INTRODUCTION

The long-anticipated Children’s Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (the Authority) became operational with the May 18th, 2015 landmark proclamation of several pieces of legislation from the package of children’s legislation including the Children’s Authority Act, Chap 46:10 (the Act), the Children’s Community Residences, Foster Care and Nurseries Act Chap 46:11, the Children Act, 2012 and the Adoption of Children Act, 2000.

This package of children’s legislation positioned the Authority at the heart of a new and progressive child protection system, specifically mandating it to promote the well-being of all children in Trinidad and Tobago, provide care and protection for vulnerable children and comply with certain obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

This Bulletin, *Nine Months and Counting*... shows the Authority at work, rolling out its range of services to children and their families and already making an impact on the lives of many. The record number of cases registered within its first nine months, not only confirms that child protection is a serious issue, but also signals the confidence that the public has placed in this newly established agency. The growing expectation of the public to address this scourge of child abuse makes it imperative that the Authority must be among the State’s top priorities and fully supported to discharge its functions effectively.

The statistics presented in this Bulletin are reports of cases received by the Authority over the period May 18th 2015 to February 17th 2016. While the data represent only nine months of operations and should not be used to make inferences or conclusions as a longer series would be required to do so, the preliminary numbers are instructive and confirm that child abuse is acute. During this period, the Authority received close to 14,000 calls and reports of which 4,158 were valid cases to be investigated.
The highest number of cases of children in need of care and protection was recorded in August 2015 and January 2016 as illustrated in Figure 1 below, despite calls by the Authority for parents, caregivers and the general public to be vigilant as the incidence of child abuse appeared to be higher during school holidays.

![Figure 1: Number of Cases per Month](image)

Figure 1: Number of Cases per Month
During the period May 18th 2015 to February 17th 2016, more than half of the clients brought to the attention of the Authority were female (58%) while 41% of all clients reported to the Authority were male, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: Sex of Clients**
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF CLIENTS

Whilst pre-pubescent and adolescent children comprised the majority of clients brought to the attention of the Authority, it is significant to note that just over a quarter of all cases involved children under six. Of concern were 528 cases of children under three years of age being brought to the Authority’s attention. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Age Groups of Clients
Figure 4 highlights the geographic location of reports of cases of children in need of care and protection brought to the attention of the Authority during the period May 18th 2015 to February 17th 2016.

Figure 4: Reports of Cases by Administrative District

*The location of 2.6 percent of cases was not identified by reporters.
Whilst reports of cases of children in need of care and protection were received from all parts of the country, the administrative districts of San Juan/Laventille (598 cases, 14.4%) Tunapuna/Piarco (534 cases, 12.8%) Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo (407 cases, 9.8%) and Diego Martin (359 cases, 8.6%) recorded the highest number of reports than any other administrative district in Trinidad and Tobago over the period under review. These administrative districts have consistently recorded the highest number of reports over the last nine months.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative District with Highest Number of Cases</th>
<th>Number of Cases</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>San Juan/Laventille</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunapuna/Piarco</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diego Martin</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to sexual abuse, again the largest number of reports were recorded from San-Juan/Laventille (195) followed by Tunapuna/Piarco (145) and Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo (108). A similar picture emerged for physical abuse San-Juan/Laventille (126) followed by Tunapuna/Piarco (124) and Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo (78).
During the period May 18th 2015 to February 17th 2016, the highest reported types of abuse were reports of cases of sexual abuse, neglect, physical abuse and children lacking care and guardianship. More than one fifth (22.44%) of all reports made to the Authority during this period were allegations of sexual abuse against children. Reports of neglect followed closely and accounted for 21.75% of all reported cases, while physical abuse cases comprised 15.54% of all reports and cases of children lacking care and guardianship were 13.50% of all reports. This is highlighted in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Categories of Care and Protection
The highest reported categories of children in need of care and protection were further disaggregated along classifications of gender (see Figure 6 following).

Amongst the four highest reported categories of care and protection, sexual abuse was the only one in which there was a large disparity in the gender classification of the clients. Of all reports received of sexual abuse against children, the majority (86.8%) involved female children while 13.2% involved male children. Male and female children subjected to neglect, physical abuse, and lacking care and guardianship however were comparable.
Mothers were identified by reporters as the person responsible for abuse in 34.5% of all reported cases. Over the past months, mothers have consistently been identified by reporters as the most common perpetrator of abuse against children. This trend is consistent with other Caribbean territories. Fathers were identified by reporters as the person responsible for abuse in 17.1% of all cases brought to the attention of the Authority. With respect to sexual abuse, 45% of all perpetrators were known to the children. Mothers accounted for 5% of all cases, while 22% of all alleged perpetrators were fathers or step-fathers.
KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FOR FIRST NINE MONTHS

- Responded to 13,984 calls
- Provided direct support to approximately 200 children and their families
- Completed 674 investigations
- Conducted medical assessments for 71 children from community residences
- Performed 150 forensic medical examinations and 73 medical screening examinations for admission into care
- Completed 213 full multi-disciplinary assessments
- Responded to 300 emergencies and placed children in alternative care environments including children’s homes, foster care and with fit persons.