

GENDER EQUALITY AND FATHERHOOD Issue Paper



Gender Equality and Fatherhood

Introduction

In 2011, the Ministry of Social Development commissioned a Social Norms and Values Report, which revealed that 25% of single parent households in Trinidad, were in fact single father homes.

In the absence of an official definition of a single father in Trinidad and Tobago, a single father can be generally described as a male, who has the responsibility of taking care of his child/ren but is no longer in a relationship with the mother/s of said children. The children could be either in his physical custody or in the custody of the mother or any other caregiver.

In keeping with the definition given above, the number of single fathers in Trinidad and Tobago will significantly exceed the number represented by 25% of single father households.

According to the Honourable Minister Nyan Gadsby Dolly, in her capacity as Chair of the Parliament Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity, 'in debates about single parenthood, the rights of the single fathers have been overlooked as focus has traditionally been on single mothers.'

The Single Fathers Association of Trinidad and Tobago (SFATT) was established in 2012, to raise awareness about the challenges being faced by fathers to get equitable access to their children, when they go before the courts in Trinidad and Tobago, to settle custody matters between themselves and the mothers of their children.

SFATT believes that a child has the right to benefit from equal access to both parents and by extension the extended families of each, once this is in the child's best interest.

The organisation challenges the ongoing perception that the child essentially belongs with the mother and that the four or eight days per month which are generally awarded to the father as non custodial parent, is adequate. SFATT believes that a child cannot develop a meaningful and beneficial relationship with his / her father with such limited access to the child. In this regard the organisation strongly advocates that both mother and father have an equal right to parent their child / children and therefore access to their children should be equitable.

SFATT's view is supported by Article 9, Paragraphs (1) and (3) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which state as follows;

(1) States parties should ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities, subject to judicial review, determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child.....

(2) States Parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if contrary to the child's best interests.

Towards this end, SFATT advocates strongly for the institutionalisation of shared parenting in Trinidad and Tobago and that, where applicable, existing legislation policy and practice should be changed to ensure that fathers are treated equitably.

This issue paper examines some of the specific issues raised by SFATT through the results of research conducted as part of a project of the Emancipation Support Committee of

Trinidad and Tobago, entitled, *Gender Equality and Fatherhood: Empowering Single Fathers in Trinidad and Tobago to Play an Equal Part in Parenting Their Children*. The project was funded by the European Union Delegation to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the beneficiary was the Single Fathers Association of Trinidad and Tobago.

Advocacy and lobbying for change in policy and or legislation was one of the major activities of the project and it involved the establishment of a Multi Sector Committee, which would review existing policy and legislation and recommend change, where required.

The paper also presents some of these recommendations as they were presented to the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights and Diversity, at a hearing on January 12th, 2018 and submitted to the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services as part of the National Consultation on Parenting.

Also included in this issue paper are some of the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity, which was presented to the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, on September 21st and September 26th, 2018 respectively.

The issue of Shared Parenting is also addressed as an alternative to the current custody arrangements generally made by the Courts. The benefits of Shared Parenting are included along with recommendations for its institutionalisation in Trinidad and Tobago.

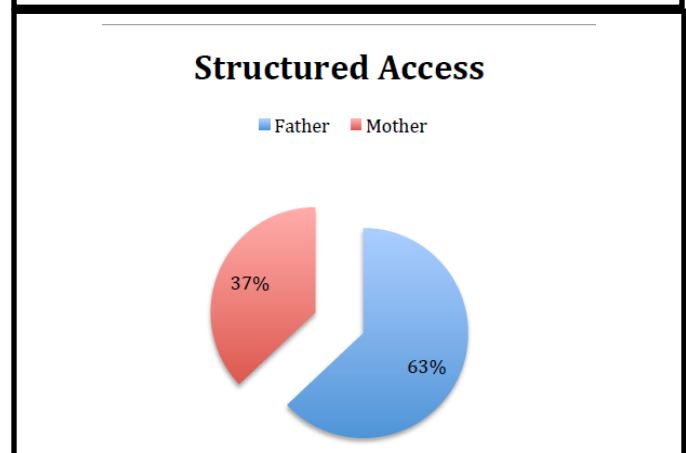
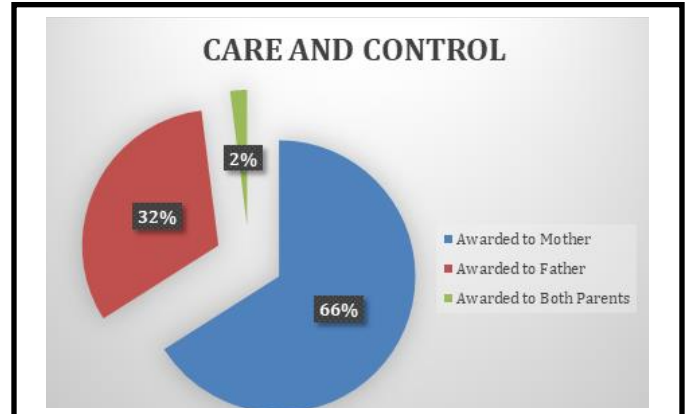
Judgements by the Family Court

Is there Gender Equity in the Awarding of Custody of children by the Family court in Trinidad and Tobago?

Research conducted as part of the Project, *Gender Equality and Fatherhood: Empowering Single Fathers in Trinidad and Tobago to Play an Equal Part in Parenting Their Children*, has revealed:

1. That of the 50 cases reviewed, in 62% of the judgements, the Honourable Court awarded sole custody to one parent and in 38% both parents were awarded joint custody.
2. Of the number of sole custody judgements only in 39% of the cases, was the father awarded sole custody care and control, while the mother was awarded sole custody, care and control of the children in 61% of the judgements.
3. Of the number of cases where joint custody was awarded, in 74% of those cases care and control was granted to the mother and to the father in 21% of the cases. In the remaining 5%, mother and father were granted shared care and control.
4. Of the total number of cases reviewed the father was awarded care and control in 32% of those cases as compared to the mother, who was awarded care and control in 66% of the cases. Only 2% represented cases in which shared care and control of the minor was granted to the mother and father.
5. Structured access was awarded by the Honourable Court in 54% of the judgements. Of those judgements the father was ordered to have structured access with the child 63% of the time compared to 37% of the time with the mother. Even though there was variation in the structured access arrangement, no order for structured access included more than 8 access days per month. In 56% of the cases the parent who received structured access was limited to 4 access days per month. The majority of structured access judgments included access to the children for half of the school vacation and every other holiday.

The dates of delivery of the judgements used in this case study, spanned the years 1996 - 2017. They are published judgements sourced from the Law Library of the Hall of Justice in Trinidad and Tobago and available on the Judiciary's website. In the selection of cases, no judgements were used, which included a determination by the Honourable Court, that there had been any form of abuse or that there was a risk to the child by either parent. Therefore, both parents should have been on equal footing regarding their applications before the Court.



sole custody: one parent has the right to make long term decisions about the raising of a child and key aspects of the child's welfare e.g. religion, education, diet, etc

joint legal custody: both parents share the right to make long term decisions about the raising of a child and key aspects of the child's welfare Joint legal custody is only granted to parents, who have been married.

care and control: management of the child's daily needs such as meals, transport, bedtime etc. The child lives with the parent who has been granted care and control.

joint care and control or joint physical custody: both parents share equally the care and control of the child and the time spent with each parent.

access: time granted to the non custodial parent to spend with the child.

structured access: time spent by the non custodial parent with the child is predetermined by the Court.

Gender Equality and Fatherhood

Voices of Fathers, Mothers and Children

In addition to the review of the 50 judgements of the Family Court, questionnaires were administered to fathers, mothers and children; in the case of the fathers and mothers to determine their experiences before the court and as regards the children, how they felt about not living with both parents.

Thirty fathers were interviewed and 20 out of the 30 or 66.7 percent of the cases involved issues relating to custody and access. The remaining cases dealt with matters relating to the payment of maintenance or the matter relating to custody and or access were ongoing. It should be noted that once physical custody or care and control is granted to one parent, the other parent has the right to access. Even when there is a situation of joint legal custody, one of the parents will have care and control and the other just access.

Of the 20 cases, the mother had care and control in 14 or 70% of the cases, whereas the father had care and control in 30% of the cases.

The access time granted to the parents can be summarised as follows:

1. Of the six mothers, who were granted access, all or 100% were granted more than 4 days per month including one who was granted liberal access.
2. As regards the fathers 5 out of 14 or 36% of the fathers were granted more than 4 days per month also including liberal access. However 9 out of the 14 or 64% were granted 4 days or less per month. Of this amount, one was denied access.
3. 12 out of 20 or 60% of the 20 cases were heard by a magistrate and the remaining 40 % by a judge. However the outcomes are very similar to the data presented with respect to the judgements of the judges of the Family Court.
4. Of the 30 fathers surveyed, 50% found they were unfairly treated by the court and the following are some of the reasons given for that perception:
 - The magistrate ignored evidence I presented.
 - My ex wife was not penalised by the judge for breach of order
 - The judge did not see the mother and father's role as being equally important.

90% of the fathers interviewed in the sample, were fathers who were recommended by SFATT and the remaining 10%, by others who became aware of the project.

Thirty-three children were interviewed as part of the survey. Fathers, who responded to the questionnaires, were generally not willing to allow their children to participate in

50% of fathers found they were unfairly treated by the court. Some of the reasons given for that perception are:
'The judge did not see the mother and father's role as being equally important.'
'The magistrate ignored evidence I presented'
'My ex-wife was not penalised by the Judge for breach of order'

the survey and only two allowed their sons to respond. It was then decided to select children from two institutions, the Youth Training Centre for Boys and St Jude's Home for Girls, where children were committed for delinquent behaviour or involvement in illegal or criminal activities. The intention was to examine the relationship between these children and their parents.

Of the thirty-three children interviewed, the parents of nine had been to court to settle custody and access arrangements. Of the nine, who were between the ages of 10 and 16, eight were boys and one was a girl. Eight of the nine children lived with their mother and one with his father. Five of the nine children saw their non custodial parent more than once per week, 3 twice per month and one twice per year. Six of the nine children indicated that they would feel better if they could spend more time with the non custodial parent.

Of the remaining 24 children, which comprised 13 boys and 11 girls, between the ages of 13 and 18, even though there were no custody orders from the court, only one lived with both his parents. Eleven or 45.4% lived with a guardian, 10 or 42% lived with their mother, 2 or 8.3% lived with their father. Interestingly nine of the 13 boys (69%) and 10 of the 11 girls (91%) preferred not to respond when asked if they would prefer to spend the same amount of time with both parents. 81% of the 24 children were also either neutral or non responsive as regards their feeling about spending more time with either parent.

Only three mothers were identified who had an interest in participating in the survey. All three mothers had physical custody of their children and were seeking maintenance. They however all agreed that both parents should have equitable access to the children.

Institutionalisation of Shared Parenting in Trinidad and Tobago

'shared parenting' means that both parents whether previously married or not, share the right to make all decisions about the raising of a child and all aspects of the child's welfare for example, religion, education, diet etc. and that both parents share equitably in the physical custody of the child and also in the determination and provision of the daily necessities of the child.

Is the role of the father as critical as the role of the mother in the development and well being of a child?



SFATT Member, Marlon Anderson with his two daughters on one of his access days

Psychologists around the world have advanced that the best interest of children are served, when they spend a substantial amount of time with both their parents. Dr. Richard Warshak has published the report entitled, *Social Science and Parenting Plans for Young Children*. His publication was done with the endorsement of 110 researchers and or practitioners, who are together, experts in various fields, including social work, early child development, clinical and forensic psychology, psychiatry, sociology and counselling.

According to Warshak, research has indicated that because infants develop attachment relationships with both their parents, there is a danger of disturbing one of the relationships by designating one parent as a primary and limiting the infant's time with the other parent.

The International Council on Shared Parenting (ICSP) is the first international interdisciplinary organisation of divorce scholars and family practitioners. The Council aims to develop evidence-based approaches to the needs and rights of the children, whose parents are living apart and to explore the feasibility of shared parenting in different child and family contexts.

In July 2014, the ICSP held the First International Conference on Shared Parenting with the theme, *Bridging the Gap Between Empirical Evidence and Socio Legal Practice*. Participants, which included members of the scientific, family profession and civil society sectors from over twenty countries. The conclusions of the Conference, which are intended to serve as a guide for family law makers, policymakers and practitioners around the globe, include the following:

Sole custody and primary residence orders are not serving the needs of children and the families of divorce. It was purported that shared parenting was a viable post- divorce parenting arrangement with the minimum of time to achieve positive results, being one third up to a 50/50 shared arrangement, inclusive of time during the weekday (routine) and on weekends (leisure).

At present in Trinidad and Tobago, the law only allows for couples that have been legally married to be granted joint legal custody of their children following separation or divorce. Joint legal custody or joint care and control are sometimes used interchangeably with the term, **shared parenting**. However the definition which is being proposed for Trinidad and Tobago is as follows: **'shared parenting'** means that both parents whether previously married or not, share the **right** to make all decisions about the raising of a child and all aspects of the child's welfare, for example religion, education, diet etc. and that both parents share equitably in the physical custody of the child and also in the determination and provision of the daily necessities of the child.

Shared parenting should involve a long-term parenting plan to which both parents agree and which is reviewed periodically and adapted to fit a child's emotional, scholastic and physical needs as they grow.



From L to R Dr. Peter Weller, Training Consultant, Rhondall Feeles, President of SFATT, Natasha Helena-Zoric, Representative of EU Delegation to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Tiffany Hercules-Jerome, Research Consultant and Zakiya Uzoma-Wadada, Executive Director of ESCTT/Project Manager at the Media Launch of the Project



ESCTT Programme Officer shares literature about family law and shared parenting at an SFATT 'I Love My Community' event



Participants, from Citizen's Security Programme's Community Councils in Central Trinidad, participate in an Outreach Facilitator Workshop.



Zakiya Uzoma-Wadada, Executive Director of ESCTT speaking at the 2018 conference on Shared Parenting held in commemoration of Father's Day



Outreach Facilitators review the contents of their Outreach Facilitator Toolkits



Representatives of SFATT share information at the National Symposium on the Parenting Policy, hosted by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services



Participants at the 2018 conference on Shared Parenting held in commemoration of Father's Day



Dr. Peter Weller, Training Consultant, conducts a workshop with Outreach Facilitators



Rhondall Feeles President of SFATT, Natasha Helena-Zoric, Representative of EU Delegation to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Zakiya Uzoma-Wadada, Executive Director of ESCTT and Aldwyn Wayne of Wi Pay present the SFATT Mobile Application



Members of SFATT Core Group participate in a Capacity Building Workshop.



Members of SFATT Core Group participate in a group activity for the development of SFATT's Strategic Work Plan, as part of a Capacity Building Workshop



Panellists at the 2018 seminar on Shared Parenting held in commemoration of Father's Day included a Family Law Practitioner and Representatives from Family in Action, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, Gender Division, Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago and SFATT.

Gender Equality and Fatherhood

Shared Parenting (Continued)

What are the benefits of Shared Parenting?

According to Families Need Fathers (FNF), Shared Parenting is intended to ensure:

- 1) That the children feel that they have two properly involved parents.
- 2) That one parent is not able to dominate the lives of the children at the expense of the other or to control the other parent via the children.
- 3) That the parents have broadly equal 'moral authority' in the eyes of the children and that the children have free access to both their parents, if there are issues affecting them.
- 4) That the children are able to share the lives of both their parents 'in the round' - for example not spending all 'routine time' with one parent and only 'leisure time' with the other.
- 5) That the parents are in a position of legal and moral equality and are considered in this light by the children, as well as friends, neighbours, teachers etc. as well as public authorities, this would apply to routine as well as major matters.
- 6) That there is no part of the children's lives, for example, their school life or having friends, that one parent is excluded from by virtue of the allocation of parenting time or the law on separation/divorce and children.
- 7) That the children are not by virtue of the allocation of parenting time excluded from any part of either parent's life.
- 8) That the children spend enough time with both parents to be able to negate any attempts at 'parental alienation'.
- 9) That the children do not develop stereotyped ideas from their parents about the roles of the sexes, for

example that a father's role is chiefly financial and a 'giver of treats', and that mothers have responsibility for everything else.

According to Warshak, in a May 2017 article:

Toward the end of the 20th century, divorce decrees offered children visits with their father every other weekend. The term visits captured the transformation of dad into something like an uncle, where the children are guests in his home. Dad became an entertainment director: The contacts were fun, but the texture and depth paled in comparison to a realistic parent-child relationship. At that time, only a handful of studies had peered into families in which divorced parents shared custody.

Judges in Trinidad and Tobago have the discretion to award joint custody and shared care and control to both parents, if they consider it to be in the child's best interest. This is supported by the dicta of Justice Ramkerrysingh in the case of Cachie v Salazar FH 1033 of 2010. In this regard the Court is given wide discretionary powers wherein it is free to consider such an option without the statutory backing.

The case study has indicated however that in only 2% of the 50 cases reviewed was joint legal custody, care and control granted to parents. In this regard, the legislation in its current form does not encourage the Courts to grant an order of shared parenting.

The following are recommendations for change in legislation and or policy towards the institutionalisation of

The least amount of time awarded to a non-custodial parent should be 10 days per month instead of 4.

A parenting plan, which facilitates shared parenting should be mandatory for divorced and separated parents.

Shared Parenting in Trinidad and Tobago:

1. All fathers and mothers have the right to joint legal and physical custody of their children, regardless of marital status
2. The least amount of time awarded to a non custodial parent should be 10 days per month instead of 4.
3. A parenting plan, which facilitates shared parenting, should be mandatory for divorced / separated parents.
4. Fathers should be entitled to at least one month paternity leave.

Gender Equity in Legislation, Policy and Practice



Dr Nyan Gadsby-Dolly chairing the January 12th JSC Public Hearing

What is the response of the Trinidad and Tobago Parliament Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity as regards gender equity in relevant national legislation, policy and practice?

The Trinidad and Tobago Parliament Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity was established under Standing Order 106 of the House of Representatives and Standing order 96 of the Senate. The Committee has the duty of considering from time to time and reporting whenever necessary, on all matters related to the following:

- 1. Compatibility of Acts of Parliament with human rights and any matters relating to human rights in Trinidad and Tobago (excluding consideration of individual cases).*
- 2. Government compliance with national and international human rights instruments, to which Trinidad and Tobago is a party.*
- 3. The promotion of measures designed to enhance the equalisation of opportunities and improvement in the quality of life and status of all peoples, including marginalised groups, on the basis of gender, age, (elderly, youth, children) and the creation of an inclusive and more equitable society, through greater social justice and sustainable human development within Trinidad and Tobago.*

At its Sixteenth Meeting, which was held on November 24th, 2017, the Joint Select Committee (JSC) on Human Rights Equality and Diversity resolved to 'examine the perceived inequality faced by single fathers in Trinidad and Tobago with specific focus on custody matters, policies and access to programmes and services.' Members of the Committee also agreed that the enquiry

would be guided by the following objectives:

- 1. To understand the unique challenges faced by male single parents in Trinidad and Tobago.*
- 2. To examine the equality of the policies which exist in Trinidad and Tobago with respect to single fathers.*
- 3. To determine whether the programmes and services offered to single parents in Trinidad and Tobago adequately meet the needs of single fathers of Trinidad and Tobago.*
- 4. To evaluate current laws which may impact on the custodial rights of single fathers in Trinidad and Tobago.*

Notice was given of the objectives of the enquiry and submissions were received from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, the Office of the Prime Minister in which lies the Ministry of Gender and Child Affairs, the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, the Single Fathers Association of Trinidad and Tobago, the Judiciary, the Victim and Witness Support Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprises, the Personnel Department of the Chief Personnel Officer, Central Statistical Office of the Ministry of Planning and Development and the University of the West Indies Family Development and Children' Research Centre.

The submission made by SFATT to the JSC hearing was prepared as part of the project, *Gender Equality and Fatherhood: Empowering Single Fathers in Trinidad and Tobago to Play an Equal Part in Parenting Their Children* and was informed by the experiences of SFATT and its clients, the research on judgements of the Family Court and also the research on existing legislation carried out by the Multi Sector Committee, which was established as part of the project. The enquiry also sought to determine how SFATT was benefitting from the said project.

On January 12th, 2018, three Directors of SFATT, four representatives of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and six representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister, participated in the public hearing and provided responses to questions posed by the members of the Joint Select Committee, in keeping with the objectives of the enquiry. Some of the key recommendations made by SFATT, as regards legislation and or policy or practice are listed below:

1. Legislation which ensures accountability by the custodial parent, as regards funds received and spent which were provided by the non-custodial parent.

Gender Equality and Fatherhood

Gender Equity in Legislation, Policy and Practice

There is no existing legislation or policy on this matter.

2. Legislation which ensures mandatory Paternity Testing before a maintenance application and order is made and or given.

The Family Law (Guardianship of Minors, Domicile and Maintenance) Act, Chapter 46:08 defines paternity order as '*an order of the Court declaring a man to be the father of a minor whether born or unborn*'. Section 22(2) of this Act also states that, '*an application for a paternity order may be made by a magistrate's court under this section - (a) by the mother of the minor*'. Section 22 subsection 5 of the Act states as follows: *Subject to section 45 a paternity order made under this section shall for the purposes of any application for a maintenance order under this Act or of any proceedings in respect thereof, be evidence that the person against whom it is made is the father of the minor.*

A Paternity Order should not be sufficient evidence to claim for child maintenance, until paternity is otherwise disproven. It was determined that this would be unfair if the person for whom the paternity order is filed, is not the father.

3. Practice which ensures that the conditions/circumstances, which allow access to public assistance for children are equitable for fathers and mothers.

Whereas the Public Assistance Regulations state that, '*Public assistance shall normally be paid to the person who, in the opinion of the Local Board, is the head of a family and whose needs shall be deemed to include those of his dependents*' and '*Notwithstanding assistance may be provided to meet the needs ofa single parent who - (i) is unable to earn a living due to caring for his child who has a physical or mental disability; and (ii) whose household income is deemed inadequate.....*', some staff, at the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, have turned away single fathers, who were seeking public assistance, indicating that male heads of households were not eligible.

4. Legislation which allows, as part of joint custodial arrangements, a minimum allotment of ten days per month (instead of the current average of 4 days allotted), in keeping with an agreed shared parenting plan, between both parents.



Rhondall Feeles, President of SFATT at JSC Public Hearing

5. Practice which decriminalises non-payment of maintenance and makes it non-punishable by imprisonment. Other punitive measures which are more cost effective to the state and more meaningful and effective in addressing the relevant issues should be implemented. In addition, while a father is incarcerated, the Magistrate should use his power of discretion to discontinue the maintenance order until he is released. In the interim the state should assist the child, where it is deemed necessary.

At present a father's failure to pay maintenance is viewed as a criminal act and the immediate response is the issue of a warrant for arrest and the punishment if found guilty, is incarceration. While incarcerated, the father's maintenance order is not discontinued and when he completes his sentence, he is sometimes immediately re-arrested for the outstanding payments, which accrued while he was in incarcerated. However, Section 27 (2) of the Family Law (Guardianship of Minors Domicile and Maintenance) Act Section (2) states as follows:

'Where the defendant neglects or refuses to make payment of the sums due from him or her under the order or since any commitment for disobedience to the order as hereinafter provided together with the costs attending the warrant, apprehension and bringing up of the defendant the Magistrate may— by warrant under his hand, direct the sum which appears to be due, together with the costs attending such warrant, to be recovered by distress and sale of the goods and chattels of the defendant;.....'

Gender Equity in Legislation, Policy and Practice

In addition the Family Law (Guardianship of Minors Domicile and Maintenance) Act Section 27 Number 5 states, *'Where in any proceedings for the enforcement of a maintenance order made by a Magistrate's Court under this Act the defendant is committed to prison then, unless the Magistrate otherwise directs, no arrears shall accrue under the order during the time that the defendant is in prison.'*

The recommendations made by the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity in response to the submissions made by the representatives of SFATT and the other government Ministries, at the Public Hearing, are detailed in the Eight Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights Equality and Diversity, which was presented to the Senate on September 21st 2018 and to the House of Representatives on September 26th, 2018.

Some of the key recommendations are as follows:

1. Given the increasing number of single parents in Trinidad and Tobago and the critical impact of data on the creation of programmes and services within Government agencies, the Committee recommends that the Central Statistical Office include questions on single parenthood, (inclusive of the sex of the single parent) in the 2010 Population and Housing Census.

2. The Committee recommends that the Judiciary institute a training workshop for Judges and Magistrates in order to mitigate possible cultural perceptions that may impact their judgments/decisions/rulings within the court system in Trinidad and Tobago.



SFATT Directors, Wendell Grant, Rhondall Feeles, Errol Fabien and Sanjeev Persad, outside the Parliament Building following the JSC Public Hearing.

3. The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Victims and Witness Support Unit, review the policies which guide the distribution of their programmes and services to ensure it is equitable for male and female single parents.

4. The Committee recommends that the Chief Personnel Officer include paid paternity leave in the Revised Guidelines for Contract Employment in Government Ministries / Departments / Statutory Authorities and the Tobago House of Assembly and the completion of the Revised Guidelines by December, 2018.

5. The Committee supports SFATT recommendation for Legislation which ensures mandatory Paternity Testing before a maintenance application and or order is made and or given. The Committee recommends that the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs amend the Family Law (Guardianship of Minors, Domicile and Maintenance) Act, Chapter 46:08 to include mandatory DNA test for paternity prior to the issuance of a maintenance order and penalties for breaches of Court Orders related to custodial arrangements.

The Committee recommends that the Courts and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service employ the option highlighted in Section 27(2)(a) of the Family Law (Guardianship of Minors, Domicile and Maintenance) Act, Chapter 46:08, before committing the individual to prison.

It is critical that there is commitment to the implementation of the recommendations presented in this issue paper so that fathers who are seeking to play a more meaningful role in the lives of their children receive the support of the relevant institutions to do so. Children have the right to benefit from a positive relationship with both their parents.

The Joint Select Committee recommends that the Judiciary institute a training workshop for Judges and Magistrates in order to mitigate possible cultural perceptions that may impact their judgments / decisions / rulings within the court system in Trinidad and Tobago.

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Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity into the *Perceived Inequality Faced by Single Fathers in Trinidad and Tobago With Specific Focus on Custody Matters, Policies and Access to Programmes and Services*

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