AUDITOR GENERAL

Special Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP)
of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
Follow-Up

3RD SEPTEMBER, 2018

AGD
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SPECIAL REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO ON A FOLLOW-UP AUDIT OF THE TARGETED CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMME (TCCTP) OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES

Prepared under
Section 116 of the Constitution
of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and
Section 9(2)(c) of the
Exchequer and Audit Act, Chapter 69:01

This Follow-Up Report examines the extent to which the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services improved the Oversight and Management of the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP) and aims to inform current and future efforts at poverty reduction.

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- The Director and staff, Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme, and
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Meaning
AGD	Auditor General's Department of the Republic of Trinidad of Tobago
E-PASS	Electronic-People's Access to Social Services
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ISEMS	Integrated Social Enterprise Management System
IT	Information Technology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTS	Means Test Score
MuST	Multi-Sector Skills Training
PMU	Project Management Unit
RATES	Rapid Access to Empowerment through Social Services
RISE-UP	Rights of Individuals to Social and Economic Security, Universal Prosperity
SHARE	Social Help and Rehabilitative Effort
SLC	Survey of Living Conditions
STEP UP	Social Transformation and Empowerment Programme-Uplifting People
TCCTP	Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme Division
TFC	Temporary Food Card
YTEPP	Youth Training and Empowerment Partnership Programme

SPECIAL REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL ON A FOLLOW-UP AUDIT OF THE TARGETED CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMME (TCCTP)

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services Needs to Operationalize Appropriate Governance and Monitoring Structures to Ensure the Success of its Food Support and Developmental Initiatives

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.   The Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (the Programme) (currently Food Support Programme) is a short-term food assistance and developmental programme, to provide social protection and reduce the incidence of poverty by promoting nutritional and food security to vulnerable households of Trinidad and Tobago. The Programme was administered through the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme Division (TCCTP) of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services [1](the Ministry).

2.   A Special Report by the Auditor General of Trinidad and Tobago on the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP) – Self Sufficiency or Dependency? (hereinafter referred to as the 2010 Special Audit Report) found that staffing and resources were insufficient for proper service delivery, challenges were faced in targeting the right people and reaching acceptable numbers of poor and vulnerable people in a timely manner, and the Ministry's policy guidelines for monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the Programme were not completely implemented.

3.   The Auditor General recommended that the Ministry:

   ➢ review and standardize operational procedures for assessing beneficiaries;
   ➢ reassess staffing requirements using a risk-based approach to improve the service and shorten the delivery times for debit cards;
   ➢ set measurable targets and track the progress of the Programme, and
   ➢ implement an appropriate IT system to facilitate processing, monitoring and evaluation.

4.   This Follow-Up Audit Report is based on field work conducted during the period April to July 2017 and covers the performance of the Programme over the period 2011 to 2016. The audit sought to assess the extent to which the Ministry and TCCTP had resolved key weaknesses outlined in the 2010 Special Audit Report.

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[1] Formerly the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of the People and Social Development

KEY FINDINGS OF THE FOLLOW-UP AUDIT

5.   The audit found that while corrective measures were taken to address certain concerns raised by the Auditor General, the majority of weaknesses remained unresolved.

Policies, Guidelines and Operational Procedures

6.   **TCCTP drafted additional operational procedures to support the implementation of the Programme.** TCCTP produced an Interviewer's Manual, a draft framework for the conditional (developmental) component of the Programme, a draft Family Case Worker Reference Manual and a draft TCCTP Manual. TCCTP also drafted a Temporary Food Card (TFC) Policy.

7.   **TCCTP did not implement the mechanism for approving debit card decisions.** Audit review of 203 debit card approvals by Regional Coordinators revealed that Regional Managers reviewed only 69 or 34%. The Approvals Committee and the Case Review Panel (to consider appeals) were not set up.

8.   **TCCTP did not use standardized MTS forms consistently across Regional Offices.** TCCTP revised the standard Means Test Score (MTS) forms for assessing clients on five occasions. However, a review of 516 MTS forms revealed that different versions of the form were used at the same time. For example, at one Regional Office four versions of the form were used for debit card applications made in 2015.

Service Delivery

9.   **The Ministry and TCCTP were not guided by up-to-date poverty statistics.** The most recent statistics of living conditions published by the Ministry was the Trinidad and Tobago Survey of Living Conditions 2005, Final Report (SLC 2005).

10.   **The Ministry established the outstanding Regional Offices except for Siparia which was most in need.** According to the SLC 2005, Siparia had the highest percentage of Density of Poor per 100 Persons (27.7%) of the five regions for which offices were outstanding. Regional Offices were established in Arima, Rio Claro, Tunapuna and Diego Martin.

11.   **TCCTP's office accommodation continued to be less than ideal for optimal service delivery.** Space was limited at the six Regional Offices visited and interviews continued to be held in areas which did not facilitate confidentiality of client information.

12.   **TCCTP did not allocate staff to Regional Offices according to poverty levels.** Regions with poverty concentration levels over 20% were allocated between two and six TCCTP staff while regions with poverty concentration levels under 20% were staffed by between five and seven officers.

13.   **The Ministry failed to fill necessary vacancies despite requests for staff by TCCTP.** Since 2010, staff shortages continued and at December 2016, 211 posts or 68.7% remained vacant. The Ministry employed the full complement of Regional Managers; however other key positions such as Monitoring and Evaluation Programme Officer and

Outreach Coordinator remained vacant while the positions of National Training Coordinator and Human Development Officer were occupied intermittently.

14.   **The Ministry and TCCTP failed to reduce the lengthy time taken to provide debit cards.** Clients continued to endure long delays in accessing food support (on average, between six and a half and twelve months).

Implementation of the Conditional Component

15.   **TCCTP failed to collate and analyse data consistently for beneficiaries and for participants of developmental activities.** TCCTP provided employment records only for October and November 2012 and training records only for the year 2014.

16.   **TCCTP did not make significant improvement towards achieving the target of successfully exiting 60% of beneficiaries within two years.** For the period 2010 to 2014, TCCTP successfully exited an estimated 7.4% of its beneficiaries from the Programme for each two-year cycle.

Use of Information Technology (IT)

17.   **The Ministry failed to deliver an IT system that met the needs of the Programme.** Plans for an integrated social services management system were not realised except for the Smart Card aspect. The Ministry spent $77.6 million on a Biometric Smart Card System, enrolled biometrically 72,973 of its grant clients and issued Smart Cards to over 3,000 TCCTP beneficiaries. However, the Ministry later halted the biometric system and TCCTP continued to store their client information in separate spreadsheets and databases with no network capability. Subsequent to the audit, one of the service providers for the biometric system obtained a judgement for $26.9 million plus interest and costs, bringing the total cost of the discontinued system to over $104.5 million.

Monitoring and Evaluation

18.   **The Ministry and TCCTP did not make significant progress in implementing the monitoring and evaluation requirements as outlined in TCCTP Policy Guidelines.** Performance measures were not defined and the position of Monitoring and Evaluation Officer has never been filled.

CONCLUSION

19.   Despite attempts to improve, the Ministry and TCCTP did not fully or satisfactorily implement corrective measures to resolve key weaknesses identified in the 2010 'Special Report by the Auditor General of Trinidad and Tobago on the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP) – Self Sufficiency or Dependency?'. These weaknesses continued to allow for inaccurate debit card decisions, lengthy delays for receipt of food support, leakage of funds due to duplication and prolonged dependency on food support, and hampered the Ministry's ability to effectively empower poor and vulnerable members of society to rise from a life of poverty.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF THE TARGETED CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMME

1.1   The Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (the Programme) was launched on 31st July, 2006 as a short-term food assistance and developmental programme, to provide social protection and reduce the incidence of poverty by promoting nutritional and food security to vulnerable households of Trinidad and Tobago[2]. Unlike traditional public assistance, the Programme provided a cash transfer to targeted families living below the poverty line[3] on condition that a member of the household participates in skills training aimed at achieving self-sufficiency within a period of two years.

1.2   The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (the Ministry), formerly the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of the People and Social Development, has overall responsibility for the management of the Programme. The Programme was administered through the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme Division (TCCTP) of the Ministry.

1.3   During the period 2011 to 2016 under review, poverty reduction remained a strategic priority through successive administrations. The Medium-Term Policy Framework 2011-2014 outlined strategies for empowering the poor and building human capital through education, training and skills building with a view to reducing poverty by two per cent per year by 2015. This was followed by Vision 2030[4] which identifies national goals for the reduction of persons living in absolute poverty in the medium term (2016-2025) and eradication of poverty in the long term (2016-2030). Short-Term (2016-2020) goals include the improvement of social services delivery to better serve the needs of vulnerable groups. Strategies[5] include promoting rehabilitation and access to decent sustainable employment so as to reduce dependence on social assistance.

1.4   The life of the Programme has been extended six times since inception as follows:

- ➢ one year from August 2007 to July 2008;
- ➢ one year from August 2008 to July 2009;
- ➢ two years from August 2009 to July 2011;
- ➢ three years from August 2011 to July 2014;
- ➢ three years from August 2014 to July 2017, and
- ➢ three years from August 2017 to July 2020 (currently referred to as the Food Support Programme and administered by the Social Welfare Unit).

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[2] Cabinet Minute dated 13th October, 2006
[3] Estimated at TT$665 per month (Trinidad and Tobago Survey of Living Conditions 2005, Final Report)
[4] The National Development Strategy 2016-2030
[5] Under Theme I Putting People First: Nurturing Our Greatest Asset

1.5   According to the TCCTP Statistical Report, at April 2014, 48,661 clients were accessing food support through TCCTP. The Ministry later reported to Cabinet that at June 2017, the number of clients had reduced to 28,067, a decrease of 20,594. Information available on the number of beneficiaries is represented in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: TCCTP Beneficiaries over 2014 to 2017

	Apr-14	May-15	May-16	Jun-17
TCCTP Beneficiaries	48,661	49,650	42,947	28,067
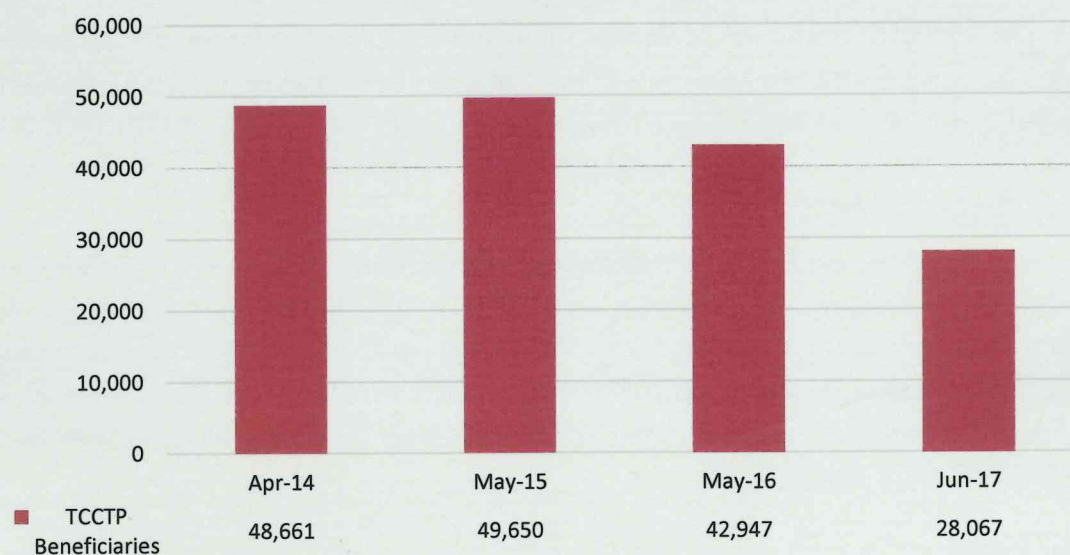
Sources: TCCTP Statistical Report 2010 – 2014
                Cabinet Minute

Cash Transfer

1.6   There was only one increase in the monthly benefit which took effect in August 2008 (**Figure 2**). Since then there have been no further adjustments.

Figure 2: Levels of Cash Transfer

	Family Size (members)	Monthly Benefit From inception ($)	Increased Monthly Benefit From 1st August 2008 ($)
Category 1	1 – 3	300	410
Category 2	4 – 5	400	550
Category 3	6 and more	500	700

Source: Cabinet Minute

Conditional Component

1.7   In December 2010, the conditional (developmental) component of the Programme was rebranded from Social Transformation and Empowerment Programme-Uplifting People (STEP UP) to Rights of Individuals to Social and Economic Security, Universal Prosperity (RISE-UP). From July 2017 RISE-UP reverted to STEP UP.

Smart Card

1.8   Delivery of the grant was facilitated through the use of a debit card with the intention of this mechanism being replaced by a Smart Card. In December 2010, Cabinet agreed to the introduction of an integrated multiple application grant card with biometric features. It was envisioned that the card would be a national card which would enable access to a number of Government services.

1.9   In July 2014, the Ministry commenced biometric enrolment of its clients on the Biometric Smart Card System. However, in June 2016, the Ministry placed a hold on cash transfers via the biometric system and the 3,158 clients who had been issued biometric cards received food support via cheque payment instead. By November 2016, there were 33,924 TCCTP clients enrolled in the system but in December 2016, the Ministry ceased the biometric enrolment process.

Special Needs

1.10   Cabinet agreed, in December 2011, to the introduction of a one-off disposable prepaid food card - the Temporary Food Card (TFC), to meet the immediate food needs of persons living in poverty and victims of natural disasters. TCCTP stated that from 2011 to 2014, 56,050 TFCs were issued.

1.11   In the Budget Statement 2012, Government proposed the automatic qualification for food support under the Programme to differently-abled individuals and families of differently-abled children. The Ministry implemented this proposal in 2013 but subsequently put this practice on hold.

Financing and Staffing

1.12   The Ministry of Finance transferred $1.46 billion to beneficiaries of food support and the Ministry spent $8.5 million on administration of the Programme (excluding personal emoluments) over the fiscal periods 2011 to 2016 (**Figure 3**).

Figure 3: Food Support 2011 to 2016

	Ministry of Finance ($)	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services ($)	Total ($)
2011	173,000,000	858,672	173,858,672
2012	239,000,000	936,864	239,936,864
2013	224,059,758	2,248,416	226,308,174
2014	270,486,521	2,428,658	272,915,179
2015	294,000,000	2,052,314	296,052,314
2016	260,000,000	3,025	260,003,025
Total	**1,460,546,279**	**8,527,949**	**1,469,074,228**

Source: Audited Appropriation Accounts 2011-2016

1.13   For the period 2011 to 2016, TCCTP did not operate with its full complement of 308 contract staff. As at December 2016, TCCTP was staffed with 115 officers, comprising 96 contracted and 19 short-term employees

ABOUT THE FOLLOW UP AUDIT

1.14   On 9th September, 2010, the Auditor General issued 'A Special Report by the Auditor General of Trinidad and Tobago on The Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP) – Self Sufficiency or Dependency?'. The objectives were to determine whether:

> ➤ there was an effective management strategy for administration of the Programme;
> ➤ the right people were being targeted;
> ➤ the process for selection and continued eligibility for the Programme was adequate and transparent, and
> ➤ systems for monitoring, evaluating and reporting were implemented and used to assess progress in achieving objectives.

1.15   The 2010 Special Audit Report identified weaknesses in management systems and controls, targeting and selecting the right people, implementation of the conditional component of the programme and monitoring and evaluation activities.

1.16   The follow-up audit was carried out primarily with a view to assist the Ministry in its re-evaluation of the performance of TCCTP to inform plans for current and future efforts at poverty reduction.

Objectives and Scope

1.17   The objectives of the follow-up audit were to determine the extent to which the Ministry and TCCTP have implemented key recommendations made in the 2010 Special Audit Report and to identify the corrective actions taken to address the weaknesses

identified. The field work was conducted during the period April to July 2017 and covered the six-year period 2011 to 2016. For the purpose of this follow-up audit, Project Management Unit (PMU) as identified in the 2010 Special Audit Report is replaced with TCCTP.

Limitations

1.18   Audit analysis was not based on up-to-date poverty statistics as the last survey of living conditions was published by the Ministry in the Trinidad and Tobago Survey of Living Conditions 2005, Final Report.

1.19   TCCTP also failed to provide certain statistical, accounting and training records. This affected the conduct of the audit. Ministries, Departments and Statutory Bodies are required to preserve their documents in accordance with Financial Regulation 135[6]. In addition, Financial Regulation 68(1) states that *"Where a sub-head of expenditure covers a variety of services or projects, accounting officers shall keep appropriate departmental records to enable them to control the progress of each service or project and shall relate them to the money spent and the amounts due on the service or project."*

Methodology

1.20   The audit assessment was based on the review of available documents, analysis of available data, site visits to the Regional Offices of Diego Martin, Port of Spain, Sangre Grande, Rio Claro, Arima and Tunapuna, and interviews with key TCCTP and Ministry personnel.

Agency Comments

1.21   The Ministry's comments on the findings included in this Report are attached at Appendix I.

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[6] Made under Exchequer and Audit Act, Chapter 69:01

CHAPTER 2: POLICIES, GUIDELINES AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

Finding from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraph 2.06)

The "Review of Draft Policy Guidelines 2006/2007" outlined:

(i)   procedures governing the Debit Card system;

(ii)   terms of reference for entitlement to a Debit Card;

(iii) conditions for continued eligibility for or removal from the Programme, and

(iv) guidance on operational procedures, the selection process and the appeals process.

However, operational procedures for successful delivery were not defined and sufficient guidance material to support operational effectiveness was not developed.

Recommendation from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraph 2.07)

The Ministry should revisit its operational plans bearing in mind the objectives of the Debit Card system and develop comprehensive guidelines to facilitate the effective implementation of the Programme.

TCCTP drafted additional operational procedures to support the implementation of the Programme

2.1   TCCTP developed operational procedures for the processing of the debit card in a document dated January 2012 and titled "Interviewer Social Assessment and Social Investigation Manual for Family Case Workers/Liaison Officer under the RISE-UP Approach using the Family Intervention Network" (Interviewer's Manual). The Interviewer's Manual outlined a step-by-step approach for the interviewing of beneficiaries and the completion of the TCCTP Means Test Score (MTS) form.

2.2   In September 2016, TCCTP submitted to the Permanent Secretary a draft Framework for RISE-UP which was based on a situational analysis completed in February 2015. The draft Framework defined revised objectives and conditions for the Programme and outlined related performance indicators. It described the databases required to capture and manage client, service provider and training information. However, the draft Framework for RISE-UP did not define performance targets. The document was never approved.

2.3   In June 2017, the Regional Coordinator of the Diego Martin Regional Office provided a draft Family Case Worker Reference Manual and a draft TCCTP Manual. The draft Family Case Worker Reference Manual described the process of conducting motivational interviews with clients and encouraging positive communication. The draft TCCTP Manual outlined the list of documents required for application for the debit card and the steps to be followed by Liaison Officers for completing a client's assessment before submission to the Regional Coordinator.

2.4   Upon introduction of the TFC in 2011, TCCTP drafted the Temporary Food Card (TFC) Policy. TCCTP indicated that this document was not approved by the Ministry. TCCTP also stated that there were subsequent revisions with the last submission to the Ministry being made in June 2016.

Findings from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraphs 2.33 and 2.34)

The documented application process involves the use of an Approvals Committee. The intention is that this Committee should approve clients recommended by the Liaison Officers for receipt of the debit card. Four Regional Managers, three Human Development Officers and the National Training Coordinator were to form the proposed Committee.

This Committee did not exist at the time of the audit and the Regional Coordinators approved the debit card applications.

Recommendation from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraph 2.37)

The Ministry should revisit the approval process with a view to promoting transparency of decision-making by implementing a mechanism for reviewing decisions of the Regional Coordinators.

TCCTP did not implement the mechanism for approving debit card decisions

2.5   Regional Coordinators continued to approve the majority of debit card decisions. The TCCTP Policy Guidelines stipulated that Regional Managers would approve cases as presented by the Regional Coordinators and would be part of an Approvals Committee. The Permanent Secretary indicated that an Approvals Committee was not formed.

2.6   TCCTP utilized RISE-UP Case Report forms (previously STEP UP Case Report forms) which included relevant sections for the recommendation of Liaison Officers, approval by Regional Coordinators and comments by Regional Managers and a Review Panel. The National Director stated that there was no Case Review Panel which the Guidelines specified as the decision making body on applications which have been denied and appealed.

2.7   Audit reviewed 349 RISE-UP Case Reports for the period 2011 to 2016 at four Regional Offices. Of these, Regional Coordinators approved 203 recommendations for debit cards. Regional Managers only reviewed 69 or 34% of these approved cases. The Port of Spain Regional Manager failed to review any cases and the Diego Martin Regional Manager reviewed only 17% of cases (**Figure 4**). The lack of independent review of approval decisions could lead to instances of inappropriate decisions regarding debit card approval being undetected.

Figure 4: Cases Reviewed by Regional Managers

	Diego Martin	Port of Spain	Sangre Grande	Tunapuna
■ Total Approved Cases	30	43	63	67
■ Cases reviewed by Regional Managers	5	0	33	31
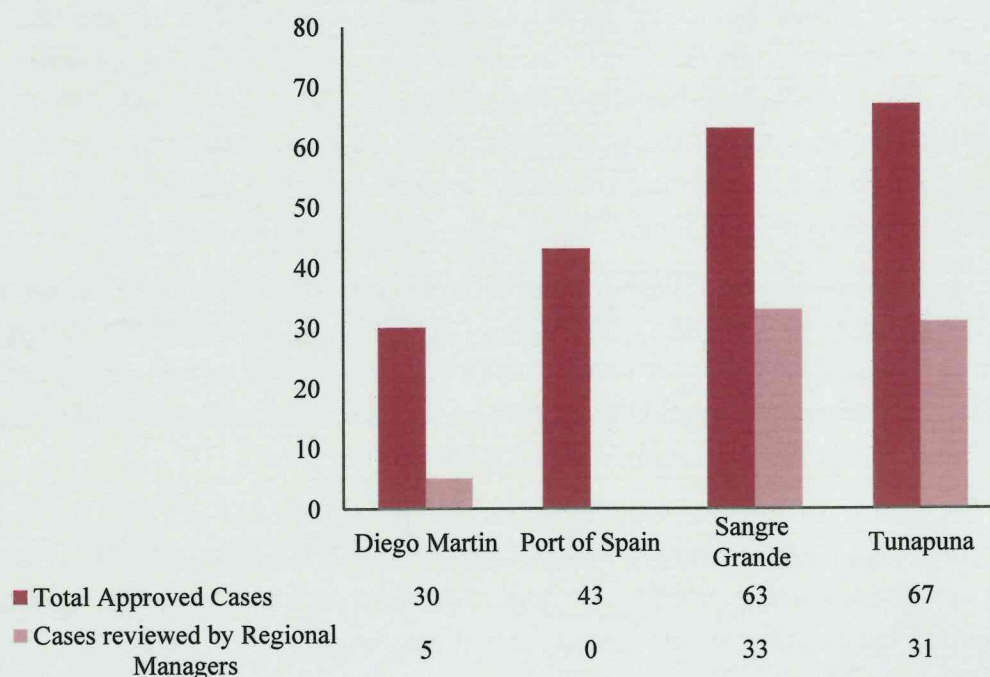
Source: Auditor General's analysis of approved cases sampled during site visits to Regional Offices

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Finding from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraph 2.35)

There was a lack of standardization with regard to certain operational procedures in the TCCTP application process across the Regional Offices examined.

Recommendations from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraph 2.38)

All officers should be trained in the use of the new standardized forms to ensure consistency of application.

TCCTP did not use standardized MTS forms consistently across Regional Offices

2.8   A Means Test Score (MTS) form is the application and assessment document that includes means test criteria to be used in all Regional Offices. The MTS is the decisive determinant of an applicant's entry into TCCTP. The means test involves the use of indicators relating to household assets and socio-economic variables to determine the eligibility of clients.

2.9   During the period 2011 to 2016, TCCTP updated its MTS form on five occasions with adjustments to scoring indices and inclusion of additional components under income and asset indices which allowed for greater equity in the assessment of client eligibility. However, there was no date on any of the MTS forms to show when the revised criteria became applicable.

2.10   The Ministry stated that in June 2012, TCCTP provided training to its staff in operational procedures by means of a staff sensitization session on the use of the Interviewer's Manual, administration of the means test, conduct of house visits and writing of case reports. In addition, the Regional Coordinators at all Regional Offices visited indicated that they, together with the Regional Managers, provided in-house and on-the-job training on operational procedures to new staff. Despite this, there was a lack of consistency in the use of the revised MTS forms.

2.11   Audit reviewed 516 MTS forms used for the period 2011 to 2016 across the four Regional Offices and found that while 82% of the MTS forms matched a revised form, different versions of the form were used at the same time. For example, applications made in the year 2015 at one Regional Office revealed that four versions were used in that year. Standard forms were not used in the remaining 18% of cases.

2.12   The use of different versions of MTS forms meant that at any one point in time, clients were being assessed using different scoring indices. Consequently, there was a risk of over or understatement of clients' Means Test Scores, which could have resulted in inappropriate and inequitable debit card approval decisions.

CHAPTER 3: – SERVICE DELIVERY

Findings from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraphs 2.27, 2.09 to 2.12 and 2.30)

The Ministry's efforts in establishing the Regional Offices were not guided by poverty density as noted in the "Trinidad and Tobago Survey of Living Conditions 2005, Final Report". For example, two regions with high poverty density (Siparia and Mayaro/Rio Claro) were not serviced by Regional Offices, while regions of relatively low poverty density such as Chaguanas, Couva and San Juan/Laventille were allocated Regional Offices. Only 10 of the requisite 15 Regional Offices were established. The following remained outstanding:

➢ Arima
➢ Diego Martin
➢ Mayaro/Rio Claro
➢ Siparia
➢ Tunapuna/Piarco.

The needs of deserving individuals in these regions were not met as they were required to travel to Regional Offices out of their area to access food support. This in turn, placed a higher than planned demand on certain existing Regional Offices resulting in longer wait times and weak administrative arrangements.

Office accommodation in certain Regional Offices was less than ideal. There were problems such as congestion due to lack of space and the absence of interview rooms to offer privacy for clients. This impeded the ability of TCCTP staff to optimise the delivery of a good service to the public and diminished the confidentiality of client information.

No emphasis was placed on regions with the highest levels of poverty in determining the level of staffing required at the Regional Offices. Regions where poverty density was higher were serviced invariably by the same level of staffing as regions with lower levels of poverty density.

Recommendation from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraphs 2.32, 2.13 and 2.31)

The Ministry should adopt a risk-based approach in the establishment of the five remaining Regional Offices by seeking to establish first, its offices in regions where the needs are greatest.

The Ministry should, with some urgency, pursue the setting up of the remaining five Regional Offices and in the interim could liaise with the Ministry of Community Development with the intention of using Community Centres in these districts to provide services on prearranged days.

The Ministry and TCCTP should immediately reassess the needs of the various regions based on the identified levels of poverty and restructure the organization taking into account the risks associated with not appropriately addressing the different levels of poverty.

The Ministry was not guided by up-to-date poverty statistics

3.1   A national survey of living conditions is a key source for measuring poverty and is vital for the development of policy and interventions aimed at combating poverty. The survey provides useful information for decision-makers to recognise how various sections of society are faring, so they can more effectively make plans for the future, evaluate the impact of policy changes and assess the state of the economy[7]. It is important that decisions are based on up-to-date information about population demographics.

3.2   Over the period 2014 to 2016, the Ministry spent approximately $6.4 million on the conduct and analysis of the 2014 survey of living conditions. Included in this expenditure were amounts totalling $992,308.50 that the Ministry paid to a private consultant to analyse the data. However, in July 2017 Cabinet rejected the consultant's report on the Survey of Living Conditions 2014 and referred the report and data to the Central Statistical Office of Trinidad and Tobago (CSO) for follow-up action with the consultant. In addition, Cabinet agreed that CSO be responsible for all future surveys of living conditions under the purview of the Ministry and commence the 2018 survey.

3.3   The most recent statistics of living conditions was published by the Ministry in the Trinidad and Tobago Survey of Living Conditions 2005, Final Report (SLC 2005). This means that TCCTP did not possess the up-to-date poverty statistics necessary for accurate targeting and appropriate resource allocation decisions.

New Regional Offices were established except for Siparia

3.4   The Ministry established four of the five remaining Regional Offices namely, Arima, Rio Claro, Tunapuna and Diego Martin. The Diego Martin Regional Office was not situated within the region but was housed in Port of Spain.

3.5   The Ministry did not give priority to the establishment of an office in Siparia despite the fact that according to the SLC 2005, the Siparia region had the third highest poverty density (27.7%) in the country and also the highest of the five regions. The Ministry indicated that it did not establish the Siparia Regional Office because of the unavailability of space at its office in Siparia. Families of the Siparia region who were seeking food support had to access the TCCTP through the Penal/Debe Regional Office.

3.6   The non-existence of TCCTP offices within the regions of Diego Martin and Siparia continued to place an additional burden on poor and vulnerable families who would have had to travel outside their respective regions to access TCCTP services.

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[7] www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforhouseholdsandindividuals/householdandindividualsurveys/surveyonlivingconditions

TCCTP's office accommodation continued to be less than ideal for optimal service delivery

3.7   The Diego Martin Regional Office shared premises and waiting area with the Port of Spain Regional Office. The waiting area was small in comparison with the number of clients visiting the offices. This resulted in clients having to wait in the corridor.

3.8   TCCTP continued to hold interviews in areas that were not private at the Diego Martin, Port of Spain and Sangre Grande Regional Offices. At these Regional Offices, interviews were conducted at Liaison Officers' desks which were located in areas which did not facilitate confidentiality of client information. At the Tunapuna Regional Office, there was an attempt to make the interview area private by partitioning the room, however the partition did not completely enclose the area resulting in discussions being audible to persons nearby.

TCCTP did not allocate staff to Regional Offices in proportion to poverty concentration levels

3.9   Audit observed that regions identified in the SLC 2005 as having poverty concentration levels of less than 20% were staffed with between five and seven officers, while poorer regions with poverty concentration levels of over 20% were allocated between two and six staff (**Figure 5**).

Figure 5: Density of Poor Per 100 Persons and Staff Assigned to Regions

	Density of Poor %	Staff December 2016
Sangre Grande	39.1	6
Princes Town	30.0	6
Siparia	27.7	0
Mayaro/Rio Claro	26.6	3
Point Fortin	24.6	2
Tobago	19.0	5
Port of Spain	18.0	5
Diego Martin	14.9	7
San Juan/Laventille	14.7	6
Penal/Debe	12.0	5
San Fernando	11.2	5
Couva/ Tabaquite/ Talparo	10.5	7
Tunapuna/Piarco	10.5	7
Chaguanas	8.9	5
Arima	4.5	5

Sources: 1. Trinidad and Tobago Survey of Living Conditions 2005, Final Report
2. Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, Human Resource Management Division

Findings from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraphs 2.14 to 2.19)

Since the inception of the Programme in August 2006, approximately 65.6% of posts remained vacant. As at July 2009, key posts such as Human Development Officer, Regional Manager and Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist were not filled. The Ministry's tardiness in filling these key posts directly affected TCCTP's ability to operate in terms of separation of duties, efficiency of operational activities and in particular the execution of the Development Component of this Programme which addressed the need for beneficiaries to become self-sufficient.

Inadequate staffing resulted in lengthy delays in verification and processing of applications, the inability to make random visits or to reach those unable to come to the Regional Offices. Audit review revealed that during the period February 2008 to March 2009 the average time for beneficiaries to receive the Debit Card at one Regional Office was 9.3 months. This delivery time was unacceptable given the needy circumstances of the applicants who were made to endure this long waiting period before obtaining food relief for their families.

Recommendation from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraph 2.25)

The Ministry should reassess the staffing requirements of TCCTP using a risk-based approach with a view to improving the service and shortening the delivery time for the issue of Debit Cards.

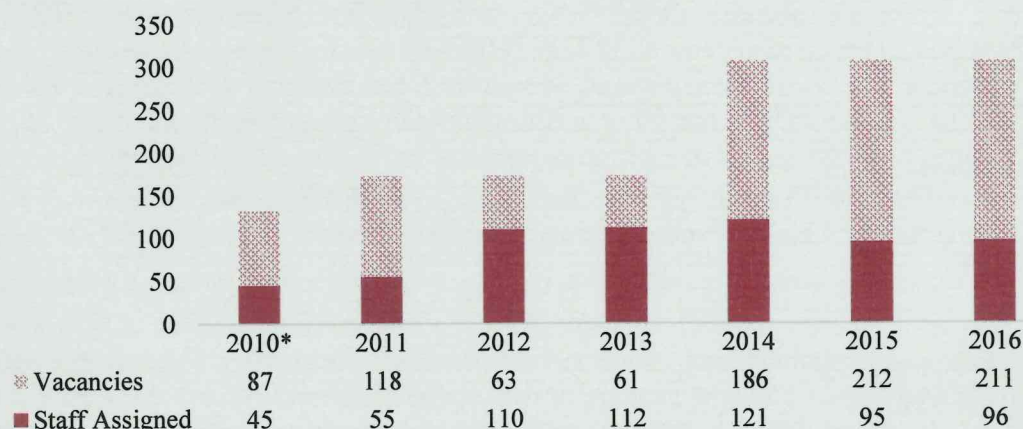## The Ministry did not fill vacancies necessary to ensure effective service delivery

3.10   In December 2010, the Ministry increased TCCTP contract positions from 132 to 173 by creating 41 new positions in order to support RISE-UP and to increase targeting of the indigent. The Ministry also succeeded in doubling the number of persons employed in 2012. However, 36% of positions remained vacant.

3.11   In October 2014, 135 additional positions were created to coordinate the efficient and effective delivery of the Rapid Access to Empowerment through Social Services (RATES) programme[8]. This brought the total number of positions to 307[9]. However, these positions were not filled. The Ministry revealed that the RATES strategy was not implemented as the requisite staff had not been recruited.

3.12   TCCTP indicated that requests were made to the Ministry to fill vacancies with the last request being made in June 2016. As at December 2016, 211 positions (68.7%) were vacant. **Figure 6** shows the actual numbers of staff and vacancies for 2010 to 2016.

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[8] RATES was an integrated social intervention strategy intended to target persons outside the social safety net with the aim of lifting them out of poverty.
[9] One position of Clerical Assistant was discontinued with effect from August 2014.

Figure 6: Staffing and Vacancies 2010 to 2016

	2010*	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Vacancies	87	118	63	61	186	212	211
Staff Assigned	45	55	110	112	121	95	96

Source: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, Human Resource Division
* Before increase in establishment in December 2010

3.13   The Ministry had varying degrees of success in filling key positions over the period 2011 to 2016. The Ministry filled all positions of Regional Manager however, the positions of Monitoring and Evaluation Programme Officer and Outreach Coordinator remained vacant while the positions of National Training Coordinator and Human Development Officer were filled for certain periods only (**Figure 7**).

Figure 7: Key Posts and Tenure

	Positions	Positions filled	Tenure
Monitoring and Evaluation Programme Officer	1	0	-
Outreach Coordinator	1	0	-
Regional Manager	4	4	02/08/11-31/07/14 04/08/14-31/07/17
National Training Coordinator	1	1	02/08/11-31/07/14
Human Development Officer	1	1	10/12/12-31/07/14 04/08/14-31/07/17
Human Development Officer	1	1	02/08/11-31/07/14
Human Development Officer	1	1	06/11/12-31/07/14

Source: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, Human Resource Division

The Ministry and TCCTP failed to reduce the lengthy time taken to provide debit cards

3.14   Neither the Ministry nor TCCTP set formal targets for the timely receipt of debit cards by beneficiaries. Audit review of files at sampled Regional Offices revealed that clients continued to endure lengthy delays (on average, between six and a half and twelve months) to receive food support (**Figure 8**). With respect to the TFC, a review of 37 applications revealed that 95% of beneficiaries received temporary cards on the same day of application.

Figure 8: Average time taken to deliver debit cards

	Average time to deliver debit cards (Months)
Sangre Grande	6.5
Port of Spain	12.1
Diego Martin	*
Tunapuna/Piarco	9.3

* Dates of receipt of debit cards were not presented
Source: AGD Analysis of debit card applications, Case Reports and Signature Sheets

CHAPTER 4: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONDITIONAL COMPONENT

Findings from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraphs 3.26 and 3.29)

At the end of the two-year period (2006 August to 2008 July) no one was eligible to graduate and exit the conditional life skills and employment training component of the Programme because the Ministry had not successfully implemented the proposed developmental activities. Also there was no evidence to indicate whether employable beneficiaries were registered with an employment agency and were actively seeking employment.

The Training Unit was staffed with only one person who was employed with effect from November 2007, some 16 months after the start of the Programme. There was no support staff in the Training Unit. The Ministry subsequently sought the appointment of three Human Development Officers as evidenced by the inclusion of these positions in the new organisation structure. At the time of the audit, these positions had not been filled.

Recommendation from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraph 3.32)

The Ministry should seek to have all the required personnel positions for the developmental component of the Programme filled in the shortest time possible. Care should be taken to engage the appropriate personnel who would drive the process to achieve the objectives.

TCCTP implemented developmental activities but failed to achieve targets for developing self-sufficiency

4.1   The conditional component of the Programme was intended to achieve the following predefined objectives by the end of the two year period of participation:

➤ engage 80% of beneficiary households in Personal Development and Employment Enhancement interventions;

➤ provide skills training to eligible individuals in 60% of beneficiary households; and

➤ successfully exit 60% of all households on the Programme within two years of their start date.

4.2   The Ministry failed to fill, on a consistent basis, vacancies in key positions which were critical to the successful implementation of the training component. This negatively affected TCCTP's ability to achieve the objectives of the conditional component. For instance, the position of National Training Coordinator was occupied only during the period August 2011 to July 2014 and only one position of Human Development Officer was occupied after July 2014.

4.3   TCCTP and the Ministry could not determine the extent to which developmental objectives were achieved as TCCTP failed to collate and analyse data consistently for beneficiaries and for participants in developmental activities. In addition, data was not comparable among the various documents produced.

Personal development and employment enhancement

4.4   The TCCTP Policy Guidelines state: "The National Training Coordinator must be involved in this aspect of the Programme. The department would work in collaboration with the other departments of the Ministry ... as well as other Ministries. A Memorandum of Understanding between government and participate [sic] Training Agencies will be signed".

4.5   A memorandum of understanding is used to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each party involved in an arrangement. Although TCCTP collaborated with a number of agencies to provide training, there were no formalised memoranda of understanding. TCCTP indicated that proposals to develop such were submitted to the Ministry in September 2016. The lack of formalised memoranda of understanding with training providers could result in beneficiaries being unable to obtain preferential access to appropriate training.

4.6   TCCTP provided records of beneficiaries registered for employment and training for October and November 2012 only. These records showed that:

> ➤ 333 persons were registered for employment and seven persons gained employment as a result of interventions made by the Regional Offices. Sangre Grande reported the highest number of successful interventions with four persons gaining employment; and
> ➤ 207 beneficiaries were registered for training with government agencies such as the Youth Training and Empowerment Partnership Programme (YTEPP), Multi-Sector Skills Training (MuST) and the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts. The majority of registrations occurred at the Sangre Grande and Tunapuna Regional Offices.

Skills training

4.7   In 2015, TCCTP conducted a situational analysis of RISE-UP and found that a total of 11,214 beneficiaries received training from 2012 to 2014, as shown in **Figure 9**. This was the period during which a National Training Coordinator and Human Development Officers were employed.

4.8   Training records presented to us were incomplete, as only records for the following periods were provided for audit:

> ➤ October and November 2012 - during which 212 beneficiaries were trained in Life Skills, Micro-Business and Financial Literacy, and
> ➤ 2014 - during which 292 beneficiaries were trained in the Growbox method of agriculture at a cost of $0.7 million.

In addition, TCCTP did not provide details of training expenditure for the years 2012 and 2013.

Figure 9: Training Activities 2012–2014

	Beneficiaries	Period
Growbox	4,500	October 2012-September 2014
Hydroponics	60	October 2013-September 2014
Life Skills Programme	6,654	2013-2014
Total	**11,214**	

Source: TCCTP Situational Analysis 2015

4.9   TCCTP identified 23 potential areas for Skills Training on a Training Interest Form. Audit review of 404 client files revealed 31 Training Interest Forms on which clients expressed preference for training in the areas of bread/cakes/baking, hairdressing, food preparation, Growbox, financial literacy and life skills. TCCTP provided training in three of the six preferred areas, namely Growbox, financial literacy and life skills.

4.10   During the two year period October 2012 to September 2014, TCCTP provided skills training to approximately 23% of beneficiary households, falling short of its target of 60% (**Figure 10**).

Figure 10: Beneficiaries trained during fiscal 2013 and 2014

Estimated Number of Beneficiaries*	48,661
Beneficiaries Trained	11,214
Percentage of Beneficiaries Trained	23% (11,214/48,661)

Sources: 1. TCCTP Statistical Report 2010 – 2014
            2. TCCTP Situational Analysis 2015
* Assumption: The number of beneficiaries remained constant over the period.

Exit from the Programme

4.11   The TCCTP Situational Analysis of RISE-UP 2015 showed that *"there was no structured and coordinated exit strategy to remove persons from the programme...There was no way to determine if an increased Means Test score is due to TCCTP's intervention on the lives of clients"*. Audit review of 340 applicant files sampled for the period 2011 to 2016 revealed that 190 or 56% of clients qualified for debit cards. Of these, 104 or 55% remained on the Programme for more than two years. Audit was unable to determine whether the exit of 45% of beneficiaries resulted from TCCTP's developmental intervention.

4.12   The TCCTP Statistical Report 2010-2014 revealed that 7,230 beneficiaries graduated off (successfully exited) the Programme during the period 2010 to 2014 with 16.7 % or 1,208 graduates empowered to become entrepreneurs. This did not meet the target for the successful exit of 60% of all households on the Programme within two years of their start

date. TCCTP successfully exited an estimated 7.4% of its beneficiaries from the Programme (**Figure 11**). The estimate was based on the following assumptions:

> ➤ there were two 2-year cycles within the period 2010-2014;
> ➤ the number of beneficiaries successfully graduated at the same rate in each cycle; and
> ➤ the number of beneficiaries on the Programme remained the same for each two-year cycle.

Figure 11: Graduates 2010-2014

Beneficiaries Graduated 2010-2014	7,230 or an average of 3,615 per two year cycle
TCCTP Beneficiaries as at April 2014	48,661
Percentage of Beneficiaries Graduated per Two Year Cycle	7.4% (3,615/48,661)

Sources: 1. TCCTP Statistical Report 2010 – 2014
             2. TCCTP Situational Analysis 2015

CHAPTER 5: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Findings from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraphs 2.39 to 2.52)

The Ministry failed to deliver an IT system that met the information needs of TCCTP. The Ministry attempted to develop a database software programme for the management and control of information for TCCTP clients and operational processes. However, there was no networking within or among Regional Offices and the database programme was housed on a series of standalone computers at certain Regional Offices.

The IT arrangements established by the Ministry did not address specific risks to the Programme such as duplication and other irregularities. A review of clients transferred from the SHARE programme revealed 639 instances of duplicate records. Assuming 40% of the duplications were not legitimate, the loss would amount to approximately $102,240 per month using an average benefit of $400 per person. This amounts to some $2,453,760 over the two-year period.

Recommendation from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraph 2.53)

Considering the possibility of large financial losses, the Ministry should immediately consider and decide on a mechanism for fast-tracking the introduction of an appropriate database and the networking of the computers in a secure manner.

The Ministry failed to deliver an IT system that met the needs of TCCTP

5.1   According to the TCCTP Policy Guidelines *"An integrated information system must be developed and maintained...A Local Area Network within the TCCT Programme in the short term, a Wide Area Network within the Ministry of Social Development social services delivery offices in the medium term and within the wider social sector including all participating Agencies, in the long term."*

5.2   The Ministry did not develop a networked system for management of TCCTP client data. TCCTP continued to use Microsoft Excel at 12 Regional Offices and Microsoft Access at two Regional Offices to record and manage debit card client information. Such software do not support the interconnectivity within and among Regional Offices required to provide information for decision-making and to avoid duplication. TCCTP indicated that it attempted to standardise the debit card database in 2014/2015 however, these efforts were put on hold as a result of the Biometric Card Project which formed part of the introduction of an enterprise-wide solution.

5.3   The Ministry outlined plans on a number of occasions for an integrated social services management system (**Figure 12**). These plans were not realised except for the Smart Card aspect which was subsequently discontinued.

Figure 12: Cabinet Decisions relating to Implementation of an Integrated Solution

February 2008
Implement an Integrated Social Enterprise Management System (ISEMS). Objectives include support of a Smart Card[10] system, provision of a unified case management system, and automation and integration of business processes.

December 2010
Introduce an integrated multiple application grant card with biometric features to cater to the needs of each client of the Ministry, reduce fraud and to enable the delivery of a number of government services including the TCCTP cash transfer.

2014
Rebrand ISEMS Electronic - People's Access to Social Services (E-PASS).

July 2015
Fund implementation of Phases I and II of E-PASS in fiscal years 2015/2016 and 2016/2017.

The Ministry implemented then halted the use of the Biometric Smart Card System

5.4   In September 2013, the Ministry entered into an agreement with a consortium of firms for the supply, delivery, implementation, operation and maintenance of an Integrated Multi-Application Biometric Smart Card System. Government spent approximately $77.6 million over the period 2013 to 2016 for the supply, delivery, implementation, operation, and maintenance of the Biometric Smart Card System for the Ministry. The Biometric Smart Card System implementation process comprised two main phases:

  ➢ The enrolment of client's biometric data, and
  ➢ The personalisation and issuance of a Smart Card to each client.

5.5   Biometric enrolment entailed enhanced identity verification and identity fraud reduction capabilities through the capture of biometric data such as fingerprints and photographs. The Ministry commenced biometric enrolment of its clients in July 2014 and launched the Biometric Smart Card in August 2015. However in June 2016, the Ministry placed a hold on payment via the Biometric Smart Card and the 3,158 cardholders then received food support via cheque payments instead.

5.6   The Ministry indicated that by November 2016, it had enrolled biometrically 72,973 of its clients as follows:

  ➢ Food Card recipients – 33,924
  ➢ Senior Citizens Pensioners – 19,138
  ➢ Public Assistance recipients – 12,151
  ➢ Disability Assistance Grant recipients – 7,760.

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[10] The Smart Card refers to a chip enabled card with biometric capability which facilitates financial and non-financial transactions.

5.7   Audit review of the biometric records provided by the Ministry for 33,892 TCCTP clients as at October 2016 revealed no instances of duplication. However, the Ministry indicated that it ceased biometric enrolment of clients from December 2016. Subsequent to the audit, one of the service providers obtained a judgement for $26.9 million plus interest and costs, bringing the total cost of the discontinued system to over $104.5 million.

5.8   Ten years after Cabinet's approval of the project, ISEMS has not been realised. In the absence of an integrated data management system and the necessary interface with systems such as the Death Registry[11], the risk of financial losses due to duplication, overpayments and other irregularities continues. For instance, Audit comparison of biometric data with records from the Death Registry for the period 1st October, 2014 to 31st September, 2016 revealed 389 cases of deceased persons being shown as 'active' on the biometric database. Of these, payments were being made in 270 cases resulting in an accumulated overpayment of $1,050,180.00.

5.9   The Ministry indicated it was pursuing the ISEMS project with the assistance of iGovTT[12].

Temporary Food Card

5.10   With respect to TFC, a network-accessible database was developed by TCCTP's Database Administrator. Subsequently in November 2016, the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Division of the Ministry created a new networked TFC application[13]. The National Director indicated that consultations were held between the ICT Division and TCCTP over the three month period, July to September 2016, to gather new system user requirements with a view to minimise end-user deficiencies. Prior to the roll-out, the ICT Division conducted a demonstration of the new system to Regional Coordinators or their subordinates.

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[11] Maintained by Registrar General's Department of the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs
[12] The National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited (NICTCL,) also known as iGovTT, which "acts as the implementation arm in the execution and administration of Government's enterprise-wide ICT strategies and programmes" under the purview of the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications (http://igovtt.tt/company-profile/)
[13] Not linked to the TCCTP system.

CHAPTER 6: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Findings from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraphs 4.01 to 4.06)

Guidelines for monitoring and evaluation were developed however the necessary activities were not sufficiently implemented in the management of the Programme. For the first three (3) years, responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation function was not specifically assigned and the necessary human resources were not engaged.

Reports submitted by the Regional Offices did not contain all the data specified by the Policy Guidelines. There was no evidence that the data submitted was used to evaluate the performance of the Regional Offices.

The following Policy Guidelines were not followed:

(i) Designing and operationalizing a 'results-based' monitoring and evaluation system to facilitate tracking of the Programme with emphasis on outcomes and impacts;

(ii) Monitor participants of the Programme on a scheduled basis according to standard indicators for successful exit from the Programme;

(iii)Implementing an automated IT based monitoring and evaluation system for the overall monitoring of all components and management levels of the Programme, and

(iv) The submission to Cabinet of a comprehensive annual report on the Programme including achievements of specific targets.

Recommendations from 2010 Special Audit Report (paragraphs 4.07 to 4.08)

The Ministry should fill the position of Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist and that measurable indicators of success be developed. The Ministry must endeavour to supply TCCTP with staff who have the requisite skills to perform this function to ensure the proper management of the Programme.

The Ministry should enforce the monitoring and evaluation requirements of the Guidelines and hold TCCTP accountable for its functioning.

The Ministry failed to implement monitoring and evaluation activities

6.1 The Ministry has not filled the position of Monitoring and Evaluation Programme Officer and TCCTP did not make significant progress in implementing the monitoring and evaluation requirements as outlined in the TCCTP Policy Guidelines (Figure 13). The Ministry has not developed and implemented a system to measure, assess, and report on the impact and outcome of the Programme. Performance indicators listed in the Ministry's Strategic Plan 2011-2016 were also not well defined. An attempt to specify suitable indicators was noted in the draft TCCTP Framework for RISE-UP, however targets were not identified. In addition, an enterprise-wide IT solution which is a key enabler of monitoring and evaluation was not realised (Chapter 5).

Figure 13: TCCTP Monitoring and Evaluation Requirements

Requirements	Status
Design and operationalize a results based monitoring and evaluation system to facilitate tracking of the Programme with emphasis on outcomes and impacts.	Not implemented
Monitor participants of the Programme on a scheduled basis according to standard indicators for successful exit from the Programme.	Not implemented
Implement an automated IT based monitoring and evaluation system for the overall monitoring of all components and management levels of the Programme.	Not implemented
Submit a comprehensive annual report on the Programme, including achievements of specific targets, to Cabinet.	Partially achieved In February 2014, the Ministry submitted to Cabinet, an Achievement Report and Overview of the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP) for fiscal 2013.
Regional Offices submit monthly reports to Head Office. Prepare quarterly reports for submission to the Permanent Secretary.	Partially achieved TCCTP indicated that Regional Offices submit monthly statistical reports. However, documentary evidence was not provided.

Sources: TCCTP Policy Guidelines
          Achievement Report and Overview of TCCTP 2013

CONCLUSION

7.1   The Ministry and TCCTP attempted to address some of the concerns raised in the 2010 'Special Report by the Auditor General of Trinidad and Tobago on the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP) – Self Sufficiency or Dependency?' however, corrective measures were not fully or satisfactorily implemented. For example, operational procedures were drafted but not approved, MTS forms were standardized but not consistently used and outstanding Regional Offices were established but not for the poorest region. Vacancies were sporadically filled and data necessary for decision-making, monitoring and evaluation was not consistently collated. In addition, a Biometric Smart Card system which effectively addressed the issue of duplication was implemented but later halted. These weaknesses continued to allow for inaccurate debit card decisions, lengthy delays for receipt of food support, leakage of funds due to duplication and prolonged dependency on food support.

3RD SEPTEMBER, 2018
PORT OF SPAIN

MAJEED ALI
AUDITOR GENERAL

APPENDIX I – AGENCY COMMENTS

By letter dated 19th July, 2018, a draft Special Report of the Auditor General on a Follow-Up Audit of the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP) was forwarded to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services for information and comments.

The following was received from the Ministry by electronic mail on 30th August, 2018:

"MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES

Audit of the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP)

Comments

The Ministry notes that the Audit covered the period 2010-2016. The Ministry notes the findings and recommendations contained in the Report.

With the delivery of the Biometric system in 2014, the then Ministry of the People and Social Development commenced a recertification exercise. The primary aim of this exercise was proof of life of close to 50,000 beneficiaries on food support. During the first wave of enrolment over 4000 persons were removed from the system. Many of these persons were holding cards belonging to others who may have migrated or died. After a comprehensive approach targeting the TCCTP database only 33,026 persons came forward with 29,026 enrolling into the new system as of March 2016. Efforts to contact these persons included telephone calls and visits to their place of residence by officers of the Ministry. This was complemented by advertisement in the print media and appearances on the electronic media by officers of the Ministry.

The status of many of these persons in relation to the programme was unknown. The Ministry took a decision to make one final effort to get to and encourage these persons to come forward. This included advertisement in the print and electronic media and appearances by officials of the Ministry on television and radio. For those persons who did not come forward, a hold was placed on their cards effective May 2016. Notwithstanding, these persons were given a further three months, up to **July 31, 2016,** to be recertified and enrolled once they continue to qualify for food support. Notwithstanding the many efforts by the Ministry, several persons did not respond, resulting in over 13, 000 persons being removed from the programme.

It is to be noted that during the negotiation of contract terms, it was anticipated that the financial platform of the biometric system once operational, would be processing the payment of 175,000 beneficiaries of the Ministry and eventually, an indefinite amount of payments, including other Government services. However, the financial platform was only paying out approximately $1,528,430 per month to the 3,158 beneficiaries of the Food Support programme who were transitioned to the biometric card. The expenditure associated with monthly financial platform and banking services for this to be effected was $2,478,220.10. In this regard, a decision was taken to put a hold on the system with effect June 30, 2016.

As part of the overall restructuring of the Ministry to bring about greater efficiency and effectiveness, food support was incorporated into the Social Welfare Division with effect August 1st, 2017. To support the administration of food support, the following measures were put in place:

- The Social Welfare Division was provided with additional staff inclusive of field officers and clerical support. This is being analysed to ensure adequacy and relevant competency of the division's human resource requirements.

- A standard operating procedure was developed and is being used to guide implementation;

- A standardized means test was approved by Cabinet in February 2018 and is being utilized for greater targeting effectiveness.

Additional measures to support grants administration are as follows:

- An Operational Policy Framework for the Temporary Food Card was developed and is expected to be submitted for the approval of the Cabinet.

- The Ministry commenced the procurement of the Integrated Social Enterprise Management System;

- The Ministry commenced and is finalizing the upgrade of the old debit card system with the First Citizen Bank;

The Social Transformation and Empowerment Programme-Uplifting People (STEP-UP), the developmental component is being revised and will be implemented with effect January 2019."