens Centre*

SERVOL's sustainability also rests with its very viable organizational structure. There is an Executive Committee, which oversees the financial matters, the employment of the teaching and administrative staff, and the overall running of the SERVOL programme. It should be noted that SERVOL has several different programme levels, starting from the pre-school level right up to the tertiary level. As a result of this, there would be sub-committees at each level with each training/educational centre in turn having its own local management committee, all of which periodically account to the Executive Committee. The fact that SERVOL has Catholic leadership and receives strong moral support from the Catholic Church certainly contributes to its sustainability. This, of course, does not diminish the obvious passion, hard work and enterprising spirit of its founders, especially Father Pantin.

### **Learning from the SERVOL Experience**

There are many lessons that can be learnt by and from SERVOL over its almost four decades of existence:

- (1) *From SERVOL's experiences and recognising the kind of youths targeted, it helps if faith is put in people's ability to change their lives in a positive direction.*
- (2) *Being non-judgemental as far as is practical does help bring sceptical and delinquent youths into the restorative fold.*
- (3) *An integral part of framing training programmes for marginalized, academically challenged or even delinquent youths is to find out as much as possible about their early experiences, their family life and structure youths. In other words, the programme must be geared towards developing one's skills as well as empowering the individual.*
- (4) *To facilitate a non-governmental organization's entry into "hard to convince" communities, a strategy is to incorporate people who have the respect or affection of the targeted youths. These could be "successful" people who emerged from the community, especially sportsmen and women and army personnel who reflect the aspirations of the targeted group.*
- (5) *For programme sustainability, effectiveness and community support, it is useful to have certain other groups as key partners in programme implementation.*
- (6) *Some reasonable form of record-keeping, especially with successful outputs, helps attract*

*funding.*

- (7) *A non-governmental organization can find strength and purpose if it is allied to a religious order while still remaining accessible to all and secular in operations.*
- (8) *It is useful to describe and package early non-governmental organizations' successes to help attract external funding. This can be done by establishing a flagship project among the other programmes. Such flag-ship project brings a brand name and reputation to the non-governmental organization.*

### **The Wider Societal Impact of SERVOL**

A very serious and challenging question is this: After all this work by SERVOL since 1970 and the obvious merit of its training and empowering programmes, why is the district of Laventille still so relatively impoverished, crime and violence-ridden, and volatile? It is still the area with high unemployment, the highest proportion of murders, gang-related crime and violence.

Is it that interventions like SERVOL's, though commendable in themselves, cannot withstand the strong forces of a persistent culture of violence and poverty deeply rooted in the lives of Laventille? Or is it that without SERVOL, things would have been worse? And at this point, there are serious political implications as well. The Laventille dilemma is one that needs an urgent, extensive examination.

# CHAPTER 5



## *THE FAMILY COURT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO - A PILOT PROJECT SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS*

### **Background and Mission**

Family disputes, civil and criminal, have had at least two adverse consequences. One, these disputes lead to litigation which can take many years to be finalized, with many of them being dismissed eventually for a variety of reasons, such as lost interest, lack of witnesses, etc. Two, there are no readily available mechanisms in the formal court system for appropriate compensation or amicable settlement with regard to family disputes.

The Family Court of Trinidad and Tobago is a two-year pilot project (May 17, 2004 to May 16, 2006). It is an initiative of the Judiciary of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago which falls under the ambit of the Ministry of the Attorney General, Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The Family Court is located at NIPDEC House, #4 Cipriani Boulevard, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad.

**The family court system provides a range of counselling, mediation facilities, and related intervention services and referrals, etc. for facilitating mutually satisfactory settlements and also for reconciliation rather than prolonged family disputes. The informalities and accessibility are unprecedented using this novel approach, and have proven quite fruitful in the pathway to peace, family and national building.**

This initiative was spurred on by the fact that there are severe case backlogs at the High Court and Magistracy. This situation has been overwhelming for several years now. In its drive to improve, modernize and make its services more efficient generally, particularly in the realm of family proceedings, it was agreed by the key stakeholders, that given the sensitive nature and the need for timely judicial deliberation/settlement in such matters, that a separate court, a Family Court, was needed.

The family court system provides a range of counselling, mediation facilities, and related intervention services and referrals, etc. for facilitating mutually satisfactory settlements and also for reconciliation rather than prolonged family disputes. The informalities and accessibility are unprecedented using this novel approach, and have proven quite fruitful in the pathway to peace, family and national building.

Since 1979, the issue of the establishment of a Family Court had been discussed at various levels.

However, it is only in 2002, after extensive consultations and agreement by the Attorney General and the Chief Justice, was the decision taken to have such a Family Court established, and within the shortest possible time. The Mission of the Family Court is: “to refer to social welfare or their agencies, persons who are in need of special types of assistance that are not provided by the court. Provision is also made in the Family Court building for social welfare and other agencies to offer information to the public. The Family Court brings together in a centralized physical environment, a team of social service providers, who are all experts in their own respective fields. They will help and support you and the other members of your family; adults as well as children, as you resolve family conflict.”

### **The Seven Major Objectives of the Family Court**

The Family Court seeks to address the social problem of families in conflict and to provide resolutions to these problems by administering professional support, guidance and services in a conciliatory, less adversarial manner and setting. Hereunder are the major objectives of the Family Court:

- (1) *To assist families resolve their conflict/problems by offering a full range of services and by trained personnel (for example, social welfare and related services, mediation services, probation services, family counselling, children’s services, legal aid and advisory services, referrals, etc.) in one specially designed location, established to deal specifically with family matters in a conciliatory rather than adversarial environment; and with special emphasis on the well-being of the child/children in such family matters*
- (2) *To act as an institution builder/problem solver, and to help rebuild families, and by extension, to ensure the well-being of the members therein and society*
- (3) *To provide a court that is focused on the citizens it serves, is accountable and efficient in its performance, and to assist in the governance of society*
- (4) *To review the many best practices that have been developed internationally with regard to family courts and select and test those in the Family Court Pilot Project that appear to be most appropriate and culturally relevant to customers in Trinidad and Tobago*
- (5) *To establish an effective benchmarking system to continuously measure and monitor performance on the effectiveness and efficiency of the various innovations and approaches utilized and to ensure the highest standards of service to its customers*
- (6) *To use the results to continuously improve the services offered during the two-year life of the Family Court Pilot Project in Trinidad and Tobago*
- (7) *To have the lessons learned form the basis for decisions on the “roll out” of a full Family Court system throughout Trinidad and Tobago (drawn from Annual Report, 2004-2005, Judiciary of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago).*

### **Governance and Accountability**

The Family Court is governed by the Family Proceedings Rules 1998 (Amended June 2003, see [www.ttlawcourts.org/familycourt.org](http://www.ttlawcourts.org/familycourt.org)) (see Appendix 5A) and deals specifically with “family matters,” which means any cause, matter or legal proceeding –

- (a) in connection with or arising out of matrimonial or other domestic relationships between different sex couples; or
- (b) concerning the welfare, maintenance, guardianship, paternity, custody of or access to children

The Family Court is accountable to the Chief Justice and the Attorney General through its Monitoring Committee. The Monitoring Committee, established March 2004 by the Chief Justice, is assisted by a Family Court Evaluation Team (comprising the Manager, Family Court, Court Statistician and an International Consultant). The role of the Monitoring Committee is to evaluate systems, coordinate data, compile feedback and make recommendations for the way forward.

## The Vision

The vision of the Family Court is to have a court, “that is focused on the citizens it serves, is accountable for its performance, is an efficient organization, a problem solver, an institution builder and is an entity that is indispensable in the governance of the society at large.” Its general guiding philosophy is that the Family Court should “*encourage parties involved in family conflicts to resolve their family disputes themselves, with specialist assistance and support wherever necessary.*”

## Family Court Committee

A Family Court Committee was established in 2002 by the Attorney General in consultation with the Chief Justice. The Committee’s two major objectives are:

### (1) Objectives

- (i) to identify ways in which measures can be introduced to enhance the functioning of the present family jurisdiction of the Court in the short term;
- (ii) in the long term, to design a Family Court structure suitable to the needs of Trinidad and Tobago and advise on the establishment of such a court (Family Court of Trinidad and Tobago, *Family Court Evaluation – First Year Report, 2005*, p. 1).

### (2) Recommendations

The Family Court Committee’s recommendations received full support by the Judiciary and the Government, all of which were implemented:

- (i) To have a well-resourced Family Court in Port-of-Spain and housed in a separate building.
- (ii) The Family Court Pilot Project should have a unified registry and administration and should deal with matters of the High Court, Port-of-Spain and the St. George West Magisterial District.
- (iii) Intake should be at one registry and the internal processes of the registry will provide for routing through to the appropriate procedural channel (that is, the High Court or Magistracy).
- (iv) The New Family Proceedings Rules, 1998 be used for this court only.
- (v) A Monitoring Committee be appointed comprising members of the judiciary, administration of the court, legal profession, the social services and the public. The purpose of the Monitoring Committee should be to monitor the Pilot Project, recommend amendments to the Rules, and to legislation, and also to inform the drafting of legislation to create a Family Court if necessary.
- (vi) The Family Court should possess many elements of a united family court, including social services and mediation services as part of the court’s structure.
- (vii) That a Bill be laid before Parliament to amend the Supreme Court of Judicature Act to increase the number of High Court Judges by three (from twenty to twenty-three).
- (viii) That the other staffing of the Family Court be referred to the Public Management Consulting Division of the Ministry of Public Administration for comments after discussion with the Family Court Committee.
- (ix) That the Property and Real Estate Division of the Ministry of Public Administration pursue the continued rental of NIPDEC House in a refurbished condition specially designed to the specifications of the Family Court (Family Court Fact Sheet, 2002, [www.ttlawcourts.org/factsheet.htm](http://www.ttlawcourts.org/factsheet.htm)).



*The elegant exterior of the Family Court of Trinidad and Tobago*

## **Jurisdiction**

The jurisdiction of the Family Court at the High Court includes applications for:

- Co-habitation
- Annulments
- Divorce
- Judicial Separation
- Paternity
- Matrimonial Property Settlement
- Maintenance
- Attachment of Earnings
- Matters Related to Succession

At the Magisterial Court, the Family Court's jurisdiction includes applications for:

- Maintenance and the Paternity of Children
- Maintenance for Adults
- Custody
- Access
- Children that are deemed Beyond Control
- Adoptions
- Fit Person's Orders
- Attachment of Earnings
- Breach of School Rules
- Maintenance which fall under the Cohabitation Act
- No one Willing and Able
- Domestic Violence as it relates to the above matters



*The interior of the Family Court's Waiting Room (at top left) and a Meeting/Conference Room (at top right). Soft colours, a friendly atmosphere, and privacy, are key to the Court's functioning and puts parties at ease as they seek the services of the Court to settle their conflict. This is in stark contrast to the traditional court room setting (illustrated below) which is open to the public and impersonal in atmosphere.*



For further details, see *Annual Report of the Judiciary of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (2004-2005, p. 12)* and [Table 1](#) below which illustrates the grouping of cases in tabular format (Family Court of Trinidad and Tobago, *Family Court Evaluation – First Year Report, 2005, p. 18*).

**TABLE 5.1**  
**GROUPINGS OF CASES AT FAMILY COURT**  
**MAGISTRATE'S COURT LEVEL AND HIGH COURT LEVEL**

*Magistrate's Court*

<b>OTHER CHILDREN ISSUES</b>	<b>ADULT - SPECIFIC</b>				
<b>Children</b>	<b>Maintenance</b>	<b>Delinquency</b>	<b>Common-Law Relationships</b>	<b>Domestic</b>	<b>Custody</b>
Application – Children Act	App – Maintenance Act	Beyond Control	App – Cohab. Relat. Act	Domestic Violence	Custody
		Breach/School Rules			
Application – Status/Children Act	Attachment/Earnings				Access
App – Fam. Law/Guar/Dom/	Maintenance - Adult & Child				Fit Persons
	Maintenance - Adult				Adoption
	Maintenance – Child				
	Willful Neglect/Maintenance				
	Paternity				

*High Court*

<b>OTHER CHILDREN ISSUES</b>	<b>ADULT - SPECIFIC</b>			
<b>Children</b>	<b>Maintenance</b>	<b>Property</b>	<b>Divorce</b>	<b>Common Law Relationships</b>
Application – Status/Child Act	App – Maintenance Act	App – Succession Act	Application Married Per Act	App – Cohab. Relat. Act
Application – Status/Children Act	Child App – Maintenance	Application – Wills & Prob. Or. Access	Divorce	
App – Fam. Law/Gua/Dom/	Maintenance – Adult & Child	App – Admin/Estate Act	Judicial Separation	
App – Infant's Act	Maintenance – Adult			
Change of Name – Minor	Maintenance – Child	Claim After Death	Nullity – Void	
Child App – Access	Willful Neglect/Maintenance	Property Settlement	Nullity – Voidable	
Child App – Custody				
Child App – Paternity				
Child App – Wardship				
Guardianship	Attachment/Earnings			

Source: Family Court of Trinidad and Tobago, *Family Court Evaluation – First Year Report*, 2005, p. 18.

### Target Group

The Family Court's major target groups include members of the general public, families in need of services (for example, social, legal aid and advisory, counselling, mediation, probation, referral services, etc), and relevant professionals available in these areas to help customers deal with their respective situations (see, for example, matters as outlined in the Family Proceedings Rules 1998, pages 3-9) (see [www.ttlawcourts.org/familycourt.org](http://www.ttlawcourts.org/familycourt.org)). Other target groups include governmental and non-governmental agencies, the private sector, professionals/practitioners, social service providers, faith-based organizations, parent teacher organizations, schools, the media, clergy, and the protective services.

## Intervention

By extension, and as a result of this intervention, a key objective of the Family Court is to reduce any negative impact on the family and the society which could result from such conflict (for example, the committal of crimes, various forms of partner or family abuse, delinquency, emotional/psychological instability, etc.). These problems may take the form of matrimonial or other domestic disagreement (for example, divorce, domestic violence, cohabitation, etc.), or in relation to issues of welfare, maintenance, guardianship, paternity, custody, access to children, etc (see Annual Report, Judiciary of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, p. 12; Family Proceedings Rules, pp. 3-9).

Another major objective of any family court intervention is to ensure the well-being and welfare of any child/children involved in any family situation where conflict exists, and to reintegrate or rebuild families as far as possible. The Family Court does this by directing customers who come in to the Family Court to appropriate personnel for assistance using its own in-house services available, or through referrals to external social service providers.

Additionally, the Family Court seeks to have any type of problem/conflict settled as amicably and swiftly as possible so as to reduce stress, tension and related emotional upheaval by the aggrieved parties/related family members in a cost-effective and fair manner and in an environment which is designed especially for this type of intervention.

## The Family Court: A Critical Examination

One good example regarding the achievement of this objective is the efficiency of the Family Court as shown in the scheduling of hearings. In the Family Magistrate's Court, over fifty percent of cases have a first hearing within two weeks of filing. In the Family High Court, again over fifty percent of cases have a first hearing within five weeks of filing.

From the positive feedback which it has received in its short life-span, there is a customer satisfaction rate of between 80-99% recorded on most of its performance measures. This is another indicator that the Family Court is achieving its goals.

The Court's staff also prepares orders within days versus weeks as it pertains to the traditional court system presently. Further, approximately twenty five percent of the matters filed in the Family High Court, and over a third of the matters filed in the Magistrate's Court, were determined after just one hearing, with over sixty percent of cases determined after two or less hearings (*Family Court Evaluation – First Year Report, 2005*, p. 31; The Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago, *Annual Report 2004-2005*, p. 51, 53).

Another area in which the Family Court anticipates achievement is the reduction over time of the number of cases being filed for litigation and referred to alternative conciliatory means of settlement. This will assist in the reduction in case backlogs at the High and Magistrates Court generally, and also at the Family Court where they exist, and to assist families heal themselves. For example, from a total of 6,885 cases filed for the first year of the Family Court's operations (May 2004-2005), while the majority of cases filed (6,206 or 90%) went to the Magistrate's and High Courts for final determination, 679 (10%) of the cases benefited from mediation/counselling respectively (*Family Court Evaluation – First Year Report, 2005*, p. 28).

An examination of the types of matters filed in the Family High Court shows that for the first year of its operations, out of a total of 1,858 cases filed, the majority of cases were for Divorce (1,609 cases or 87%), 187 (10%) for Other Children's Issues, 26 (1%) for Common Law Relationships, 25 (1%) for Maintenance and 11 (1%) for Property. (*Family Court Evaluation – First Year Report, 2005*, p. 29).

A further examination of the types of matters filed in the Family Magistrate's Court shows that for the first year of its operations, out of a total of 4,348 cases filed, the majority of cases were for Maintenance (2,457 cases or 57%), 1,173 (27%) for Custody, 486 (11%) for Domestic, 206 (5%) for Delinquency, 24 (1%) for Common Law Relationships and 2 (1%) for Other Children's Issues. (*Family Court Evaluation – First Year Report, 2005, p. 30*).

What these statistics represent is that the Family Court system is having the types of cases under its jurisdiction properly routed to it for deliberation. The system is also working well within its Pilot Project's target, and sets the standard for eventual "roll out" in Trinidad and Tobago. These statistics also provide the Court with a critical indicator regarding the volume and types of cases it can expect, and so enable it to provide adequate resources to suit anticipated calls for service in these respective areas in the future. For example, the majority of the cases recorded were for Maintenance, Custody, Domestic, Delinquency, Divorce and Other Children's Issues. Resources can therefore be allocated in advance to deal with the expected baseline intake for these types of cases.

Additionally, these statistics provide an essential framework for continuous recording and adjustments as may be required in terms of staff, resource, external support and related allocations. In this way, the Family Court will not be taken by "surprise" as it were in future. The administrators will know in advance the type of resources which are needed in all sectors and can plan ahead for the unexpected in some reasonable manner.

Family Court Manager, Ms. Donna Boucaud, emphasized during the interview that "customers have indicated that coming to the Family Court helps to limit the stress of their situation given the Court's environment, trained staff, etc." She is confident that "the Family Court is achieving its prescribed goals and targets at this time." It is a novel institution in this part of the world, and one which emphasizes the use of conciliatory interventions versus adversarial methods, for example, the use of the law and courts to settle family conflict.

### **The Eleven Performance Areas of the Family Court: Outcomes and Process**

The Family Court has eleven clearly defined areas outlined for achievement during its two-year Pilot Project. There are six Outcome Performance Areas which focus on assessing the impact of the court on its customers, staff and general public who utilize its services, and five Process Performance Areas targeted, which focus on continuous assessment and implementation for best practice. These targets are summarized in Table 2 below:

**TABLE 5.2**  
**Framework for Assessing the Family Court Pilot Project**

<b>Six Outcome Performance Areas</b> (measuring the impact of the court on its customers, staff and general public)	<b>Five Process Performance Areas</b> (creating within all parts of the court the environment, capabilities and actions for continuous learning and improvement)
(1) Access to Justice *	(7) Clear direction and leadership *
(2) Expedition and Timeliness *	(8) Clear accountabilities and strong partnerships
(3) Equality, Fairness and Integrity *	(9) Effective and efficient operational strategies, tools and practices
(4) Independence and Accountability	(10) Sufficient well-trained personnel and adequate resources *
(5) Public Trust and Confidence	(11) Effective support systems
(6) Environment for Conducting the Work of the Court	* = Priority for Year 1 of the Evaluation

Source: *Family Court of Trinidad and Tobago, Family Court Evaluation – First Year Report, 2005, p. 215.*

This is an important table of priorities as it shows the resolve to establish an efficient and effective Family Court, and with evaluative and continuous assessment components built in for ongoing measurement of performance in the targeted areas for achievement. This is an example of an institution which is serious and committed to serving its customers with the highest professional standard, and one worthy of replication – it is an excellent example for best practice.

### **Organization and Programme Structure**

There are twenty-two individual units located within the Family Court Pilot Project with approximately one hundred and fifty employees on contract, seconded from the public service, or from the private sector to assist in the day-to-day running of the Court. This figure does not include persons and other relevant personnel or support staff sourced externally to assist the Court in treating its customers (re referrals, etc.).

The Family Court's Senior Management Unit comprises of one Family Court Manager, while the Operational Planning and Statistics Unit is made up of one Statistician, one Court Statistical Officer and two Statistical Clerks.

The Operations Unit comprises Judiciary Services (Judicial Officers, Judges' and Magistrate's Support Team - which is made up of eight Secretaries, eight Orderlies and the Judiciary Support Officers Unit which has one Case Management Officer, eight Judicial Support Officers and one Case Management Officer Trainee); Social Services (Intake Services, Counselling Services, Probation Services); Mediation Services; Children and Youth Services (Day-care Waiting Room, Youth Waiting Room), Transcription; Library Services and Court Office Services. The Operations Support Unit comprises Communication and Information, Security, Human Resources, Building, Plant and Equipment, Finance and Budgeting, Information Technology and Administrative Services.

As mentioned earlier, the Family Court Monitoring Committee is of course established to oversee the entire functioning of the Court and to make recommendations in collaboration with the Evaluation Team.

Some critical documents such as the *Annual Reports of the Judiciary of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago*, the *Family Court's First Year Evaluation Report (2005)* and the *Family Proceedings Rules 1998 (Amended 2003)* (see [Appendix 5A](#)) are available. These provide the background and procedures for the operations of the Family Court as well as an assessment of the Court's work to date and some preliminary recommendations for the way forward. [Appendix 5B](#) and [Appendix 5C](#) provide an example of the Family Court's Social Services Intake Form and its Customer Service Questionnaire used to assist in its documentation/data base creation and benchmarking of its performance respectively. The Court has also produced two very useful DVDs which have been aired on the electronic media to highlight its work and inform the public.

Several revisions/adjustments have been recommended to help sustain the operations and continued success of the Family Court Pilot Project and before it is "rolled out" island-wide. As one critical example, there is need to revise the senior management structure and staffing. More technical and administrative support staff are needed to assist the Family Court Manager, whose portfolio has been informally extended during the Pilot Project, and whose ground level involvement with the day-to-day administration, while necessary and perhaps inevitable at this Pilot stage, has been far too time consuming. The Family Court Manager needs to have more time for strategic planning and decision making, budgeting and forging alliances with external stakeholders. While the current Family Court Manager has done extremely well in ensuring the efficient functioning of the Court during the Pilot Project, with the increasing demands for its services, the holder of this post will need more resources to treat the increased workload which will naturally arise (for example, Assistant Managers, Quality Control Officers, etc.).

Similarly, several specific units are at this time operating beyond maximum capacity to deal with an increased workload due to unprecedented demand for services (for example, in mediation services, social services, counselling services, judiciary support and the Court Office). No extra staff has been allocated to deal with this high volume of requests. More qualified/professionally trained staff is also urgently required. For example, more social workers, counsellors, psychologists, mediators, etc. so as to handle requests for service at these respective units. Revisions will have to be made also regarding the upgrade of the Court's skills bank and resource personnel to assist the Court in dealing with the increasing volume of customers.

The mix of contract and public service staff, in addition to staff hired as required and those who are seconded from various Government Ministries created a type of "culture shock" in the Family Court's work environment. This was due to the different levels of training and professional standards among the persons employed to service the court. While all staff have benefited from training, specifically to work and service customers at the Family Court at the very highest professional standards, initially this created some uneasiness since workers had different styles of executing their duties. Family Court management has, however, been seeking to continuously assess and revise this situation and provide the necessary training so that all staff can speak a common operational language.

The information technology and data collection aspect of the Family Court's operations also needs to be revised in terms of improving databases and refining procedures for data analysis and output. An assessment has been/is being done to ensure this element is brought up to the required standard before the Pilot Project draws to a close.

The Family Court Manager indicated that while they are happy with the response to the Court's available services, the Court has now outgrown its current facility and is in need of more physical space to house, for example, larger meeting/conference rooms, court rooms, mediation rooms, social services consultation and counselling rooms. The customer waiting areas also are in need of expansion since the initial space is limited and inconvenient, given the increasing flow of customers.

The Evaluation Team has recommended a revision to its mandate, in that, it be given additional resources to do a comprehensive review of the implications of the "roll out" of the Family Court nationwide. This includes staff and resources to conduct a feasibility study, obtain architectural services, advice, source appropriate properties, make recommendations regarding staffing, systems, data collection and analysis and benchmarking procedures to ensure continuous assessment and evaluation of the Family Court's operations. Report preparation, as well as a project manager will be needed to assist with this work.

The Family Court has facilitated numerous staff training programmes, arranged referrals and client interviews. A very successful programme which was conducted using an external facilitator was a course on co-parenting since the Family Court felt that as part of its mandate it wanted to offer life skills training and awareness programmes to its customers. This course was very well received, but due to limited resources, and an already overworked social services unit, this programme has not been repeated, despite several requests to do so, due to time and staff constraints. The Court has in place several such proposals for the conduct of these types of classes and hopes to have them implemented in full, as planned in the not too distant future.

The approximate cost per month for the functioning of the Family Court was not provided at the time of writing this report. However, it is noted that fifty four percent of the Judiciary's annual budget for 2003-2004 (TT\$193,449,166) was allocated for the establishment of the Family Court. From our own calculations, this is approximately TT\$105,000,000 (US\$17,000,000). We approximate that the Family Court needs TT\$2,000,000 or US\$32,000 per month at least to sustain its operations.

Continued funding from the Government will be required for sustainability, expansion, improvements,

etc. of the Family Court's operations. Given the positive official support and expressed will from key sectors, this is not anticipated to be a problem. There is also the issue of the Family Court's financial matters being vired through the Judiciary. It is felt that the Family Court should have its own Finance Unit so as to assist the Court with managing its own financial affairs with appropriate accountability in place. This will ease the bureaucracy and limit the waiting time to process requests for payment, make purchases, etc. which is often the case and which impacts negatively on the Court's efficient and effective functioning.

As a means of ensuring optimum performance of the Family Court, there is need to have financed and on board an external independent evaluator so as to provide continuous assessment and benchmarking of the Court's operations. The contract of the existing International Consultant is being paid for by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). This resource person will therefore have to be financed by the Government when the Pilot Project comes to a close.

### **Institutional Linkages**

The Family Court has formed strategic partnerships with several key agencies to assist in the successful execution of its mandate. For example, The University of the West Indies and its Hugh Wooding Law School, several Government Ministries (for example, the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of the Attorney General and its Judiciary, the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of National Security and its Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs). A variety of non-governmental organizations such as SERVOL, Families in Action, Alcoholics Anonymous, homes for battered women, shelters for children and other youth facilities, Association of Psychologists, Social Workers, Civilian Conservation Corps, medical institutions, schools, Parent Teacher Associations, members of the media, clergy and members of the public to name a few are also important partners.

Collaboration with professionals in the private and public sector is also necessary as the Court seeks to continuously add to its human resource capital and skills bank so as to provide appropriate services, interventions and referrals, as far as possible in-house in the first instance, and externally where not available in-house.

The Family Court Monitoring Committee and the Family Court Committee are critical stakeholders as they provide important organizational mechanisms for participation of a variety of groups in the monitoring and improvement of the courts. Collaboration with the Government through the Ministry of the Attorney General and Ministry of Finance is important in terms of maintaining its chief funding source.

These partnerships auger well with regard to the dissemination of information about the mandate of the Family Court and the services it provides. Such networking builds civil society through shared values, commonality of goals and objectives as all of these agencies also seek to enhance the quality of life of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and maintain peace, public safety and order.

### **The Family Court: Obstacles and Challenges**

The Family Court's success has ironically created several challenges to its efficient functioning. Due to the positive impact which the Court has been having in assisting families deal with their problems, etc., coupled with the dissemination of information on the availability of the Court's services, for example, this has resulted in case overload in some areas of the Court's operations. For example, requests for mediation, family counselling and referral services have increased so much that the existing staff have been stretched to the limit for quite some time now.

More staff is needed as a matter of urgency, and Court management is assessing this situation

continuously, to ensure that, while some backlog is mounting, customers are able to access the care that they need or have requested, whether in-house or through external care providers/facilitators. The Family Court Manager herself has had to face many obstacles and challenges given the demands on her portfolio, increased workload, and the need for more day-to-day monitoring and supervising of the Court's operations to ensure quality control. Recommendations have been made for technical support and administrative staff to help augment her role, as well as that of several other key officers in the Family Court as it continues to expand.

During any Pilot Project period, one can expect the unexpected. Increased calls for service and the need for more staff to attend to customers is one such example previously cited. The need for more physical space and additional resources comes as little surprise to Court administrators since they have, from the very start of the pilot, been continuously obtaining feedback from its customers, staff and members of the judiciary and the public who use its facilities. Through this data collection and analysis, Court management has been able to respond to the unforeseen and/or take remedial or corrective action quickly, so as to ensure smooth operation of the Family Court at all times. Finding another home for the Family Court based in Port-of-Spain, however, is a challenge and one that needs to be addressed.

Continuous training and re-training of staff has been critical in dealing with the challenge of having to manage a mixed intake of staff from a variety of sectors initially. Recommendations have been made so as to avoid this "culture clash" from occurring again, with measures and systems also in place to gauge staff performance and output.

A challenge has been the Court's ability to collate and analyse data collected. Using the Judicial Enforcement Management System (JEMS), it was found that this was limited in its versatility in generating the types of statistical analyses required for documentary and evaluative work. While this statistical package has been useful for collecting and storing data, its applicability has been limited. Some time and resources are therefore now being utilized to create a more effective system to analyse data, generate required reports, etc.

While the Family Court seeks to assist families in distress and to help them resolve their conflict, it has been faced with a challenge regarding its inability to provide efficient after-care or certain types of follow-up services. For example, the Family Court sometimes need to network, and quickly, with such agencies as juvenile homes, homes for battered women and children, etc. in such cases involving domestic violence and such issues. These agencies are usually non-profit, non-governmental organizations who are trying their best as it is, and many times cannot respond with the speed the Family Court might require. In executing its own mandate, the Court has realized that there is a significant gap in social services delivery and provision of certain types of care. The Court continues to do what it can, but is limited since they do not have any facility to house some persons in need, and this is a concern given the impact it has on the lives of those so affected. The Family Court Manager has suggested that a study be done on such homes and shelters, etc., standards be put in place, and support sourced so that they can function at a more optimal level. The Court also has limited staff, and once persons are referred to external agencies, follow-up can be a problem, simply because of the lack of adequate resources. Recommendations have been made, as indicated earlier, to have its skills bank expanded and more service providers sourced.

While Government via the Judiciary has been in full support financially and otherwise for the Family Court Pilot Project, there is no word as yet on what is to happen after the end of the pilot period in terms of continued funding, "roll out," etc. Given the success of the court, it is not anticipated that this will be a problem, but it is a challenge at this time planning for the future when there is no formal word on the next steps. However, the Court's administration and Monitoring Committee are continuing its work to continuously evaluate the Pilot Project's performance and make recommendations for island-wide implementation.

Linked to this anticipated expansion of the Family Court to other communities, recruitment issues are a source of concern for the Family Court Manager. Where are the specialized attorneys in family law, the workers, managers and implementers going to come from? This is a challenge and plans need to be put in place as soon as possible to ensure that the resources are put in place for hiring/sourcing appropriate staff and with the expected high standards which has been the experience in the Family Court Pilot Project.

A challenge for the Family Court is to maintain the high satisfaction rankings recorded by customers about its services and functioning generally (80%-90% satisfied). All on board will have to continue to work towards maintaining this objective, and continuous evaluation and benchmarking of performance by staff and stakeholders will be necessary so as to ensure that the standard is kept over time in Court functioning.

Another challenge, because of the increased caseload, is backlog. At this time, the Family Court is working out a system so as to ease case backlog under its jurisdiction. An obstacle, as mentioned before, is inadequate staff to deal with increasing demands for the Court's services. However, with some outsourcing, the Court administration is working out a system of time and caseload management to eliminate this situation.

A challenge to the Court's administration is the fact that its budget is linked to the Judiciary's main account. The time it takes to wire requests from the Family Court to the Judiciary's accounting unit has been affecting the Court's ability to look after its own affairs. Recommendations have been made to have a separate accounting/financial section established at the Family Court with appropriate accountability mechanisms in place so as to assist it acquire the level of efficiency it wishes in this area of its operations.

### **Six Features of The Family Court's Success**

The Family Court's success has ironically created several challenges to its efficient functioning, but these have been "ironed" out in large measure due to continuous evaluation systems by the Court's management – an accomplishment in itself and which must be recommended for similar initiatives so as to ensure optimal functioning. The Family Court Pilot Project has been able to deal with its challenges and obstacles as they arose in a timely and methodological manner. This has impacted positively on its effective and efficient functioning and enhanced its reputation as a full service provider to the public.

The Hon. Chief Justice, Mr. Satnarine Sharma expressed this view in his Foreword to the Judiciary's *Annual Report for 2003-04* (p. 3): *"A day that engendered a feeling of pride in us all was May 12, 2004 when the doors of the Family Court officially opened. The Family Court pilot project is a unified court encompassing both the High Court and the St. George West Magisterial jurisdiction and is viewed as a customer driven, one-stop shop. The Court's customers have the benefit of other services including social services, counselling and mediation. In the establishment of this Court, the needs of the family have been given priority and its ambience and physical environment is conducive towards the resolution of matters. We are convinced that this court will be the flagship for other judicial facilities."*

#### **(1) Logged Cases**

This summarizes, quite succinctly, the major objectives of the Family Court. Given the evidence, the Family Court has indeed achieved remarkable success during its two-year Pilot Project. For example, the increased numbers of customers accessing the services of the Family Court illustrates that the Court has been successful in reaching the citizens who need such services, via its own marketing and dissemination of information strategies. A total of 6,885 cases were logged for treatment during the first year of its operations. From 15 cases to 1,858 cases recorded in the Family High Court, and from 91 cases to a total of 1,348 cases in the Family Magistrates' Court during the period May 2004 to May

2005, in its first year alone bears testament to this.

## **(2) “One-Stop Shop”**

The Family Court has indeed provided a “one-stop shop” for resolving family conflict with its provision of all services required in this area, and in an environment especially designed for dealing with family matters.

## **(3) Customer Satisfaction**

Another sign of success is that customer satisfaction ratings remained between 80-99% on most indicators, illustrating the high performance standards of the Family Court’s operations. This illustrates the Court’s ability to maintain its objective for continuous benchmarking and evaluation of its performance, and to take steps (either remedially or proactively) to deal with any eventuality and to ensure the smooth operations of the Court.

## **(4) Case Backlogs**

The Family Court has been successful in impacting on the reduction of case backlogs in the regular High and Magisterial Courts since many more cases as indicated are being channelled directly to the Family Court for settlement, mediation and other conciliatory forms to reach settlements. For example, Court statistics show that there were 417 referrals to mediation and 1,336 referrals to social services in the first year of the Pilot Project’s functioning, and a total of 1,041 children and 519 youths accessed day care facilities.

## **(5) Expedition and Timeliness**

With regard to expedition and timeliness, the Family Court has succeeded in achieving its set target for having hearings within eight weeks of filing. The Family Magistrate’s Court, for example, scheduled first hearings within three to four weeks of filing, and this was maintained. In the High and Magistrate’s Courts, sixty percent of matters were determined in two hearings or less.

## **(6) Key Partnerships**

The Court also succeeded in establishing key partnerships and drawing in stakeholders as planned during its Pilot Project period. This methodology in total has therefore been successful in re-building family ties, ensuring continuity of family life for youths and/or providing counselling strategies to assist with separation issues where necessary, assisting grieved parties with their conflict, and helping to facilitate family and community strengthening.

## **Sustaining Vision: The Way Forward**

The Family Court Pilot Project is sustained primarily through official Government/Ministerial funding and with external consultancy services provided by CIDA. This programme can be sustained given its tremendous success, as detailed in the above sections and the positive impact which it has had on the customers it serves, and by extension ensuring a civil and safe society with stronger families being of paramount consideration. Government must pledge its ongoing support financially and institutionally to ensure sustainability and to allow for the way forward.

Proper planning now needs to be done to ensure resources and recommendations of the Monitoring Committee are implemented for the continuation of the Family Court in Port-of-Spain, and its “roll out” nationwide. A feasibility study has been proposed to oversee this expansion of the Family Court network, without which the success of the expansion could be hindered, given the high quality of operations and the standards set for professional operations using the Family Court Pilot Project as the benchmark.

Forging new and maintaining existing partnerships is critical to sustaining the Family Court initiative, since such work can only be successful when all stakeholders are fully on board.

The Family Court has been instrumental in helping families address their conflict/various problems in a non-adversarial and conciliatory manner. This augers well for maintaining family ties, or rebuilding the family where it has become broken. It is an initiative that must be encouraged.

### **Learning from the Family Court Experience**

Some of the major lessons learnt from the experiences of the Family Court Pilot Project can be summarized as follows, and which also have relevance for best practice:

#### **(1) Collaboration**

With the combination of resources of the Judiciary, Governmental support and funding, the bringing together of key stakeholders as mentioned, and the professional standards set and maintained for the functioning of the Family Court, this Pilot Project provides us with an important lesson learnt in terms of the collaboration that is needed for such projects to succeed. All key parties have to agree and establish formal modes of operation, implement with the necessary resources, and have in place an evaluation component so as to assess performance over time, and make the necessary adjustments so as to ensure the highest standards in operation. (This is evident from the fact that talks regarding a family court started as far back as the 1980s, and it is only since 2004 this initiative bore fruit due to collaboration among key partners).

#### **(2) Goal Setting**

The Family Court Pilot Project illustrates best practice given its attainment of set goals in a timely and expeditious manner. The Family Court provides us with an excellent example of an organized, properly financed and resourced entity, with a strong and effective evaluative component to ensure maximum performance.

#### **(3) Timely Responses**

Given that this is a Pilot Project, the responses by management to various challenges which arose were quite commendable, since they were able to continuously respond in a timely and effective manner, and provide solutions to whatever problems arose, thereby ensuring the smooth and efficient functioning of the Court.

#### **(4) Training**

Another lesson learnt is the need for training staff, especially when they are sourced from various sectors, as in the case with this Pilot Project, where there is a combination of public service officers and private/externally sourced workers. Extensive training is an essential component for any organization serious about providing top class service. Given the customer ratings, the Court has been able to train its staff to execute their duties in a professional and dedicated manner, and this has impacted on the Court's success in service delivery to date.

#### **(5) Partnerships**

Another important lesson learnt is that the Family Court needs to partner with external care agencies (for example, homes, shelters, etc.). While it has established working relationships with such agencies, they are not able to respond in many instances due to their own resource constraints. The Court may wish to consider having its own facility to house persons in need of such shelter. This may impact on the Court's ability to follow-up and provide any after-care more effectively.

**(6) Human Resources**

The need for an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is essential for an institution like the Family Court. It was observed that staff have their own problems sometimes, and they themselves need some counselling/assistance in dealing with their own situations. Only when they are functional can they assist the Family Court's customers without stress to themselves or their performance. It was learnt that customers' problems are sometimes internalized by the staff who attend to them so an EAP will help take care of these human concerns.

**The Family Court seeks to address the social problem of families in conflict and to provide resolutions to these problems by administering professional support, guidance and services in a conciliatory, less adversarial manner and setting.**

*Appendix 5A*  
***THE FAMILY PROCEEDINGS RULES 1998 (AMENDED JUNE 2003)***  
***Part 2 – Application and Interpretation of the Rules (Pages 3-9)***

## **Part 2**

### **Application and Interpretation of the Rules**

#### Contents of this Part

Citation and commencement	Rule 2.1
Application of the Rules	Rule 2.2
Definitions	Rule 2.3
Who may exercise the powers of the court	Rule 2.4
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Time - computation	Rule 2.8
Meaning of 'month'	Rule 2.9
Documents	Rule 2.10

#### Citation and Commencement

- 2.1 (1) These Rules may be cited as the Family Proceedings Rules 1998.
- (2) These Rules shall:-
- (a) come into force on a date in 2003 to be fixed by the Rules Committee save and except Rules 37.1 to 37.11 which shall come into force on a subsequent date to be determined by the Rules Committee;

#### Application of the Rules

2.2 (1) These Rules as amended apply to any family matter commenced in the Registry of the Supreme Court, Port of Spain on or after the date of the coming into force of these Rules.

- (2) Subject to subrule (3), these Rules shall also apply to family matters commenced before the date of the coming into force of these Rules if -
- (a) any party to such matters at any time after the close of the pleadings and before the case has been listed for trial, files a request at the court office for a directions hearing under Part 13; or
- (b) (i) some step required to be taken by a party has not been taken within six months of the time prescribed for taking it; or
- (ii) a case has not been listed for trial for more than three years after being set down for trial,

and the court office issues a notice to all parties requiring them to attend a directions hearing.

(3) Save as provided in subrule (2) above, the relevant rules of court and other statutory provisions shall continue to apply to family matters commenced in the Supreme Court before the coming into force of these Rules.

(4) "**Family Matter**" means any cause, matter or legal proceeding -

- (a) in connection with or arising out of matrimonial or other domestic relationships between different sex couples; or
- (b) concerning the welfare, maintenance, guardianship, paternity, custody of or access to children;

and, in particular, to relevant proceedings under the following statutes -

- (i) Matrimonial Proceedings and Property Act, Chap. 45:51;
- (ii) Family Law (Guardianship of Minors, Domicile and Maintenance) Act, Chap. 46:08
- (iii) Maintenance Orders (Enforcement) Act, Chap. 45:53;
- (iv) Status of Children Act, Chap. 46:07;
- (v) (Attachment of Earnings (Maintenance) Act, No 14 of 1988;
- (vi) Cohabital Relationships Act, No 30 of 1998.
- (vii) Adoption of Children Act, Chap. 46:03;
- (viii) Age of Majority Act, Chap 46:06;
- (ix) Infants Act Chap. 46:02;
- (x) Wills and Probate Ordinance Chap. 8:02;
- (xi) Married Persons Act, Chap. 45:50.
- (xii) Children's Authority Act, No 64 of 2000 (when proclaimed)
- (xiii) Children's Community Residences, Foster Homes and Nurseries Act, No 65 of 2000 (when proclaimed)
- (xiv) Adoption of Children Act, No 67 of 2000 (when proclaimed)
- (xv) Children Act, Chap. 46:01
- (xvi) Maintenance Orders (Facilities for Enforcement) Act, No 12 of 2000 (when proclaimed)

- (xvii) Part VIII, Succession Act, 1981
- (xviii) Administration of Estates Ordinance Cap. 8 No.1
- (xix) Orisa Marriage Act 1999
- (xx) Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act, Chap. 45:02
- (xxi) Hindu Marriage Act, Chap. 45:03
- (xxii) Marriage Act Chap. 45:01
- (xxiii) Habeas Corpus Act, Chap. 8:01

- (5) "**The principal act**" means the Matrimonial Proceedings and Property Act, Chap 45:51.
- (6) A reference to a rule as FPR xx or to rule xx is a reference to the rule so numbered in these Rules.
- (7) A reference to a rule as CPR xx is a reference to a rule so numbered in the Civil Proceedings Rules 1998 and shall be of no effect until the Civil Proceedings Rules 1998 come into force.

#### Definitions

##### 2.3 In these Rules -

"**adopted**" shall be construed in the same way as any grammatical derivative of 'adopter' as defined by section 2 of the Adoption of Children Act;

"**answer**" is the means by which a respondent defends a petition for divorce, judicial separation or nullity whether or not it includes a cross-petition for divorce etc.,

"**applicant**" and "**respondent**" have the meanings given by rule 8.2;

"**assess**" in relation to costs means the taxation of costs as provided for in the Matrimonial Causes Rules and the Rules of the Supreme Court 1975."

"**cause**" means any proceedings for a decree of divorce, of nullity, of judicial separation or of presumption of death and dissolution of marriage and includes an application under s.5 of the principal act;

"**certificate of marriage**" means a certificate of marriage certified by the Registrar General or, in the case of any overseas marriage, by the appropriate authority in the country where the marriage took place;

"**Chief Justice**" includes, in relation to any period in which the office of Chief Justice shall be vacant, the person for the time being performing the functions of the Chief Justice ;

"**child**" in relation to one or both of the parties includes a child born out of wedlock or an adopted child of that party or of both parties;

"**child of the family**" in relation to the parties to a marriage or to unmarried persons means -

- (a) a child of both of those parties; and

(b) any other child who has been treated by both of those parties as a child of the family;

“**cohabitant**” has the meaning given to it by the Cohabital Relationships Act, 1998 or the meaning given to it by Part VIII of the Succession Act, 1981 or the meaning given to it by the Administration of Estates Ordinance Cap 8 No 1 as the context requires;

"**court**" means the High Court;

"**cross-petition**" means a petition for divorce, judicial separation or nullity made by a respondent whether or not contained in an answer;

"**defended cause**" means a cause which is not an undefended cause; “**decree proceedings**” means proceedings in which a party is seeking a decree.”

"**filing**", in relation to a document, means delivering it or posting it to the appropriate court office and shall not be complete until the document is received at that office;

"**guardian ad litem**" means a person appointed to separately represent the interests of a child;

"**Marshal**" includes a Deputy Marshal.

"**master**", subject to any direction under rule 2.4(2), includes assistant master;

"**minor**" means a person under 18 years of age;

"**next friend**" has the meaning given by Part 5;

"**notice of intention to defend**" has the meaning assigned to it by Part 10;

"**order**" includes any judgment, order, decision, direction or decree;

"**the overriding objective**" means the objective set out in rule 1.1;

"**patient**" means a person who by reason of mental disorder within the meaning of the Mental Health Act Chap 28:02 is incapable of managing his own affairs;

"**petition**" is the means by which a party to a marriage seeks a decree of divorce, judicial separation or nullity;

"**practice form**" means a form which the Chief Justice designates by practice direction to be a practice form.

"**relevant child**" means in relation to the parties to a marriage -

(a) any minor child of the family who is -

(i) under the age of sixteen; or

(ii) receiving instruction at an educational establishment or undergoing training for a trade, profession or vocation, whether or not he is also in gainful employment; and

(c) any other child of the family to whom the court by an order under Section 47(1) of the principal act directs that Section 47 should apply.

"**Registrar**" includes Deputy Registrar and Assistant Registrar

"**undefended cause**" has the meaning given it by rule 17.1; and

"**welfare**" includes the custody and education of a child and financial provision for him.

#### Who may exercise the power of the court

- 2.4 (1) Except where statute, rule or practice direction provide otherwise, the functions of the High Court may be exercised by any judge or master of that court.
- (2) The Chief Justice may by direction allocate the work of the court between judges and masters.

#### Court staff

- 2.5 (1) Where these Rules refer to the court office or require or permit an act of a formal or administrative character, that act may be performed by a member of the court staff authorised by the Chief Justice.
- (2) Where these Rules expressly so provide, any other functions of the court may be carried out by a member of the court staff authorised by the Chief Justice.

#### Court's discretion as to where it deals with cases

- 2.6 (1) The court may deal with a case at any place that it considers appropriate.
- (2) In considering what place may be appropriate the court shall consider the convenience of such place to any child of the parties, the parties and their attorneys.

#### Time - court to state calendar dates and time

- 2.7 When making any judgment, order or direction which imposes a time limit for doing any act the court shall state the calendar date by which such act is to be done.

#### Time - computation

- 2.8 (1) This rule shows how to calculate any period of time for doing any act which is fixed -
- (a) by these Rules; or
  - (b) by any Practice direction; or
  - (c) by any order or direction of the court.
- (2) All periods of time expressed as a number of days shall be computed as clear days.
- (3) In this rule 'clear days' means that in computing the number of days the day on which the period begins and the day on which the period ends are not included.
- Examples
- (a) Notice of an application shall be served at least 3

days before the hearing.

Application is to be heard on Friday 20 October,

The last date for service is Monday 16 October.

- (4) Where the specified period -  
is 5 days or less; and includes
- (i) a Saturday or Sunday; or
  - (ii) any other day on which the court office is closed,  
that day does not count.
- (5) When the period fixed -
- (a) by these Rules; or
  - (b) by any practice direction; or
  - (c) by any order,
- for doing any act at court ends on a day on which the court office is closed, it is in time if done before 4 p.m. on the next day on which the court office is open.
- (6) When the period fixed by these Rules; or
- (a) any practice direction; or
  - (b) by any order,
- for doing any act which does not need to be done at court ends -
- (i) on a Saturday or Sunday; or
  - (ii) on any public holiday; or
  - (iii) on Carnival Monday or Carnival Tuesday
- it shall be done before 4 p.m. on the next ordinary business day.

#### Meaning of 'month'

- 2.9 Where 'month' occurs in any order or any other document, it means a calendar month.

#### Documents

- 2.10
- (a) So far as is practicable, every document prepared for use in the court shall be on "letter size" paper; approximately 11 inches long by 8.5 inches wide. Margins of 1" (25 mm) shall be left at top and bottom and of 1.5" (38 mm) at each side.
  - (b) Every document to be filed at the court shall be headed with the title of the proceedings and -
    - (i) a description of the document; and
    - (ii) a statement of the nature of the case; and
    - (iii) be endorsed with the name; and
      - firm name; and
      - bar number; and
      - address; and
      - telephone and fax numbers, if any; and

- E mail address, if any,  
of the attorney filing the document, and (where an advocate  
attorney has been instructed -
  - the name
  - bar number; and
  - telephone and fax numbers, if any;  
and
  - E mail address, if any, of that attorney.

**Appendix 5B**  
**Family Court of Trinidad and Tobago - Social Services Intake Form**

Form # 1A SSU



SOCIAL SERVICES  
**INTAKE FORM**

Ref: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: **08/12/05** Source of Referral: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Time In: \_\_\_\_\_ Time Out: \_\_\_\_\_

9(a) Address: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Directions: \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Mailing Address (if different from a) \_\_\_\_\_

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(a) Title \_\_\_\_\_ Surname/Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First NameMiddle Name \_\_\_\_\_ Other/Alias \_\_\_\_\_

Accompanied by: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Title \_\_\_\_\_ Surname/Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First NameMiddle Name \_\_\_\_\_ Other/Alias \_\_\_\_\_

10 (a) Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

11 Telephone Contact  
 Home \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mobile \_\_\_\_\_  
 Work \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

b) Employer/Address  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Sex: F M 3. Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Religion/ Denomination: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Single Married Common Law (a) Age: \_\_\_\_\_ (b) Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Separated Divorced Widowed

8. No. Of Dependents: \_\_\_\_\_

M	F	A	School	M	F	A	School

13. Referred to: Mediation Social Worker Probation Court Other

14. **Important:** Are you presently or have you ever experienced Domestic violence or abuse at home?

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 5C**  
***Family Court of Trinidad and Tobago - Customer Service Questionnaire***

For Official use only  ID _____
---------------------------------------



**CUSTOMER SERVICE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Please answer the following questions by placing a tick in the relevant box.**

1. What was the purpose of your visit? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Did you have any difficulty finding the building? (1) Yes (2) No
3. If yes, please state difficulty \_\_\_\_\_
4. Did the directional signs assist you in finding your way around the building?  
(1) Yes (2) No
5. How easy was it to get information at the information desk?  
(1) Very Easy (2) Somewhat Difficult (3) Very Difficult
6. How long did you have to wait before getting the information?  
(1) Less than 5 minutes (2) More than 5 minutes
7. Did you get the assistance required from the Court Personnel? (1) Yes (2) No
8. How long did you have to wait before getting assistance?  
(1) Less than 5 minutes (2) More than 5 minutes
9. Were the instructions given by the Court personnel clear? (1) Yes (2) No
10. Did you find the staff courteous? (1) Yes (2) No
11. How satisfied were you with the following:
 

	Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Did Not Use
Youth Waiting Room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child Day Care Waiting Room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Washrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coffee Shop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. What suggestions do you have for improving the services?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
13. What suggestions do you have for improving the Court Environment?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



# CHAPTER 6

## PIPARO EMPOWERMENT CENTRE - TOWARD DRUG REHABILITATION AND SOCIETAL REINTEGRATION

### Background and Vision

The Piparo Empowerment Centre (PEC) is a substance abuse rehabilitation Centre established and operated by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. The Government (led by the United National Congress (UNC) was the ruling party at the time) and saw the need for a facility of this nature. The Centre opened its doors to the country on July 18<sup>th</sup> 2001 at Dindial Trace, Piparo in rural Trinidad and Tobago. The Centre occupies ten acres out of one hundred acres of State land quite deep in the countryside.

The site for this empowerment centre was strategically selected because of the historical stigma attached to its location and its previous owner, Mr. Dole Chadee. Mr. Chadee was convicted by the courts and hanged with other persons for the murders of several persons. His house, which was confiscated by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and after extensive reconstruction, was converted into the present rehabilitation and empowerment Centre. During this confiscation, the Government explained that the lands occupied by Mr. Chadee were State lands, and that he had in fact been squatting (illegally occupying). This change of residence, function and status definitely represented a paradox, but Mr. Le Gendre, Manager of the PEC facility, reported that they wanted to change the whole stigma of the location and what better way to do this than to create a Drug Rehabilitation Centre.

The PEC has the following Vision: *“The Piparo Empowerment Centre is an internationally acclaimed Therapeutic Community which will become the hub of successful treatment, rehabilitation and training in the Caribbean and where recovering persons are empowered to achieve their fullest potential.”*

The Mission statement of the Piparo Empowerment Centre is as follows: *“To provide for the total rehabilitation and empowerment of persons affected by substance abuse, employing the principles of responsible love and concern, with the highest standards, using all available resources and networking with relevant agencies.”*

The methodology used for collecting the data for this study was through a series of interviews with the PEC’s staff, an examination of the organisation’s records and manuals, meeting/interviewing the PEC residents, interviewing nearby residents as well as surveying and observing the PEC’s premises.

### Programme Aims and Objectives

The Piparo Empowerment Centre’s rehabilitation programme **aims** to provide:

- (1) *A comprehensive array of rehabilitation services within the Therapeutic Community (TC) Model*
- (2) *Long term residential substance abuse rehabilitation services for males who have a chronic problem, and may have previously had several failed attempts*
- (3) *Rehabilitation services including vocational and remedial skills training for socially displaced men*
- (4) *Opportunities for clients to benefit from training, research and other academic situations*
- (5) *A safe physical environment during clients' recovery period*
- (6) *The means for effectively fostering the social reintegration of clients into society*



*The entrance to the Piparo Empowerment Centre*



*Residents in the cafeteria*

The rehabilitation Centre aims to provide the psychological, social and spiritual support that a resident needs in order to prevent him from being tempted by drugs and alcohol. The major **objectives** of the programme at the Piparo Empowerment Centre are:

- (1) *Abstinence from drugs*
- (2) *Sobriety*
- (3) *Recovery*
- (4) *Social Reintegration*

These objectives are aimed at “recreating the individual in the best way possible so they can re-enter society without a stigma attached to them.” They also aim to foster good communication skills in residents, and to improve “their ability to value themselves” as well as others around them, and to have “a general attitude of gratitude.” These “general life skills” which are learnt at the Centre, “help mould a new personality for each resident so they can make right choices in the future when presented with volatile, challenging situations.” These detailed objectives are derived from the PEC’s vision of what they want to achieve within the near future. The Director still sees it as a “pilot project.” This is because many improvements and structural additions remain to be made.

## Target Group

The Piparo Empowerment Centre is a treatment Centre that provides live-in rehabilitation services. The programme is geared to assist the following persons:

- (1) *Male citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who are eighteen years and older*
- (2) *Socially displaced individuals who voluntarily seek treatment or who are referred by the Social Displacement Unit (SDU) of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago*
- (3) *Chronic substance abusers who have had several failed attempts at rehabilitation*
- (4) *Drug addicts who are free from pending legal matters and whom the Courts refer to the Centre. This is in the form of an alternative prison sentence*
- (5) *Individuals who are in good physical health as evidenced by results of their mental health status, Tuberculosis (TB) and HIV/AIDS tests*



*Residents working in the cafeteria*

## PEC's Treatment Model

The Centre utilizes the Therapeutic Community (TC) Model. This model was introduced in the late 1950's in San Francisco, USA. The treatment environment was introduced by a group of past substance abusers because they had become their own "experts" at what they needed. This rehabilitation model, practised by the PEC, provides a three-stage continuum of care:

### A. *STAGE 1: Admission / Induction/ Early Treatment (spans approximately 30 days)*

- (1) *Psychological assessment*
- (2) *Detoxification*
- (3) *Induction to the Centre's rules and regulations*
- (4) *Development of a treatment plan*

### B. *STAGE 2: Primary Treatment (spans approximately 7 to 10 months)*

- (5) *Behaviour change and modification*
- (6) *Individual and Group Counselling*
- (7) *Skills building/ Vocational Training*
- (8) *Remedial Education*

### C. *STAGE 3: Re- entry (spans approximately 1-2 months)*

- (9) *Autonomy and self management*
- (10) *Money management*
- (11) *Preparation for the job market*
- (12) *After care*

## PEC's Approach to Crime

The major issues that need to be addressed are the growing rate of substance abuse, both alcohol

addiction and drug addiction in Trinidad and Tobago, and the worsening crime situation with an increasing number of offences being drug-related. Mr. Ralph Le Gendre, the Centre's Director, explained that a lot of these addicts had many personal problems of their own, which, if not rectified, would further their life in crime. Some of the major pre-entry problems faced by PEC residents are:

- (1) *Lack of self esteem*
- (2) *Deprived childhoods (e.g. lack of father figures)*
- (3) *Literacy problems*
- (4) *Emotional problems*
- (5) *Family problems (caused by substance abuse)*
- (6) *Lack of social/family support and*
- (7) *Lack of spirituality*

According to the Centre's doctrine, persons with the above deficiencies become quite vulnerable, not only to the "drug culture, but more specifically to drug addiction." Such persons, in order to rid themselves of the resulting emotional and psychological pain, "may resort to a life of drugs, alcohol and crime that becomes cyclical." They are presented with a situation where they need drugs to survive, and in order to support their drug habit, they indulge in stealing, petty crimes and other illegal means which help them earn money. And, so drug abuse and crime become strongly related.



*Mr. LeGendre, PEC Director (left) being interviewed by Rainah Seepersad and Petal Sampson (right)*



*One example of a renovated office building at the PEC compound*

## **Organization Structure**

The Piparo Empowerment Centre is owned by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago with the administrative head being the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development. The Manager at the Centre is Mr. Le Gendre, who is also the Programme Director. The Clinical Director is Mr. Cole while Ms. Fox is the Administrative Manager. Most of the clerical staff, quite youthful, comes from another government programme called the "On the Job Training" (OJT) programme. On the team as well are several social workers, counsellors, cooks, drivers and domestic attendants. Other personnel such as the security and some nursing staff are outsourced.

The staff at the Centre continues to make cross cultural exchanges between themselves and residents from similar institutions which helps to improve the methodology and programme content. The staff members of the PEC therefore, see their Centre as an avenue for not only rehabilitating drug addicts, but also as a place that helps to reduce the increasing crime rate in Trinidad and Tobago.

On entry into the programme, new residents are first required to fill out an Assessment Form. Following this, there are assessments of their psychological well-being and physical health as well as all special needs that residents may have, are recorded.



*Inside the residents' dormitories*

Over time, there have been improvements to the programme such as structural additions to the building, as well as to the gymnasium, gardens as well as to the technical programmes. But the Director and the staff still see the PEC's work as being a "pilot project," that is, a work in progress.

The Piparo Empowerment Centre has classes to improve literacy skills, computer skills, as well as vocational and technical skills. These programmes are conducted by outsourced educational/training organizations such as Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP), which provide two modules of pastry making, carpentry and masonry, respectively. The PEC has also collaborated with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Retraining Programme, as well as the Multi-Skilled Sector Training (MUST) programme for some of the technical skill requirements. Some residents of the Centre have also done classes at the Marabella Senior Secondary School where they learn auto car care as well as electrical wiring. By facilitating the residents to become skilled, they now have an opportunity for "an alternative life" to look forward to, instead of a life of addiction.

All of the above programmes are geared towards educating the residents of the PEC so that their transition into the world after rehabilitation would be an easier one. By allowing them to become skilled in these ways, they have a sound alternative to look forward to as compared to a life of crime and addiction, to which they have grown accustomed. Attempts are now being made by the PEC to have rehabilitated or partially rehabilitated residents integrated into nearby rural communities, mainly by providing their carpentry, electrical and other skills to the community.

### **Financial Support**

All funds to cover the expenses and costs for the Empowerment Centre are supplied by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Presently, the total expenses less salaries per month is approximately TT\$53,200 (US\$8,860), with increasing projected expenses. Total expenses for the year 2006 are estimated at TT\$2,797,394 (US\$462,380). This figure includes salaries, other expenses, as well as the cost of improvements to the rehabilitation programme. These funds are provided by the government, a condition which makes partnering with other similar organizations much easier.



*A workshop facility at the PEC*



*Gardens maintained by the residents*

### **Partnering for Success**

The Piparo Empowerment Centre collaborates and partners with many organizations and institutions to ensure their success. Throughout their four years of existence, they have partnered with the following organizations:

- (1) *Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP)*
- (2) *Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)*
- (3) *Multi Skilled Sector Training Programme (MUST)*
- (4) *Caribbean Region of Institute of Alcohol and Drug (CARIAD)*
- (5) *Family Support Association*
- (6) *Narcotics Anonymous*
- (7) *Alcoholics Anonymous*
- (8) *FEEL (Foundation for the Enhancement and Empowerment of Life)*
- (9) *The Retraining Programme*

### **PEC: Obstacles and Challenges**

Entry into the programme requires residents to come willingly for the nine-month period of the programme so that they can have full access to the treatment. Many of the residents come into the programme for varying reasons, among them are:

- (1) **Coming for a rest.** This suggests that they are “drained of the use of the substance” that they are addicted to, and there is a need to “get away from it for a while.” They would therefore enter the “rest and abstinence” programme since there is no use of the drugs. However, such residents often do not stay for the entire nine months and would resume their old habits. The challenge that is posed to the Centre: How do you refuse a person like this?
- (2) **They are forced into the programme.** This occurs when residents are sent by the criminal justice system, or when their families have had “enough” of their illegal drug use. Because such individuals are not attending the programme willingly, they also would not stay in the programme for its entirety, and end up going back into their old ways upon departure. Refusal to admit such individuals, said the Director, helps contribute to the crime situation. But how could the PEC “force” such persons to stay for treatment?
- (3) **They are hiding.** They are the ones who are “hiding from the law,” from friends, or from people

to whom they owe money. In such cases, they are protecting themselves from returning to jail or from physical harm. These “friends” include those whom they owe money or those who have encouraged them in their life of crime. What screening device can the PEC use to determine these categories of persons? And, to what extent can the PEC keep them away?

- (4) **They are manipulators.** However, this group, if sincere about their rehabilitation, will likely gain most from the PEC programme since they possess a critical factor for successful rehabilitation, that is, the will to change.”

In all of these instances, however, each resident is treated as if “he is really there to overcome his addiction.” This is the PEC principle – to volunteer one’s services and to be non-judgemental as far as possible. In any case, it is very difficult to determine the exact social and psychological circumstances of each entrant, or his motive for seeking residence. The largely voluntary nature of residence is therefore a two-edged sword. It can be beneficial to some, but exploited by others. In each case, if the Centre refuses access to their services, it may well be doing exactly what they are trying to prevent in the first place, that is, further drug addiction and crime. Therefore, by admitting them into the programme, at least temporarily, it means one less addict and criminal on the streets.

**The staff at the Piparo Empowerment Centre continues to make cross cultural exchanges between themselves and residents from similar institutions which helps to improve the methodology and programme content. The staff members of the PEC therefore, see their Centre as an avenue for not only rehabilitating drug addicts, but also as a place that helps to reduce the increasing crime rate in Trinidad and Tobago.**

How does the PEC meet the challenges? They do so in different ways, and in varying degrees. Some examples are provided below:

- (1) A high level of illiteracy. This occurs because many of the residents that come to the Centre have not completed secondary school, or may have been part of the penal system in their early teenage years. To overcome this, the Centre has literacy programmes for its residents.
- (2) Socially displaced individuals. These individuals are also frequent at the Centre since they either come from the penal system or they may have been vagrants. At the end of the programme however, the problem that develops, is that there is nowhere to house these individuals. As a result, housing must be sourced for this group.
- (3) Family Life. Families want nothing to do with these individuals at the end of their stay at the Centre. To overcome this, the PEC provides counselling for immediate family members that will enable them to get a better understanding of the circumstances and be better able to cope with the rehabilitation and re-integration process. The families are shown through videos and testimonials, etc., how and why addiction is a disease and that it can be treated. However, counselling does not work all the time, so the affected individuals have “to be housed as an aftercare strategy.”
- (4) Reintegration of the individuals into the society. For this to be achieved there must be an education programme for the wider public since the public tends to blame the affected individuals for the addicted, crime-prone position that they are in. In other words, the general public, according to the PEC’s staff, see the addict as a victim of his or her “own shortcomings and weakness.” The public, more often than not, does not realize that these individuals are fragile and disempowered and can be treated for rehabilitation.

- (5) The need for qualified staff. Many of the staff members do not have the necessary professional qualifications for the positions that are available. There is also the challenge for the staff to attend to the physical needs of the residents, that is, their medical and dietary requirements. For example, at the inception of the programme, there was a nurse. However, at present, there is none available to look after the needs of the residents. As a result, residents have to be taken to the surrounding medical facilities for treatment. Further, when they the PEC do have the qualified staff, there is a problem in keeping them since the funds are insufficient. As a result, the Centre strives to manage with the staff that it has at present.

The PEC experiences further obstacles such as the need for expansion as well as further development of the rehabilitation programme. It is also believed that in undertaking this expansion, there would be the need for additional qualified and dedicated staff. There is also a growing concern over the entry of heroin addicts as a new challenge for the Centre. Within the Centre, there are no facilities to deal with such addicts since they need to be treated with appropriate medication. In fact, as the Director explained, in Trinidad and Tobago “there are no facilities that are able to deal with heroin addicts and there seems to be no plan to have programmes in place to deal with the predicament.”

As indicated above, the three major means of dealing with contrite and manipulative residents are:

- (1) *Education*
- (2) *Counselling*
- (3) *Aftercare support in terms of housing facilities*

### **Features of PEC’s Success**

According to the Centre, this programme tends to deal with individuals that are “addicted to a particular drug substance.” There are “no guarantees of success since substance addiction is a disease and the individual may relapse.” According to the Centre’s records, the success rate is between 12% to 20%, which to them is “not as good as they would like.” However, they attribute such results to three major factors:

- (1) The environment to which the individual returns. Many of the ‘rehabilitated’ individuals return to where they came. This, sadly, is where they began their habit and as a result they are quite vulnerable. They return to their old habits since the resources for continued addiction are readily available to them. These are the “degenerates.”
- (2) No support from family and friends. This related factor caused many former residents to return to their old ways since there is no one to keep them on the right track or to lend them support in dealing with their rehabilitative challenges. These are the “desolates.”
- (3) Premature departure. Some individuals do not stay for the entire nine-month programme. These usually do not get fully rehabilitated and as a result they are not ready to reintegrate into society. Some suffer serious relapses. These are the “prematures.”

Sometimes these conditions are related. For example, no family support leads to alienation, which then leads to drug alliances and recycled addiction.

The Centre’s records indicate that since its inception in July 2001 to November 2005, approximately four hundred residents stayed at the Centre. The longest period any resident ever stayed was twenty months and over ten percent of the residents stayed for more than nine months. Those who stayed less than nine months, however, still benefited from a range of guidance and counselling programmes. It was noted that many of the residents go on to attend meetings of narcotics and alcoholics anonymous in their

various home districts. So, in this sense, “all is not lost.” There has also been the establishment of a Family Support Association at the Centre in 2004 to provide sustained support to departing residents, as well as the provision of after-care support from the National Family Services.

### **Sustaining the Vision: The Way Forward**

The Centre sees the sustainability of the programme as quite certain. This is mainly because of the growing rate of drug addiction in Trinidad and Tobago, and the official recognition that such drug addiction with its forerunner, drug trafficking, is strongly related to the growth of serious crime. Since the PEC falls under the purview of the Ministry of Social Development, it is assumed that the Centre will continue to be funded by the Government.

Additionally, because the Piparo Empowerment Centre falls under the portfolio of the Ministry of Social Development, it is difficult to ask for financial assistance from private companies. The Centre, therefore, petitions for perishable and non-perishable items from these companies. According to the Director, they are now receiving help from a private company to establish a gymnasium.

In this programme, the staff members are very committed to seeing that the residents are well taken care of so that they can be on the way to recovery. They believe that everyone deserves “a second chance” in life, since drug abuse is a disease that can be cured once there is the willingness of the individual to make a change in his/her life. Therefore, the Centre sees rehabilitation and social re-integration as “real possibilities.” For such reasons, the Centre believes that with widespread public support and government funding, the future for this project will be assured.

There must be continuous assessment of the programme from the bottom up, thus helping the personnel involved at the Centre to quickly locate any problems that might arise. Such continuous assessment will also assist staff to ensure that the operations are working in harmony with the PEC’s objectives.

Exchanges between the staff and residents from similar institutions will also help strengthen both the methodology and programme content. There is also the need to understand that what is done in one country may not be strictly applicable to another because of cultural differences. However, the programme could be modified to suit the environment that it enters.

Testimonies from the successfully rehabilitated should be more widely disseminated to build confidence in both the public and in potential residents. As stated before, this organization is under the Ministry of Social Development, and as a result, individuals working at the Centre are part of the public service. However, there are some individuals, such as the Coordinating Director and the Social Worker, who are working under contract terms.

At the Piparo Empowerment Centre, there is a ‘decentralized framework,’ that is, work is delegated by the Coordinating Director and allows feedback to other members of the staff. He, in turn, would have to answer to the Ministry of Social Development. Therefore, all the decisions are not centralized around one person.

### **Learning from the PEC Experience**

As with any new activity, there are the positive and negative experiences. Some of the positive experiences noted were:

- (1) *While providing counselling for family members, the family framework is mended with the rehabilitation of the addict*
- (2) *The residents are able to successfully reintegrate into society where they are able to take care of*

*their families by earning an honest living*

- (3) *The Centre has witnessed positive changes in the attitude and behaviour of individuals who have passed through the programme*
- (4) *Some residents have learnt the benefits of being patient with the programme's pace, and remain determined to go through with it. Such residents have expressed their feelings of empowerment*

There were also some negative lessons, for example:

- (1) *Because the PEC is a Government institution, there is some bureaucracy which tends to impact negatively on programme development*
- (2) *Not everyone changes at the end of the programme; there will always be recidivists. These are "the prodigals"*
- (3) *There are still quite a few citizens, even family members, who view drug addicts "as a menace to society, who should be imprisoned, since they themselves have bought the addiction upon themselves."*

**In this programme, the staff members are very committed to seeing that the residents are well taken care of so that they can be on the way to recovery.**

**They believe that everyone deserves "a second chance" in life, since drug abuse is a disease that can be cured once there is the willingness of the individual to make a change in his/her life.**

**Therefore, the Centre sees rehabilitation and social re-integration as "real possibilities."**



# CHAPTER 7

## ***THE PRE-CARNIVAL PROGRAMME: TOWARDS REDUCING VIOLENCE AND DELINQUENCY IN SCHOOLS*** *(Peace Promotion Programme, Ministry of Education)*

### **Background and Mission**

The Peace Promotion Programme was started by Dr. Michael Alleyne in August 2002. Dr. Alleyne is the Coordinator of the Peace Promotion Programme and the Ministry of Education's School Intervention Strategies Unit (SISU). The Peace Project began through the Office of National Commission for UNESCO, but in March 2003 was launched as the main thrust of the effort of the Ministry of Education to deal with violence and indiscipline in schools across Trinidad and Tobago. The School Intervention Strategies Unit was formed by the Ministry of Education to identify problems of school violence and delinquency, and to develop appropriate programmes to reduce these problems.

The Pre-Carnival Programme (PCP), a project within the Peace Promotion Programme, "focuses its efforts on 168 Secondary Schools at present" in Trinidad and Tobago. They target groups from Form One to Form Six to deal with "the high incidence of violence and indiscipline that occurs during the Carnival season." The programme is delivered to schools "through numerous interactive workshops during the month before Carnival" (around February each year). These workshops "rest on a platform of dramatic plays" and are delivered by trained professionals and actors who are involved in these kinds of programmes from various non-governmental organizations. Such plays are intended to send messages of virtue and "good behaviour" as compared to undesirable behaviours. There are many other key personnel involved such as school supervisors, principals and teachers from the various schools.

The PCP aims to reduce the incidence of violence and indiscipline by changing the behaviour and attitudes among students. This is tied into the long term goal and mission of the Peace Promotion Programme, that is, to create a "culture of peace" in the individual, the home, the school and community. Their main strategy is "*to cultivate peace in the individual child - a peace that entails self-discipline, self esteem, respect, a non-violent approach to resolving disputes, and a sense of democracy.*"

By imparting these qualities, attitudes and techniques, there will be a building up in each and every child in a preventative, proactive way, the resilience and capacity to withstand temptations to violence and indiscipline, and to adopt peaceful, democratic alternatives to resolving conflicts.

### **The PCP'S Approach to Crime**

Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago is a world-renowned two-day festival, which includes calypso (a type

of music), steel pan music, dance, masquerades, and colourful street parades. This two-day revelry is preceded by a number of other events involving children, such as carnival and calypso competitions in schools and “junior carnival parades.” For the adults, it is an “intoxicating” event that attracts a lot of tourists and media coverage. Almost all Caribbean states now have some form of carnival.

Both the police and the Ministry of Education claim that “there is an increase in school violence and delinquency in secondary schools just before carnival.” It is a plausible impression, since the carefree dispositions that the carnival atmosphere naturally presents, can easily materialise in the youths. However, apart from anecdotes and plausible impressions, there has been no systematic data analysis to demonstrate this pre-carnival phenomenon.

The programme aims to encourage the youths of Trinidad and Tobago around the ages of 11-18 years to adopt “problem-solving strategies to existing problems” that face their age group. The PCP delivers these strategies through interactive workshops that allow students to offer suggestions and participate in order to help them realise that there are alternative methods that do not involve violent acts and hostility to solving volatile situations.

The PCP states that “research into the behaviour of secondary school students showed that violence and indiscipline was very prevalent among them” (11-18 years). It must be noted, however, that there were no data to show that student delinquency was any less or more than delinquency before the carnival season. Though plausible, the justification for this PCP was apparently based on anecdotes, episodic media reports and impressions.

This note does not mean that inquiry into school delinquency and interventions are not required. It merely means that in order to select a particular period, or “delinquency-related event” such as carnival for an intervention, there should be some data-based justification to select that particular period. The research should precede the intervention. This is a matter that should be considered to improve the viability, objectives and sustainability of this PCP. Nevertheless, the types of violence and indiscipline that “were discovered” by the project personnel were:

- (1) *Fighting and Physical Aggression*
- (2) *Disobedience and Rudeness*
- (3) *Verbal Aggression*
- (4) *Gangs*
- (5) *Vandalism*
- (6) *Stealing*
- (7) *Bullying*
- (8) *Substance Abuse - Drugs, Cigarettes and Alcohol*
- (9) *Possession and Use of Weapons*
- (10) *Truancy*
- (11) *Sexual Misconduct*

### **The Objective of PCP**

The main objective of the PCP is “to prepare and implement their interactive workshops as effectively as possible.” Through this, they aim to reduce delinquent behaviour such as fighting, drugs, stealing, etc. However, as indicated earlier, the PCP has itself gathered no data on school violence and delinquency as a pre-project guide, neither has it conducted any data analysis at the post-project phase to know “the state of school violence and delinquency.” (There are research reports on school violence and delinquency commissioned by the Ministry of Education itself. A relevant one is entitled “Benchmarking School Violence and Delinquency: Towards a Culture of Peace and Civility in Schools” (2003, 2005). While these give a background of the school delinquency problem and examine over

twenty different forms of delinquency, they do not deal with the “carnival period” as an intervening variable for any change in student delinquency).

Of course, there have been widespread concerns from the general public, teachers and the Government itself over repeated episodes of school violence and delinquency. Further, one study into a sample of secondary schools commissioned by the Ministry of Education in 2002 revealed varying amounts of stealing, fighting, obscene language, attacks with weapons, alcohol and drug abuse. There is indeed a disturbing prevalence of school violence and delinquency, and as such, the PCP is justified as one attempt to reduce the level. But in order to establish its impact, the PCP will have to create data-based benchmarks to reliably compare the pre- and post- intervention differences in the targeted behaviours.

**The projects that are implemented by the Peace Promotion Programme are generally geared towards shaping “the behaviour of impressionable youths in an effort to reduce the incidence of crime in the future.”**

The projects that are implemented by the Peace Promotion Programme are generally geared towards shaping “the behaviour of impressionable youths in an effort to reduce the incidence of crime in the future.” This is why, as the Project Organiser stated, their programme seeks to provide “greater attention to the emotional, social and spiritual dimensions” of the child’s personality, which “are lacking consideration because schools usually concentrate on the intellectual development of the child, through curricula, that are predominantly academic.”

At present, the PCP aims to improve behaviour in a rather global sense. It does not specify what the targeted behaviours are, so that one may see what improvements the programme has caused from one point to the next. The related issue, of course, and one with serious methodological implications, is to find out more precisely why the students behave in this perceived manner; and how different this is from the ways in which they “normally” behave, or at least before the carnival season.

## Organization Structure

The major implementers of the PCP are non-governmental organizations who are contracted by the Ministry, and who “possess the special expertise and resources for communicating with young people,” especially in an interactive approach. The organizations have trained personnel and actors who put together skits and discussions which help provide the visual aspects of the workshops that would appeal more to young adults. The over-arching consultative group is headed by the Coordinator of the Programme, Dr. Michael Alleyne, the School Supervisors, the Principals of the various secondary schools and the facilitators of the numerous non-governmental organizations.

The PCP has been revised since its inception in order to deliver their message more effectively. For example, instead of the NGOs being “messengers only”, that is lecturers, they have changed the procedure of their delivery in order to make it “more of an interactive experience,” so students can suggest solutions to their own problems and gain a more “hands-on way of solving problems” that may affect them in the future. Hence a range of skits, visual and interactive sessions were introduced with room for student participation. In order to deliver effective sessions to the students, the committee of this PCP send preliminary documents to the relevant schools before they deliver their workshops. This preliminary information helps the targeted schools to design and develop interactive sessions to address the problems unique to those schools.

In order to gain feedback from the workshops delivered, and “accumulate ideas for the development of new programmes,” the PCP submits questionnaires and evaluation forms to the secondary schools

before and after the relevant workshops are delivered in order to customize the approach for the particular school.

### **Financial Support**

The workshops are described by the Ministry as very “informative and interesting,” and they focus on the most problematic issues at the schools. As earlier indicated, through the staging of the skits and other audio-visual aids for the school programme, several costs are incurred. Payments have to be made to the NGOs’ members/actors and for supporting props and other materials. The cost of each workshop is US\$830 (TT\$5,000 approximately) which is paid through the Ministry of Education funds. This year they have done about one hundred and ten workshops at a total cost of US\$96,600 (TT\$550,000 approximately). To continue with this project, the Ministry has to insert the projected costs in the next year’s budget.

### **Partnering for Success**

The PCP partners with several NGOs, a linkage which contributes “immensely to the success” of their workshops. Such linkages also help to build the reputation and sustainability of the programme. They help to reduce some of the challenges faced by the PCP such as obtaining programme supervisors, local actors, props, etc. A recurrent obstacle is the difficulty, though an understandable one, of gaining access to the targeted schools. The timing and schedule of the PCP do not always coincide with the school activities, especially when these activities are unexpectedly drawn up by the school.

The Programme Coordinator stated that they “need the NGOs’ support and participation to deliver their message effectively.” The NGOs that are partnered with their programme are:

- (1) *The Platinum Mind*
- (2) *Arts-in-Action*
- (3) *Idakeda*
- (4) *Network Community Organization*
- (5) *daDi Consulting*
- (6) *Interactive Team*

The Coordinator stated that “the partnering with these organizations improves the success and impact that the programme has on the students of the secondary schools visited, in terms of reducing delinquent behaviour which could later lead to criminal and violent behaviour.” By using these NGOs that already have a good track record, he added, they are able to “ensure quality workshops that not only affect the students but also the wider environment.”

### **PCP: Potential and Current Obstacles**

With this PCP, even though it is funded by the Ministry of Education, there are several obstacles that it faces. These include:

- (1) Arranging an appropriate time that is convenient for both the organisation and the schools so that they do not interfere with the schedule and academic goals of the school.
- (2) The workshops that take place are usually held during the pre-carnival period, that is, about one month before Carnival, and this is usually the shortest term in the school year. This means that they have to contend with the school’s core curriculum, as well as deal with the delivery of their workshops.

To avoid these obstacles, the Peace Promotion Committee usually sends out questionnaires to the schools before they visit, so problems that the schools need addressed, can be prepared for and dealt

with specifically in order to minimize disruptions to the school's schedule.

As with any programme that is constantly setting new goals to be achieved, the availability of money is the foremost problem. The programme is run by the Government under the Ministry of Education; hence a proposal is presented to the Ministry so that it can become a component of the annual budget. To ensure that the PCP has the necessary funds available, requests have to be made early in the year, thus guaranteeing that the goals they have laid down for themselves "can come all the way through." The organisation "does not anticipate any further obstacles, because the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has provided for them financially over the years."

The other related issue is the context of the youths' behaviour. While before carnival itself (two-day public festival of music, song and dance), a particular behaviour may be judged as delinquent or even "immoral," that same behaviour during carnival time is quite likely to be tolerated and even enjoyed. There is therefore a need to categorise precisely the specific behaviours targeted for change, as well as those behaviours in the "grey area," which can mean different things to different people, and further, mean one thing before carnival and mean something else during carnival time itself. Even more than this, behaviours (e.g., drinking, wining, lewd lyrics, etc.), which may be found objectionable if performed by youths, these same behaviours are all seen "as part and parcel of a good carnival time." The challenge of sustainable improvement does seriously arise. As part of this programme's development, these cultural issues need some appropriate "social psychological" discussion, because the programme's intentions and conclusions will be affected by the wider norms that the surrounding community has of these same behaviours, especially when these behaviours have strong cultural connotations.

### **Features of PCP's Success**

The project staff claims that since the PCP's inception in 2003, "11,000 students in 168 schools have benefited." They have also received "very high ratings through numerous evaluations" from the schools that participated in their workshops. One specific example pointed out by the PCP Coordinator relates to a young man from a school where one of the presentations was held. Surprising the presenter, a young man walked up to him at the end of the presentation and handed over to him a '*marijuana joint*' as an expression of contrition. This, to the PCP organisers, was a major step forward, and it inspired the programme organisers "to have an optimistic outlook" since they began to see how participating in a programme such as this "can bring change to the student's life and ultimately the entire school."

### **Sustaining the Vision: The Way Forward**

PCP organisers explain that "over the two years that the programme has been in operation, every time the pre-carnival period arrives, there is an increase in the number of schools that require their services." The Coordinator believes this shows that "referrals are being made by those who have benefited in the past and their programme is achieving what they have attempted to do." The Coordinator is very impressed with the devotion, enthusiasm and commitment of the staff within the PCP. They "work hard to help change the students' behaviour and attitude in the nation's schools." It is this enthusiasm and devotion, he said, that will cause this programme to be sustained. That is, apart from the virtual guarantee of government funding.

For this programme to be applied more widely, there must be "a coming of age for the programme." That is, fuller use must be made of the new forms of communication technology. This can take "the form of video taping an assortment of presentations, which can be used by different schools so that they can have a library of the presentations that can be used." This will ensure that their standardised message gets across to many schools without having the workshops interfere with their schedule. The organisation can also get the media more fully involved in the programme, hence allowing them to

broadcast, “not only the negatives that take place in the schools but the positives as well.”

### Learning from the PCP Experience

The PCP staff have realised that extensive consultation is needed to conduct their workshops with both the principals, as well as the students of the schools involved. This ensures effective pre-planning and delivery of their workshops, as well as quality results.

The use of the media can be very tricky; they have learnt that they must “get the media on their side so they can get good reviews of their programme.” Using the national media also allows them to sensitize the public on the issues that are facing schools and the youths of Trinidad and Tobago today.

To change students’ delinquent behaviours, there needs to be more than “talk and noble instructions.” It will help if the messages of virtue are accompanied by some attractive audio-visual aids and, better yet, if there is an opportunity for the students themselves to participate in their own restoration.

### Intervention

This PCP is a useful intervention. But there are some areas which need attention to help improve the programme. For example, the PCP needs a more strategic data-driven platform of benchmarks, criterion behaviours, and a “pre vs. post intervention” model.

**It will also be helpful if there is an early discussion on the sociology and psychology of carnival as the most popular cultural festival in the country, and in fact, in several other Caribbean states. Such an early discussion will help provide a better understanding of what is “carnival delinquency,” what meaning we can give to “pre-carnival delinquency” and how sustainable the intervention results, if any, will be in this larger societal context.**

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# CHAPTER 8

## *VISION ON MISSION: TACKLING PRISONER RECIDIVISM AMONGST EX-PRISONERS*

### **Background and Mission**

Across the Caribbean, the challenge of prisoner rehabilitation has become a very serious one, a major reason being the relatively high rate of recidivism of approximately sixty percent (60%) (Deosaran and Ramdhanie, 2003, *Prison Recidivism: Towards Reduction, Rehabilitation and Reform* (Research/Policy Project)). The challenge is to find some ways, either inside or outside the prison, to change the attitudes and lifestyle of these offenders, so that they will not repeat their crimes. At the same time, it is recognized that if this high rate of recidivism can be reduced, so will the crime rate itself. In the last ten years, several groups have emerged with an interest in rehabilitating ex-prisoners. That is, to provide some kind of shelter, social acceptance, employable skills and even spiritual guidance. One such group is Vision on Mission, an organisation run by a group of ex-prisoners.

Vision on Mission was conceived by an ex-inmate, Wayne Chance, while serving time in 1995 in the Royal Gaol in the capital city of Port-of-Spain, in Trinidad. At present, he is the organization's President.



*Wayne Chance (centre) with Carlton Craigh (sitting) and the Principal Founders of Vision on Mission*

The Project's founder, Wayne Chance was incarcerated for armed robbery, illegal arms and ammunition with aggravated assault. In 1994, he escaped from prison and was rearrested and placed in solitary confinement for one year. During this time, he meditated and went into "deep reflection" where he had a "spiritual epiphany." He was then 23 years old, and discovered that about 75% of the prisoners were in the same age group and were subjected to the demeaning and debasing life of prison. This situation thoroughly disturbed Chance, and he decided to disseminate a message of change, which captured 50% of the prison population.

The authorities mistakenly thought that, through the gathering he addressed, he was causing a riot and so they returned him to solitary confinement. They soon realized the positive changes in the youths he touched in prison. Then Prison Superintendent Mr. Grell, released Chance to continue his programme with the other inmates. The programme took such a serious pitch after this, that soon after, other prisoners got actively involved. The "restorative" group went to one of the other prisons, the Golden

Grove Prison in Arouca, where their work flourished and spread to approximately ninety percent of the prison population. A number of programmes were implemented by Chance, the other ex-prisoners and some volunteers. Among the programme items were literacy, anger management, crime prevention, conflict resolution, spirituality and drug rehabilitation.

Chance was granted the use of a shed to carry out programmes in the Golden Grove Prison. This was soon transformed to a centre for rehabilitation. He left prison in the year 2000, but continued with the programme. He returned to check on prisoners soon to be released, and even made visits to the families of these inmates.

The then Attorney General, Mr. Ramesh Lawrence-Maharaj, supported the programme and as a result, the programme “Score With The Law” was launched in 2000 across Trinidad and Tobago. There were seven in all and each was publicly presented in Arima, Port-of-Spain, San Fernando, Laventille and Sangre Grande. Each presentation cost around US\$2,500 to US\$3,000. Chance and a small group of ex-convicts were the main presenters of the programme. The programme yielded positive results.

Several professionals from the respective districts - lawyers, doctors, psychologists, nurses and counsellors - came on hand to give assistance and support. The contrite testimonies of the ex-convicts at Vision on Mission were used as a strategic route to gain the attention and invoke positive change in delinquent youths. In other words, the ex-convicts themselves became a resource for helping to change the attitudes of delinquents. They all gave horrifying details about their “run-ins” with the law and how it impacted negatively on their lives. These shared experiences, from ex-convict to potential criminal, were offered in the hope that they would deter youths from a life of future deviance and hardened crime. Many leaders in the various communities gave positive feedback on this exercise to the staff of Vision on Mission.

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When most ex-convicts are released from prison, they are literally homeless. For the prisoners to be successfully integrated into society, there must be a proper well-structured programme. With this in mind, a house was acquired at #23 Second Private Road, Mt. D’or, Champs Fleur in east Trinidad. The facility is situated on 2.5 lots of land and has six bedrooms and two toilets and baths, with hot and cold water. Each room accommodates four in-house guests. Chance decided to call this house an “in-transit house” and not a halfway house. This was because the ex-convicts tend to view a halfway house as a secondary prison. The office of Vision on Mission is presently situated in San Juan, just on the outskirts of the capital, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. It is a rented upstairs office. It is the dream of Vision on Mission to eventually have a permanent office building.

### Target Group

Initially, the major target groups and beneficiaries were prisoners and ex-convicts. The programme expanded to include the families of the ex-convicts, their victims and the victims’ families. It also included the youths in the community. Most of the counsellors were former convicts themselves. They had first-hand experience with the troubled life on the streets, and used these experiences to deter youths from a life of crime and its subsequent negative results.

The families of the prisoners are also counselled and aided in an attempt to fill the void created when the major bread-winner in a family, is incarcerated. Vision on Mission provides families with basic necessities. The children of the prisoners are also provided with books for school as well as money for transportation.

There is also a new programme called “Victim.” In this programme, the victims and their families are counselled and in some cases monetary contributions are made.

### **Financial Support**

With the change of government in 2001, Vision on Mission encountered serious financial problems. A private business organisation, the Hindu Credit Union, then decided to adopt and fund the programme for one and a half years (2003-2005). The Ministry of Social Development subsequently adopted the organization. After an initial expenditure of US\$20,000, the Ministry decided to continue supporting the programme by giving US\$79,365 annually to Vision on Mission. This was hard to procure because of “bureaucratic red tape”, and out of sheer frustration, Chance realised that self reliance instead would go a long way to ensure the success of the programme.

A catering business, “The Best Bake and Shark in the Caribbean,” was born to help sustain himself, his family and Vision on Mission. The business has been quite successful in buffering some of the major expenses and has been instrumental in continuing its programmes.

Vision on Mission operates on a monthly shoe string budget of US\$1,800 to US\$2,000. For a fully operational professional staff, approximately US\$6,000 to US\$7,000 is needed to have a more effective programme implementation. Some agricultural land has also been identified in Blanchisseuse, north Trinidad. This land is situated in the deep forest, and approximately U.S. \$80,000 is needed to develop the land to include a rehabilitation site for the ex-convicts, as well as some self financing programmes. These programmes can aid the centre monetarily to help buffer expenses. Vision on Mission is also targeting twenty acres of land in Tobago, to lease it for ten years for similar reasons. Vision on Mission believes though difficult to start, these tasks are not impossible.



*Wayne Chance (at left) seen here at “The Best Bake and Shark in the Caribbean” layout, with customers (at right) enjoying their meal.*

### **Vision on Mission’s Approach to Crime Reduction**

In November 2005, we paid several visits to Vision on Mission. We wanted to evaluate the extent to which care and support are given to ex-convicts, as well as the impact that this support is having, especially in terms of bringing about some positive change in the lives of the ex-prisoners who are

enrolled at the centre. Among the key persons interviewed was Mr. Wayne Chance, Ms. Pamela de Garcen, a Social Worker at Vision on Mission and nine ex-prisoners attached to the organisation. In addition to these interviews, data were collected through observations and from archival materials. Furthermore, we visited the in-transit centre which housed the prisoners who had been released from jail. There, we inspected the rehabilitative operations and observed how the ex-prisoners carried out their duties. We also traced some of the ex-convicts who had left the organisation.

**On their release from prison, the ex-convicts have very low self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy. This is very difficult to overcome, especially with the stigma often attached to an ex-convict. The ex-convicts have to work assiduously to overcome these negative circumstances.**

The needs addressed are as holistic as possible. One of the problems that Vision on Mission tries to address is the lack of social welfare programmes inequitably available to ex-convicts. Most ex-prisoners do not have a place to go after their release. Some are taken in by Vision on Mission. After “resting” there for at least six months, and after being treated by the programmes of counselling, anger management and adult literacy, the “rehabilitees” are placed in jobs to become self-reliant and civic-minded. This programme has been reasonably successful in the rehabilitation process, not only with the ex-convicts, but also with victims of crimes and delinquent youths. On their release from prison, the ex-convicts have very low self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy. This is very difficult to overcome, especially with the stigma often attached to an ex-convict. The ex-convicts have to work assiduously to overcome these negative circumstances.

Deficiencies in parenting are also addressed by Vision on Mission. The implementation of a parenting skills programme is also a priority. Another problem that is addressed is the poor community infrastructure, especially in the high risk crime areas such as Beetham, Sea Lots and Laventille (communities on the outskirts of the main capital city of Port-of-Spain Trinidad). Without the proper infrastructure in the community, the youths are left idle. Good community programmes will energize the youths into being constructive.

Another technique used by Vision on Mission in its rehabilitative programme with ex-convicts is called “Head on the Block.” When the ex-prisoners show signs of self-reliance at Vision on Mission, they are placed in jobs that need their skills. In this, Vision on Mission negotiates employment for its rehabilitees, and then accepts full responsibility for up to one year for the behaviour of the allocated ex-convicts. **The ex-inmates are strictly monitored on the jobs.** After the year, as Vision on Mission explained, the employer and the society become responsible. In other words, for the first year, Vision on Mission puts its ‘head on the block’ for its ‘rehabilitees’ in the work environment. After that, the ex-prisoner must live and work like an ordinary citizen. Members of the business community have offered to employ such ex-prisoners, but wished to be assured of their good behaviour on the job. This partnership has been reasonably successful.

**In the last five years, about five hundred (500) ex-inmates have been reformed, have obtained gainful employment and have supported themselves and their respective families. The jobs are mainly in construction and security. There are those who eventually become self employed in their various trades of carpentry, welding, fishing, subsistence and cash crop farming.**

### Objectives of Vision on Mission

One of the main objectives of Vision on Mission is to rehabilitate ex-convicts and to lobby for their

social acceptance as they try to reintegrate into society. Another objective is to track down the victims of crimes. This is important so as to encourage a healing bridge between the victims and their perpetrators. Many crimes committed are done in a common neighbourhood where both the victims and the perpetrators reside. “Many times we have been called to quell disturbances between vengeful victims and the ex-convicts, so this is an important aspect of our work,” Chance related.

Another objective encompasses provision of essentials, such as food, clothes and living accommodations for the various families. It also includes job placement assistance and counselling services for prisoners and their families.

Helping to place deportees into jobs, as well as getting them acclimatized to their homeland Trinidad and Tobago, is another objective of this programme. Deportees are mainly from Canada, North America and England. All are ex-convicts who are not usually welcomed back by their families. They are penniless and homeless. An official form with the relevant information is completed. A social worker then assesses the relevant needs and the process of acclimatisation begins at the “in-transit” house. The “deportee” then “rests” for a while and is constantly monitored by the social worker. When there is positive feedback on a deportee’s progress, he is then placed in a job that matches his relevant skill, or is integrated into the “Head on the Block” programme where he learns a skill.

This programme essentially strives to accomplish its mission statement, which is, *“to aspire to be an essential contributor to social development and nation building, in a positive light”*. This can be done with the rehabilitation of these ex-convicts, by giving them an avenue and an opportunity to become self reliant and civil.

## **Organization Structure**

As previously indicated, the President of Vision on Mission is Mr. Wayne Chance. Pamela de Garcen is one of the two social workers. The other was Breanna Bridge, but she has been reassigned to Project/Event Manager. Another social worker and a professional counsellor are also needed. There is also a Database Manager, Don Cox who is an ex-convict, a Secretary/Receptionist and a Board of Directors.

To keep track of the rehabilitation process, official forms are necessary. Those who are earmarked for the “in-transit” house are registered. The form asks basic personal information such as name, age, health, occupation, former address, dependents, crime committed and which jail the individual was in, etc. A deportee form is also used to assess an individual’s case history. This form requires the same information as the client registration form, but is more detailed. Information about the deportee’s life abroad and in Trinidad and Tobago is requested, as well as the reason behind the deportation, that is, if it was because of a crime that required jail time or was it because they were “illegal aliens.”

In January 2005, Vision on Mission was contracted by the government to be in charge of deportees. Before this, Vision on Mission undertook this responsibility on its own. Most of these deported individuals had committed an offence in other countries and some were illegal aliens. Many who returned to Trinidad and Tobago were impoverished and displaced with the added stress of not being welcomed by their families. Government saw the positive impact that was being made and as a result a contract was issued to Vision on Mission. The in-transit house plays an important role in this aspect. Job placement also plays an important role in the deportees becoming self sufficient.

Vision on Mission also added a new programme called the “Rapid Response” programme, where a Rapid Response Unit intervenes to solve confusion and contention in families with ex-convicts. The reasoning behind this is that sometimes when families have heated arguments and the police are called

in, the ex-convict may be returned to jail. To prevent this situation, Vision on Mission mediates instead of allowing the police to make arrests.

On one of our visits at the in-transit centre there were eight ex-convicts sitting in a group at the in-transit centre. Those who were not present were at various jobs. They were all informally dressed. There were around 16-20 other inmates moving around with eighty percent (80%) of them being of African descent and the other twenty percent (20%) of Indian descent. One of the ex-convicts had an American accent, and we later identified him to be a deportee from the United States, where he was incarcerated for aggravated assault and attempted robbery.

In this in-transit house, there were three facility rooms with approximately 3-4 beds in each room. In the living room, there was a television and a stereo, both of which were off. There were a lot of plants in the living room along with nice, serene pictures of waterfalls and flowers hanging from the wall, metal chairs, normal couches and a podium. In the house, there was a daily roster schedule which is changed every month. In the kitchen area, there were two refrigerators. There was also another room with two bigger refrigerators, which stored seasoned shark for the bake and shark business.



*An external view of the in-transit house (at left),  
with Ex-inmates being counseled by Pamela DeGarcen, Social Worker (at right)*

Behind the house, there was a small yard, where pumpkin, bhagi, (spinach), sugar cane and “shadon beni” (a local herb) were grown by an ex-convict to subsist and augment expenses. Also in the back, there were a lot of storage containers used for selling the bake and shark. There were also two old vans for the ex-prisoners to “try their hand at mechanics to pass time.” The yard was very well-kept and a sign with the words “Vision on Mission” was made out of stones by the deportees who were cleaning the yard. Recently, there was an accident where a truck crashed into the wall and plans are being made to fix it and then paint the entire facility. The in-transit centre was located in a quiet residential area and nobody would ever know that it was a centre.



*Inside one of the bedrooms of the in-transit house*

There was one ex-inmate in particular, who had a lot of certificates for carpentry, scaffolding and masonry, etc. Another ex-inmate was a tutor in adult literacy and computer competence in the Vision on Mission programme. Spiritually inclined, he said, “God bless meh yes! I have to give Him back something that is why I am doing this.” He has been shunned by his family. He has one brother and one sister with whom he would like to be reconciled. He also has a 23 year old son who does not want “anything to do with him” because he is poor. The same goes for his child’s mother.

At the centre, there are two placement officers that have been there for the last 7-8 months, one male and one female. They were trained for the position and have never been to jail. Their job is to make the inmates self-reliant, ensuring that they keep their appointments, do their chores and maintain the facility. They work closely with each individual to try to remove the stigma of supervision as was experienced in the prison service. They are not trying to reduce their freedom as happens in the conventional rehabilitation centre. Another function of the placement officers is to make the ex-convicts independent, both emotionally and psychologically, to help them survive in society when released from the programme. When one of the placement officers was asked if there are any outbursts he said, “Teeth and tongue may clash, but nothing that causes any physical conflict.”

The inmates invite their friends and families which gives them a sense of well being. There are plans to buy two computers and put in the internet, so that they can communicate with family or other inmates in other countries.

Five days after this interview, Vision on Mission was contracted by The University of the West Indies (UWI) Sport and Physical Education Centre St Augustine. They were seen distributing bake and shark to the competitors of a marathon. Vision on Mission does contracting services with companies such as National Housing Authority, Hard Cap Construction, Port Authority, Jet Print, Direct One and I-Five. Other groups which they serve are the Peer Counsellors at U.W.I and Open Bible Church which provides a whole stream of resources.

In October 2004, there was a short programme in curriculum training involving three consultants, for such activities additional help was attained from ex-principals, teachers, social workers, counsellors and event managers. This was strictly on a volunteer basis.

During one of our visits, we saw an ex-inmate walking in, explaining that he was released that same day and wanted “a place to stay.” This appeared to be a regular event at the in-transit house. This particular ex-convict, who had one daughter, had spent six months at the Golden Grove Prison for committing larceny. He indicated that he had the “skill for glass work,” and he had worked on the financial complex (a high-rise building in the capital city). He was then told to fill out a form and that he would be admitted to the in-transit house.

When asked about the meaning behind Vision on Mission’s logo, Chance replied, “Giving a brother a second chance, releasing him from bondage and getting him up on his feet.” This programme also needs a strengthening of staff to cope with the increasing number of ex-convicts. Additional staff members are also needed to teach relevant training programmes. Vision on Mission needs more tools and equipment to help improve both the scope and effectiveness of its programmes. Vehicles are also needed to carry out its outreach programmes. At present, his privately owned vehicle is used. Furthermore, the programme also needs to have an additional in-transit centre. Many more ex-convicts need to be accommodated. There is also a plan to establish a sewing factory. They are now trying to acquire the contract to sew prison and hospital sheets.

### **Client Interviews – Three Ex-Convicts**

In order to get a closer understanding of the programme’s impact, we interviewed a number of ex-prisoners. We now recall, briefly, three such in-depth interviews at the in-transit house.

In the first interview, the ex-prisoner was a dark brown male of East Indian descent in his late twenties. He wore a sleeveless white t-shirt and a black track pants. He was clean shaved with short hair. He was in and out of prison for aggravated assault and robbery three times. He sorrowfully said: ***“Boy, I was in the wrong company, yes. I give meh family real real pressure yes. They doh want to see me today. I really regret what I did. I met Chance in prison and he really treated me well nice, boy. He treated me***

***like human. He help me find God and today I am a better man. Thanks to Chance I also have a job.***

Anxiously showing us his certificates, he proudly displayed his C.X.C. passes in English, Maths, History, Social Studies and Computer Literacy. While in prison, he also did various courses in agriculture and animal husbandry from the Farmers College in east Trinidad. This person was in charge of maintaining the garden in the back yard. He was in the transformation stage.

In the second interview, the ex-prisoner was a slim well built dark male of African descent in his early thirties. He was very merry and jovial. He was very eager to share his life history: ***“I was hooked on drugs, and I used to steal an ting to support my habit. I really was fed up. In jail I met Wayne. He told me over and over that Jesus loves me and he really tried to “speech me of”. In the beginning I did not listen. Buh boy I was really fed up with my way of life. I finally saw the light. When I got out of jail Wayne gave me a chance. He never judged me. Today I have a job as a security guard.”*** With this, he suddenly jumped up and left. He was back in a flash, sporting a crisp white security uniform. The trouser was black and the shirt was short sleeved and white. The name of the security firm was on the sleeves. He “strutted” his stuff. Enjoying all the attention we gave him, he eventually left us with a proud smile.

In the final interview, the ex-convict was a quiet well spoken light brown male of African descent in his late forties. He was bald headed and clean shaven. He was hooked on drugs, and is an orphan. He left the orphanage when they could not keep him any more. He literally lived on the streets: ***“Living on the streets was the way of life for me. I had some really bad friends for company. We did all sort of bad things to get money to buy our drugs. I have been in and out of prison eight times. Out there on dem streets real bad, I had many, many, fights. One day in jail I saw Wayne. I did not take him on. The drugs controlled my life. I was really fed up at one time. Jail really not nice. I slowly came into Wayne and I am here now. I have a job now through Vision on Mission. I am saving some money as I want to help my daughter. She is old now, but I still want to buy things for my grandchildren. My daughter comes to visit me, and I am proud of her.”***

These three cases cited above illustrate the kind of ex-prisoners who use Vision on Mission for civil reconstruction. The training and job options provided, as limited as they are, go a long way in building self-confidence and civility in those ex-convicts who pass through Vision on Mission.

### **Partnering for Success**

Vision on Mission depends on many organisations, schools, institutions and other NGOs for an all-rounded programme. Over the years, from 2001-2005, over 60 organisations have worked with Vision on Mission. These have included St. Joseph’s Convent, Belmont Primary School, Princes Town Junior and Secondary School, Erin Community Centre, Personal Outreach, Open Bible Youth Camp, Trinidad Hilton, Children’s Programme, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, in all camps in the country (Trinidad and Tobago), Mason Hall Government Secondary School (Tobago) and so on.



***A Vision on Mission workshop at Mason Hall Government Secondary***

Vision on Mission currently depends upon The University of the West Indies’ Peer Counsellors group to conduct the Prisoner Pre-Release Programme at the Port-of-Spain Prison and Carrera Prisons on Mondays and Fridays respectively. The peer counsellors provide the knowledge and skills necessary for the smooth transition into society. This programme also introduces the inmates to the after-care services available, and provides risk assessments of prisoners to ensure employment is appropriate to the offence committed.

Proactive programmes are also conducted at churches, youth camps and NGOs. These programmes are conducted by the small staff of Vision on Mission, as well as volunteers. Together with all its partners, Vision on Mission hopes to affect the entire society and to provide safety to the entire country. Chance is also supported by his wife, who has a Masters Degree in Human Resource Management. She assists in a lot of the operations of Vision on Mission.

### **Vision on Mission: Obstacles and Challenges**

Vision on Mission has encountered many seemingly insurmountable obstacles, the major ones being lack of financial support, lack of supportive infrastructure, stigmatization and discrimination. Financial support is not at the level that Vision on Mission would like it to be. Naturally, Vision on Mission's President, is disappointed, even angry and frustrated at times. Perhaps he has not yet recognised the challenges facing non-governmental attempts in restorative justice and prison rehabilitation. Chance observed: *"There are many who complain about the escalating crime situation. These people 'talk the talk but they don't walk the talk'. I am proactive and it takes a lot of dedication and hard work. People want crime to be ridden from society without any money."*

Venting frustration, he went on to say that: *"The big money players in society think that the problem of crime is just a cheap fix, but what they need to do is start treating crime as a multimillion dollar problem, then they would then see some results, and a change in society's attitude."*

It was learnt that the cost of running both facilities, in San Juan and Champ Fleurs, conducting all of the different programmes implemented by Vision on Mission, housing the ex-convicts and paying staff is more than what government provides on an annual basis. In terms of infrastructure, Vision on Mission now has two offices within 5-10 minutes driving distance of each other. The group argued that having more offices would definitely give the organization a greater chance to affect the entire society. The same applies to the in-transit centre. They said that the more in-transit centres there are, then the more accommodation available to inmates leaving prison, thus there would be greater rates of rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

Another obstacle that Vision on Mission faces is the lack of cooperation from society. Chance further observed that most people want the crime rate to be drastically reduced. In fact they talk a lot about it, but when it comes down to actually doing something, they are not very proactive. He also stated that crime starts from the home, and if every family member does his or her part, there would be a notable reduction in the crime rate.

The majority of ex-convicts, on their release from prison, are ostracised from society and their loved ones through various forms of discrimination and stigmatization. This makes it difficult for reintegration into society. They often remain marginalised, alienated and isolated from almost everyone. Psychologically, this has a negative impact on the ex-convicts, and this is where the intervention of Vision on Mission is crucial.

### **Features of Vision on Mission's Success**

**Reintegration:** Many of the rehabilitees, an estimated eighty percent (80%), have all successfully re-entered society. Many are self-reliant and employed, and are now family-oriented. They ensure that their children are well-grounded and not being led astray. In other words, they are not being absentee fathers.

**Spirituality:** Vision on Mission has also introduced the aspect of spirituality as a main source of succour for these ex-inmates. The programme welcomes all and sundry. With this aspect, many ex-prisoners have slowly but surely come to realise that in life's equation, some sort of spiritual dependency is essential. Vision on Mission does this mainly through the efforts of the President himself, in partnership with several religious leaders.

**Funding Partnerships:** The Government has also benefited from this programme. The crime rate would probably be higher if this programme was not implemented. Government has recognised this fact, and is now slowly but surely lending assistance to it. This is done by an annual subvention of approximately US\$79,360. The wider society has also become aware of the urgent necessity to aid these ex-convicts. The business community has now come on board to assist in whatever way they can. This is done in the way of job placements (Head on the Block), monthly financial donations, and in some cases certain supermarkets contribute food and basic necessities to the in-transit house, and some of the impoverished families of the ex-convicts. A major outcome is that stigmatization is not as rampant as before. This can be reflected in the willingness of certain companies to aid in job placement programmes.

**Large Clientele:** There have been many beneficiaries from the programme of Vision on Mission. From the year 2000 to now, Vision on Mission has worked with approximately nine hundred (900) prisoners with a good success rate. Using data supplied by Chance, over five hundred (500) of the nine hundred (900) prisoners (56%) who have been through the rehabilitation process at Vision on Mission have not returned to jail. Many more have gone on to lead very useful and productive lives. The organisation has a large clientele since it is done at a national level and reaches all denominations.

**Public Education:** The organization also has its own weekly radio program on Power 102F.M and a television program on Gayelle Television. These weekly broadcasts help educate the public about the role of rehabilitation, as well as they attract some funding and public support. These programmes advocate how Vision on Mission has impacted positively on communities and by extension the wider society. Further, and equally important, the prisoners themselves hear these programmes while in prison, and so when released, those in need come to Vision on Mission for help. The organisation therefore serves as a “walk-in” centre.



*Wayne Chance on his outreach radio programme*



*Ex-prisoners at a “Head on the Block” Worksite*



*Carlton Craigh in his “prisoner stripes” in action at a workshop*

**Rehabilitation:** This programme has the potential to be highly successful. It also has a strong spiritual base that serves as the foundation for the rehabilitation process. There are pro-active prison visits by Vision on Mission. In this, the organisation visits the various jails and counsels the prisoners inside. This is also intended to reduce the high recidivism rate.

**Media:** More media exposure, public acceptance, willing volunteers, and very importantly economic sustainability, is of extreme importance to ensure that this programme continues with its quest to reduce the crime rate. Intermittently, newspapers have written articles about the work of the programmes. With this type of positive publicity, contributions are sometimes spontaneous and welcomed. Unfortunately, these alone cannot sustain the organisation.

### **Sustaining the Vision: The Way Forward**

There is great potential for this prisoner rehabilitation programme. It can be sustained through the availability of sustainable funding with accompanying transparency and accountability.

Vision on Mission is sustained mainly by Government funding, donations from the private sector, volunteer workers, and the profits of the bake and shark business. Some companies can also provide further help in terms of money, training and jobs. For example, Prices Supermarket provided groceries for two years, and Radica Trading did the same for six months. To implement the programme more widely, more acknowledgement from government is needed. More exposure in the media will certainly improve social acceptance, and a more decentralised mode of Vision on Mission operations.

Exchange programmes with similar organisations overseas would also help, as it would give counsellors more experience and training, which would improve their ability to rehabilitate prisoners. There would also be international valuation and international organisations may be willing to aid financially and technically.

### **Learning from the Vision on Mission Experience**

**Role of Civil Society:** Vision on Mission explained that one of the lessons learnt from this programme was that crime could not be reduced and prevented only by those in legal authority. Civic society has a key role as everyone in society is affected by crime, so the entire society needs to play its part in order to create safety for the nation.

**Sustainable Support For All:** A hard lesson was learnt from the death of one of the founders of Vision Carlton Craigh was an ex-convict who was at the forefront of the organization in 2002, counselling and conducting programmes. Apparently frustrated by the challenges with Vision on Mission, Carlton reverted to his life of crime where he met his untimely death. There was a lot of negative publicity from the media as he was a founding member and better was expected. This experience suggests the need to continuously strengthen and sustain the determination of those who are served and serve on the programme.

**Community Partnerships:** An important lesson learnt was that rehabilitative or restorative justice programmes become more effective when they are integrated with other community groups or agencies. This was evident in the “ex-prisoners testimonies and delinquency reduction” programmes in which schools, police officers and police stations were involved.

**Philosophy to Include All Offenders:** Another lesson learnt was that it is possible to rehabilitate serious crime offenders and reintegrate them into society. Some ex-convicts served time for very serious offences, but Vision on Mission positively changed their lives. Vision on Mission was there for them. The programme made them feel like human beings. The ex-convicts were “not judged”. They were welcomed with open arms to go through the programme and were well prepared for their re-integration into society.

### **Vision on Mission: Wider Application and Partnership**

There are three projects that could be developed with deepened partnerships and strong elements of an integrated crime prevention programme:

- (1) **Testimonials:** The first is the use of ex-prisoners' testimonials to engage delinquents and the delinquent-prone in developing an aversion to crime. The use of drama and skits also increases the demonstrations' effects.
- (2) **Mediation:** The second is the role of ex-prisoners to intervene proactively in disputes involving other ex-prisoners. This mediation role helps keep the police away from these ex-prisoners and so control the rate of recidivism.
- (3) **Head on the Block:** The third is the "Head on the Block" project, that is, a self-regulating programme whereby ex-prisoners monitor and regulate other ex-prisoners on the job. The guarantee given to the employers helps remove stigma, improve social support and open further employment for other ex-prisoners.

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# CHAPTER 9

## *TRANSFORM LIFE MINISTRIES: TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF EX-PRISONERS*



### Background and Mission

This organization, Transform Life Ministries (TLM), was born nineteen years ago, in 1990. It has as its major objective the rehabilitation of ex-prisoners. This essentially means giving them some viable shelter, food, clothing, counselling, skill development and civic socialization according to their needs, with the hope that they will be able to re-enter society as law-abiding, self-reliant, sociable and well-employed citizens. Pastor Glen Awong together with his wife Florance, have been the main activists behind this programme. Many other willing volunteers, reformed ex-convicts and various spiritual agencies have also supported this programme. From what Pastor Awong and his wife explained to us, “sheer persistence and an unflinching belief in humanity” have motivated the volunteers to keep working at TLM, and “dealing with the various challenges of prisoner rehabilitation.”

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TLM’s leader, Pastor Glen Awong, served a seven-year jail term in 1989 for physical assault. During our interviews with him, he described his harsh youth upbringing as being “mostly on the streets,” and “falling into bad company,” and not “having the will” to keep on the right side of the law. From a very tender age, he was privy to the “atrocities meted out to the homeless and dispossessed.”

Even before his jail experience, and as a “straying youth,” he began to feel the urge to help the homeless ex-prisoners. At 19, he started a security firm with some youths in his home area of Diego Martin, west Trinidad. With the success of the security firm he opened, he rented a building to house these dispossessed souls. They were provided with the very bare necessities.

It was during this period that he ran afoul of the law and was imprisoned. On his release, and with

the modest savings from this security firm, he joined with some other ex-convicts and rented a building in the capital city of Port-of-Spain, Trinidad where they began to house the homeless and provide the

basic necessities. In his words, “I wanted to contribute something, somewhere, somehow to the very desolate of society.”

During his seven-year incarceration, Pastor Awong observed the “utter dehumanization of the convicts.” His determination grew stronger to start some sort of organization to assist in the rehabilitation of ex-prisoners. While incarcerated, Pastor Awong observed that the convicts in prison were constantly “treated very harshly,” and in fact, were repeatedly victimized. Their treatment, he explained, was “demoralizing and depraved.” The convicts themselves realized that they were being treated inhumanely and with scant respect, so they retaliated by being boisterous and rowdy. Even though they were reprimanded swiftly and harshly, the prisoners continued their disorderly behaviour. As he explained, “It seemed difficult for any prisoner to become committed and respectful to any institution which allows such degrading and dehumanizing treatment.” While in prison, he pledged “to do something to help” after he was released. He nurtured the dream to build a rehabilitation centre for ex-convicts. As he further explained, he knew it would be an uphill struggle, fraught with serious obstacles and social scepticism. His strong spiritual faith became the energy to bring his plans to fruition. Together with the unstinting support from some friends and volunteers, he pursued this dream.

Within the prison walls, Pastor Awong identified many problems within the prison system. Some were the total lack of privacy, sharing of beds and the shift system among the inmates of four hours a night. This “sleep roster” was designed to give as many as possible a turn to sleep on a bed. In frustration, some slept on the ground with pieces of cardboard as beds. The toilet facilities were shared by as many as fifteen inmates to a toilet, and quite frequently, the toilets were not working properly. This led to unsanitary conditions and, according to Pastor Awong, many became ill because of this. The food was not nutritious, and the “fresh bread” was often hard and unpalatable. The soups and rice were laden with weevils and worms. Fresh vegetables were scarce and there were hardly any meat dishes. All this pained Glen Awong during his prison term.

He explained further that prison officers further exacerbated the situation by treating the prisoners with scant respect and courtesy. Pastor Awong related one instance when one prison officer laughed and rather abrasively told him, “And is we who put Jesus in jail and crucified him? What do you expect from us?” Pastor Awong felt that these dehumanizing problems further encouraged rather than discouraged the prisoners from continuing their path of crime. He realized that the prison authorities and the Government “did not care for the welfare of the prisoners.” He felt that he and others like him in prison should do something.

In prison, Pastor Awong therefore initiated a programme that introduced prisoners to “moral and spiritual values,” as a means of coping with their emasculating conditions, and as well giving hope for rehabilitation. As we found out from some of the ex-prisoners, Glen Awong was kind to them, and spoke with respect and love. He taught them “high spiritual” values and morals. He held bible classes, and encouraged those that were educated to teach others in prison. He taught the lesson of sharing and looking out for each other. In fact, he held “training the trainer” sessions.

According to Pastor Awong: *“We talking about real hardened criminals, who had a high recidivistic rate. In the beginning, they scoffed at me, but with sheer patience and persistence, the convicts warmed to me. I believe they eventually realized that I had their best interests at heart. Also, remember, before my incarceration, I helped quite a few of the homeless, and some of these ended up in prison where I met them.”* He continued: *“Word soon got around, and they started to trust me as I treated them like human beings. One prisoner told me one day, ‘Glen boy, yah really care for we yes, I believe in you boy!’ All this motivated me to persist in my mission.”*

Within the prison walls, he started to minister to the prisoners. Eventually, Pastor Awong’s work was noticed by then Superintendent of the Carrera Prison, Mr. Timothy where he was housed. This prison is

on a very small island just off the north coast of the capital, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. Mr. Timothy encouraged Pastor Awong and fully supported him. Pastor Awong was allowed a few privileges not afforded to other prisoners. He was allowed the whole run of the prison, and attended informal meetings with the prison guards and officials within the prison system. They listened attentively to his proposals as they realized that the prisoners he counselled were among the most well behaved. During Pastor Awong's seven-year incarceration, he ministered to fifteen hundred (1,500) prisoners. Many left the prison with a "better level of self-esteem." Some even left with "some sort of skills." One particular prisoner excelled in Agricultural Development. He made many friends and some of them are at present working with him in the Rehabilitation Centre.

On his release in 1994, Pastor Awong worked at many odd jobs, using his earnings to aid the homeless, many of whom were ex-convicts. Many times people gave him dilapidated houses to use as a rehabilitation centre. With sheer hard work, Pastor Awong and his group of ex-convicts renovated the houses. Each time they were evicted because the owner "wanted the place for something." This occurred four times.

Pastor Awong realized that even though there were those who genuinely wanted to lead a fulfilling life, they were stymied by the lack of societal support. Many of their families had deserted or ostracized them. Therefore, with virtually no place to go, and no economic support, the ex-convicts soon reverted to their deviant behaviours. Pastor Awong realized what was occurring, and through his small personal earnings, contributions from other ex-convicts and some generous individuals, he tried to help the prisoners on their release from jail. During a six-year period, through the good will of a few individuals, Pastor Awong secured temporary accommodations for about five hundred ex-convicts. He, with the aid of his group of ex-prisoners, renovated dilapidated buildings and ran a shelter for these and other ex-convicts. Many times they were thrown out of buildings because of social mistrust and fear of ex-prisoners. However, according to Pastor Awong, "God never lets you down, he provides."

Soon after this, Pastor Awong identified a piece of Government land in Arouca, a district about eight miles from the capital city, Port-of-Spain. The land was overgrown with bush and tall trees. The land was eventually procured legally from the Government. Official plans were also drawn up by a professional draughtsman. These were legally passed by the relevant authorities. At present, Pastor Awong is trying to procure funds for a full-scale, proper, sustainable rehabilitation centre. In early 2000, TLM moved from temporary, place-to-place housing and earned a permanent home on one acre of land. Here, together with the ex-convicts, volunteers, friends and the kindness of a few others, a rehabilitation centre was built.

This structure is a large wholesome shed. It is divided into a church, dormitories for the prospective rehabilitees, a large kitchen area, a small library, an office, living /dining rooms as well as sleeping quarters for Pastor Awong and his wife. Old chairs, beds, furniture, stoves, refrigerators and anything that could be used was refurbished. Electricity is available, but there is a problem with the supply of water. Rudimentary toilet and bathing facilities are used. The kindness of a neighbour ensures that water is available to TLM. Transform Life Ministries was born, and Pastor Awong and his close set of volunteers finally realized their dream. The church itself is a structure of wood, steel and galvanize. The floor is wooden and covered in threadbare carpet.

The church is the major focus area of the rehabilitation centre. All the furniture is second hand, but the electronic equipment and the podium are new. There are a lot of tambourines, guitars, electronic organs, etc. The TLM is based on the principles of the Seventh Day Adventists teachings, and Sabbaths are observed on a Saturday. On Saturdays, Pastor Awong, his wife and other guest speakers, as well as the ex-convicts themselves testify and preach lessons of civic restoration. The amazing aspect of the TLM is the powerful, invigorating music and songs that emanate in the halls. Several persons we interviewed admitted that it was "quite an inspiring experience." A special songbook is used by the TLM. These

songs were specially selected for the ex-prisoners, and like all inspirational songs, the words are very uplifting. On the Sabbath, the families and friends of the ex-convicts, join in prayer and mediation. On this day, “wounds are healed and many families are drawn together.”

With the kindness and goodwill of volunteers, as well as “scarce-to-come-by funds” from Government, Pastor Awong progressed with TLM. Two dilapidated vehicles were bought and with these, together with a group of friends, volunteers and ex-convicts, Pastor Awong goes to various districts, finds the homeless ex-prisoners, and invites them to the TLM. Some refuse, but many are eager to reform and refurbish themselves. With the three “Ps” - patience, perseverance and persistence, TLM gradually began to reach many ex-convicts. While moving his mission around, Pastor Awong also met a few of his former prison “buddies.” Through such reconnections, the mission of TLM was circulated quite widely.

**This evaluation of the work carried out by TLM, now almost twenty years old, is yet another story of patience, perseverance and passion within the realm of non-government organisations. TLM is dedicated to the rehabilitation of prisoners, ex-prisoners and strengthening their family ties.**

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### Financial Support

TLM’s dream is to become self-sufficient in the long-term. There are long-term plans in the areas of agriculture and aquaculture. There are also plans to have a catering business, as well as a breakfast and lunch restaurant in the front of the TLM compound. TLM also wants to expand and have fully operational trade and vocational schools. TLM believes that imparting knowledge and skills can contribute to the ex-convicts assimilation into society since with skills they can maintain their families properly.

Pastor Awong is very adamant that the Government has the ability to make a positive impact in the rehabilitation of prisoners. He believes that with proper governmental incentives, the business community can aid in the rehabilitation process, and by extension reduce the crime rate. TLM advocates that tax concessions can help facilitate donations to organization as the TLM.

Due to the lack of strong financial support, the TLM depends mostly on the goodwill of others and of course the passion, patience and persistence of its many volunteers. There is as yet no paid professional staff of counsellors, psychologists, and office staff. Such deficiencies severely restrict certain operations of the rehabilitation centre. For example, records are not properly kept, and many of the ex-convicts need professional psychological counselling. The structure that is used in the programme is now successful to a point, but if there is paid professional help, the programme can be better streamlined, shared and more successful. TLM needs approximately US\$9,000-\$10,000 to ensure a successful programme. At present, the TLM runs on US\$2,000 monthly.



*Pastor Glen Awong*



*The exterior of the Transform Life Ministries at its Arouca base*

### **Target Group**

TLM's major target groups were initially convicts and ex-convicts. This was the main aim in the beginning, but with experience, the TLM grew to encompass the families of the convicts and ex-convicts, the victims of crimes and their families, as well as homeless children. Such evolution once again attests to the need to have a coherent, embracing set of programmes when dealing with prisoner rehabilitation. For sustainable rehabilitation, the family, at least the spouse and children, if any, should incrementally become partners towards rehabilitation. As TLM staff explained, "To sustain the rehabilitation effort, we must also treat the immediate social environment as well, in particular those 'significant others'."

### **Impacting Lives and Spreading Its Wings**

With "strong effort, spiritual strength and his wife's unfailing support," many ex-convicts and other volunteers, Pastor Awong and the TLM administered to various communities all over Trinidad. There were, of course, several other churches that did the same type of work. Quite often, they all co-operated in joint projects, but with each retaining its special programme emphasis. The head of each of these other rehabilitation Ministries are, interestingly enough, all ex-convicts. This facilitated inter-group communication. This is one of the main reasons, according to Pastor Awong, why TLM is a success. The ex-convicts know that Pastor Awong was once one of them, and they aspire, through his example to be reformed, and to lead a positive role in society away from crime and deviance. In other words, he is a role model to many of these ex-prisoners.

The TLM has expanded over the last six years to encompass programmes of adult literacy and certain types of trade skills. The families of the ex-convicts are also targeted by the TLM for counselling and support. The TLM tries to heal family rifts and introduce the children to their drifting fathers who are also ex-prisoners. Male children are allowed to spend weekends with such fathers, but girls are always chaperoned and do not spend nights. This allows the kids to bond with their fathers thus encouraging the ex-convicts (fathers) to be rehabilitated. The victims of the ex-convicts are also contacted by TLM. In many cases, the TLM has tried to heal the hate and grief between the victims and their perpetrators since in most cases the victims and the ex-convicts were living in the same neighbourhoods.

Another outreach programme by TLM is its Open Air Crusades. All the different rehabilitation Ministries merge and they have these consciousness-raising civic-restoration sessions. The caravan of churches, together with the ex-convicts, their families, friends and volunteers, all come together under one powerful Ministry crusade. They all deal with the rehabilitation of ex-prisoners and have become a

vital aspect with this type of work. These restoration crusades are usually held on the weekends, at some popular open-air areas with thousands attending. There is usually a large crowd of curious on-lookers, including many youths. Several ex-convicts, both male and female, openly testify about their previous life-styles and how they were saved by their respective Ministry. They testify to their spiritual epiphany, which focused them on the right path. The youths that are present all listen very attentively and many have thanked the various pastors for these lessons as it gives them the incentive not to tangle with the law.

Another networking example is with a “graduate” from TLM, Pastor Anthony Sealy, now based in New York, USA. From what he learnt at TLM, he now carries on some rehabilitation work there. He keeps in constant contact with the TLM. He also gives some monetary support as well as personally brings into the country many barrels of clothing, etc., for ex-convicts at TLM and their families. Another contact engineered by TLM is the international charity organization called “Food for the Poor.” This Organization has favourably acknowledged the work the TLM does. It gave a donation to help build fourteen small self-contained houses on the land around TLM premises in Arouca. At present, construction is on going with the disbursement of funds. The inmates of the Rehabilitation Centre do the construction.

### **TLM’s Approach to Crime Reduction**

The objective of prisoner rehabilitation is indeed related to crime reduction and civic empowerment. That is, when a prisoner is rehabilitated, and given the high recidivism rate in the country (60%) (Deosaran and Ramdhanie, 2003, *Prison Recidivism: Towards Reduction, Rehabilitation and Reform* (Research/Policy Project), it is unlikely he/she will commit another crime and as such, the crime rate will be reduced.

But as this story of TLM unfolds, it is important to recognize that without certain basic amenities and physical infrastructure, such rehabilitation will be impossible. The challenge to find such amenities and infrastructure should therefore be part of this story, so that the evaluation can have a proper perspective. In other words, this group’s success should be measured within the context of limited resources and the extent to which such limitations are often compensated by the passion, perseverance and patience of the few “crusaders.” This condition makes a critical distinction between volunteers as with NGO’s, and paid professionalism as we find in government agencies.

After his release from prison in 1994, (for good behaviour) Pastor Awong “procured” a series of dilapidated houses. Each time a house was renovated, the owners claimed possession. This unfortunate eviction repeated itself four times. In addition, the communities themselves were less than welcoming to the ex-prisoners and their mission for rehabilitation. The most pressing need to be addressed therefore was the procurement of a permanent and suitable location for the TLM. According to Pastor Awong, “We knocked from pillar to post before the Lord provided this permanent place in Arouca.” This structure was well renovated with the materials being donated. The ex-convicts themselves did odd jobs to help pay for the renovations.

TLM also secured a contract with certain funeral homes to dig graves. With the help of ex-convicts, this provided a rather frugal means of income. Such concrete contributions by the ex-prisoners themselves and their fraternal collaboration added a strong degree of social capital to the rehabilitation mission. Nevertheless, more funds were needed for the project’s sustainability.

Many letters were written to various key personnel in the Government. The bureaucratic red tape was horrendous. Each officer kept shuffling TLM to another officer. Several promises were made and broken just as quickly. Numerous meetings were held, and at each meeting, documents and proof were

requested of TLM's work. All of this was provided, as well as the testimonies of several ex-prisoners who had benefited from TLM's work.

As a means of gaining public support, the mass media also highlighted TLM's work. Pastor Awong and many ex-convicts appeared on radio and television to publicize TLM's work. There were many spontaneous contributions after these, but eventually these petered out. According to Pastor Awong, "the social welfare of ex-convicts and their families seem to be at the bottom of the list for the government officials and even many others who could help."

But all was not lost. A couple of key NGOs like SERVOL, FEEL and the Living Water Community donate hampers with basic necessities once a year. The help is welcomed, but according to Pastor Awong, "we would usually have enrolled twenty to thirty ex-convicts at any one time. We do need more to carry on."

Another aspect to be addressed is the psychological needs of the released ex-convicts to adjust to their newly acquired "freedom." These ex-convicts were in an extremely rigid structure of restricted institutionalization at prison. There were strict rules to be obeyed in a constrained environment. They were literally told when to eat, sleep, exercise, etc. Permission was sought for the slightest move, and when rules were broken, retribution was quick and sometimes severe. Soon after their release, according to Pastor Awong, and even from our own observations, the ex-prisoners seemed quite apathetic, with little social motivation and no keen desire to "get up and get." During our interviews, we found that some had little hope for their future; some were frightened and confused as to what the society had to offer. A few who were high recidivists came out with the self-fulfilling prophecy, that "society had a very negative attitude toward them so they will continue on this trend." At TLM, however, these became special targets for counselling towards mental reconstruction. Pastor Awong said that this "warm and unconditional acceptance" by TLM has a "seventy-five per cent (75%) success rate."

The Bible was used as the main teaching tool for such restoration. Many relevant lessons were taught from it and the ex-inmates were able to relate to the lessons on various levels. Pastor Awong along with volunteer counsellors also trained the other ex-convicts about the Bible, so that they can teach the new rehabilitees. This was part of TLM "training the trainers" programme, one which brought great pride and self-esteem to these "trainers."

There are some kind professionals (psychologists, social workers, etc.), who volunteer their services but these are too far and in-between to sustain TLM's long-term objectives. This is a major obstacle, as a structured, sustainable approach is needed to build the confidence of ex-prisoners and facilitate their rehabilitation and integration into society. Many of the ex-convicts are also drug-addicts and need professional medical care with the withdrawal process. As some of the ex-prisoners explained, while they were in prison, there was no structured programme to assist in drug rehabilitation. In further conversations with them, they said that while in prison they had easy "access to drugs." Obviously, all this makes the treatment of drug addiction difficult both in and out of prison.

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*Pictures Initially Found in the Media Showing Pastor Awong and the Ex-Prisoners Renovating A House in Santa Cruz  
(Source: Trinidad and Tobago Sunday Mirror, May 31 1998)*

# 'Former prisoners need a helping hand'

## - the man behind the Santa Cruz Rehab Centre

GLEN AWONG, a ray of light for ex-prisoners who have nowhere to go when they come out of jail, says when a man who is a slave to the "outcast system" and the crime world, comes out of prison, nobody wants any part of him.

"Sometimes he's genuine and he really wants to make a change in his life, but there's hardly anybody to give him a helping hand," he observed last week.

"They just look at you as a prisoner who's playing smart and looking to steal ... because that is the true nature of a man on crime.

"But there are people out there

He said prisoners who have been genuinely converted through the work of Christian prison ministries, need to be nursed back into society when they come out.

"But they don't even have a straw to grasp and the devil is right there waiting to lead men back into temptation.

"The government does not have a filter system to help transformed prisoners fall back into society.

"When the prisoner comes out, he does not even have proper

died, some have delinquent parents who made delinquent children, and then moved from TFC, all the way up to big jail.

"But it doesn't mean a good seed cannot be sown in their hearts," Awong, who is completely dedicated to this cause, added.

Calling for government intervention, he said this could be seen as a new vision for fighting crime and drugs. However, observing that only one set of prisoners are "inside" year after year, Awong said



*Article in Weekly Newspaper About Pastor Awong  
(Source: Trinidad and Tobago Sunday Mirror, July 9th 1998)*

This rehabilitation centre, TLM, also has the problem of having to cope with the absence of professional office staff, as well as basic office equipment like computers, faxes, etc. This makes proper record-keeping a problem and the preparation of project proposals very difficult. There is too much dependence on sporadic volunteer help in these respects. Again, because of TLM's dependence on the availability of these volunteers, many projects, proposals and sometimes even important meetings that are vital to the organization's development are delayed.



*Two vehicles used by the Transform Life Ministries*

The TLM keeps in contact with the prison system to be informed of prospective rehabilitees, that is, released prisoners. At the beginning, Pastor and other ex-convicts taxied back and forth to the prisons to conduct “in-prison counselling,” as well as to transport the newly released prisoners to the rehabilitation centre. A twenty-five year old van and a twenty-year old car were eventually obtained for such uses. With patience and persistence, as well as the “mechanical genius” of the ex-convicts, these two vehicles are working satisfactorily.

The overall objective of this Rehabilitation Ministry is to apply a holistic approach to the rehabilitation of ex-inmates. That is, to provide as far as possible, the physical, social, psychological and financial needs of ex-prisoners. TLM staff explained that spiritual advocacy is “a major pillar” for the restorative process. But Pastor Awong advises that even though TLM is based on the Seventh Day Adventist principles, he does not force any of the ‘in-house guests’ into religious conversion. The message at TLM is that, “I believe that each man has his own way to reach the Supreme Maker.” In fact, while visiting the centre, we saw in the living areas of the dormitory, pictures that portrayed Islamic and Hindu ideologies, as well as various pictures of Christ. One message at the centre reads, “I believe all of God’s brethren are one.” This Ministry welcomes individuals here, despite their race, ethnicity, class or spiritual persuasion. All are welcome – none will be refused.” (*Trinidad and Tobago, with 1.25 million is a multi-ethnic country: 40% of African descent, 41% East Indian descent, 18% Mixed, the rest White, Chinese, Syrian, etc.* (Central Statistical Office, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago)).

The TLM’s outreach programmes as well as open air sessions are used as avenues to reduce the stigmatization that follows these ex-convicts within the society. The Ministry tries to sensitize the public through the redeeming public testimonials of the ex-convicts. Their self-image is of importance to them. As our interviews revealed, they put great store in “how people see them,” and if shunned, they tend to retaliate in different ways. This public interaction through open-air testimonials is therefore an important part of the restoration process too. It is used to build the ex-prisoners’ self-efficacy and self-confidence. The testimonies are used to make the ex-convicts proud of what they have achieved, compared to where they were. Their feelings of pride are obvious when they deliver their public testimonies. As one said: “We feel like somebody.”

The families and close friends of the ex-convicts are also of vital importance to the rehabilitation process. The TLM tries to reunite estranged families, sometimes through “tough negotiations,” since some families “disown” the ex-convict. However, the ex-inmates all show a positive attitude when they are aware that “close, loved ones” are there to support them. These loved ones are encouraged to attend the church services with the ex-prisoners, as well as to visit the rehabilitation house as often as possible. TLM’s ex-prisoner staff lends support to the families of the other ex-convicts during their incarceration,

and even after they are released from jail. Often these ex-convicts are the main breadwinners of a family and their incarceration therefore leaves the family behind, quite distressed and financially handicapped. Transform Life Ministries (TLM) tries to provide basic necessities as well as school books, transport and in some extreme cases, medication.

When these ex-convicts are released from jail, there is a three-month “resting period” at TLM. During this time, they are counselled and encouraged to “rest and meditate.” Slowly they are acclimatized to the “free outside world” and subjected to the sensation of not being under constant “lock and key.” These “just-released prisoners” are gradually assigned chores in the rehabilitation centre and are more or less “free to do as they please” at the TLM. This freedom is to test and affirm their “will to be reformed.” However, they are restricted from leaving the compound during this three-month period.

With the limitation of tools and equipment, trades and skills are taught to a very modest extent. The ex-convicts teach each other whatever trade or skills they themselves have mastered. It is the vision of the TLM to have a trade school as well as an academic school. A skills bank in the TLM is another objective, as this will enable businesses within the larger society to employ or assist the ex-convicts with jobs. Some security firms also employ a few of the ex-convicts as they believe in the motto – “Use an ex-thief to catch a thief!” Many of the ex-convicts are semi-literate. Outside volunteers and those ex-convicts who have the basic three “R’s,” that is, reading, writing and arithmetic, sometimes help in promoting adult literacy at TLM.



### *Transform Life Ministries at an Outreach Exercise*

TLM also seeks to bridge the gap of grief and hatred between the ex-convicts and their victims. In many cases, the crimes committed are done in the same neighbourhoods where the ex-inmates, victims and their respective families live. In these cases, the ex-convicts have to re-enter the same neighbourhoods. Therefore, it is therefore vital for peace to prevail. TLM believes that targeting the victims of crime is another way to achieve a safer community. Sometimes these victims are so angry that they wait to mete out revenge on their perpetrators. Sometimes the families of the perpetrators are also targeted.

Transform Life Ministries (TLM) tries to bridge the gap between the victims and the perpetrators. This has been done through modest amounts of “partnership-counselling and monetary contributions.” Such cases are however quite few, not so much because of a lack of need but more so because of the amount of human resources required for proper settlement. While on the site, we witnessed such an outreach programme in action with two antagonistic families. This has been somewhat successful. The children, for example, have benefited, since they are no longer publicly ostracized by the respective families. In this sense, TLM, like a few others can be called a “rehabilitation and peace” centre – with all essential elements of a restorative justice approach.

## Features of TLM's Success

A major objective of TLM is to become fully recognized by Government, so that much needed annual subventions can be provided. This will initially aid the Rehabilitation House to eventually become self-sustainable. The work and fairly good success rate of TLM can justify such assistance.

A recent success of TLM is its acquisition of a ten-acre plot of land (estimated value US\$30,000) in the district of Caparo, a rural part of Trinidad. This land is targeted for agricultural development. TLM has plans for subsistence farming as well as cash crops to supply both the local and export markets. TLM is arranging for a group of agricultural experts to assist in making this fund-raising project viable. The work of TLM has attracted funding for this land. Other fund-raising projects include aquaculture and fishing.

At present, the inhabitants of TLM are re-socialized, and gradually assimilated into civil society. As Pastor Awong and his volunteer staff explained, "There is almost nothing in prison life that properly prepares the prisoner for a useful and productive life on the outside. There is too much emphasis on the punishment side of things." "The first three months are crucial," the ex-prisoners at TLM confessed. One added, "If you can stand the first three months at this Ministry or any other good rehab house, it is very likely that you will make it back to society." Those who "successfully graduate" from TLM learn to live in the outside world again, and are encouraged to build their self-esteem and self-efficacy. Some are even given the chance to work, as TLM has some key business partners who employ the ex-convicts. This helps raise the self-confidence and self-esteem of the ex-convicts while encouraging them not to become deviant again. Through TLM's reputation, released ex-prisoners make useful social contacts which add to TLM's progress.

## Organization Structure

The main implementers of the programme comprise a team of volunteer staff and ex-prisoners led by Pastor Glen Awong and his wife Florance. The families of some ex-prisoners also lend periodic support in the various projects. The organizational and programming structures are not very tight, mainly because of the voluntary nature of assistance. This dilemma diminishes strict accountability and efficient programme delivery.



*Pastor Awong's wife, Florance (at left, seated), is seen here with some members from Transform Life Ministries*

Pastor Awong's wife Florance is called "Mother Florance," by all at the rehabilitation centre. Well respected and admired, her roles at TLM are many. We repeatedly saw her pitching in wherever there was a need with unfailing enthusiasm. She complements and reinforces her husband quite well. She keeps a strict eye on the new ex-inmates. And with her moral authority, they follow her expectations of them. She outfits them smartly in suits of clothes and other personal necessities. She can be seen constantly circling the compound, regularly talking to the "in-house guests," as well as targeting the

apparently dejected and depressed ones. We saw how often she makes them laugh while gently admonishing them when necessary.

When the ex-convicts enter TLM, they are assessed by the Pastor or a volunteer counsellor and a form is filled out. This form asks for details like, age, last place of abode, occupation, dependents, marital status, the type of crime committed, the last incarceration date, etc. At various stages (when time allows), these forms are updated with the individual's progress, achievements, drawbacks, etc. TLM maintains documents which clearly state the main objectives of the rehabilitation programme, as well as the behaviour codes, house rules, and personal ethics that are used to manage inmates and implement its various programmes.

At approximately 5:30a.m. one Sunday morning, we accompanied Pastor Awong on a visit to the "Eddie Hart Stadium" in Tacarigua. This exercise was to identify homeless men, many of them ex-prisoners who were sleeping on the steps of the stadium. TLM came to offer them shelter and a "new life" at TLM. This is the typical mode of operations by TLM. Such "discovery missions" in the field supplement the enrolment that comes directly from the prisons.

The technique of invitation at the stadium was intriguing to us. With gentle prodding and a very cheery, soft-spoken "good morning," the Pastor awoke ten homeless men sleeping on the steps and platforms of the stadium. They were extremely difficult to arouse, as all seemed quite "high" on some type of drug. Some did not even answer. The pastor left them "for another time." Those who responded promised pastor to visit the rehabilitation centre. To our delight, from behind the stadium, a rather dishevelled light brown male East Indian descent, in his early forties, hailed out the pastor. The pastor spoke to him and "John" very beseechingly asked to be "saved." Pastor Awong embraced the man and instructed him to go take a bath and get his belongings, and he would be taken within an hour to Transform Life Ministries.

We left the man, and then made our way to the Tunapuna cemetery. We carried some clothes and basic food necessities for the homeless ex-prisoners who were sleeping on the graves. Many of them were not there. They had left for the Tunapuna market, trying to hustle some "small change," or by being petty labourers, or helping the vendors carry their produce and packing them. Those who were still there in the cemetery were given the supplies we brought. There was a particular ex-convict who had lived in a tree house at the cemetery for quite some time. He was very reclusive, but gave an impromptu interview at the pastor's request.

He confirmed that he was an addict, cocaine being the drug of his choice. He was a dark Rastafarian of African descent in his middle thirties. He had been in and out of prison five times, mostly for aggravated assault and robbery. His 'hustle' was bottle collecting and doing various odd jobs. He said: *"I have mih pride, I doh beg. I does wuk. Pastor here is a good man, he does help me and ting, dem people out there doh help yuh, especially if dem know you is an ex-con."*

His clothes were semi-clean. He wore dark green pants and a sleeveless blue shirt. There were no needle marks on his arms, as he either snorts the coke or smokes it. He had three brothers and two sisters. He explained how his father abandoned his family and his mother was a single parent. Due to peer-pressure and 'bad' company, he started to smoke marijuana and then coke. He stole to support his habit. He admitted to us that through TLM's influence he has stopped robbing people, and does "a hustle here and there." TLM staff pays this fellow regular visits and counsels him, to help keep him out of further crime. Such "discoveries" and narratives helped us to understand the deeper, darker sides of the lives of ex-prisoners, especially the many who come out of prison homeless and socially disconnected.



*A homeless ex-prisoner  
at the Tunapuna Cemetery*

We left the cemetery and visited an abandoned house in Tunapuna. This was a dilapidated upstairs and downstairs corner house. It was overgrown with bush. At the back of the house was a wooden and galvanize shack, about four by eight feet. Inside, there was a double bed and a chest of drawers. About six homeless ex-convicts lived here. There was a rudimentary fireplace where cooking was done on the outside of the shack, and a pipe with a large wooden sink, that doubled as a bathing and laundry area.

Only two of the six men were at “home.” The rest were out “hustling.” They eagerly welcomed the provisions that pastor gave them. They chatted for a while, and Pastor enquired if they were “still within the limits of the law.” Both quickly replied yes, reaffirming that because of Pastor Awong they really, “doh want to go back behind bars nah boss.” TLM staff checks with the nearby police station to help ensure that these ex-prisoners do keep out of trouble with the law.

Such “walk the talk” encounters with these homeless ex-prisoners added scope to TLM’s in-house programmes. After all, unfortunately, not every ex-prisoner wishes to be housed at TLM or any other such institution. The next best thing, as TLM staff admitted, is to “go to them, wherever they may be, to help ensure that they keep out of trouble with the law.”

We were impressed to learn that this homeless group contributed in one way or another to the daily “communal pot.” Every day someone cooked, and gathering the groceries was a joint effort. Those at the cemetery also shared their pot with other homeless ex-convicts living on the streets, especially when TLM bought extra food for them.

We did several interviews “on the spot.” One such interview was with a young, dark, coloured, clean-shaven male of African descent in his mid twenties. He was bare backed and wore a torn up grey short pants. His hair was dark brown in colour and neatly plaited in corn rows. He was in prison twice, and vows with Pastor Awong’s help “not to go dey again.” He had spent most of his young years in the Tacarigua orphanage, and left at sixteen years. He did odd jobs here and there, but with peer pressure, started to rob people to support his marijuana habit. He said: *“I does still smoke meh pot now and then but I don’t do no ‘rong ‘ting again. Pastor and dem boys from the ministry does real talk to meh, and ah trying!”* He seemed precariously lodged, needing regular help and support from TLM.

After our interviews, we proceeded to the nearby district of Curepe, to another abandoned, dilapidated house. Here a group of female ex-convicts lived, along with six males. The three females all confessed they were “on coke,” and one had an intimate relationship with one of the guys. At the time, she reported this, one of the male individuals rang out, “She is meh horse, yes man she is meh horse,” and gleefully burst out laughing, and ran outside. He was of African descent, about thirty to thirty-five years old. Bare backed, he had a towel in his hands and wore a navy blue jockey, His hair was jet black and in disarray. All three female ex-prisoners desperately pleaded with us. “Can you all do anything to help us?” We did feel very powerless. TLM promised to see what it could do in the near future with these women especially.

We eventually left and returned to the Eddie Hart Stadium where “John” was waiting. Pastor had promised to pick him up within the hour. And indeed he was waiting.

What a transformation there was! “John” was clean-shaven, his hair was neatly combed and he wore a suit of clean clothes.

He had a duffle bag with his belongings. We threw his bag into the trunk and returned to TLM’s compound. During the twenty-minute return journey, Pastor counselled “John” and asked him many questions. Jokes were made, and there was a lighter mood on the return trip.



*“John” getting ready to go to the TLM*

There are no formal, structured, educational programmes at the TLM. Each ex-convict shares his own skills and knowledge with each other. This has worked up to a point. If there was sufficient monetary funding, then proper staff, equipment, etc. would be available and better programme projections could be made.

There are no systematic data-bases and statistical analyses for management use. There are no statistical summaries of past performance, except for judgments and estimates made by TLM staff and the ex-prisoners themselves. The information we derived came mainly from interviews, staff estimates, archival materials, news stories, and our own observations. How many ex-prisoners’ lives have Pastor Awong and TLM touched and in fact improved? While in prison the pastor estimated, he helped one thousand five hundred (1,500) inmates. After his release, he estimated that with TLM, an additional fifteen hundred (1,500) to two thousand (2,000) ex-prisoners were helped to keep out of trouble. Out of the three thousand (3,000) plus ex-prisoners, about one thousand five hundred (1,500) were drug addicts, and from this, there was an estimate of five hundred (500) relapses (33%).

TLM staff explains, that apart from the raw numbers of ex-prisoners whom they have helped to change, their related achievements should be seen in the social capital and restored relationships they have engineered with families, and the numerous crime prevention programmes to which the youths were exposed. “Not everything we do can be counted,” says one volunteer. Another ex-prisoner staff member said that crime prevention is promoted not only by “locking people up,” but also by creating a “safe and peaceful environment” which is also “part of the mission” at TLM. All this seems to be the collective view of the leaders and supporters at TLM.

### **Partnering for Success**

TLM is also supported by Pastor Colin Rosales of the Alpha Omega Ministry, another Christian-driven ex-prisoner rehabilitation centre. Both men and their respective families have a passion for this missionary work. Pastor Rosales and Pastor Awong support each other by keeping track of ex-convicts in each other areas, as well as sharing the burden of administering to the respective families and their loved ones.

Collaboration with the prison authorities is also quite a helpful partnership. The prison authorities inform Pastor Awong when a prisoner is to be released from jail. When he receives this information, he is there on the day of the ex-convict’s release. He would have already informed the prisoner of his presence at the gates. The prisoner has a choice at that point. Three out of five times, according to TLM estimates, the prisoner - homeless and friendless at that time - accepts Pastor Awong’s invitation to join the TLM fraternity at Arouca. There is, of course, no guarantee as to how long he will stay there. With these two main avenues of partnership, the rehabilitation programme at Transform Life Ministries has

been successful to a point.

TLM is situated in the east, and The Alpha Omega Ministry is in the south of the main island, Trinidad. This enables each Ministry to alert each other of potential rehabilitation efforts of ex-inmates and their families. This puts less pressure on already strapped financial resources, as each Ministry can then concentrate on the individuals who are more strategically situated.

Pastor Frankie-Antonio Sealy of the Rescue Mission Christian Work, situated in Brooklyn New York, USA has also been a participant in the rehabilitative process. Pastor Sealey himself is an ex-convict and a Trinidadian. He got married while in jail, and like Pastor Awong has pledged to help ex-prisoners rehabilitate themselves. He partners with Pastor Awong to respond to the needs of the prisoners. Pastor Awong partners with Pastor Sealy to identify what necessities are of the most urgent priority. “Sneakers are always on his list,” Pastor Awong laughed, stating that: *“Sometimes he brings down three to four barrels of sneakers for the boys in prison, and there is normally an excitement in the air when the prisoners know that Pastor Sealy is coming to visit them!”*

This boosts morale in the ex-prisoners. It also builds their confidence in TLM as an agency that is really serious about caring for them. Knowing that there are other people in a different country who care about them has a positive impact on these individuals. It boosts their self-esteem, and to them the world does not seem too bleak from the inside of the jails. Through this partnership, Pastor Awong has been introduced to more prospective rehabilitees and their families. With this partnership, many families felt comfortable in coming for social support and counselling at TLM.

A key partner is the district police station and the officers who are there. TLM organizes friendly visits by these officers to the centre. TLM staff also visits the police station to find out if any of their inmates are in trouble or need to be looked after.

### **Transform Life Ministries: Obstacles and Challenges**

The major obstacle that has been finally surmounted was the procurement of a permanent plot of land at Arouca to house TLM. After facing many broken promises, a piece of land was leased to the TLM by the Government. Even though the actual building was erected six years before the lease was granted, Pastor Awong with a few dedicated volunteers consistently petitioned the government and their efforts were finally rewarded in the latter part of 2005.

Procurement of building materials, office equipment and basic furniture and appliances were also long in forthcoming. The best materials from discarded piles at various warehouses and construction sites were used in the building process. Some new materials were donated, but the majority was procured the former way. Transport at this time was also a major problem. To assist in this part of the project, several trips were made with the small jeep to cut down on transportation costs.

The question of the lack of a fully operational, professional work force is another major obstacle. The need for psychologists, counsellors, secretaries, computer technicians, etc., is another debilitating problem. The good will of volunteers and professionals serves as a buffering force to combat this problem. Medical, eye and dental care are also desperately needed. At present, the ex-convicts and their families use the public health system to ease their pains and sufferings.

There is also the question of the lack of facilities to train the ex-convicts in certain types of skills and vocations. At present, two very old vehicles are used by the TLM. These often break down, and the ex-convicts practice their hands at being car mechanics. The scarcity of tools also makes this a challenge. There is also the need for a fully functional vocational school, where the ex-convicts can practice and

learn all types of skills. Some of them have the basic educational background and are even trained in computer literacy. Skill sharing is a major aspect of gaining autonomy at Transform Life Ministries, and a well equipped vocational school could enhance this drive. All such needs, according to TLM staff, should have been provided while these people were in prison, at least at the basic levels.

Pastor Awong and his staff all agreed that the extent to which these prisoners are deprived of basic necessities, skill development and other forms of humane rehabilitation in prison, has a severe impact on how much more groups like TLM can or should do.

Keeping track of the ex-convicts, when they leave the TLM Rehabilitation Centre is another major obstacle to achieving further success. Some ex-convicts were described by Pastor Awong as “Missing in Action” (MIA). TLM staff explained some of the difficulties. One said: *“We try to follow up on them and their families, but sometimes their place of abode changes so often that locating them is quite difficult. Some religiously report back to the centre, and” give back” to the Centre in what ever way they can.”*

This volunteer ex-prisoner added, *“A few that are assimilated back into society try to forget their past and all it entails, so they are permanently MIA. Some also disappear deep into rural areas where accessibility is a problem. In these areas, they become subsistence and cash crop farmers. They decide to do this in isolation as they are fed up with the way society views them.”*

The ex-convicts have to battle the negative attitude that society metes out to them. Stigmatization is a major dilemma that faces these individuals on a daily basis. To combat this, one of the major features of TLM is the fact that all the in-house guests are ex-convicts. As a means of buffering this social obstacle, they socialize among each other, reinforce and console each other, even laughing at each other’s idiosyncrasies and foibles. Gradually, however, these contrite ex-prisoners are introduced into the wider society, especially through employment, the church and open air charismatic sessions. Business, security firms and construction companies help with the integration process by employing these ex-convicts. Their personal history is confidential and at their own timing, they may wish to share their life experiences with their working colleagues.

### **Features of TLM’s Success**

The fact that over the hard lean years of operation, TLM has survived through passion, perseverance and patience, is in itself an inspiring story of success. While the results of its work are important to count, the acquisition of land, a building, a modest amount of physical amenities and increasing public goodwill are all also important to count. Transform Life Ministries has become quite alive since 1994.

Recently (August 2005), part of the building housing the dormitory, and living area was demolished, and through the aid of an international organization called “Food for the Poor,” fourteen self-contained two bedroom houses are being built on the compound. Construction is being handled by Pastor Awong and the ex-inmates. Outside volunteers and loyal friends also pitch in. Each house will house four inmates, and the inmates will be specially grouped together. Pastor Awong realizes that there is a need to separate the hard-core recidivists and the ex-cons who do not have a high recidivism rate. There are plans in the future to add a toilet and bath to each home, but for economic purposes communal baths and toilets are now necessary.

In May 2004, Government granted TLM US\$9,500. To “stretch” this grant, second hand fridges, a deep freeze and stoves were brought. The two old vehicles were given a much needed overhaul. Second hand beds and mattresses were also acquired as well as some tools. Another sign of success was job placement. TLM records showed that over sixty percent (60%) of the ex-convicts from TLM are placed in jobs, and even those who learnt skills from fellow inmates at TLM were placed in appropriate

employment. The most popular job placements were in security and the construction industry.



*Pastor Awong and some ex-inmates at work on the construction site*

**Another sign of success was job placement. TLM records showed that over 60% of the ex-convicts from TLM are placed in jobs, and even those who learnt skills from fellow inmates at TLM were placed in appropriate employment. The most popular job placements were in security and the construction industry.**

Some of the married ex-inmates became so self-reliant that they are now working and supporting their families. Pastor Awong himself serves as a marriage officer. While at the TLM, we were introduced to an extremely well dressed and pleasant individual. It will be helpful to use his own words to reveal the kind of success, which TLM has had with some of their inmates.

This was a dark coloured male of East Indian descent in his early forties. He wore a black short pants and a sleeveless vest. On his feet, he wore a pair of black construction boots. His attitude was extremely up beat, even joking about his past. His hair was short and he was clean-shaven. His name was Michael, and he was now operating his own fish stall. He was once a “drug king-pin,” and used cocaine. He was in prison three times, and had relapsed into the cocaine habit many times. He said: *“I just come back here to talk to dem fellas and dem, and to help with the construction project going on here!”* he said. *At this point in time (November 2005), he has been clean for six years, and has a daughter, who is “the light of his life.”* He added: *“The TLM has done a lot for me. I really needed help. I must give back something here. This is why I here. I must try to help dem fellas an dem. Out there not easy. It bad real bad!”*

Michael firmly believed that this positive life-style was due to his “faith in God. He stated: *“I am not telling you, I always believed, but I was so fed up of prison. One day I met Pastor Awong and on many occasions he administered to me. I felt like a human being. Many of my friends and family all treated me like dirt, and I was very despondent and suicidal. Even my first girl-friend left me. Now I am in God’s Path!”*

in NLM's programmes, their satisfaction with each session, families' views of treatment progress, etc. There is clearly a need with this and other social welfare organisations to develop some standardised measures that can help them monitor and evaluate the effects of their programmes. There is, of course, some helpful documentation, but the rough estimates and impressions about "programme success" should be supplemented by some kind of objective assessments, especially if external funding is an objective.

### **Sustaining the Vision: The Way Forward**

A major requirement for programme sustainability is to have a viable number of qualified professional staff always available. Further, the administrative staff here comprises a lot of volunteers whose missionary zeal fluctuates.

NLM also obtains its financial resources through client fees, donations and partnerships. All in all, the programme that NLM started in 1986 can be sustained through the commitment and dedication of the staff at the Centre along with all the support of other agencies - governmental, private and foreign.

NLM also requires the "will to change" by the drug addicts themselves and the social support of family, friends and the community in this very difficult challenge of drug rehabilitation. In this sense, these conditions for sustainability are quite common in all other rehabilitation groups.

### **Learning from the NLM'S Experience**

Several lessons have been learnt from this venture both positive and negative. Some of the positive lessons are listed below, followed by some negative ones:

- ***Adherence to Goals:*** As NLM's staff admitted, at no time must the goals of the organisation be compromised, even though under pressure from clients or family members. It is easy, they explained, to be manipulated by drug addicts so you feel sorry for them and relax or ease up on the required programme. This leads to chaos. "We have learnt from these mistakes," they said.
- ***Holistic Approach:*** In terms of programming, NLM believed it is far better to take a holistic rather than a piece-meal approach to drug rehabilitation since they believe that addiction is also "a personality challenge." Their early doubts about the holistic approach were eventually dispelled.
- ***Hard Work and Dedication:*** They have been convinced that the "hard work and dedication" at the NLM has brought in rewards beyond financial compensation. It has been a very self-fulfilling experience for many of them, including the volunteers. And through such work, the reformed drug addicts go out and spread the word, thus building the reputation of the NLM.
- ***The Addict:*** Addiction is a serious problem. It requires hard work. To put an addict through a rehabilitation programme can be quite stressful for this person, and to some extent, for the staff too. It is regrettable that at times, it is realised that rehabilitation cannot work for everybody. And the lesson learnt is that such staff – permanent professionals and volunteers – must develop patience and the tolerance to know that in such a challenge success is not always guaranteed. As one volunteer explained, "Dealing with addicts can be frustrating. Addicts are individuals that are closed-minded, and there are times when nothing you can say would change their minds."
- ***Lack of Support:*** A rather painful lesson learnt is that not all citizens, organisations or public agencies believe in providing rehabilitation or giving money to help drug addicts, especially those who have been in prison. This is an uphill battle. But the realisation that so many do not believe in such rehabilitation is a hard but necessary lesson to learn. In "training the trainers"

programmes, this lesson should be widely shared to help build the professional determination required for this special mission.

**This rehabilitation centre accommodates anyone with an addiction problem. This includes substance abusers, gambling addicts, and even individuals with eating disorders and obsessive-compulsive behaviour. NLM provides such assistance because they believe that sometimes people are afflicted by more than one addiction or behavioural disorder, and that to effectively treat one, you have to attend to the other as well, sequentially if not simultaneously. Their major focus, however, is on drug abuse and drug addiction, and the after-care required for successful social re-integration, especially since “such problems were affecting many youths and communities across the country.”**

# CHAPTER 11

## *RAPE CRISIS SOCIETY: HEALING VICTIMS, RESTORING OFFENDERS*



### **Background and Mission**

The Rape Crisis Society (RCS) has been in existence for almost twenty-two years. It was formally registered in 1984 with its head office in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, and a branch in South Trinidad. The information for this evaluation study was gathered through face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, site visits and an examination of documents.

This institution was started informally by a small group of women who adopted the name, the Rape Crisis Committee. The group emerged from a seminar on “Rape and Violence.” The group then comprised ten persons from various backgrounds such as the police service, the prison service, the regiment and social workers amongst others.

The first public service by the RCS was a hotline service for victims of rape. This was offered three times a week from 6:00p.m. to 9:00p.m. at the Catholic Centre in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad due to the limited resources at that time. This service was eventually expanded to a full twenty-four hour service, and then to a walk-in face-to-face counselling clinic. The RCS then expanded its programme to include victims of domestic violence, child sexual abuse/incest, family problems and personal conflicts. The RCS however, remained a secular organisation. In August 1985, a full-time coordinator was employed followed by a full-time counsellor four months later. Consequently, a dream was born, when a walk-in counselling service was offered from 8:00a.m. to 4:00p.m. This was in answer to the escalating problems which seemed related to unemployment, drug problems and other debilitating social problems through the eighties and nineties. The RCS’s main competencies lie within professional counselling and referral services.

Group counselling was also on the agenda where men, women and children would be empowered to help in the resolution of personal conflicts. This, in turn, would raise the self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy of the clients. In other words, a holistic approach to healing was adopted, that is, by giving due attention to the emotional, psychological and physical well-being of the affected individual.

It became apparent that a pro-active approach must be instituted to reduce the crimes of sexual and domestic violence, as well as to provide some treatment to victims and offenders as far as possible. Certain supporting programmes were also pursued. They were the Agro Processing Production Programme, the Community Caravan, Young Male Awareness, the Survivor’s Support Group and the Youth Arm of the RCS. There are many women who, because of their financial dependence on their abusers, are very hard pressed to leave their abusive situations. The Agro Processing Production Programme was born to aid in the journey of autonomy for these women. This is a culinary skills

programme where the art of preserving fruits are taught, as well as baking and the making of wines and liqueurs.



*Participants (at top left) and  
Products from the  
Agro Processing Project*

The Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) disbursed funds to aid in its infrastructure. Training of its original members was done by Mrs. Sparks of the Crisis Centre of The St. Vincent Hospital, in New York, United States of America.

The rest of the programmes are all geared to sensitize the public about the crimes of sexual and domestic violence. The Young Male Awareness Programme seeks to take a proactive approach. Young males, between 13 to 19 years are targeted. The programme teaches respect and consideration for the females. Incest/child abuse is also dealt with. The Community Caravan educates the very young children about inappropriate touching and molestation.

Even though there have been many challenges, the main one being lack of economic sustainability and independence, the RCS has endured all these years to ensure that a much needed service is available to the public.

Communities from other Caribbean islands have also benefited from this programme. Social and community workers attached to “Crisis Centres” in other Caribbean countries like Grenada, St. Kitts and St. Lucia, have all been trained and advised by the staff of the Trinidad and Tobago Rape Crisis Society.

Public education, counselling and referrals play dominant roles in the operations of the RCS. This has proved beneficial in many communities. The lives of many victims have been healed and enhanced by the RCS. In addition, as the RCS’s officials pointed out, there are “many cases where the perpetrators have voluntarily been counselled, first through the hotline and then through the walk-in clinic.” Society on the whole has benefited from the various services of this NGO.

The Society also strives to ensure that its mission statement is adhered to. The RCS's mission statement is:

*“The Rape Crisis Society of Trinidad and Tobago is established to address the issues of Sexual and Domestic Violence, particularly as they impact on the most vulnerable members of society, through counselling and public education. The Rape Crisis Society is a focal point for active work towards change in all areas affecting these issues.”*

**Even though there have been many challenges, the main one being lack of economic sustainability and independence, the RCS has endured all these years to ensure that a much needed service is available to the public.**

In 1986, a constitution was drawn up and the Rape Crisis Society of Trinidad and Tobago was formally registered. The RCS is now situated on Woodford Street in the capital city of Port-of-Spain, Trinidad.

### **Target Group**

The major target groups and beneficiaries are victims of:

- (1) *Rape*
- (2) *Child Social Abuse/ Incest*
- (3) *Domestic Violence*
- (4) *Family Problems*
- (5) *Personal Conflicts*

### **Rape Crisis Society's Approach to Victims of Abuse**

The RCS recognised the prevalence and serious implications of domestic violence, rape, incest, sexual assault and the related social and psychological problems. According to a RCS's officials, these were the “hidden evils” of society which “did not discriminate in choosing of its victims.” In today's society, however, these “evils” are gaining more publicity with increased public sympathy for victims.

The Society's programmes are free. As the RCS's staff explained, this has led to the misconception that the majority of clients are mainly from the lower socio-economic income bracket. This is not altogether true. It was pointed out that “there are clients from the broader society, from all walks of life with most being women.”

The treatment context is quite a sensitive, delicate one, requiring patience and understanding. For example, since the nature of these crimes is so personally invasive, some clients prefer to be treated outside the RCS's premises. Most victims also refuse to have family members present at their counselling sessions. On many occasions, the “victims” were reluctant to inform close family members of their plight. Sometimes this was because the perpetrator was a close family member, friend or the main bread winner in the family.

The cases that are dealt with are of an extremely sensitive nature. The society is still very hard pressed to sensitize the public about the serious nature of these crimes. Surprisingly, the RCS discovered that even as of now, many people are not aware that domestic violence is a crime, and how it can negatively impact on the broader society. The social problems of domestic and sexual violence can have a negative impact on the family institution and by extension on the society as a whole. A stable and cohesive

family life is essential if there is to be a well functioning society. If this is not nurtured, then children can be “pushed” into a life of crime and deviance.

It is quite plausible, in the view of the RCS, that an individual, who has experienced emotional deprivation or psychological damage during childhood, generates a disposition towards crime and aggression. In many cases, when individuals are counselled it is extremely difficult to punish or even challenge the abuser. The abuser is often the breadwinner in the victim’s home. Such dependency plays a major part in the perpetration of victimization and the silent suffering of shame and stigmatization. In the case of child victims, the cycle of violence is likely to be repeated in later years when these children grow older. The RCS’s staff pointed out that while psychological counselling is necessary, if the abused person does not leave the abusive environment, then the psychological recovery of the abused person is difficult to nurture.

### **The Five Objectives of the Rape Crisis Society**

The Rape Crisis Society has set out some major objectives which are set out below.

- (1) *To lobby for the development of laws, institutions and procedures to protect women and children and would-be offenders*
- (2) *To educate the public and would-be offenders about sexual violence issues through their Outreach programmes (lectures, workshops, panel discussions, videos, etc.)*
- (3) *To improve the quality of service and support provided by the Society especially in the counselling of volunteers and clients*
- (4) *To maintain and establish links with organizations devoted to the empowerment and advancement of women and with other institutions concerned with social development and research*
- (5) *To improve organizational structures and systems, and the overall management of the Rape Crisis Society*

The Society hopes to reduce the incidence of these violent crimes and the further victimization of the individuals. In many cases, there is a lack of proper infrastructure to aid the victims. It is the goal of the Society to establish and implement guidelines in the examination and counselling of the victims. For example, sexually abused and domestic violence victims have to further undergo the humiliation of being questioned and examined in a public police station. Special stations or places should be instituted for these types of crimes.

Further, as the RCS suggests, the implementation of a Sexual Offenders Registry is of paramount importance. At present, they indicated, the onus is on the sexual offender to register with the Sexual Offenders Registry. The RCS says that this, however, has not been instituted.

When an adult over eighteen is raped, the court proceedings are held in the public court. The RCS hopes to advocate a change, that is, to have these proceeding “in camera.”

As these offences are extremely sensitive in nature, the RCS has many workshops to try to train both male and female police officers in procedures regarding these offences. The victim’s dignity, self-respect and privacy should be of primary importance. At present, police officers are trained in six months, rather than in one year. The RCS wishes to put on the training curriculum three or four components dealing with sexual and domestic violence. This, the RCS claims, will help ensure a more sensitive approach to both the victims and the accused of these crimes.

### **Organizational Structure**

The President of The Rape Crisis Society is Mrs. Marcella Alcalá; the Vice President is Mrs. Roselyn

Walcott. There is a Treasurer, Secretary, and Assistant Secretary. There are also Management Members, Trustees, Community Caravan Coordinators, Administrative Assistants, Counsellors and Psychologists. There are other office staff, as well as volunteers and well-wishers.



***Mrs. Marcela Alcalá,  
President of the  
Rape Crisis Society***

There are standardised forms which are essential to keep records of clients and their progress. For the hotline, the form requires information on the time, date and nature of the call, as well as the sex, age, gender and referral if needed. There is also a form for the outreach programmes. This form records the date, time, place and the nature of the outreach programme. Application forms are available for volunteers. This asks for details of the prospective volunteer; such as age, gender, occupation, experience, place of residence, etc.

There is also a very detailed form that is filled out by the psychologists or the counsellors. This “confidential” form is specifically for sexual and domestic violence victims. It requests the nature of the crime, the age of the victim, the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim, the place and time of the crime, occupation, etc.

While retaining its focus on the healing and psychological well-being of the victim, the Society’s work has now expanded to “empower women” in society. This is done through the Agro Processing Project which began in 1993. RCS’s staff observed that most victims of sexual and domestic violence do not leave their abusive environment because they are not financially independent. The Agro Processing Project teaches culinary skills. This ten-week programme has three separate sessions yearly. Wines, cordials liqueurs, cakes and pastries, as well as preserves are produced and marketed. At Christmas, local dishes, such as pastilles, sorrel liqueur and jelly, as well as fruitcake, pawpaw balls, etc. are all on the list. Seasonal fruits at each cycle are also preserved, etc.

Educational/Outreach Programmes are also held. These are to assist the public in understanding and preventing incidents of rape, sexual abuse/incest, buggery, wife battering, etc. These programmes try to alert individuals to the potential signs of abuse, so that reports can be made to the relevant authorities to intervene before the abuse escalates out of control. These educational programmes are conducted in the form of plays, videos, slides, etc. The interactive drama workshops are very popular as they touch many sensitive chords in the audience. As one facilitator claims, “There are a lot of questions and attentive faces during these sessions!”

Basic and advanced level training in counselling are available to RCS members and suitable members of the general public. This component is to do two things: one, to sensitize individuals of the trauma, anger, helplessness and isolation that victims feel, and two, to teach volunteers and selected professionals how to guide and encourage victims towards a positive way of life.

A Survivors Support Group has been recently implemented. These sessions involve some basic psychotherapeutic training and problem-solving skills. They enable people to believe that they are still worthy in spite of their victimization. It was also established to shape and monitor the recovery progress of victims of domestic violence. Funding was provided by FEEL (Foundation for the Enhancement and Empowerment of Life). It was also responsible for assisting individuals to cease feeling as “victims” and become SURVIVORS!

The Community Caravan is another expanded component of the programme. Its theme is based on the United Nations International “Year of the Family” 1994. Its main purpose is to effectively encourage community enhancement projects in family life values and in non-violent forms of conflict management and resolution (see [Figure 11.1](#)).

**Figure 11.1**  
**Map of Trinidad and Tobago Showing Visits by RCS's**  
**Community Caravan**



The Young Male Awareness Programme was implemented in 1994 at the Morvant/Laventille School with funds from British Petroleum of Trinidad and Tobago (formerly AMOCO) in 1999. This programme, through a set of communication and educational techniques, seeks to elicit attitudinal change among males. Human sexuality, gender and family life issues are addressed.

The Youth Development Training Agency of the RCS was the component used to train youths in understanding and preventing sexual and domestic violence.

RCS's officials agreed that the original organisational structure of the RCS needed to be revamped to provide more effective management. At present, each office worker generally helps in all aspects of

managing the office. In fact, some workers have more than one portfolio and this leads to the delaying of other necessary administrative work. For example, the current president has the job of administrator, research officer, and at times, public relations officer.

The exterior of the head office in Port-of-Spain has the façade of an old colonial house that is in desperate need of an upgrade. The building is painted in white, and an old galvanized roof painted in a motley coloured red, tops it off. There is no driveway on the compound so that both employees and clients have to park their vehicles on the road, or in a neighbouring car park. The old building is on three quarters of a lot of land and it spreads almost to the four corners of the boundaries. This gives the look of a crowded piece of land. The gate is painted red, and the building has only one floor, supported by a pillar-foundation of approximately two and a half feet. There is a pile of rubble underneath the house which is partially hidden by steps leading to the front door.

The average person walking by would not suspect that it is the office of the RCS, as there is no sign with the organization's name in front of the building. This was deliberately done so as not to advertise the nature of the problem that is being dealt with on the premises. The benefit of this is that, it reduces the stigma associated with persons who visit the centre.

The inside of the RCS is very cramped. There is a small waiting room, two secretaries' desks, and a small area that is the president's "office." There is also a narrow corridor which houses a small library, comprising mainly of pamphlets and posters. At the end of this corridor, there is a small kitchen, and on the right of the corridor is a private counselling room. The waiting room houses a television, which was tuned in to the local station. The walls in the office display posters about sexual abuse and the empowerment of women. On one of the desks were stacks of pamphlets on a range of topics including HIV/AIDS, "Saying NO," and Rape. These were set out for a programme/caravan which was scheduled to be conducted on Thursday, to celebrate the UN international Day (November 25) to Eradicate Violence against Women.

The staff comprised of four women and a female counsellor. The women varied in ages between early twenties and late fifties. All were neatly attired in smart office suits and they all wore low-heeled shoes. The staff was quite friendly and there was an air of subdued excitement. This was because they were busily preparing for some programmes about “The Elimination of Violence against Women.” This was to be held for the rest of the week to coincide with the UN’s official day (November 25).



*Interactive Drama Workshops being conducted by the Rape Crisis Society*



*Members of the Rape Crisis Society participate in a Workshop (at left)*

The RCS has a branch located in south Trinidad. This branch was established around the same time as the office in Port of Spain. Today, it is located at #12 San Fernando Street, San Fernando. There are three staff members; Marva Thorne, Ingrid Prescod, and Karen Sutton. They are the Administrative Assistant, Counsellor, and Caravan Coordinator respectively. They range in ages from late twenties to early forties, all are very friendly and have a quiet determination to ensure that their work is done quietly and effectively. In fact, Marva remarked: *“Most of our clientele are extremely withdrawn when they first arrive. It is then our duty to ensure an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity. Sometimes we get the odd client who just refuses to talk. It takes a lot of coaxing and skill to “get them out of that shell.”*

The outside of the old colonial building that houses the RCS is mainly white in colour with green trims on the window sills and the doors. The house is on a lot of land, and it is sprawled out on the lot in a very spacious way. There is none of that overcrowding ambiance like the building in Port-of-Spain. There is a driveway and space for employees to park. Renovations are earmarked for the future, if funding is available and permission is granted by the landlord. There is a green galvanized roof to match the building’s colour. In keeping with the theme, there is no visible sign. The RCS does not own the building; the organization pays a rent, and shares the building with a man who owns a computer business. The office entrance is protected with metal burglar proofing, as if to ward out the evils of society.



***The Rape Crisis Society's  
Office in San Fernando***



***Two members of  
staff of the RCS  
(south office)***

There is a small waiting room, (it is a bit bigger than the Port-of-Spain office), a counselling room, library, kitchen, and two offices. The counselling room is simply decorated with a desk and two chairs, and a small utilitarian sink in a corner. The library is even smaller than the one in Port-of-Spain; it is a two-shelved cupboard with a few books and pamphlets, which Mrs. Thorne sadly bemoans that, they were “scrutning for.” There are a couple of march-past trophies which were won by the RCS at its Family Day. Posters are displayed with themes such as, “Don’t Quit,” “Abstinence,” and “Love & Loyalty.” Situated at one of the corners of the waiting room is a small table with some pamphlets and two donation boxes. Adjacent to the table are two boxes filled with toys. These toys occupy the children while their parents are counselled. The office also boasts a small radio, a couple of fans, a water cooler and an old fridge. There are some pamphlets on a table, these are rather few and we were told some were on its way from the Port-of-Spain branch.

Mrs. Prescod informed us that three clients were counselled the day before. She then proceeded to outline the problems of two of these clients. The first client was a teenage girl who was raped by her father. After this, she went to live with her mother and stepfather who also raped her. Her father was later incarcerated, not for the rape but for some petty crime. He eventually died in prison. The girl is presently living with her stepmother who is 70 years old. The situation is complicated and frustrating. The girl needs psychological help as she giggles and lies a lot. She may also be pregnant for a Form Four student. She was referred to a psychiatrist, Dr. Ghany, who is yet to give the RCS his assessment so that a psychotherapeutic approach would be worked out for her. She needs to confirm her pregnancy but is “short on cash.” She attends YTEPP, a youth training programme, but is not a regular student since, as the RCS’s staff explained. She “has been affected psychologically by all her traumas.” The RCS’s administrator sadly indicated that “she will be able to continue her training programme, but she will be unable to obtain a certificate due to frequent absenteeism.” Mrs. Prescod frustratingly and sadly indicated that, “this is what incest, rape, and poverty do to our children.”

The second client is a 12-year old girl who is one of triplets. As the RCS’s staff explained, she has two other sisters who are prostitutes. The girl was “raped by her father and a gang of boys.” She was found in an abandoned house in Princes Town, “laughing and bleeding, with marks on her body.” It was apparent that she “was drugged.” The triplets were rescued by a pastor who is now willing to adopt them. A warrant has since been issued for the arrest of her father and the boys. She has been to counselling four times at RCS, and “signs of improvement are apparent.” She is beginning to smile, they say. Some time ago, she tried to run away from the RCS but was thwarted in her attempt. Arrangements are in place for the girl to start some extra-curricular activities. She is due for “another counselling session in a few days.”

Couples with family and relationship problems also come in for counselling at the RCS. However, the “majority of cases are for rape and incest.” Counselling is offered daily, and most clients “either make

an appointment or simply walk in.” Many persons are referred to them by the Community Policing Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. There was a particular incident where the Community Police had to escort a battered client to the RCS’s shelter in Piparo. All such cases “are kept highly confidential.” This seems to be “another reason for the success of the RCS.”

When asked about the monthly costs, we were told that the Port-of-Spain head office pays all the bills, including the rent of US\$150 per month. Sometimes, when funds are available a monthly stipend of US\$30 is allocated to buy stationery and other office items.

### **Rape Crisis Society: Client Interview**

For this type of crime prevention and restorative justice study, it is helpful to hear some further details from a victim. Interviews with researchers are difficult to obtain mainly due to the intense personal nature of sexual abuse and domestic violence. A “survivor,” that is, a victim who “overcame her trauma,” agreed to conduct a telephone interview. The client was at the RCS and the interviewer was at her own home. It was done one evening at approximately 5:00p.m. for 20 minutes.

This female survivor was raped a year ago. She was then a virgin and two weeks away from celebrating her eighteenth birthday. She was raped by her best friend’s brother. They were neighbours and knew each other from early childhood. She and her best friend attended the same primary and secondary schools. They slept over at each other’s home, and both families enjoyed an amicable relationship.

*“I felt very violated and extremely shocked. I did not believe that this happened to me. I expected support, but his family and others treated me badly after the rape. They did not believe me. If it was a stranger, it would probably be easier for them to believe me, but I was treated cruelly, meanly and very coldly by all who knew me. My mom herself could not believe it, she was shattered! At first I thought she blamed me, but long after I realized that she thought that she had let me down. She is a single parent, and she believed that she failed to protect me.”*

During this 20-minute interview, there was an audible sigh on the phone. With an audible deep swallow, she continued: *“At the hospital, they did a “rape kit” on me, and I was examined in front my mom, the nurses, doctor and even the police. I felt more violated. I am from a very conservative family, and I felt so ashamed and vulnerable, I could not stop crying. I was given tablets to prevent pregnancy, STD’s and HIV/AIDS. It was horrible. Right after I tried to commit suicide, but the attempt was unsuccessful. Thank God!”* she quietly exclaimed.

She continued: *“Rape Crisis Society helped me a lot. Miss Marie the Counsellor here has instilled in me a deep sense of self confidence and self worth. In fact I now feel better about myself than I did before the rape. I had stopped school but eventually returned and a school counsellor tried to help me, but she was not nice, and she leaked my business out. I was really horrified, as apparently some of my teachers knew and there was gossip.”* After a short pause, she continued: *“People looked at me rather strangely, and I could not take it on. A friend then introduced me to RCS and I then met Miss Marie. I felt as if I was going mad, and I could not face school, family, friends, my neighbours, anybody. I wanted to crawl in a hole and stay there. Miss Marie understood, and she got me admitted to the Mt. Hope hospital, where I spent a few weeks. She constantly visited and counselled me. I started to feel better about myself, and I eventually returned back into society.”* With a touch of pride, she added: *“I applied myself to school and I made the honours list with a G.P.A. of 4.0. I am now a Science Major.”*

Interviewer: *“So you can say that RCS has helped in your recovery?”*

Survivor: *“Yes most definitely! The RCS helped and is helping me. The staff here is personal. They treat me with dignity and respect. There are no stares. I don’t feel well – a how – you*

*know what I mean. Other people treated me really badly. People can be real cruel. But I have grown stronger all because of RCS."*

Interviewer: *"How have you changed as a person?"*

Survivor: *"Before the rape I was a leader, very independent. I used to work on and off to pay for any extra courses. I liked my independence, now I am a bit quieter and as my mum is very protective, I tend to be at home a little more. But I am stronger."*

Interviewer: *"Would you say that your spiritual faith also helped you?"*

Survivor: *"In the beginning I was very angry with God. I did not believe in him, but eventually I do believe that he helped me. The RCS helped me with this also."*

The interview ended here.

### RCS and Record-Keeping

The record-keeping at the RCS was better than most such NGO's. Data provided by the RCS for 2004 reflected a client increase of seven percent (7%), as compared to 237 new clients in 2003. For 2004, there were 63 new rape cases in the north and 22 new cases in the south (see [Table 11.1](#)). There were 7 new incest cases and 40 repeat cases in the north. In the south, there were 13 new cases of incest and 29 repeat cases. Sexual abuse of children was higher in the north than in the south. There were 24 new cases in the north with no new cases in the south.

The table also shows the overall statistics of social issues that are dealt with by the RCS. In the north, the total number of new cases was 169 with 317 repeat cases still being counselled. In the south, there were 84 new cases and 142 repeat cases still being counselled. A grand total of 712 cases both from the north and south branches were counselled.

As [Table 11.2](#) shows, the minimum age for the first visit at the RCS was at the pre-school age of four years, and the maximum age was "over 54 years." There were 5 people who sought help but their ages are unknown. In the 12-17 age group, there seems to be a definite correlation between sexual abuse/incest/rape, and the onset of puberty. More than fifty percent sought counselling between the ages of 12 to 26 (See [Figure 11.2](#)).

**The willingness of kind volunteers who go the distance with you is very important" asserted Miss Hinds (Past President of the RCS). She continued: "There have been many times my staff and I were in the office before and after midnight. This is to ensure that programmes and workshops would be successful. We also have faithful volunteers, who are not able to give their time, but lend financial, emotional and psychological support. All this is appreciated and it goes a long way. We need everyone. There are those who are here because "it will make their resume look nice," and they take and leave, but the Almighty is good! After all, we are still in existence for almost twenty-two years!"**

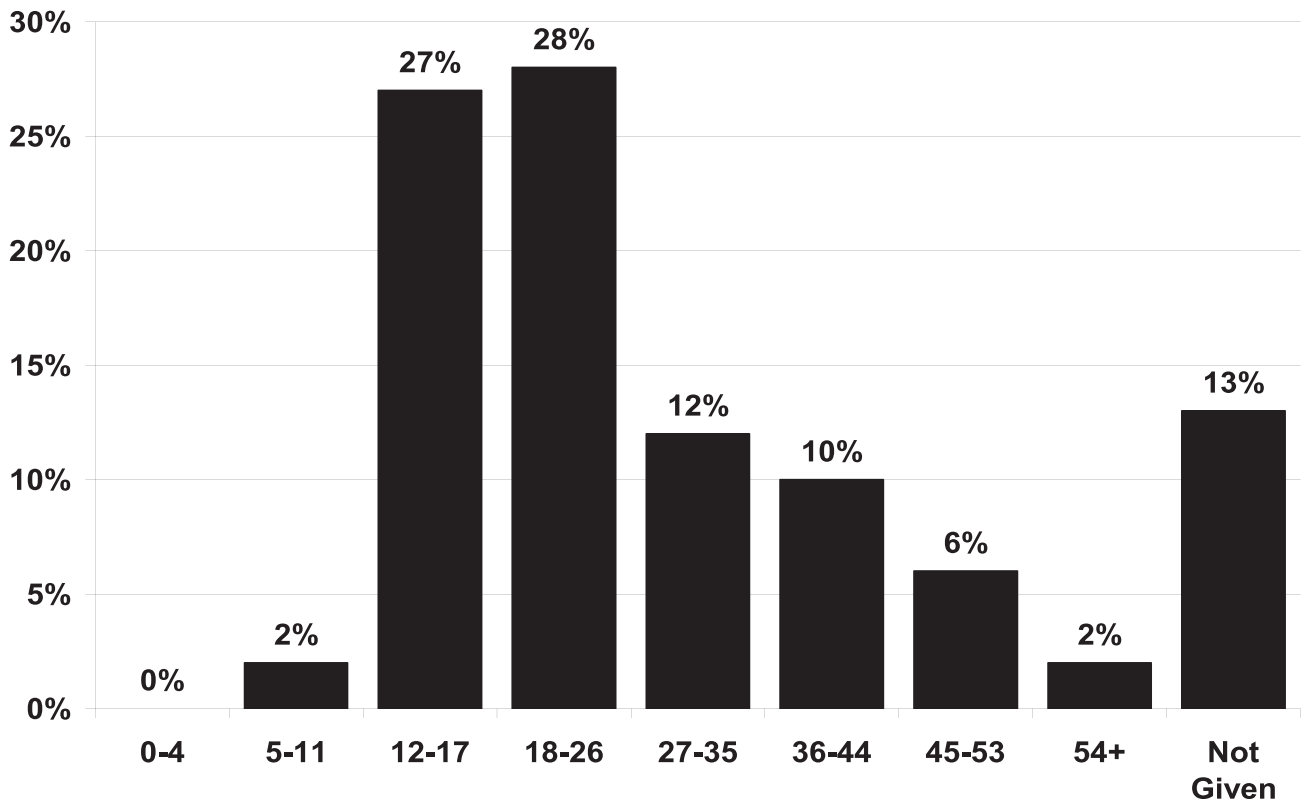
**Table 11.1**  
**Total Number of Cases at the RCS 2004**

<b>Social Issues 2004</b>	<b>Total No. of Cases NEW (North)</b>	<b>Total No. of Cases REPEAT (North)</b>	<b>Total No. of Cases NEW (South)</b>	<b>Total No. of Cases REPEAT (South)</b>	<b>Total New and Repeat Cases (N&amp;S)</b>	<b>Total No. of New Cases (%)</b>
Rape	63	131	22	35	251	33.60
Incest	7	40	13	29	89	7.90
Child Sexual Abuse	24	49	-	2	75	9.49
Sexual Assault	3	6	5	2	16	3.16
Family Problems	22	35	20	40	117	16.60
Personal Problems	31	39	12	20	102	17.00
Domestic Violence	12	13	11	14	50	9.09
Behavioural Problems	-	2	-	-	2	-
Attempted Rape	3	2	-	-	5	1.18
Buggery	4	-	1	-	5	1.98
<b>Total</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 11.2**  
**New Clients by Age at the Time of First Visit**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>Total 2004</b>	<b>2004 %</b>	<b>Total 2003</b>
0-4 (Pre School)	-	-	-	-	3
5-11 (Primary School)	2	2	4	1.58	18
12-17 (Adolescent)	47	22	69	27.28	77
18-26 (Young Adult)	49	22	71	28.06	60
27-35	18	12	30	11.86	30
36-44	16	9	25	9.88	23
45-53	9	7	16	6.32	14
54+	2	2	4	1.58	7
Not given	26	8	34	13.44	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>237</b>

**Figure 11.2**  
New Clients in 2004 by Age



In Figure 11.3 for the year 2004 there was a total of 208 new female clients, and 45 new male clients. This shows that there is a higher prevalence of these crimes committed against females. This was both in the north and south branches.

**Figure 11.3**  
New Clients in 2004 by Gender

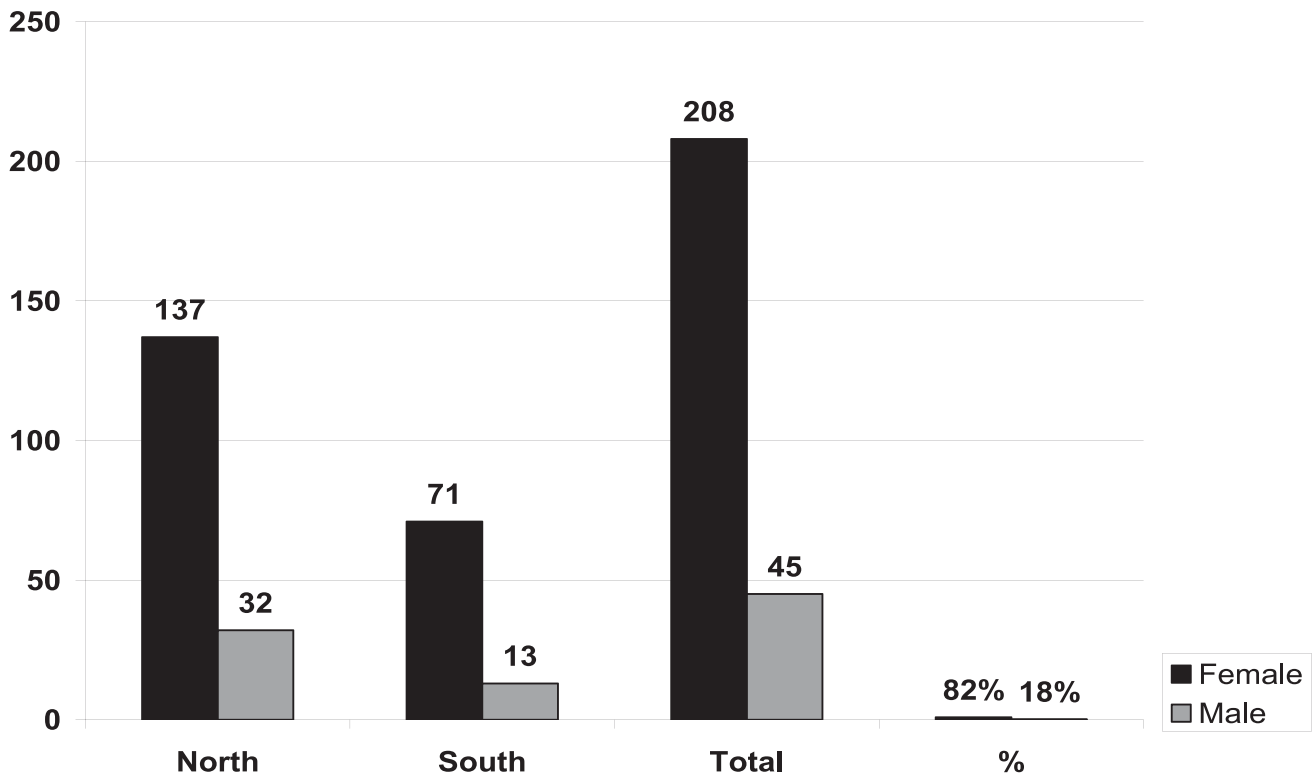
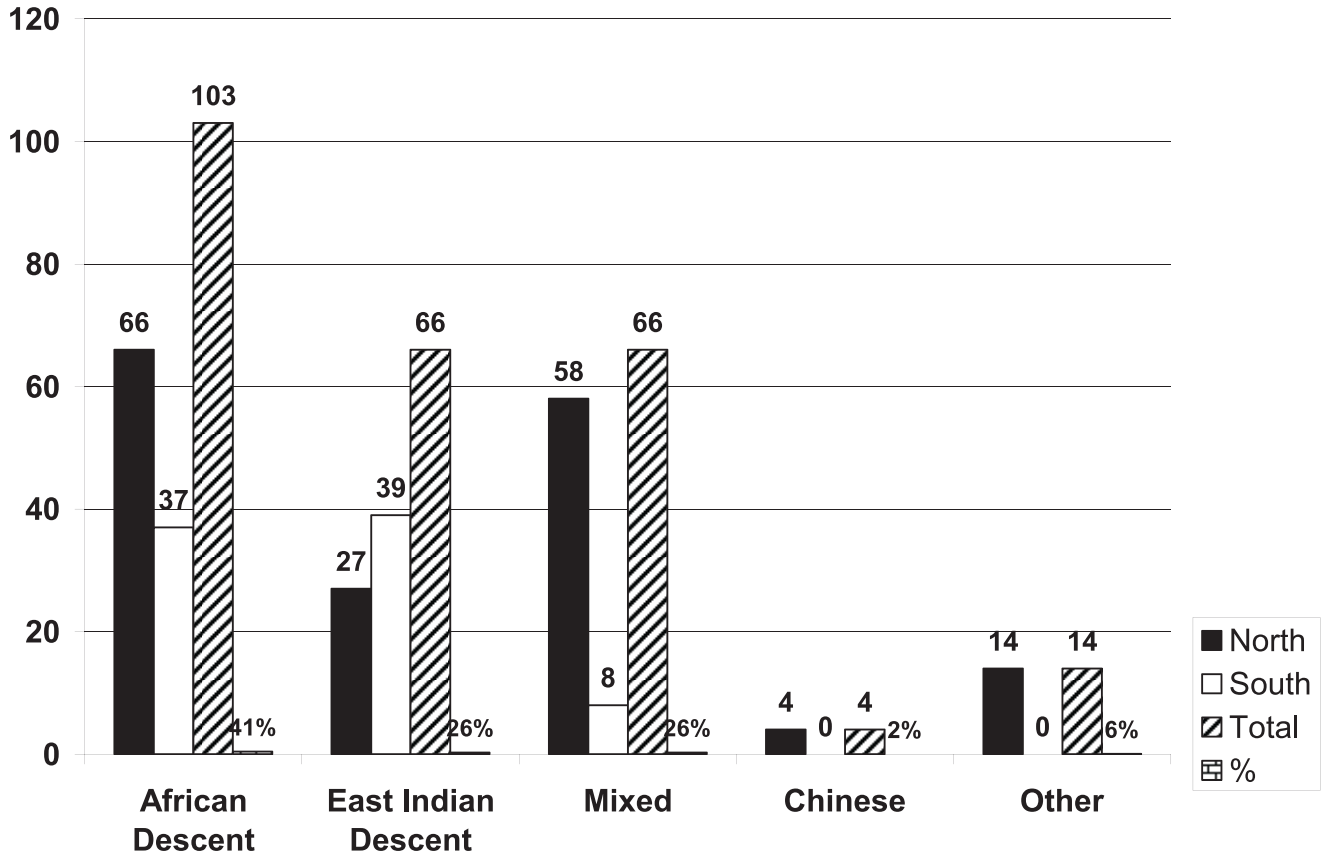


Figure 11.4 indicates that individuals of African Descent were the ones who needed the most help. This was so for both branches in the north and south. Table 11.3 shows the number of rape cases counselled between 2000 and 2004. This table also indicates the type of rapes committed. “Acquaintance/Date” and “Stranger/unknown” categories accounted for the highest proportions. Gang rape was highest in 2002 with 20 cases and lowest in 2001 with 9 cases.

**Figure 11.4**  
**New Clients in 2004 by Ethnicity**



**Table 11.3**  
**Number of Rape Cases Counsellled Between 2000-2004**

Type of Rape	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004	
		%		%		%		%		%
Stranger/Unknown	34	36.97	29	36.71	32	37.21	20	27.40	38	40.86
Gang	13	14.13	9	11.39	20	23.25	10	13.70	17	18.28
Acquaintance/Date	38	41.30	32	40.51	29	33.72	35	47.94	30	32.25
Attempted	5	5.43	8	10.13	3	3.49	3	4.11	3	3.23
Buggery	2	2.17	1	1.26	2	2.33	5	6.85	5	5.38
Total	92	100%	79	100%	86	100%	73	100%	93	100%

More full-time counsellors are needed as well as part-time counsellors for outreach programmes. There should also be funds available for “refresher” courses. An exchange programme with similar and international agencies would also benefit the RCS. Ideas and experiences can be exchanged, for a better functioning RCS.

### **Partnering for Success**

The relative success of the RCS is also due to the fact that there are many institutions, businesses, church groups and citizens who willingly donate their time, expertise and money to the Society.

Networking is also an integral part of the Society’s success. These other agencies help in research and referral services. Where one agency falls short in a service, another agency willingly lends its expertise. According to Mrs. Alcalá, the President of the RCS: “We all come together to see a better Trinidad and Tobago where our children can walk freely without the fear of being the victim of a crime.” Some of the networking agencies are:

- (1) *The Caribbean Epidemiology Centre*
- (2) *The Family Planning Association*
- (3) *The Queen’s Park Counselling Centre*
- (4) *The Pan American Health Organization*
- (5) *Dr. Sonia Roche, The University of the West Indies*
- (6) *The United Nations Information Centre*

### **Rape Crisis Society: Obstacles and Challenges**

Economic sustainability is extremely vital to any organization. The availability of funds can push the RCS further into reaching the wider society. An improved proactive approach can be effectively implemented if more funds are available.

The willingness of kind volunteers who go the distance with you is very important” asserted Miss Hinds (Past President of the RCS). She continued: *“There have been many times my staff and I were in the office before and after midnight. This is to ensure that programmes and workshops would be successful. We also have faithful volunteers, who are not able to give their time, but lend financial, emotional and psychological support. All this is appreciated and it goes a long way. We need everyone. There are those who are here because “it will make their resume look nice,” and they take and leave, but the Almighty is good! After all, we are still in existence for almost twenty-two years!”*

According to the RCS’s staff, another challenge is the stigmatization that many of these “victims” face from the public. There is a lot of shame and embarrassment that the person faces. In many instances, the “victim” feels that it is their fault. According to one of the counsellors on site: *“Many of these individuals, (most are women) feel a sense of total loss and isolation. Sometimes the entire family feels totally betrayed by the victim, especially if the perpetrator is a close friend or family member.”* She continued: *“Remember the family also has to come to terms with this heinous act, so every one needs counselling. We do have family counselling sessions. In some cases, I have had to calm a parent down. He wanted to take revenge on someone who had raped his daughter. If he had done this his daughter would have suffered. Her father was her main support mechanism.”*

Mrs. Alcalá, the President of the RCS exclaimed: *“We also try to get the message across to the public that a woman has the right to dress the way she wants.”* She added: *“Many believe that a woman ‘asks for it’ by the way she dresses. This is so far from the truth. Who in their right mind would want to be raped? No one!”* After a few minutes, she continued: *“So we try to get that message across. This is another issue the Community Caravan tries to inculcate in the youths today, especially the males. RCS staff feels that the Male Youth Awareness Programme is “a big success, especially in the Laventille Morvant Area. We had a few males who told us so” One said: “But Miss, we thought dem girls and dem*

*was just asking for it especially if they talking to yuh nice nice so". Another youth said, " I really was trying to kiss a girl some time back. She was a hot little ting, but she kept on telling me no. I was real mad and I kept on trying. Now I know that "No" means No!"*

### **Features of the Rape Crisis Society's Success**

There are some rough indices of positive change and community impact through RCS's programmes. For example, in the cases dealt with, domestic violence decreased in these homes. Children also showed a keener awareness of what was inappropriate touching.

During the period 1996-2000, six hundred and forty-four (644) organizations requested programmes. However, due to the shortage of resources, only four hundred and seventy-six (476) were honoured (74%). From 1996-2000, six hundred and ninety-two persons (692) were referred by other welfare agencies to the RCS for specialized counselling. RCS records also show that from 2002 to 2005, three hundred and thirty cases (330) of family problems were counselled. The feedback from these clients was quite positive.

Since the inception of the Community Caravan in 1998, eighteen (18) rural communities were visited. This educational programme used "interactive drama," video presentations and discussion sessions. At the end of these programmes, many expressed satisfaction that they learnt a lot. The project was disbanded in May 2001 because of a scarcity of funds.

The RCS has also been approached to train interested individuals in establishing a Crisis Society in various Caribbean islands. Hence, in St Lucia, Grenada and Suriname, Crisis Societies were set up. Interestingly, these countries opted to leave "Rape" out of the organization's name. What is now needed is for such groups to develop a data base for their own activities and achievements gained over a period. Such records will help demonstrate the extent to which the Trinidad and Tobago RCS has been successful in getting other groups to carry out the restorative justice mission.

All in all, an important sign of progress for the RCS is the increasing number of groups and individuals who seek its assistance in various ways, most of all in healing victims, restoring civility in offenders and engaging the community towards a culture of peace and safety.

### **Sustaining the Vision: The Way Forward**

The RCS can be sustained if there is sufficient funding for its programmes. The interdependence of all the NGOs is also a vital part of its success. The fixed list of welfare partners and supporting agencies facilitate stable programming, referrals and a holistic approach to the healing required.

The determination, loyalty and unflinching support of its staff and volunteers, contribute immensely to the organisation's stability and achievements.

The RCS has some spot announcements on radio and television. This helps draw those in need to the organisation's services.

### **Learning from the RCS's Experience**

- **Outreach Projects:** With the Community Caravan Outreach projects, many residents in the various communities not only developed a clearer understanding of, and compassion for crime victims, but some of them pledged to volunteer their services with the RCS. This indicates that such outreach programmes can become "scouting for volunteers" missions as well. Community leaders also took an active part in the welfare of the families of sexual and domestic violence.

- **Treatment:** It became clear to the RCS and us that while treatment is provided to the victim of a violent crime, it is also useful to attend to the spouse and children in that family, especially if the spouse is the offender and the children witnessed the violence.
- **Educating Communities:** In some of the communities, many were silent and ambivalent at first about domestic violence. With the education imparted to these communities, many women became cognizant that there were alternatives to their victimization and in fact, many of them joined the Agro Processing Project to become more independent. Reaching out and being active in the community, as RCS does, is a key technique to empower victims. Such community presence helps give a voice to those who have been witnessing or subjected to “silent crimes” as incest. A community elder reported that, after the Caravan, the crime of incest was not as prevalent as before, since affected persons “became braver” to report it.
- **Record-keeping:** As RCS’s staff explained and we also recognised, financial support, though difficult, can be facilitated if the NGO can demonstrate some well-documented achievements. The lesson here is that NGOs also have a responsibility to keep proper records as well as to have a system of financial and operational accountability. This will enhance the group’s professional reputation, as well as attract funding.
- **Security:** As with any organisation, the Society has also learned several negative lessons. One notable problem is the issue of security at the RCS. There was an occasion when a husband stormed the centre to demand, “Where all yuh put meh wife?” He was a police officer and he had his gun drawn.
- **The RCS Name:** The word “rape” in the RCS’s name also has a negative stigma attached to it. The society has been advised by many to leave the word “rape” out of its name. There has been strong opposition to this since dealing with the crime of rape is the major focus, even though the RCS’s role has been expanded over the years.

**The determination, loyalty and unflagging support of its staff and volunteers, contribute immensely to the organisation’s stability and achievements.**

# CHAPTER 12

## *FAMILIES IN ACTION: TRANSFORMING FAMILIES*



### **Background and Mission**

The materials for this evaluative study came mainly from a series of interviews, office documents and reports, site observations and feedback from clients who had used the group's services.

In 1988, Families in Action (FIA) was officially organised as a non-profit, non-governmental organization in Maraval, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. Its birth was fuelled by the drug situation and downturn in family life in Trinidad. Additionally, Ms. Ivis Gibson, the present Administrator of FIA, realized the major problems that needed to be addressed in Trinidad were drug addiction, domestic abuse, rape, incest, a high incidence of crime and a major decline in family life. Ms. Gibson worked at the same building, which was at the time an Employee Assistance Programme's Office. FIA started at a small office at the back of this EAP's office to address many of the issues of family life and drug addiction that were becoming quite prevalent in Trinidad.

As a result of the growing societal decay, there was the need to regain and establish some form of social order within communities so FIA decided to design counselling services, to create an outreach education to schools, to support recovering addicts and their families, and to establish a 24-hour, 7-days a week hotline for persons in acute distress. Consequently, this led to the development of a Peer Counselling Programme (PCP), Group Support Service (GSS) and the Confident Parenting Programme (CPP). The objective of each of these programmes is geared towards providing support and reducing risk behaviour in each group.

The present obstacles facing FIA are insufficient financing, inadequate staff to perform field work and collect data, and a lack of capacity to reduce the problems faced by all the families that they help. They also face the challenge of convincing those individuals who believe that no one else can solve their family problem. This aversion to therapy, counselling and intervening in "family business" is part of a cultural lag, more so for certain ethnic groups. However, through radio talk shows and other forms of media exposure, the aversion tendency is decreasing, though still a challenge for groups like FIA.

Overall, however, the Administrator has estimated a "40% success rate" for those who come or are invited for treatment at FIA. They see the success of FIA sustained as a result of its many partnerships with other organizations that share their goal. There is, however, the need for a more tightened system of programme evaluation which is, of course, a general problem with such NGOs who have to scramble for funding to support quite ambitious programmes.

Since the programme's inception in 1988, Ms. Gibson said "many additions and revisions have been made" in order to accommodate the new social challenges and operational difficulties. She indicated that there are "evaluation committees who review their programmes periodically," and make

recommendations for additions as the need arises. Ms. Gibson stated that since there is always the need for improvement within programmes, costs have been increasing.



*Ms. Ivis Gibson  
Administrator of  
Families in Action*

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Over time, according to the FIA’s Administrator, reports of abuse and addiction increased, which meant more space was needed to address these debilitating occurrences. It was becoming very difficult to manage two businesses at the same time and huge debts were being accumulated. The National Insurance Board (NIB) was about to seize the building to pay for the debts which would have meant the closing of the Counselling Centre and also the safe haven that those in need looked forward to.

Since the rest of the country saw that FIA was providing a crucial service, three private companies offered to pay off the debts incurred by the Centre in order for them to carry on their present work. Those companies were National Gas Company (NGC), the National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB) and Phoenix Park Gas Processors Limited (PPGPL). FIA was now fully incorporated under the Companies Ordinance (Chapter, No.1, as a company limited by guarantee, not having a share capital at its Maraval Road location in Port-of-Spain).

Ms. Gibson stressed that their door is open to all in need, but the organization is mainly dedicated to the upliftment and healing of families and individuals ravaged by drug addiction and social abuses through counselling and group support. She stated that the majority of clients that come to their Centre include substance abusers, street children as well as battered women. These, they see, as crucial clients because children are the future of any nation and a child needs love and attention at all times to live a full life and to contribute later on in their lives to their country. Strong mothers are also very important in any home therefore these issues need to be addressed.

In all of its programmes, FIA attempts to follow its mission statement: *“To promote healthy family life, balancing emotional, spiritual and physical needs. We are moved to regenerate both family unit and any individual of that unit experiencing pain, difficulty or isolation.”*

The Board of FIA comprises their Patron, Sir Ellis Clarke (first President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago); Ms. Laila Valere as Chairperson; Ms. Linda Besson (of the Employers’ Consultative Association); Ms. Lisa Ghany-Weekes (of Home Construction Limited); Ms. Ivis Gibson (FIA’s Administrator); Ms. Patricia Simon (of the law firm Alexander, Jeremie & Company); and Mr. Anthony Watkins (of Odyssey Consulting Limited.) There are also parenting facilitators and receptionists. All these form what Ms. Gibson describes as “a crucial part of FIA.”

## Financial Support

FIA looks at the present problems in Trinidad and designs realistic methods of solving them.

They are also trying to achieve an environment where people listen to one another, and parents respect their children. The NGO also hopes to deal with those issues the government of Trinidad and Tobago is unable to rectify.

All of these efforts are quite costly. Presently, the cost is more than TT\$160,000 per month, with estimated projections for future projects running into the millions. This is why they believe partnering with other organizations similar to theirs helps their efforts as well. A recent programme

addition is the National Child Development

Programme; this has been presented to the Ministry of Education. The proposed cost of the National Child Development Programme is TT\$8,430,200.

## The FIA's Approach to Families in Crisis

The major problems which FIA attends to are:

- (1) *Various kinds of addiction, but especially drug addiction (cocaine, marijuana, alcohol)*
- (2) *Domestic violence and abuse (e.g., assault, rape, incest)*
- (3) *The overall decline in family life*
- (4) *Delinquency and first offenders*

FIA's strong view is that the society has become very 'messed up,' and groups like FIA "should step up and do all they can to clean up as much as possible."

In order to achieve their mission, FIA provides a number of services. They have a drop-in counselling service, outreach education to schools, community groups and agencies. FIA also serves as a short-term assessment and referral centre to other professionals and organizations across Trinidad and Tobago. This helps to strengthen and sustain partnerships.

FIA provides a series of training programmes and group support for recovering addicts and families. There are also vacation camps for the youths, peer counselling, and a twenty-four hour, seven days a week hotline for persons in acute distress, and a parenting programme. Their three major programmes, however, are: the Peer Counselling Programme, the Group Support Service and the Confident Parenting Programme.

## Programme Overview and Objectives

The Peer Counselling Programme seeks to encourage teenagers to assist their peers in developing positive attitudes and behaviours. Its major goal is to help students achieve a holistic development of themselves and their peers. They believe that by helping others we help ourselves in the process. The major objectives of this peer counselling programme are given below:

- (1) *To provide students with information about social issues relevant to them (e.g., Aids, delinquency, sexuality)*
- (2) *To provide a comfortable forum for young people to share their opinions and experiences (e.g., seminars, workshops, lectures, videos)*
- (3) *To help students become leaders (e.g., allocation of responsibilities, measuring accountability)*
- (4) *To help participants develop peer counselling techniques (e.g., practicals, simulated sessions)*

**In all of its programmes, FIA attempts to follow its mission statement:**

***"To promote healthy family life, balancing emotional, spiritual and physical needs. We are moved to regenerate both family unit and any individual of that unit experiencing pain, difficulty or isolation."***

The *Peer Counselling Programme* seeks to help youths help their friends and other youths who are in need of help at an early age. During their teenage years, FIA explained, young adults are bombarded by many influences, some good and some bad. Many times it is easy to give in to risky behaviours in order “to belong to a group or to help ease the pain of family problems.” In order to discourage these individuals away from misdemeanours and petty crimes that may result, *the peer counselling programme* is put in place as a support system in several secondary schools around Trinidad.

The Group Support Service seeks to support recovering addicts as well as their families and “significant others.” This programme offers periodic assessment and individual therapy with a counsellor or psychologist. Also provided are group therapy, a twelve-step programme in collaboration with Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous, and a “referral in-house treatment” and follow-up care. Generally, as FIA explained, the underlying aims of such programmes are to inspire persons to explore and discover their own value and dignity, to cope with life’s challenges, to relate effectively with others, and to stretch their potential.

In order to achieve these objectives, FIA sticks to a methodology of having open discussions, role playing, lectures, handouts and video presentations to make the healing process easier and appealing to all of the senses. FIA has found through experience that while the possession of drugs is a criminal offence, drug addicts continuously seem to be breaking the law in order to support their “next fix.” And so “they steal from others and are in possession of drugs most of the times.” Breaking a habit such as drug addiction therefore requires constant commitment and responsibility. The Group Support Service helps a recovering addict “rediscover” and “purge” himself or herself. But relapse in the face of daily temptations and peer pressure is an ever-present challenge. FIA said that going back to drugs “comes easy to many ex-addicts, but “with support systems, a life of crime could be wiped out from most of the minds of those recovering addicts who join this programme.”

The Confident Parenting Programme is offered in about five to eight sessions at times and places convenient to the particular target group. The course seeks to help parents:

- (1) *Establish for themselves their own style of parenting*
- (2) *Understand their children’s behaviour*
- (3) *Find alternative methods of discipline*
- (4) *Communicate better with their children and spouse*
- (5) *Take some of the stress out of parenting*
- (6) *Reflect on how they are relating to their children and caring for themselves*
- (7) *Experiment with new skills which can be applied both within family and working relationships*

FIA, through this programme, aims to get the parent to “see through their child’s eyes” and understand the variety of ways that parents perceive and carry out their roles as parents. Listening to children and actually trying to help them goes a long way in contributing to the future of that child. According to FIA, many times children who grew up to be criminals speak about “the lack of support that was given to them in the home,” or how “nobody cared enough to listen or be sensitive enough to understand their problems.” Such individuals, FIA has found, turn out to be “rebels and with personalities of destruction. They become very angry later on in life.” To prevent this, *The Confident Parenting Programme* allows parents to make communication between them and the child easier, and help shape an individual who follows the right track and not a life of delinquency and crime.

One past participant of the Confident Parenting Programme who is also a Community Policing Officer stated in his testimonial that: *“I strongly recommend that all fathers...be given the opportunity to access this programme. The result, I am sure, will be a drastic reduction in youth crime, juvenile delinquency, domestic violence and better quality families.”*

We found that FIA really aims to develop healthy family life by treating the “dysfunctional ones,” who

in one way or another subvert domestic peace, mutual respect and stability. Ms. Gibson, stated that “all responsible citizens need to look at the present situation of the country, and through programmes such as those offered by FIA, there will be some hope to make life in Trinidad and Tobago much better. FIA sees its role as supplemental to what the Government is doing, and in fact, is prepared to help in areas where the Government has difficulty reaching.

The family structure in Trinidad and Tobago, according to FIA, is “not what it used to be.” (FIA was referring to a “two-parent, stable family”). They noted that many of the country’s family structure now take two major forms:

- (1) *A single parent family, with the single parent being the mother in the majority of cases*
- (2) *No biological parent present, where the child is brought up with an aunt, uncle, grandparent(s) or an older sibling*

In both these instances, FIA states, the family structure is “broken down,” and FIA “wants to be there to ensure that the physical and mental needs of the child are still met.”

### **Partnering for Success**

To help them deal with the range of programmes conducted, FIA has established partnerships with the following organisations that also specialise in treating young people:

- (1) *Young Men’s Christian Foundation Association (YMCA)*
- (2) *Foundation for the Enhancement and Enrichment of Life (FEEL)*
- (3) *St. Jude’s School for Girls*
- (4) *St. Michael’s School for Boys*
- (5) *Credo Foundation for Justice*
- (6) *Rainbow Rescue*
- (7) *St. Dominic’s Children’s Home*
- (8) *HEAL Centre, Couva*
- (9) *New Life Ministries - Mt. St. Benedict’s Treatment Centre*
- (10) *SERVOL - Service Volunteered for All*
- (11) *They have also developed a partnership with the Police Service who helps them with the contacts required for carrying out some of their programmes*

Throughout the years, in turn, they have helped the Police Service, the Defence Force, the Prison Service, NADAPP (a drug prevention unity of government), the Ministry of Community Development, Sport and Consumer Affairs, Community Enhancement & Protection of the Environment Programme (CEPEP) and many secondary schools with education, training, development, social support and counselling sessions. Through these partnerships, Ms. Gibson stated, contacts are developed which “have become very crucial in this kind of business.”

### **Families In Action: Obstacles and Challenges**

As stated at the beginning, this is an agency which saw the need to “mend family structure and heal individual family members, especially with respect to drugs, alcohol and nicotine problems in the family. In its zeal to do as much as possible, FIA encountered several obstacles:

- (1) ***Insufficient financing available to them.*** They receive \$5,000 monthly from the government, that is, theoretically, to cover their essential bills. FIA therefore supplements this funding by getting donations from several programme partners and private companies.
- (2) ***Addressing the family life of the people that come into the centre.*** At its inception, FIA

recognised that individuals involved in their programmes showed a need for family life and parenting skills. They felt the need to introduce parenting classes. FIA believe that parenting is an art that could be taught; hence with the introduction of the Confident Parenting Programme, it allowed parents to understand that their children are miniature versions of themselves. The obstacle is that not many parents or family adults wish to undergo such family life or parenting classes. FIA attempts at persuasion have not been as successful as wished.

- (3) ***Inadequate staffing to perform the field-work that is necessary to achieve the purpose of the institution.*** To overcome this, many of the staff perform more than one task and FIA also has a number of volunteers who come in to offer their time. University undergraduates also provide help as part of their university internship requirement. Such arrangement helps overcome the staffing challenges.
- (4) ***FIA's inability to reach all families who are found "to be in trouble."*** This inability occurs because of two factors:
  - (a) FIA has only one location, which is in the capital city of Port of Spain; they are therefore unable to deal with problems that are beyond their reach, especially those in rural communities
  - (b) FIA only deals with situations that they actually hear about and where the persons involved are willing to facilitate FIA's intervention. To overcome these obstacles, Ms. Gibson takes one day per week to drive out in the country, meeting groups and talking to local agencies to find how and where FIA can help

FIA believes that there is a need to have a network of institutions like FIA around the country so as to cover both urban and rural areas, as well as, to have an exchange programme with clients as far as practical.

Many families in Trinidad and Tobago prefer to deal with their family problems on their own without the help of someone external. What contributes to this is that in this country, many people believe that domestic affairs should be dealt with in the home. There is also the fact of not having trust in anyone outside of the family.

There are a number of families in the rural areas who come to the attention of FIA but faced with a limited workforce and other resources, it is difficult to respond positively. Faced with episodes of domestic violence, incest and even drug abuse in the home, many rural residents, especially of certain ethnic backgrounds, prefer to keep such episodes "silent." However, even when there is a willingness to report such matters, there is no appropriate agency nearby in these rural districts. The residents' well-known distrust in the police does not help the situation. Keenly aware of these challenges, FIA is setting out some plans to decentralise their programming, as well as broaden their partnership networks across the country.

### **Features of Families In Action's Success**

When the number of treated cases and client feedback were considered by FIA, the group indicated that they have achieved "a success rate of approximately 40%." This means that their follow-up inquiries show no further signs of the initial problems treated (e.g., drug abuse, domestic violence, incest, etc.).

There are many letters from former clients who express satisfaction with FIA's programmes to Ms. Gibson, every "positive result" FIA gets with a client, gives her "the confidence to carry on, firmly believing that people can and do change for the better."

FIA's *Annual Report* (2004) shows that four hundred and eighty two cases (482) of family problems, behavioural problems, physical abuse and sexual abuse were reported and resolved through FIA. For the period January through June 2005, three hundred and fourteen (314) similar cases were reported and dealt with. The decrease raises a "statistical enigma." Does such a decrease reflect the group's success or its ineffectiveness? Does it mean that with such a decrease that, in fact, there is a decrease in the wider society? In dealing with such figures, FIA needs to understand what "more cases" may mean. It may mean that more affected persons are attracted to the FIA programmes. It may also mean that more such incidents are happening in the wider community. Further, it may mean that people are reporting the similar amount incidents at a higher rate (of reporting). There is, therefore, a need for FIA and other similar groups to define what "success" or "progress" means, and compile a more reliable set of success indicators.

### Sustaining the Vision: The Way Forward

FIA has a number of partnerships with several NGOs and private companies that ensure that their goals are achieved. They are able to receive funding, as well as advice from these institutions to ensure the management of the Centre is effective. In addition to these partnerships for sustainability, the other parties that participate in sustaining FIA's programmes are the government, foreign companies, volunteers as well as the university interns.

The permanent staff and volunteers demonstrate great enthusiasm for their work here. This obviously goes a long way in programme implementation and sustainability. This is part of the human resource factor in NGOs' operations.

FIA argues that there must be "a holistic approach to dealing with everything," thus ensuring programme integration and sustainability. They believe that not only should FIA be sustained but that the treatment and advice meted out to clients – individuals and families alike – should also be sustained after leaving the FIA.

FIA programmes are developed with "a vision," that is, its goals must be maintained both in the short and long term, with modifications made when necessary. Adaptation seems to be part of FIA necessary. Adaptation seems to be part of FIA programming.

**The permanent staff and volunteers demonstrate great enthusiasm for their work here. This obviously goes a long way in programme implementation and sustainability. This is part of the human resource factor in NGO operations.**

### Learning from the FIA Experience

- **Opportunity to Change:** Some of the lessons learnt have been both positive and negative. One of the most important lessons learnt by FIA is that "people can change once they are given the opportunity to do so." This change can be brought about by "having an understanding of the individuals that you are dealing with, and therefore having the correct programmes that are relevant to the individuals who are to receive them."
- **Expectations:** Their second lesson is that "everything that you set out to do, it must be done so wholeheartedly, and with the expectation that it will indeed be achieved, treating failure as a thing of the past."
- **Goal Setting:** Their third lesson is to "set practical goals to be attained, thus allowing for

evaluation at the end to understand where the weakness as well as the strong points are.”

- ***Selfishness:*** A lesson with a touch of negativity is the “selfishness” displayed by some clients. Where cooperation and goodwill are required, such persons “refuse to provide these as start-up elements in the programme.” Such self-centredness, though part of the problem, creates further obstacles. The lesson learnt is that, in spite of having faith in others, love and unity are hard to come; there is the tendency of humans to be selfish.
- ***Implementation of Policies:*** It is difficult to get policies implemented, especially those policies or programmes where the government is involved. The red tape, time delays and bureaucracy adversely affect effective implementation.

**...their door is open to all in need, but the organization is mainly dedicated to the upliftment and healing of families and individuals ravaged by drug addiction and social abuses through counselling and group support.**

# CHAPTER 13

## *ROXBOROUGH POLICE YOUTH CLUB: MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF THE YOUTH*



### **Background and Mission**

This evaluative study focuses on the Roxborough Police Youth Club which was inaugurated on November 23, 1990 in the community of Roxborough, Tobago in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

In the late 1980's and into the 1990's in Trinidad and Tobago, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) made attempts to engage in a modern form of policing, namely, Community Policing as part of its crime-fighting strategies. This new thrust in policing was being practiced in many developed countries for many years, and being a developing nation, this country attempted to institutionalize this "new and attractive" mode of policing.

Subsequently, the TTPS established a special unit in its organizational structure dedicated to this purpose. It was known as the Community Policing Unit. One of the important components of community policing is to develop community relations with a view to building partnerships between the police and community, as a means of maintaining public safety, preventing crime or to manage/reduce crime where it exists. This includes the involvement of members of the community in crime prevention, crime reduction and crime management programmes.

As such, the Community Policing Unit of the TTPS established the Trinidad and Tobago Police Youth Club Organization as a mechanism to assist youths - in depressed areas in particular - to develop positive and healthy lifestyles. The first two youth clubs were established in Trinidad, that is, in the areas of Cocorite and John John, Laventille. To date, there are approximately twenty-six (26) Police Youth Clubs in existence – twenty (20) in Trinidad and six (6) in Tobago.

It was envisaged by the police service that by creating a network or working opportunity between members of the community and the police service, there will be a reduction in crime, and that such collaboration could serve as an effective crime prevention mechanism. This Police Youth Club Organization was seen to be a strategic tool towards building better community relations in the fight against crime at the community level and one which would impact on public safety at the national level in the long term.

On Friday November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1990, the Roxborough Police Youth Club (RPYC) in the community of Roxborough, Tobago was inaugurated through the combined initiatives and assistance of the police officers, teachers and community leaders in this village. Its founding members were Sergeant Collis Hazel (who remains its Leader), Officer Lyndon Ramsden, Mr. Steve Duncan, Ms. Giselle Thomas, Ms. Marcia Grey and Mr. Clifford Philips.

Several crime/social problems existed in the community of Roxborough. For example, juvenile delinquency, truancy, drug trafficking, theft and various forms of criminal activity, teenage pregnancy, poverty and unemployment, poor academic performance, lack of technical/vocational facilities, sporting and cultural facilities, lack of community integration and lack of leadership were among some of the major challenges facing the community of Roxborough and its environs.

The RPYC made an assessment of this situation and engineered several appropriate responses, without any official funding or support. Through several successful fund-raising efforts on its own initiative, and the support and work by its Executive and Parent Body, the Club implemented several educational/training programmes (for

example, in computer literacy, opened an Internet Café, culinary arts, garment construction, cosmetology, gardening, music and dance, remedial classes, homework centres, etc.). This was geared to assist members and those from the community, to access skills to help make them employable or to become entrepreneurs in their own right. The Club also organized several tutoring, sporting and cultural activities so that youths in particular could make more productive use of their after school hours and leisure time. This has been instrumental in preventing many youths from falling prey to criminal elements, or engaging in delinquent acts generally. The Club has been excelling in a number of sporting areas for quite some years now as a result, particularly, in football, netball and cricket.

The Club has raised TT\$6,000,000 (US\$1,000,000) to date, via international donor agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), Canadian High Commission and British High Commission, and from local agencies and corporate citizens, such as, the Office of the Prime Minister Social Services Delivery, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, Tobago House of Assembly, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, BPTT, Petrotrin and the National Lotteries Control Board.

The RPYC has to its credit received numerous awards and honours in recognition of its work, and has achieved all of its objectives to date as evidenced below. Its educational, sporting, cultural and public outreach programmes in particular, have made significant impact on its members and the communities it services. To date, for example, over one thousand five hundred persons have benefited from the Club's education/training programmes. Many of these have gone on to become self-employed entrepreneurs or gainfully employed in the private or public sectors.

Further, over forty of its members have become accomplished professionals (for example, in medicine, nursing, teaching, accounting, managerial roles, in the protective services, in technical/vocational areas, etc.). These past and present members continue to contribute their time and capital to the Club's programmes as a means of ensuring its sustainability, and making an ongoing positive impact on the lives of its members and the community. The RPYC is an initiative that should be encouraged.

This initiative also seeks to enhance community and institutional strengthening. This is reflected in the

**One of the important components of community policing is to develop community relations with a view to building partnerships between the police and community, as a means of maintaining public safety, preventing crime or to manage/reduce crime where it exists. This includes the involvement of members of the community in crime prevention, crime reduction and crime management programmes.**

Club's motto which states that *"Togetherness is the Road to Achievement."* The Club's vision is to be *"the premier agency for fostering growth of empowered, well-rounded, independent and disciplined youth."* This philosophy is further elaborated in its Mission Statement: *"to provide youths/persons in our communities with resources that would facilitate their holistic development thus moulding them for emergence in a competitive world."*

The RPYC was established as a mechanism to bring the young members of the community into a working environment with the police under the whole thrust of community policing. It was a strategy to engage both the community and the police service in crime prevention and crime reduction programmes. With the active involvement of the parents of youth club members, as well as other members of the community in the Club's activities, this initiative seeks to enhance community and institutional strengthening.

The RPYC has acquired its property, its home, called the Roxborough Multipurpose Youth Centre, and is located on one acre of land at #24 Bloody Bay Road, Roxborough. This Multipurpose Centre grew from a 32 x 28 square feet building to a 79 x 28 square feet building to meet increased and increasing demands for its programmes, services and to house its growing membership.



***The Roxborough Police Youth Club's Multipurpose Centre***



***Members of the Roxborough Police Youth Club in their attractive club uniform***

Police officers are assigned to the youth club on their off-days. They also voluntarily provide their time and services to the youth club. However, this is not full-time. The Parent Body remains a vital component to the functioning of the Club as indicated by its Leader, Sergeant Collis Hazel during our interview.

The offices of the Youth Club are open during the day for persons to access for several reasons. These may include participation in its educational/training programmes, as well as for utilizing its telephone/fax, photocopying, typing, computer/internet services, etc. Even tourists visiting the popular Argyle Waterfall and environs in the Roxborough area, often come by the RPYC to use its Computer/Internet Café. All of these for a small fee of course, so as to help pay for the staff to sustain these services, and as part of its entrepreneurial and fund-raising efforts.

### **The Five Objectives of the Roxborough Police Youth Club**

The RPYC views itself as a service, non-governmental organization committed to enhancing the lives of youth, and by extension the community of Roxborough and environs which it serves, and seeks to do so through four major initiatives: (1) education, (2) culture, (3) sports and (4) community-spiritedness. The Club is therefore guided by its stated objectives:

- (1) *To foster discipline among youths*
- (2) *To ensure that youths occupy their leisure time productively*
- (3) *To expose youths to educational, sporting, cultural and spiritual activities*
- (4) *To facilitate youth empowerment*
- (5) *To engage youths in positive community development*

### **Target Group**

The main target group of the RPYC is youths, both male and female, between the ages nine to twenty-five years who reside in the Windward communities of Tobago. Members come from as far as Mt. St. George and as near as Speyside. Membership is free of charge. There is an Application Membership Form, and members are given an Identification Card, and a uniform which distinguishes a member at various events, etc., (see photograph above). Meetings are held monthly at the RPYC's Conference Room every first and third Saturday from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. There are approximately one hundred and seventy-five youths who are Club members at present.

Persons who are older than 25 years are not excluded from being associated with the Youth Club. They are, however, utilized in the organization in various leadership/supporting roles as required for the execution of its various projects and programmes.

Furthermore, the RPYC has established a RPYC's Parent Body, comprising parents of members and who provide a vibrant and supporting role to the youth Club's varied projects. The Parent Body meets on the third Wednesday of each month, also at the Conference Room from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.



*Some members of the Roxborough Police Youth Club's Parent Body at one of the Club's sporting events*

### **The Roxborough Police Youth Club's Approach to Crime Reduction**

Generally, the emphasis of the Youth Club is on assisting youths develop positive and healthy lifestyles by fostering, through its projects and programmes, discipline among its members and exposing them to socio-cultural, educational, sporting and related activities which will ensure the productive use of their leisure time and lead them into a path to productive adulthood.

It was determined by the police service that not enough productive use was being made by the youths of their time generally. They were often seen "liming" (or "hanging out") on the streets, street corners, in the parks or at home doing nothing and idle. Problems of juvenile delinquency and truancy in the community therefore arose.

Many youths were unemployed - they either could not find a job in their community due to lack of job opportunities since the area was/is generally economically depressed, or they were unemployable - as many did not succeed academically, as well as, they did not have appropriate alternative skills which could help them obtain jobs. With no remedial classes or technical/vocational training avenues easily available to assist them, it posed a problem for their development and sustainability.

There was also a serious problem of "drug pushers" or trafficking in marijuana in this community, especially around the periphery of playing fields, savannahs, etc. where youths would go for their various activities. Many youths fell victim to the drug trade as users and "pushers" helped them earn some income. Theft also became one of the more common crimes/offences committed in the

community. Youths, in search of money, would often steal or rob other members of the community, or as a means of getting money to buy drugs. Youth pregnancy was also an observable problem. From investigations, it was found that many parents in this generally poor community were struggling to make ends meet, and some had little control over their children.

Another major problem that needed to be addressed was the fact that there was not much organized activities in the community to bring the youths together, such as cultural activities, for example, on national holidays, religious holidays, Christmas, Easter, Independence Day, etc. There was nothing much the community could look forward to on these important occasions. There was an absence of key facilities in the community for the youths to engage in such productive activities. There were no proper playing/sporting fields, or even an area with night lights to play, for example, football, basketball, netball, table or lawn tennis, hockey, etc. The associated problems of alienation and lack of community spiritedness also was a reality hindering community progress.

Youths also did not have access to many of the technological developments occurring in Trinidad and Tobago and indeed the wider Caribbean. These included access to telephone/fax machines, access to computers, the internet, etc.

One of the major problems experienced in the community was the fact that some children who were attending school did not have the relevant expertise at home available to assist them in their school work and assignments. The need for a homework centre(s) was indeed quite urgent so as to assist youths improve their academic performance. The RPYC therefore felt it was critical to address and curb these problems as a matter of urgency. By and large, and as the evidence will show, organized events and facilities were absent until the Youth Club came into the picture.

Interestingly, official statistics reveal that total crimes in Roxborough accounted for ten percent (10%) of total crimes reported for the entire island of Tobago in 2000, while in 2004, it was eight percent (8%) – a two percent (2%) decrease, albeit small, but significant given the size of the overall island. Further evaluation will be needed to assess the possible positive impact which the work of the RPYC has had on this national figure.

We believe that the Youth Club is a fine example of combined resources working towards the achievement of shared goals and geared towards empowering youth and ensuring a safer community and society. Indeed, as the Club's Motto stresses: *"Togetherness is the road to achievement."* Clearly, fostering a strong sense of community-spiritedness and community building is another of its key objectives.

### **The Roxborough Police Youth Club: Projected Benefits**

The RPYC aims to achieve several tangible and intangible benefits to the youths in the community, as well as for the community as a whole, as a means of developing social and human capital, fostering a sense of belonging and pride, reducing involvement in crime and maintaining public safety. It attempts to achieve this through its various projects and programmes, for example:

- (1) *Reducing unemployment among the youths by providing education/training programmes (for example, computer literacy, culinary arts, music/dance training, garment construction, typing, costume making, cosmetology, gardening, etc.) so that they can become employable/ self-employed*
- (2) *Reducing the presence of idle youths in the community by engaging them in these and related activities offered by the Youth Club*
- (3) *Providing more activities for youths to engage in, when not at school or not working, that is, after-school/after-work activities*
- (4) *Building stronger community and family ties through its activities, for example, Annual Sports*

and Family Day, Annual Candle Light Dinner, excursions, “tidy up” campaigns, etc.



***Students catching up on their studies at the now defunct Home Work Centre***



***Members of the RPYC very attractively outfitted at its Annual Sports and Family Day***

- (5) *Providing the necessary resources, technology, etc. for youths, as well as, the wider community so they will be in the stream of things (for example, access to telephone/fax machines, computers for typing, internet access, photocopying machines, etc.)*
- (6) *Providing home work centres for students to get the necessary educational/remedial assistance/training*
- (7) *Improving the profile of the community, for example, representation at several local and national occasions, one recent example at the national level was at the Roxborough Police Youth Club’s Mock Tobago House of Assembly Sitting/Youth Parliamentary Debate on the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), held on November 23, 2005 in commemoration of the Club’s 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary sporting and cultural competitions (for example, its Roxborough Police Youth Club Steel Orchestra and its Dance Group), as well as, on international exchanges*
- (8) *Providing entrepreneurship opportunities for youths and members of the community. This is exemplified in the Club’s Culinary Arts Centre which provides food catering services, services the Ministry of Education’s School Feeding Programme, and training in the culinary arts, so that members can open their own businesses, or become employed in the tourist and related industries; beauty and cosmetology salon – again where classes are held for training, and members go on to open their own businesses, become employed elsewhere, and similarly for costume making, music playing, etc.*
- (9) *Encouraging the learning of life skills, for example, respect for one another, the need to stay away from crime, the need to work, the need to help fellow human beings, the need to share your skills and training, honesty, etc.*
- (10) *Providing appropriate responses/interventions to various community problems as they arise, and which involves the social and human capital and resources from members within, and outside the community of Roxborough if required.*



*Some members of the Roxborough Police Youth Club's Culinary Arts Centre hard at work preparing meals for the School Feeding Programme*



*Members of the Roxborough Police Youth Club during several of its regional and international exchange visits*

### **Organization Structure**

The RPYC has as its Leader, Sergeant Collis Hazel, one of the founding members, and who remains a key element in maintaining its continued success, coordinating its fund-raising efforts, planning and outreach programming. There is an elected Executive Body which comprises a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Trustees and an Auditor.

There is a Youth Coordinator who is in charge of executing programmes, and a Computer Facilitator/Accountant who also manages the Club's office at the Multipurpose Centre. These latter posts are paid for by income generated through the Club's own fund-raising initiatives and as well from the Culinary Arts Centre. Six kitchen staff personnel are employed with, and take care of, the catering/entrepreneurial aspect of the Culinary Arts Centre.

The RPYC's Parent Body comprises parents of the Youth Club members, and other individuals, who volunteer their services to assist the Club in its youth and community outreach projects and programmes. The Parent Body is made up of an elected Executive Team with a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Public Relations Officer, Trustees and Internal Auditor.

External persons are brought in when needed, for example, tutors/remedial class teachers, coaches, music/steel pan teachers, trainers, etc. Some give their services voluntarily, others are paid for their services from the Club's funds where required.

The Youth Club members themselves and members from within and outside the community are brought in to assist, or provide services as necessary for the implementation/execution of the Club's activities, projects and programmes.

There are some useful documents that are available by the RPYC. These include its *Annual General Meeting and Financial Reports*, its *13<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Magazine* and a Paper entitled "15 Years and Still Going." The Club also has an Application for Membership Form and Identification Card. The Club can also boast of having its own website ([www.roxboroughpoliceyouthclub.com](http://www.roxboroughpoliceyouthclub.com)) where information can be obtained on its aims, objectives, programmes/activities, etc.



*Sergeant Collis Hazel  
at his office at the RPYC  
displaying one of his awards*



*Photo shows interview team with  
Sergeant Collis Hazel ( from right to left),  
Professor Ramesh Deosaran,  
Ms Barbara Stewart and Ms Vidya Lall*

As indicated by the Leader of the RPYC during our site visit and interview with him on December 5, 2005, there have been several revisions which have taken place, and some which need to take place as the Club seeks to improve and expand its work:

- (1) Infrastructural Development: The current available space at the Club's Multipurpose Centre has since outgrown itself since its last physical expansion. At the moment, everything is in one main room (for example, reception/lobby area, the Secretarial/Project Coordinator's office, photocopier, fax machine, filing cabinets, storage, computers for training classes, meeting table, Internet Café, etc). To be better able to service the community, for planning, and to expand and improve its services, a larger space is desperately needed at this time. The music room, library area, salon, sewing room, music room etc., also share a small space to the back of the main room. This situation needs to be improved, especially since these various sectors are doing very well, and need to expand their services for both income generation purposes and for training larger groups of persons from the community. This issue of space will become even more critical as the Club's membership drive heats up, and more youths and members from the community come in to the Multipurpose Centre to access the advertised services.
- (2) Enhanced Administrative Structure: There has been a need for quite some time now to have a formal administrative structure in place, with official posts which are properly staffed to ensure efficient work flow, accountability, etc.
- (3) Increased Membership Drive and Succession Planning: A plan needs to be put in place to build upon existing membership and community networking to bring in more youths, in particular, males from the communities which the Club serves. There is a marked deficit in the number of males who participate/join the Club and this deficiency needs to be addressed. The issue of succession planning is also a critical one for the Club since it wishes, as a serious organization committed to continuing its work, to ensure smooth transition and continuation of the Club's projects and programmes with upcoming leaders being groomed continuously, to take up the mantle when the older heads will have demitted office.



*Photo shows Mr. Arnold Lindow, President, Roxborough Police Youth Club (at left) being interviewed by Professor Ramesh Deosaran (at right)*

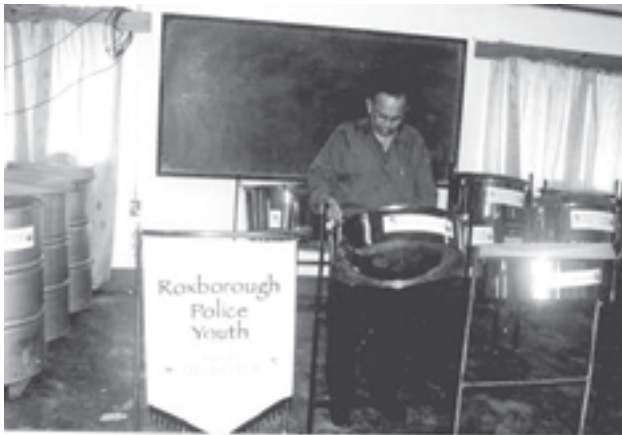
- (4) Act of Parliament: The RPYC would like to have the organization registered as an Act of Parliament, so as to formalize its structure and so enhance its marketability and fund raising efforts.
- (5) Funding: Most of the funding received by the RPYC comes from external (non-governmental, non-TTPS) sources and used primarily for capital expenditure. These funds are rarely used for recurrent expenditure (for example, daily administrative costs, maintenance, etc.). There is need for revision with regard to income generation which is necessary to sustain and expand the Club's various projects and programmes.
- (6) Professional Staff: The RPYC sees the need to have several professionals now attached to its operations so as to better service the youths and the community who need such professional assistance. For example, social workers, psychologists, remedial teachers, counsellors, teachers to assist differently-abled students and the like are needed at this time.
- (7) Youth Rehabilitation Facility: The Club has written the Commissioner of Police last August 29, 2005 with a proposal to utilize the old Roxborough Police Station, so as to house a Youth Rehabilitation Facility. What exists at this time is that youths beyond control are sent to juvenile institutions in Trinidad such as the St. Jude's School for Girls, the St. Michael's School for Boys and the Youth Training Centre, and are returned to Tobago after the stipulated period of treatment. Such transfer results in separation from community and broken family ties. It has been found that many youths return more troublesome and resentful than before, and remain a problem in their community. The RPYC is of the view that having such a facility in Tobago itself will avoid physical dislocation from one island to another, and will provide local treatment which should be more helpful to youths housed in such a facility. This proposed facility will also involve the supervision and assistance of drop-outs, provision of counselling services, etc. for the youths and anyone else who wishes treatment.
- (8) Homework Centres: The RPYC in 2001 won the BPTT Youth Leadership Award for its proposal to implement this project under its Youth in Education Category. These homework centres were, however, closed when this funding was exhausted. Given its proven success in providing after-school training for children in need, this is an initiative which the Club wishes to have re-implemented, and is currently looking at a revision in its fund-raising efforts for this and in general.



*A view of the  
Roxborough Police Youth Club's  
Library area*



*Member of our research team,  
Mr. Ian Ramdhanie admires the  
impressive array of trophies and awards*



*Professor Ramesh Deosaran tries out  
a tune on one of the steel pans of the  
Roxborough Police Youth Club's  
Steel Orchestra in the Music Room*

- (9) Community Outreach Activities: An assessment of community outreach activities is now being done so as to enable the Club to adjust current programmes and projects as required, plan ahead, and get the appropriate funding for new projects which are now in need to help service the youths and community.

These initiatives show the Club's ability to continuously assess the needs of the youth and community, its capability and its resolve to respond and provide services as much as it can, so as to ensure the progress of the youths and members of the community. This Club can indeed be viewed as a "full service provider," and must be complemented for taking on such tasks, with limited resources, and for providing leadership and direction to the community it serves.

Several classes and education/training programmes are offered by the RPYC. As mentioned earlier, the Club offers training in the culinary arts at its Culinary Arts Centre, computer literacy, musical training for the steel pan and garment construction. The Club's Beauty Salon offers training in cosmetology, nail art, barbering and beauty culture. Several tutors are available through the Club who offer classes in academic subjects for those who need such tutoring or remedial attention.

There are a variety of sporting activities for the youth, for example, netball, windball cricket, table tennis and football, and night football as part of the Club's thrust to instil discipline in members and youths, and to create a sense of team and community-spiritedness. These are well-organized teams, not only for recreational purposes so that youths and members of the community can make full use of their leisure time and not become involved in criminal activity, but many of these sporting teams go on to local

competitions and do very well, in addition to providing leadership in the community. For example, the Club's netball team placed third in the Tobago Netball Competition recently. The Club has also been coordinator of the Windward Windball Cricket League for the past three years. The Club's netball and football teams continue to excel.

Referrals are available and in fact, as pointed out by Sergeant Hazel, when members go out for a job interview, for example, and persons become aware that they belong or have some affiliation to the RPYC, this serves them very well, since the reputation of the Club is so positive that it adds to one's own capital. The Club also tries to assist wherever it can to provide whatever information or direction as needed by its members or from enquiries from persons from the community.

### **Financial Support**

The estimated cost of running the Club is TT\$15,000.00 or US\$2,400.00 per month. There is need for steady-state annual funding so as to deal with recurrent expenditure, (for example, pay staff, maintenance of equipment and facility, services, etc.), formalization of the Club's administrative structure to ensure proper functioning, efficiency and accountability, and to assist the Club in its current drive to expand its public education/training, outreach, social skills, sporting programmes, etc. as it seeks to meet the needs of the youth and the community it services.

At the moment, the Club raises all its funds to help sustain its current operations and projects through donor agencies, to which it has applied or won grants based on proposals submitted for various projects. It also generates income through its Culinary Arts Centre and from services it provides to the community (for example, minimal charges to use the telephone, fax, photocopier, Internet Café, etc). There is no funding from the Government or from the TTPS at this time.

### **Partnering for Success**

The RPYC partners with several local and international donor agencies, Governmental and non-governmental agencies, the private sector and the wider community. It does so for creating funding opportunities, obtaining technical support, expertise and collaboration, forging strategic networks so as to assist it in the successful execution of its projects and programmes, to build its membership and to assist the dissemination of information about the Club and its objectives.

Key partners and stakeholders include, primarily, the Tobago House of Assembly (THA), its Information Division, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS), Ministry of National Security, other government ministries (for example, Office of the Prime Minister, Social Services Delivery, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture, Community Development and Gender, Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs), the British High Commission, Canadian High Commission, private sector companies such as BPTT, Petrotrin, National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB), non-governmental organizations, various schools and Parent-Teacher Associations, churches, the media and the wider community.

As one example, and due to the Club's accountability, the British High Commission has since 1997, given grants on three occasions to assist the Club in its work, as well as, to maintain its own pledge of support to the RPYC for its various initiatives. Also significant, is that on the assumption of duties by each new High Commissioner, an official visit is paid to the Club. This shows the level of interest and commitment by this international agency in maintaining a strong working relationship with the Club based on its work output.

These partnerships are critical as the Club seeks to continuously improve its functioning and expand its

public education/training and outreach programmes. The Club's efforts at providing leadership and critical services to its community are recognized and serve as a source of inspiration to many. It has also impacted positively on its ability to raise funds given its track record for winning grants based on its reputation as a critical community initiative.

### **The Roxborough Police Youth Club: Obstacles and Challenges**

The obstacle and challenge of raising funds is nothing new to non-governmental and community agencies. In fact, many such initiatives have failed due to lack of capital, not only financial, but social and human as well. A great deal of time has to be spent on proposal preparation, fund-raising, grant seeking and accounting. The RPYC does not receive any sustained funding from the TTPS or Government, and must rely primarily on external donor agencies, the private sector, and on the initiatives and input of its members, etc. as mentioned earlier.

Fund raising will continue to be this Club's main challenge. In addition to forging new and maintaining current key partnerships, implementing a marketing and strategic plan, and having a proper evaluation of its operations, an assessment of its programmes needs to be done so as to benchmark its performance and lay the framework for the future.

Despite this challenge, the RPYC has been able to raise approximately TT\$6,000,000 or US\$1,000,000 to date to help sustain its work. More funds will be needed, and this is a major challenge at this time, for example, to help the Club obtain a bus or buses to assist with transportation generally. Many members/students/resource persons live outside the Roxborough area and need transportation to access the Club's services. This is particularly critical since public transportation is limited after 6:00 p.m. Expansion of sporting fields is also necessary at this time so that the Club can expand their sport offerings and coaching. New computers are also needed as soon as possible to allow the Club to expand and enhance its training and education programmes in computer literacy, etc.

Sergeant Collis Hazel, Club's leader, has benefited from his training in Project Management at The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago, and has been able to apply the knowledge gained in writing grant proposals, successfully obtaining or winning awards for grants and maintaining a working relationship with the donor agencies. The Club has placed great emphasis, as naturally required, on proper management and accountability to its donors, ensuring achievement of planned objectives, preparation of financial statements and annual reports, etc. This has been instrumental in helping the Club sustain its programmes and ensure its survival to date.

A main obstacle is that the TTPS is very bureaucratic, and all requests need to be passed through the Commissioner of Police. The timeliness of replies to requests, for example, in many instances is not forthcoming, no doubt due to the demands of the Commissioner's own portfolio. This negatively impacts, however, on the Club's ability to respond to an issue or cause as it would like to, especially if formal approval must first be obtained for certain activities, etc. Enthusiasm by members is often diminished as a result, and this affects the morale and functioning of the Club.

An obstacle which the Club faces is its ability to attract more males. There is a vibrant Parent Body, but it is made up mostly of women who diligently give of their time to Club activities and to support their children who are members. The Club is attempting to bring in more fathers and males from the community to help in its work. This has not been very successful to date, and remains a challenge and obstacle to the Club's overall functioning.

The Club has been a target to thieves as well. Cash, which reflects income from services have been taken, and a few small office items. This has been a very unfortunate and upsetting occurrence to the administrators, since all of its efforts have been geared towards the enhancement, improvement and

progress of the community. Security has been improved and the Police have been assisting the Club in finding the perpetrator(s).

A continuous challenge is to hone in community stakeholders. This is critical for involvement, membership and support of the work of RPYC. To this end, the Club is mounting a membership and recruitment drive so as to bring in some key stakeholders and members of the community who are not involved in the Club's work to date.

It has been found that because of the positive reputation which the Club enjoys, many persons sometimes want to misuse the organization for their own selfish reasons (for example, being affiliated with the Club might auger well in obtaining a job, getting a useful recommendation, opportunities for travel, etc.). It has been found that in these circumstances, there is no real interest in assisting the Club in any tangible way. Some in the political arena seek to assist the Club for publicity. Despite these realities, the Club attempts to focus on providing services and enhancing its programmes on a continuous basis, and welcomes the support of all those who wish to do so since its main goal is the development of the youth and the prosperity of the community it serves.

An ongoing obstacle and challenge is the Club's ability to attract volunteer support, particularly from the professional sector. Many qualified persons, understandably, have very demanding and time-consuming jobs, and are not able to give of their time as they might wish due to their own job commitments. Many are also from outside the area making distance another negative factor in connecting with the Club. Thus, a skills bank is lacking, and efforts are being made to improve the Club's human and social capital and resource personnel. The demands on the Club's Executive sometimes takes its toll on family life, since much time needs to be dedicated to the Club and its activities, and this keeps members away from their families. An expanded resource base will help members to meet Club demands to ensure their work gets done.

While many persons are willing to assist the Club in its education/training programmes (for example, as tutors, etc), there is the question of remuneration. The Club therefore has to always be vigilant in its fund-raising efforts so as to ensure that they have funds in hand to pay for services when required, and for the long term, since the education/training component of the Club's activities is key to its overall objectives. This will continue to be a challenge until some source of sustained funding for recurrent expenditure is found.

There is need for the implementation of an evaluative component to assist the Club to benchmark its performance and make projections for the future. They also need to review the management of their projects as well, so as to enhance performance and output. They do not have the skills or resources to do so, and are at this time trying to obtain assistance from an external donor agency to assist them in this regard.

One of the main objectives of a Police Youth Club is recruitment. To date, just three members have gone on to become police officers and one has joined the army. This recruitment drive is a challenge, since there are no real resources in place to follow through on the recruitment process. There is therefore the need to put things in place to enhance recruitment and training, so that more members can be encouraged to become police officers and play a more active leadership role in their communities.

### **Features of the RPYC's Success**

It is useful to recall the RPYC's objectives here:

- (1) *To foster discipline among youths*
- (2) *To ensure that youths occupy their leisure time productively*

- (3) *To expose youths to educational, sporting, cultural and spiritual activities*
- (4) *To facilitate youth empowerment*
- (5) *To engage youths in positive community development*

The Club has achieved remarkable success during its fifteen-year life span to date, with regard to all five objectives through its education/training, sporting, cultural, entrepreneurial initiatives and public outreach programming. For example, it has been successful in fostering discipline with the involvement of approximately forty youths in its uniform detachment, which made its debut in 2001, led by Sergeant Major Subrena Winchester at the Independence Day Parade. This is an ongoing exercise by the Club, which is also geared at building membership, reducing youth's involvement in delinquent activities and as a recruitment drive for entry into the protective services.

Another example, is the scores of youths and members from the Roxborough community and environs who are involved in various sporting activities organized by the Club (for example, night football, Annual Sports and Family day, netball team, table tennis, windball cricket, basketball, etc.). The Club has been a leader in the sporting arena for many years now. In fact, until the advent of the RPYC, the community of Roxborough did not have a proper playing field, or organized sporting activities for youths or members of the community.

With regard to youth and community empowerment, education and training opportunities and entrepreneurial initiatives, over one thousand five hundred (1,500) persons have benefited from the Club's leadership to date. For example:

- (1) *Approximately four hundred and sixty-six persons have been trained in computer literacy, use of the internet, email and typing skills to date, at the Youth Club's Multipurpose Centre. These persons have now become self-sufficient in these skills, and many have gone on to obtain gainful employment in various sectors. Many also utilize these skills to assist them in furthering their education. Three Club members also benefited from a "train the trainer's" course offered by the University of New Brunswick in Canada. This allowed the Club to have the in-house resources it needed to provide such critical training in computer literacy.*
- (2) *The Culinary Arts Centre has provided training in the culinary arts for one hundred and sixty-six females and four males. This Culinary Arts Centre is now a key income-generator for the RPYC, and permanently employs six persons at the Centre providing services for the School Feeding Programme, catering events and offers such services to the public. Many graduates from this programme have gone on to work in tourism and related service industries, and many have opened their own catering businesses.*
- (3) *Twenty-five members from the Club have obtained training in playing musical instruments and the steel pan. In fact, the RPYC now boasts of its own steel orchestra and is fast becoming a very popular addition to many cultural and related events. The steel orchestra also serves as another source of income generation.*
- (4) *The RPYC has also launched its own dance group which is made up of twenty dancers, and performs at a variety of cultural and related events as well. Like the steel orchestra, fees pays for their performances are credited to the Club's income.*



***Members from the Roxborough Police Youth Club and the community of Roxborough join forces to "tidy up" their surroundings – an activity which helped them to cop the Rotary Club's Tidy T&T Litter Control Award in 2003***

- (5) *Approximately thirty members have benefited from training in garment construction and have become self-employed or gainfully employed elsewhere. The beauty salon also provides training in beauty culture, hairdressing, barbering, nail art, etc.*
- (6) *From the micro-credit programme, twenty persons have been utilizing this facility so as to become entrepreneurs. The RPYC has provided all these facilities so as to assist members, other persons in the community and environs in developing their potential, ensure their livelihood and lift them out of their poverty.*
- (7) *As mentioned before, total crimes in Roxborough accounted for ten percent of total crimes reported for the entire island of Tobago. In 2004, interestingly, total crimes in Roxborough accounted for eight percent of total crimes reported for the entire island of Tobago. While detailed analysis has to be done to ascertain the reasons for this small, but significant decrease, one can theorise that this decrease might be due in part to the community empowerment and community strengthening initiatives of the RPYC.*
- (8) *The Club's growing membership is evidence that its outreach efforts are bearing fruit with approximately one hundred and seventy-five members to date.*
- (9) *For fourteen consecutive years, the RPYC has organized a junior and senior Carnival band and has won significant cash prizes annually. This income has assisted the Club in meeting some of its monthly financial obligations.*
- (10) *While the three home work centres started with a grant in 2001 from BPTT, they have been closed since 2003 when this grant was exhausted. The Club has been unable to source funding to re-start and maintain this very successful initiative, but plans are in place to secure funds so as to provide this very important facility. Many youths in Roxborough do need extra academic tutoring and many do not have the resource base at home to assist them with their homework. In fact, one female student scored ninety-seven percent on her Mathematics examination arising out of the tutoring she received at these home work centres. The RPYC is therefore adamant that this is one of their priorities at this time since from the evidence, children were performing much better in school. The home work centres also provided an opportunity to keep youths off the streets until their parents were available to collect them, while engaging them in much needed extra classes to assist them in their school work.*

All of these examples show how the youths and wider community have benefited, critical training and education was obtained, members could become self-sufficient and add to the improvement of the community economically and otherwise. All the activities listed above also serve as a means of keeping youths therein involved to keep them away from bad company or get involved in delinquent acts or criminal activity, focusing instead on fine-tuning their skills to assist them in ensuring their sustainability later on.

Another significant sign of progress is the number of professional exchange programmes which the RPYC has participated in – a total of eight to date, to such countries as Canada, Barbados, Washington, DC and New York, USA, Trinidad, St. Lucia, Grenada and St. Vincent. This has afforded the Club's members to interact with other youth club members and officials, to learn from their travels and create significant networks with partner agencies.

The RPYC has been the recipient of numerous awards and honours. For example, in 2000, the Club captured the Trinidad and Tobago Cement Limited Community Builders Award and Sergeant Collis Hazel received the Public Service Medal of Merit Award for Meritorious Public Service, a National Award issued by His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. In 2001, the Club won the BPTT Youth in Education Award and the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce - Best Community Project Award. In 2002, the Club won the UWI-Motorola and ACCP Community Policing Caribbean Award and the Tobago House of Assembly 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Youth Development Award.

In 2003, the Club again captured the BPTT Youth in Education Award, it won the Rotary Club's Tidy T&T Litter Control Award, the Prime Minister's Best Village-Best Educational Project and National Carnival Band Leaders Association Award for Outstanding Contribution to Carnival. In 2004, the Club's President, Mr. Arnold Lindow copped the Tobago House of Assembly Award for Best Youth Leader. For three years in the running, the Roxborough Police Youth Club has received the THA's

## Award for Most Outstanding Youth Project and Youth Initiative.

Another sign of success and progress, is that to date over forty members have excelled in their chosen professional fields (for example, medicine, law, nursing, business/self employed business owners, teaching, managers, clergy, sports, police officers, psychologists, social workers, accountant, journalist, auto mechanic, supervisors, computer facilitators, etc.). This attests to the success of the training and start they would have attained in part due to their affiliation with this Youth Club. Equally important, is that these members continue to volunteer their time and expertise to the Club's various projects and programmes. This shows commitment, dedication and loyalty.

As a means of facilitating youth and community empowerment, reducing poverty and crime, the Club has been successful in raising external funds - \$6,000,000 to date, to help it offer the projects and programmes which it has on board. The Club has received repeat funding from several international donor agencies, which is evidence that it can manage its affairs properly and is a responsible organization. Despite the lack of official funding, the RPYC has persevered through the efforts of its Leader and its Executive and Parent Body, to continue its operations, provide leadership in the community and maintain all of its projects, programmes and services. This is commitment at its best. As one of its papers indicated, the Club is "15 Years and Still Going."

The Club's ability to partner with international agencies such as the IADB, UNDP, Canadian High Commission, British High Commission, and various private sector agencies and Government Ministries and related agencies, shows that it has been successful in establishing a reputable name for itself, and is known for its serious approach and dedication to the youths and community it serves.

Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly, The Hon. Orville London, sums up the performance, success and progress of the RPYC quite appropriately in recognition of the Club's 13<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2003: *"After thirteen years of triumph and consistent, meaningful activity that has impacted the lives and livelihoods of numerous Tobagonians of all ages, the members of the Roxborough Police Youth must be justifiably proud. This organization cannot now be perceived as just another youth group, but rather as a pioneer, an entrepreneur, maybe, an icon among service organizations in the country, and even the region."* (Roxborough Police Youth Club 13<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Magazine, 2003, p. 3).

### **Sustaining the Vision: The Way Forward**

Funding is of course critical in order to help keep the RPYC operational. The Club has been sustaining its operations to date via *ad hoc* grants received – be it in response to grant proposals submitted and accepted, copping various awards or grants in recognition of its work, generating income from its Culinary Arts Centre, Beauty Salon, small fees paid for services, donations, etc.

In order to maintain the Club's effectiveness and sustainability, forging new and maintaining existing key partnerships are critical. The Club therefore seeks to maintain its good relationship with local and international donor agencies and the private sector; this as a means of continuously keeping these agencies abreast of the Club's work, and as well, to take the opportunity where appropriate, to submit further proposals for funding.

The Club will continue its thrust to apply for steady-state funding from the Government and the TTPS, Ministry of National Security. This will

**These initiatives and lessons learnt by the RPYC are worthy of mention so that other organizations can benefit from their experience and emulate their best practice. The Club has evolved into a "full service provider." It is not just another voluntary**

assist them in meeting recurrent expenditure and to improve its basic administrative and management structures. This is particularly crucial since the Club wishes to expand and enhance its projects and programmes to help meet the needs of the community and environs which it now serves.

The Club will have to engage in an effective marketing campaign and strategic planning as it seeks to sustain itself, keep abreast of developments internationally, and to gain more support for its work from various sectors.

The Club's operations are sustained through the continued support, commitment and loyalty of its Executive and Parent Body. Without this human capital, the Club will not be in the successful position it is in today. External support will continue to be sourced to help sustain the Club's programmes as required.

The Club needs to review its administrative and operational structure to ensure its sustainability and enhance its efficient functioning. For example, permanent and paid posts, not only relying on voluntary service, are now needed so as to ensure efficiency and accountability by staff for its operations. This will also help provide the resources to help manage the Club's affairs in a more organized way, and as well, to assist the Leader in accessing funds externally and to manage its various programmes and projects.

A renewed membership drive is planned to help boost the Club's membership, and also to bring in more community stakeholders into its operations. This is geared towards forging new partnerships and to encourage more "buy in" into the Club's operations, so as to assist in achievement of stated objectives, to create a renewed sense of community-spiritedness and belonging, and to ensure its crime management and crime reduction goals are maintained. All in all, sustainability is a viable element for the RPYC.

### Learning from the RPYC's Experience

Some of the major lessons learnt from the experiences of the RPYC can be summarized as follows, and which also have relevance for best practice:

- (1) **Human Capital and Values Base:** There must be passion, loyalty, shared goals and commitment when working with an organisation such as a Police Youth Club, given its stated objectives and expressed mandate. There needs to be genuine care and concern for the progress of youths and the community by extension, by those in charge of such an organisation committed to personal and institutional strengthening. As with any volunteer-based organisation, hard work, long hours and focus by its implementers are key to its success.
- (2) **Democracy:** To allow for effective community participation and "buy in," organizers need to be alert to the views of the community and encourage these views, suggestions and recommendations to be expressed and merged with the stated objectives of the organisation. Give and take will always be necessary, since without such collaboration and consensus, any project which relies on the involvement by members of a community will not succeed.
- (3) **Misuse:** People tend to flock around successful persons or agencies. Many are genuinely interested in becoming involved and contributing to the cause. Many are not, and seek merely to align themselves only when convenient or when they need to build their own capital, or for

**organisation with "hodge podge" projects here and there. Their projects and programmes are carefully directed at meeting the needs of its youth members and the community it services, to ensuring the prosperity and safety of the community and island by extension.**

publicity. Organisations such as the Police Youth Club need to be aware of this and organize itself so as not to be derailed in any way by these types of actions, which may in the long run prove to be a disadvantage to the efforts of the organisation.

- (4) ***Key Projects, Partnerships and Marketing:*** It is a good strategy to have one or two viable projects (at least, depending on your resources) which will assist one's organisation establish its reputation. These "flagship" projects or programmes can then provide an avenue to expand its focus/become involved in other areas which are part of its mandate, and may well help draw in funding opportunities. Establishing strong working relationships with the members of one's organisation, the community it services, donors/funders/corporate citizens is essential. A good marketing strategy is crucial to assist the organisation to disseminate information, create, as the RPYC has done, its own website, publish annual brochures, magazines, etc. so as to keep abreast of one's work and the way forward. Together with proper record-keeping, these strategies will help build interest and encourage membership and key partnerships in the long term.
- (5) ***Effective Response and Intervention:*** The initiatives of the RPYC and its success as detailed above indicate how an organisation, if properly managed and focused, can rise to the challenge of providing effective response, leadership and interventions to assist the community or members it serves to overcome their particular problems, social or otherwise. For example, the Club realized that poverty, youth delinquency and crime were significant areas of concern in Roxborough and environs. They therefore put things in place to respond so as to alleviate these conditions (for example, its education and training programmes, sporting and cultural activities, homework centres for the youth, etc.).

These initiatives and lessons learnt by the RPYC are worthy of mention so that other organizations can benefit from their experience and emulate their best practice. The Club has evolved into a "full service provider." It is not just another voluntary organisation with "hodge podge" projects here and there. Their projects and programmes are carefully directed at meeting the needs of its youth members and the community it services, to ensuring the prosperity and safety of the community and island by extension. From all indications, the Club is targeting its efforts on expansion and while fund-raising will continue to be a challenge as it is for any entity, we have no doubt that it will achieve its goals.

**...the Roxborough Police Youth Club is a fine example of combined resources working towards the achievement of shared goals and geared towards empowering youth and ensuring a safer community and society. Indeed, as the Club's Motto stresses:**  
***"Togetherness is the road to achievement."***  
**Clearly, fostering a strong sense of community-spiritedness and community building is another of its key objectives.**

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Ramesh Deosaran obtained a B.Sc. (First Class Hons.), M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Toronto, Canada. He is Emeritus Professor of Criminology and Social Psychology, former Director of the Centre for Criminology and Criminal Justice and The Ansa McAl Psychological Research Centre at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus. He is now Programme Professor of Criminology and Public Safety at The University of Trinidad and Tobago, O'Meara Campus. He is serving a fourth term as an Independent Senator in the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

He is a research and policy development expert in crime prevention and crime management, social policy construction, institutional strengthening, governance and civil society.

A well known international scholar, Professor Deosaran is author of 14 books and over 400 papers and journal articles and has written extensively on crime, poverty, juvenile delinquency and youth rehabilitation, police reform, educational attainment, conflict resolution and restorative justice, leadership and organizational development, inequality and ethnic relations, politics, the criminal justice system, prison recidivism and penal reform. He is Editor of the *Caribbean Journal of Criminology and Public Safety* (ISSN 2073 5405) ([www.cjcsp.com](http://www.cjcsp.com)).

Ian K. Ramdhanie obtained a B.Sc. (Hons.) and M.Sc. from The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus. He is currently completing a Ph.D. in Sociology (specializing in Criminology in the area of white collar crime) at the UWI.

He is a Senior Research Assistant at the Centre for Criminology and Public Safety at The University of Trinidad and Tobago, O'Meara Campus.

His research interests include white collar crime and state corruption, prison recidivism and penal reform, crime statistics and analysis.



Vidya Lall obtained a B.A. (Hons.) and M. Phil. from The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus. She is currently completing a Ph.D. in Sociology (specializing in Criminology in the area of juvenile delinquency, victimization and bullying in primary schools) at the UWI.

She is a Senior Research Assistant and Assistant to the Programme Professor at the Centre for Criminology and Public Safety at The University of Trinidad and Tobago, O'Meara Campus.

Her research interests include juvenile delinquency, gender-based violence, crime, justice, public safety, and the family in the Caribbean region.

