



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PUBLIC CONSULTATION DECLARATION TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

25th September, 2024, Port of Spain

PREAMBLE

Recognizing the significance of the Domestic Violence Consultation organized by the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs, which brought together officials, state and justice sector agencies, experts, civil society, the public and other key stakeholders.

Acknowledging the persistent and alarming rates of domestic violence, which continue to destabilize families and communities, and the gaps in operationalizing the current legislative framework.

Understanding that domestic violence is a multifaceted issue requiring a multi-sector collaborative approach across agencies and disciplines, ensuring the protection and empowerment of victims/survivors and accountability for perpetrators and offenders.

Recognizing the need for action, standardization and improved public awareness to support the effective delivery of services and interventions to address domestic violence.

Addressing the need for state agencies to establish and implement urgent protocols to address the needs of domestic violence victims.

We, the participants of this consultation themed - "Public Consultation on Domestic Violence – the Need for Greater Protection" - commit to addressing the following issues and implementing the following solutions to achieve measurable outcomes in addressing domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago:

Policy Interventions

1. That domestic violence be recognized as a critical societal issue requiring urgent prioritization by all stakeholders, with a commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of victims.
2. That a victim-centered approach be adopted in all domestic violence interventions, ensuring that the voices, needs, and protection of all victims are at the core of decision-making processes.
3. That multi-sector result-oriented collaboration continues to be embraced as an essential strategy in addressing domestic violence, promoting coordinated efforts among law enforcement, the judiciary and social services to provide comprehensive support for victims and effective accountability for offenders.

Legislative Interventions

4. That the Domestic Violence legislation be subject to a comprehensive

review to ensure it remains responsive to emerging challenges and gaps identified in its operationalization.

5. That any necessary amendments be considered to enhance the clarity and effectiveness of legal definitions, processes, and protections, particularly regarding the enforcement of protection orders and the inclusion of psychological and behavioral interventions.
6. That ongoing legislative review ensures alignment with international best practices and evolving societal needs, promoting stronger legal mechanisms for the protection of domestic violence victims and the accountability of perpetrators.

Operational Interventions

7. That psychological and psycho-educational support and counseling for victims, including the families of victims, children and perpetrators be provided, as well as access to safe spaces to support persons to better navigate the negative effects of domestic violence.
8. That trauma-informed and survivor-centered psychological care and support be provided to victims to empower them to take ownership of their lives and prioritise their own safety and mental well-being, with the singular intent to end violence and abuse in their domestic relationships.
9. That policies and interventions be created to address the psychological harm caused by domestic violence to empower and enable victims to break abusive cycles and regain control over their lives.
10. That a comprehensive public awareness campaign be launched to educate the public, including students, on identifying domestic violence and the available support and services from state agencies, ensuring that victims, perpetrators and those affected, know where and how to seek help.
11. That a Domestic Violence multi-sector committee foster greater collaboration among key agencies including civil society, ensuring better information sharing and coordination in responding to domestic violence incidents.
12. That service delivery be strengthened, particularly in relation to the serving of Protection Orders, by improving police protocols and response times to better protect victims and hold perpetrators and offenders accountable.
13. That persons assigned responsibilities under the law are held accountable for inaction in the same way professionals are made





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accountable for not reporting and provide a robust mechanism for the public to make reports.

14. That all agencies and entities involved in the enforcement and support of the Domestic Violence legislation acknowledge the critical gaps in resources and take necessary steps to ensure the provision of adequate human, financial, and other resources, to enable the effective implementation and operationalization of the legislation.

Commitments of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

15. That the Police Service undertakes to ensure the full implementation of the Domestic Violence Register, providing a comprehensive and accessible system for tracking incidents and interventions.
16. That the Police Service commits to improving its handling of affidavits and timely service of Notices and Orders of the Court thereby supporting the effectiveness of the judicial interventions.
17. That the Police Service prioritizes the protection of unrepresented victims, ensuring that all necessary support mechanisms are in place to safeguard their rights and well-being during domestic violence proceedings.
18. That training be provided to all police officers, especially those not in the Gender-Based Violence Unit, to enhance their understanding of domestic violence issues and victim support, thereby improving police response and service delivery.
19. That service delivery be strengthened, particularly in relation to the serving of protection orders, by improving police protocols and response times to better protect victims and hold offenders accountable.

Judicial and Court Interventions

20. That the Judiciary commits to the development and implementation of standardized Domestic Violence Rules to be made by the Rules Committee for all courts, ensuring consistent application of the law and equitable service delivery to all persons affected by domestic violence. victims.
21. That judicial officers ensure the inclusion of all relevant and necessary conditions in Protection Orders, tailored to the specific circumstances of each case, to enhance the effectiveness and enforcement of the Order.
22. That the Judiciary strengthens its efforts to protect unrepresented victims by court support services, and timely judicial interventions in domestic violence matters.

Monitoring and Follow Up Mechanism

23. That the Office of the Prime Minister-Gender and Child Affairs consolidates the aforementioned commitments into the National Strategic Action Plan on Gender Based Violence and Sexual Violence -2023-2027.
24. That a Domestic Violence Multi-Sector Committee under the Office of the Prime Minister, Gender and Child Affairs, monitor and advance the commitments outlined herein above and report to Cabinet within six (6) months from the date of this Statement. .

ADOPTION

Adopted by acclamation on 25th September, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago by the participants of the Domestic Violence Public Consultation, in pursuit of measurable outcomes to address and eradicate domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago.

