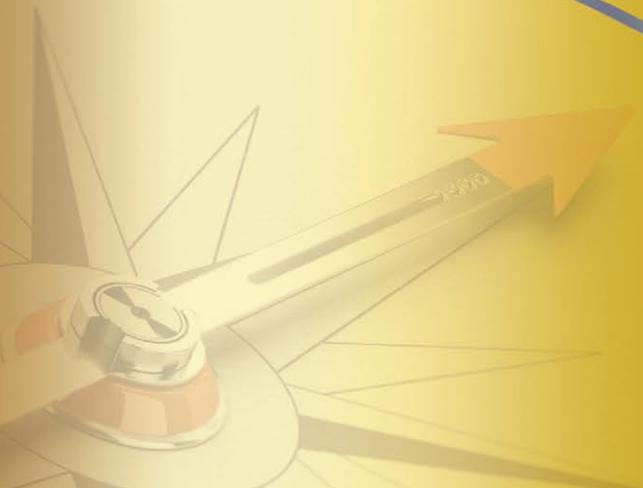




Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

Annual Report 2015

The year of re-visioning and re-mapping





The Equal Opportunity Commission
submits its
seventh Annual Report on its activities
for the year ended December, 2015.

This report is prepared in compliance with
Section 53 and 54 of the Equal Opportunity Act
which states:

Section 53

“The Commission shall within three months
after the end of each calendar year
submit to the Minister
a report of its operations during that year.”

Section 54

“The Minister shall cause the report of the
Commission to be laid before Parliament.”

Table of Contents

Annual Reporting	4
Abbreviations	4
Chairman's Statement	5
Chief Executive Officer's Remarks	6-7
About the Equal Opportunity Commission	8-11
Vision and Mission	8
Core Values	9
Structure of the Commission	9
Strategic Objectives	10-11
Reports	12-47
Report on Complaints Received by the Commission	12-25
Complaints Received and Investigated	13-22
Complaints Referred to Conciliation	22-23
Summary Prosecutions for Non-Compliance	24
Reports on Matters Published for Public Inspection	24-25
Report from the Conciliation Unit	26
Report from the Research Unit	27-29
Research Agenda	27
Research Limitations of 2015	29
Research Agenda for Fiscal 2016	29
Report from the Communications Unit	30-34
Functions of the Communications Unit	30-31
Public Education	32-34
Report from the Administration Unit	35-36
Financial Expenditure	36
Report from the Human Resources Unit	37-44
Functions of the Human Resource Unit	37
Staffing at the Commission in 2015	37
Recruitment and Selection	37-38
Staff of the Human Resource Unit	38
Organisational Structure	39
Training and Development	40-43
Strategic Human Resource Management	44
Developing and Implementing Policies and Procedures at the EOC	44
Performance Management	44
Human Resource Committee	44
Report from the Information Technology Unit	45-47
Overview	45
ITU Project Achievements for 2015	45-47
Outstanding Projects, challenges and direction for 2016	47
Review of the Equal Opportunity Act	48-51
Preparation and Publication of Guidelines	52
Submission of Report	52
Staff Social Events Committee	53-55
Profile of Commissioners	56-60

Annual Reporting

Abbreviations

Equal Opportunity Act – EOA, the Act
Equal Opportunity Commission – EOC, the Commission
Equal Opportunity Tribunal – EOT, the Tribunal
Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago – GoRTT
Human Rights – HR
Public Management Consulting Division -PMCD
Information Technology Unit- ITU

Chairman's Statement

The highlight of fiscal year 2015/ 2016 for the EOC was the conduct of our strategic planning exercise to take the work of the Commission down to the year 2018. We felt a 3-year plan would provide continuity after the end of the term of the current board in 2017.

We utilised the services of an experienced facilitator in Dawn Richards Consulting and availed ourselves of the usual tools such as hammering out a Vision and Mission, SWOT and PEST analyses, etc

Three main strategic objectives were identified as follows:

1. To work towards the elimination of discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago, in keeping with our statutory mandate set out in the Equal Opportunity Act.
2. To become an autonomous institution.
3. To maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission.

Each department was tasked with fleshing out Work Plans per their respective roles in the organisation. This was a long overdue exercise for an organisation which became operational since 2008, 8 years ago.

The EOC regards its statutory duty to work towards the elimination of discrimination very seriously. To this end, we held several major seminars including

A conference at the Hyatt with more than 100 in attendance with the theme Human Rights and Disability - Implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The resultant report and recommendations have since been forwarded to various stakeholder's principal among them being the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and the Ministry of the Attorney General.

In terms of strengthening the technical capacity of the EOC viz-a-viz it's core function of receiving and conciliating complaints of discrimination, we embarked on the strenuous exercise of creating a Workflow for the Legal Department identifying each step in the process and providing timelines.

Trinidad and Tobago reported to the UN Committee on Discrimination against Women at its Geneva meeting in July 2016 for the first time in 8 years. The EOC took the initiative in



December 2015 along with the Network of NGO's for the Advancement of Women to commemorate this event by hosting a press briefing at the Network's offices to highlight the provisions of the UN Women's Convention (CEDAW) and the responsibilities of states parties such as Trinidad and Tobago to implement and report.

Several important networking activities were also undertaken such as courtesy calls on the President of the Republic, the President of the Senate, the Attorney General and the Mayor of Chaguanas.

We also played host to such dignitaries as her Honour Kerry-Ann Ifill, President of the Senate in Barbados, herself a visually impaired person, and Judge Helen Whitener from the USA who is a renowned campaigner for the rights of the LGBT community.

On behalf of the Commissioners of the EOC and on my own behalf, I wish to thank the staff and service providers of the EOC for their sterling work over the reporting period, and as well thanks are extended to the Ministry of the Attorney General for all their support over the year.

Lynette Seebaran-Suite
Lynette Seebaran-Suite
Chairman
Equal Opportunity Commission

Chief Executive Officer's Remarks



We began the year 2015 with a re-visioning retreat, on the theme 'Re-mapping our EOC Culture'. This retreat was held in the month of January and was immediately followed by strategic planning exercises and activities. The Commissioners and all members of Staff participated and contributed to the re-visioning exercise which paved the way for the development and implementation of a Strategic Plan for the period 2015-2018. The Re-visioning Retreat provided the Commissioners and Staff with the forum to dedicate themselves to moving the EOC to higher levels of performance and to adopt the concept 'change begins with me'. Several brainstorming sessions were held, alongside intense research exercises, to develop the strategic plan. The plan included the revision of our vision and mission statements, re-stated core values and setting specific goals and objectives to guide the work of the EOC over the next three (3) years. We identified three (3) main goals in the strategic plan and these are:

1. **Strategic Goal 1** - *To work towards the elimination of discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago, in keeping with our statutory mandate as set out in the Equal Opportunity Act Chapter 22:03.*
2. **Strategic Goal 2** - *To become an autonomous institution.*
3. **Strategic Goal 3** - *To maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission.*

Each functional unit was tasked with fleshing out their unit's roles and responsibilities in a work plan to bring to fruition the above three (3) goals over three (3) years from October 2015 to September 2018. The work plans were completed by the Management Team in June and approved by the Commissioners shortly thereafter.

The Strategic Plan which is supported by the work plans for each unit was launched in September and took effect in October. It provides us with a roadmap to accomplish our mandate and improve our services while focusing all of our efforts as a team, working together, in the same direction, over the next three (3) years.

A Committee was formed in January to review the workflow of the Legal Unit and this was completed by August and rolled out to the Legal Unit. The revision of the Legal Unit's workflow provided an opportunity to review how we receive and investigate complaints of discrimination. This exercise helped us to better understand some of the challenges faced by the Legal and Investigating Officers while identifying realistic standards for service delivery and to measure our performance going forward. It was agreed that the revised legal workflow was to be monitored and reviewed by the end of the year to iron out any issues that arose after its implementation.

Chief Executive Officer's Remarks (continued)

At the beginning of the year, we welcomed three (3) new members of staff who filled the positions of Conciliator/Mediator, Senior Legal Officer and Manager – Information and Communications Technology on contract. Filling these vacancies was instrumental in making the year a success and strengthening the management team on the whole.

Amidst the strategic planning activities, the Human Resource Unit and Management Team successfully completed the implementation of a revised performance management appraisal system. The Human Resource Unit was also tasked with completing the second phase of the Six Year Contract Employment Plan which dealt with the creation of new contract positions. This was completed and submitted to Public Management Consulting Division (PMCD) in June, however, additional information was required and revisions were made by PMCD and their comments were not finalised until September. Following the receipt of the final comments from PMCD in September we were not able to secure Cabinet's approval before the general elections.

After the general elections in September, the Government changed and several Ministries were merged. The Ministry of the Attorney General was merged with the Ministry of Legal Affairs and a human resource rationalisation exercise began which lasted until the end of 2015. All of our recruitment exercises which were in progress to fill the vacancies at the EOC were halted, until the completion of the rationalisation exercise. This left the Commission understaffed for several months and existing staff were asked to assist where possible.

Despite being understaffed, in an effort to respond to requests from other parts of Trinidad, we extended our monthly outreach services to three (3) additional areas in 2015, which were Port of Spain, Point Fortin and Rio Claro. This was in addition to ongoing monthly outreach services in Sangre Grande, San Fernando and Tobago.

Once again, we struggled in 2015 with limited allocations of funds and securing releases of those allocations in a timely manner, to operate the EOC. With the limited funds that were allocated and even further challenged by the way in which the funds were released, several activities were downsized and in some cases cancelled altogether. But nevertheless, we managed to successfully hold and/or participate in several public education and advocacy events which are listed on pages 32 and 34 in the report from the Corporate Communications Unit.

All in all, the year 2015 was successful for the EOC and we closed the year proud of our main accomplishment which was the completion and implementation of our Strategic Plan 2015-2018. The challenges which we continue to face in terms of staffing and finances have significantly impacted our scope, but we remained focused on our mandate as we work towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity through advocacy, public education, research and conciliation of complaints.



Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen
Chief Executive Officer

About the Equal Opportunity Commission

The EOC's mandate is to promote and advocate for mutual respect between groups based on understanding and appreciation of diversity and on shared respect for equality and human rights.

Vision

A society which is free from discrimination and prejudice, where human rights and diversity are respected, and where there is equality of opportunity for all.

Mission

The Equal Opportunity Commission works towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity through advocacy, public education, research and the conciliation of complaints.

The functions of the Commission are set out in section 27 (1) of the Act and are:

- to work towards the elimination of discrimination
- to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status
- to keep under review, the working of the Act and any relevant law and when so required by the Minister, or where necessary draw up and submit to the Minister proposals for amending them
- to receive, investigate and as far as possible, conciliate allegations of discrimination
- to develop, conduct and foster research and education programmes and other programmes for the purpose of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status
- to prepare and publish appropriate guidelines for the avoidance of discrimination
- to do any other thing conducive or incidental to the carrying out of its functions.

About the **Equal Opportunity Commission** (continued)

Core Values

- **Passion** – we are committed to what we do, knowing that it makes a difference to the lives of many, and when it is done right, we can make Trinidad and Tobago a better place for everyone.
- **Fairness, justice and equality** – we adhere at all times to due process, and are impartial in our procedures.
- **Customer-centricity** – we are sensitive to the needs of our stakeholders as we continuously strive to create a positive client experience.
- **Empathy** – we seek to understand people’s situations from their perspective and we are focused on exercising compassion.
- **Respect for diversity** – we promote respect for people’s differences.
- **Timeliness** – we deliver our services promptly, in keeping with our commitments and protocols, and we address situations with a sense of urgency. We are an on-time and pro-active organisation.
- **Loyalty** – we strongly support, and are committed to the EOC and its mission.
- **Integrity** – we operate with honesty, uprightness and honour.
- **Autonomy** – we operate independently, in accordance with the law and we are free from unnecessary external influence.
- **Team cohesiveness** – we strive to communicate effectively, work together efficiently and we focus on the EOC’s mission and activities that unite us.
- **Best practice** – we consistently adopt methods and technologies to achieve superior results, and we keep our practices under continuous review.
- **People development** - we continuously update and improve our knowledge and skills so that we develop the EOC’s human capital.
- **Recognition and reward** – we acknowledge the work and efforts of our team and reward them.

Structure of the Commission

The Commission has five Commissioners including a chairman and a vice- chairman. The Commissioners for the term 2014-2017 are as follows:

- Mrs. Lynette Seebaran-Suite – Chairman
- Dr. Beverly Ann-Marie Beckles – Vice Chairman
- Dr. Indira Rampersad – Commissioner
- Mr. James Chin Chuck - Commissioner
- Mr. Eric Colin Cowie - Commissioner

The Commission is also divided into six **(6)** units and each report to the CEO. These are as follows:

- Legal Unit
- Communications Unit
- Administration Unit
- Information Technology Unit
- Conciliation Unit and
- Research Unit

The CEO is responsible for planning, organising, coordinating activities and resources for all the operational functions of the Commission.

About the **Equal Opportunity Commission** (continued)

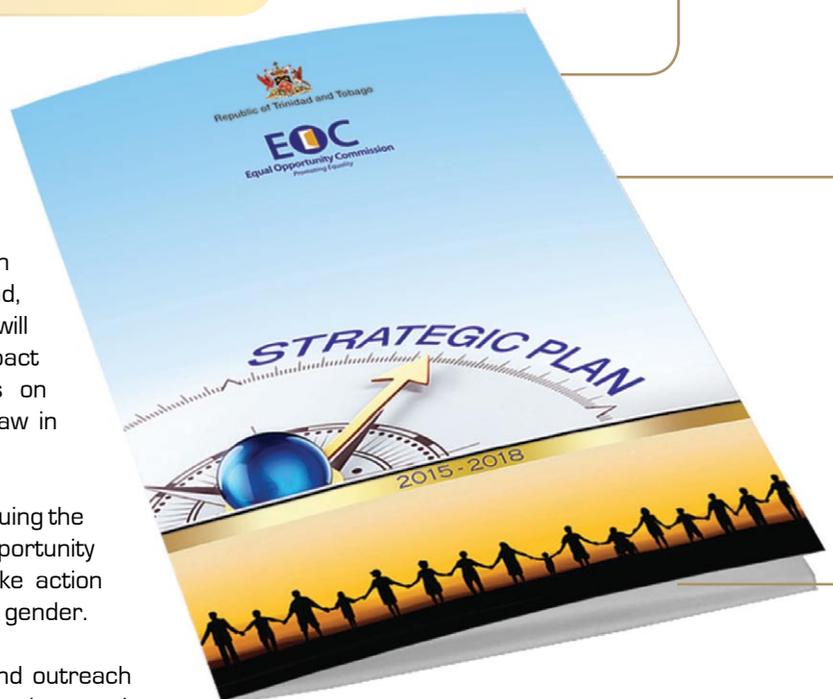
Strategic Objectives

In January 2015, the Commissioners and the Management team began work on the EOC's Strategic Plan 2015-2018. There were a series of meetings and brainstorming sessions in coming up with the strategic plan. This process with a Re-Visioning Retreat was intended to ensure consensus building and ownership of the plan in its design and implementation process. During the period March – April 2015, the management team developed a first draft of the main goals and objectives to be implemented during the stated period. This was subsequently reviewed and approved by the Board of Commissioners.

The strategic objectives are as follows:

To work towards the elimination of discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago, in keeping with our statutory mandate as set out in the Equal Opportunity Act Chapter 22:03.

- The Equal Opportunity Commission in fulfilling its mandate will focus on building a compelling brand through public awareness of the work of the Commission among local, regional and international stakeholders.
- The Commission, through dialogue with human rights actors in Trinidad and Tobago and abroad, will seek to build strategic relationships which will facilitate a deeper understanding of the impact of regional and international developments on the Commission, and on anti-discrimination law in Trinidad and Tobago.
- The Commission will continue its efforts in pursuing the passage of legislation to amend the Equal Opportunity Act which will enable the Commission to take action against discrimination on the basis of age and gender.
- The Commission will continue its advocacy and outreach activities in order to further its mandate to work towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion equality of opportunity.



About the **Equal Opportunity Commission** (continued)

To become an autonomous institution.

- The Commission aims to transition into an operationally and financially independent organisation in order to be truly effective in the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity, the Commission has to be a stand-alone body, accountable to the people of Trinidad and Tobago through the Parliament.
- In order for this transition to be seamless, the Commission has identified a process for the said transition which would include benchmarking similar public service transitions; the development of an approved accounting unit and the implementation of organisational changes which may become necessary in the wake of a transition.
- It is hoped that once the necessary mechanisms are put in place, the Commission will be able to complete the transition by 2018.

To maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission.

- The Commission believes that we are obligated to deliver excellent and consistent service through a competent and diverse team of dedicated professionals.
- The Commission through its re-visioning retreat held at the end of January, 2015 has begun the work necessary in order to create an organisational culture that supports and reflects the core values of the Commission.
- The Commission will initiate change management activities to bolster confidence in leadership team and will work towards the refining of policies and procedures that reflect best practice.
- The Commission will also focus on the training and development of its human resources to ensure that we nurture a cadre of professionals who are able to deliver exceptional service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.
- The Commission continues to strive towards developing the organisation into a technology-driven entity. Through the new and evolving technologies, the Commission will be able to intensify its outreach and advocacy and to liaise with regional and international organisations through video-conferencing and other enhanced technologies.
- The Commission will continue to develop and strengthen its research and monitoring roles and function through the use of public perception polling, some of which may be done through the use of the new technologies being considered.
- The Commission reiterates its commitment to its critical function of handling public complaints. The Commission will drive the creation of customer-centric complaints handling procedure which will ensure excellent and consistent levels of service to all persons who have come seeking redress.

Reports

Report on Complaints Received by the Commission



Complaints Received by the Commission in 2015

At section 27(1) (d) of the Act, the Commission is mandated “to receive, investigate and as far as possible, conciliate allegations of discrimination” as are lodged with it by members of the public.

Overview of Process

Part VII of the Act provides for the process by which complaints are handled. For convenience, the process can be broken down as follows:

- **Lodging a complaint:** The process begins when a member of the public lodges a complaint, which must be in writing [section 30(1)]. This should be done within six months of the date of the offending action [section 30(2)] but the Commission may accept a complaint outside of this period if there are exceptional circumstances [section 30(3)].
- **Investigating complaint:** The Commission is mandated to investigate all complaints lodged [section 32]. The Commission is empowered to send a notice in writing to any party to furnish specified information by a specified date [section 33]. Where upon investigation, no evidence of discrimination has been found, the Commission shall write to the complainant and inform of this and the reasons for this finding [section 34].
- **Conciliating complaint:** However, where the Commission has found that the subject matter may be resolved by conciliation, it is obligated to make all reasonable steps to have same conciliated [section 35]. The Commission may by notice request the attendance

of the complainant, respondent and any other person with relevant information or who is likely to assist the resolution of the matter. If the parties are able to reach an amicable resolution at conciliation, an Agreement is usually drawn up, and signed, and it can be registered with the Equal Opportunity Tribunal where it becomes an Order of the Court [section 38].

- **Prosecuting defaulters:** Recall that the Commission may send a Notice under section 33 to produce information and/or a Notice under section 35 to attend conciliation. Section 36 provides for a process to criminally sanction parties who fail and/or refuse to comply with either of these notices. A summary complaint can be lodged before the Magistrates Court, and the party can be summoned to Court as a defendant; if the party cannot advance reasonable justification for this failure or refusal, they can be convicted and sentenced:
 - In the case of an individual to a fine of \$1,000.00 per day or
 - In the case of a body corporate to a fine of \$5,000.00 per day
 for each and every day that they have failed and/or refused to comply.
- **Referring complaints to Tribunal:** According to section 29, if
 - (a) attempts to resolve the matter by conciliation have not been successful, or
 - (b) after completing the investigation, the Commission felt that it was unlikely that the matter could have been resolved by conciliation, and as such, the matter was not referred.

Report on **Complaints Received by the Commission** (continued)

but the Commission is satisfied that there was likely a breach of the Act, the Commission will:

- (i) prepare a report relating to the investigation with its recommendations
- (ii) send a copy of the report to the parties to the complaint
- (iii) publish the report, and
- (iv) make said report available for inspection by the public

If the matter remains unresolved, the Commission may with the consent and on behalf of the complainant, refer the matter to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal for hearing and adjudication.

This section of the Report presents information on complaints received and handled in 2015, using the above processes, that is:

- (A) Complaints received and investigated in 2015
- (B) Complaints referred to conciliation
- (C) Summary Prosecutions before the Magistrates Court
- (D) Reports that have been published, and matters that have been referred to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal.

(A) Complaints Received and Investigated in 2015

In this section, we will present and discuss data on the following:

1. Number of complaints received
2. Demographic data on the complainants: Sex, Age, Race/Ethnicity
3. Geographic data on the complainants
4. Category and Status of Discrimination alleged
5. Types of respondents

Number of complaints received

The Commission received 102 complaints in 2015, which is 24 less than it received in 2014 (126), and represents a drop of 30.24%. It is also less than what was received in 2013 (196).

Number of Complaints received: January 2013 to December 2015

Month	2015	2014	2013
January	10	11	33
February	09	06	17
March	07	15	16
April	04	10	16
May	09	20	08
June	08	13	24
July	07	12	22
August	14	06	12
September	13	09	10
October	07	01	13
November	04	15	14
December	10	08	11
Total	102	126	196

Table 1

When disaggregated by quarters, it is observed that for all the quarters in 2015 the number of complaints received were less than complaints received for the corresponding quarters in 2014 with exception of the third quarter:

- 26 in the first quarter (January to March) of 2015, compared to 32 in the first quarter of 2014
- 21 in the second quarter (April to June) of 2015, compared to 43 in the second quarter of 2014
- 34 in the third quarter (July to September) of 2015, compared to 27 in the second quarter of 2014
- 21 in the fourth quarter (October to December) of 2015, compared to 24 in the fourth quarter of 2014.

In fact, more complaints were received in the second half of 2015 compared to the second half of 2014: 55 for the period July to December 2015, compared to 51 for the corresponding period in 2014. In both 2013 and 2014, 60% of the complaints were received in the first half of the year - 114 in 2013 which is 58% of complaints received for that year, and 75 in 2014 which is 60% of complaints received for that year - and tapered down during the second half.

Report on **Complaints Received by the Commission** (continued)

However, the situation is the opposite in 2015, where more complaints were received in the second half: 47 complaints were received in the first half, which is 48% of complaints received, compared to 55 complaints in the second half, which is 52%.

Demographic Data on the Complainants:

Sex, Age, Race/Ethnicity

For the three-year period January 2013 to December 2015, a total of 424 complaints were lodged, of which:

- 236 were lodged by males, or 56%
- 182 were lodged by females, or 43%
- 07 were lodged by a group, or 1%

In each of the three years, more complaints were lodged by males than by females. However, there was an increase in the percentage of female complainants from 41% in 2013 to 48% in 2014, but this dropped in 2015 to 40% which is the lowest for the period. Complaints lodged by groups have remained in the region of 1% to 2%.

Sex of the Complainant 2013-2015

TYPE	2015	2014	2013	TOTAL FOR ALL 3 YEARS
MALE	60 (59%)	64 (51%)	112 (57%)	236
FEMALE	41 (40%)	61 (48%)	80 (41%)	182
GROUP	01 (<1%)	01 (<1%)	04 (2%)	06
TOTAL BY YEAR	102 (100%)	126 (100%)	196 (100%)	424

Table 2

Of the 102 complaints received in 2015, 17 or 16.5% of complainants, did not give age information. This was higher than the previous two years – 12% in 2014 and 15% in 2013.

However, when looked at in terms of numbers, the number of complainants who did not give this information was highest in 2013 – 30 complainants. From those who gave information, the following can be noted:

- For 2013 and 2014, the cluster of persons aged 36 to 55 accounted for around 55% of all complaints lodged: In 2013, 109 complaints were lodged by this cluster which was 55.5% of the total, and in 2014 this cluster lodged 68 complaints or 54% of the total. However, in 2015, this cluster accounted for only 43% of the total of all complaints lodged.
- In 2015 the dominant cluster was persons aged 26-45 - they lodged 49 complaints which is about 48% of the total received for the year. By contrast in 2014 this cluster accounted for about 43% of all complaints, and in 2013 they accounted for about 36%. As such, there has been a steady increase in complaints lodged by this cluster over the period.
- In both 2015 and 2014, the dominant age group of persons lodging complaints were 36 to 45, followed by 26 to 35 and then followed by 46 to 55. In both years this 'super-cluster' of persons aged 26 to 55 accounted for more than 60% of all complaints lodged: 67% in 2015 and 63.5% in 2014.
- For all three years, persons under 18 and over 65 generally account for less than 8% of all complaints received for the year: 5% in 2015, 7.5% in 2014 and 6% in 2013. There has been a steady decline in the number of persons over 65 lodging complaints; in 2015 it was less than half that of 2014, and was one-third that of 2013: 3, 8 and 9 respectively. It must be noted that age is not a status ground that is protected under the Act. Consequently, if because of their age, a person over 65 is denied employment, or some benefit or facility associated with employment, for example, promotion, transfer or training, they have no recourse for relief with the Commission.

Report on **Complaints Received by the Commission** (continued)

Age of the Complainant 2013-2015

Age group	2015	% of the Annual Total	2014	% of the Annual Total	2013	% of the Annual Total
Under 18	1	1%	2	1.5%	01	<1%
18-25	1	1%	6	5%	09	4.5%
26-35	24	23.5%	27	21%	38	19%
36-45	25	24.5%	27	21%	32	16%
46-55	19	18.5%	26	20.5%	39	20%
56-65	12	12%	15	12%	38	19%
Over 65	3	2.5%	8	6%	09	5%
Not Stated	17	16.5%	15	12%	30	15%
Total	102	100%	126	100%	196	100%

Table 3

With respect to the racial composition of persons who lodged complaints in 2015:

- 41 persons self-identified as being of African origin, which was 40.1% of complaints
- 41 persons self-identified as being of East Indian origin, which was 40.1% of all complaints
- 17 persons self-identified as being of mixed origin which is 16.6% of all complaints
- 2 persons self-identified as being of White/ French Creole origin which is 2% of all complaints, and no persons self-identified as being of Chinese or Syrian/Lebanese origin.

Racial Background of Complainants

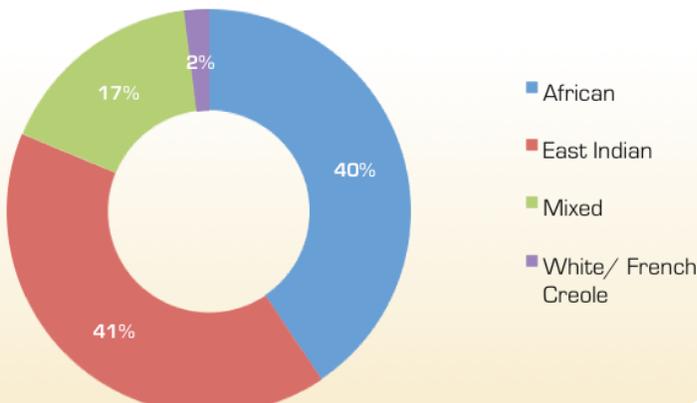


Table 4

There was an equivalent number of complaints lodged by persons of African and of East Indian origin. By contrast, in 2014, significantly more persons of African origin lodged complaints. However, between 2014 and 2015 the following trends or figures remain fairly constant:

- An almost equivalent number of complainants self-identified as being mixed, but this accounted for a lower total percentage in 2014;
- No complaints were lodged by persons who self-identified as being of Chinese or Syrian/Lebanese origin.

Report on **Complaints Received by the Commission** (continued)

The statistics for 2014 are as follows

- 62 persons self-identified as being of African origin, which was 49.2% of complaints
- 45 persons self-identified as being of East Indian origin, which was 35.7% of all complaints
- 18 persons self-identified as being of mixed origin which is 14.3% of all complaints
- 1 person self-identified as being of White/French Creole origin, and no persons self-identified as being of Chinese or Syrian/Lebanese origin.

According to 2011 Census data published by the Central Statistical Office, the following groups account for the following percentage composition of the population of Trinidad and Tobago:

- Persons of East Indian origin – 35.4%
- Persons of African origin – 34.2%

- Persons of Mixed origin – 23.3%
- Persons of the following origins: White/French Creole, Portuguese, Chinese and Syrian/Lebanese – 1%

Compared with national statistics, it would seem that in 2015 there is a greater tendency for persons of East Indian and of African origin to lodge complaints, and a lesser tendency for persons of mixed origin, that is:

- Persons of East Indian origin account for 40% of complainants, but only 35% of the national population;
- Persons of African origin account for 40% of complainants, but only about 34% of the national population;
- Persons of Mixed origin make up 17% of complainants, whereas they account for about 23% of the national population.

**Geographical Origin of Complainant 2013-2015
(By Regional and Municipal Corporations)**

Area	2015	% of Annual Total	2014	% of Annual Total	2013	% of Annual Total
Port of Spain	6	6%	11	9%	09	4.5%
Diego Martin	3	3%	5	4%	11	5.5%
San Juan/ Laventille	5	5%	11	9%	19	9.5%
Tunupuna/Piarco	12	12%	14	11%	24	12%
Arima	20	19.5%	10	8%	06	3%
Sangre Grande	2	2%	1	<1%	05	2.5%
Chaguanas	14	14%	23	18%	24	12%
Couva/Talparo/Tabaquite	6	6%	7	5.5%	10	5%
San Fernando	12	12%	15	12%	23	12%
Penal / Debe	1	1%	4	3%	07	3.5%
Siparia	1	1%	4	3%	08	4%
Point Fortin	2	2%	2	1.5%	01	<1%
Princes Town	6	6%	4	3%	08	4%
Mayaro/Rio Claro	4	4%	0	–	7	3.5%
Tobago	7	7%	12	9.5%	30	15%
Not stated/ Other	1	1%	2	1.5%	4	2%
Total	102	100%	126	100%	196	100%

Table 5

Report on Complaints Received by the Commission (continued)

For the three-year period January 2013 to December 2015:

- 10.6% of all complaints received [45 out of 424] were lodged by persons living the North-West region of Trinidad [Port-of-Spain and Diego Martin]. According to 2011 National Census Data published by the Central Statistical Office, this region accounts for 10.6% of the total population of Trinidad and Tobago; consequently, it can be said that the percentage of complaints received from persons in this region is proportionate to the national population.
- 30.4% of all complaints received [129 out of 424] were lodged by persons living in the North-East Region [San Juan/Laventille, Tunapuna/Piarco, Arima and Sangre Grande]. According to 2011 National Census Data, this region accounts for 36.3% of the total population of Trinidad and Tobago; consequently, it can be said that there is a lesser tendency for persons from this region to lodge complaints.
- 19.8% of all complaints received [84 out of 424] were lodged by persons living in the Central Region [Chaguanas and Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo]. According to 2011 National Census Data, this region accounts for 19.7% of the total population of Trinidad and Tobago; consequently, it can be said that the percentage of complaints received from persons in this region is proportionate to the national population.
- 25.7% of all complaints received [109 out of 424] were lodged by persons living in the Southern Region [San Fernando, Pt Fortin, Debe/Penal, Princes Town, Sparia and Mayaro]. According to 2011 National Census Data, this region accounts for 28.8% of the total population of Trinidad and Tobago; consequently, it can be said that there is a lesser tendency for persons from this region to lodge complaints.
- 11.6% of all complaints received [49 out of 424] were lodged by persons from Tobago. According to 2011 National Census Data, Tobago accounts for 4.6% of the total population of our twin-island republic; consequently, it can be said that there is a greater tendency for persons from this region to lodge complaints.

In 2015, there were small decreases (of 5% or less) in the percentage of complaints coming from the following regions, when compared to 2014:

- The North-West region accounted for 9% of complaints in 2015 compared to 13% in 2014;
- The Central region accounted for 20% in 2015, compared to about 23.5% in 2014;
- The South region accounted for 26% in 2015, compared to 22.5% in 2014.

There was a significant increase in the percentage of complaints from the North East region: 38.5% in 2015, up from about 29% in 2014, which was also an increase from 27% in 2013. The 2015 percentage is significantly higher than the percentage of the national population living in this region (30.4%). Moreover, in 2015 there was a doubling in the actual number of complaints received from persons resident in Arima – 20 in 2015, representing 19.5% of all complaints received for that year, compared to 10 in 2014, representing 8% of all complaints received. According to 2011 National Census Data, the Borough of Arima accounts for about 2.5% of the total population of Trinidad and Tobago; as such it can be said that the percentage of complaints received from this area in 2015 is about 8 times more than what one would expect using national statistics.

Over the three-year period there was a consistent percentage share of complaints received from the regions of Tunapuna/Piarco (about 12%), Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo (between 5% and 6%) and San Fernando (12%), although the actual number of complaints from these regions dropped almost by half.

There has been a consistent decline in both the number and percentage of complaints received from Tobago over the period 2013 to 2015: 30 complaints in 2013, representing about 15% of all complaints received that year, to 7 in 2015, representing about 7% of complaints received. However, the percentage of complaints received from Tobago in 2015 is still higher than the percentage of the total national population resident there (4.6%).

In the Commission's Annual Report for 2014, it was noted that for the three-year period January 2012 to December 2014, complaints from Pt Fortin, Siparia and Penal/Debe were relatively low - 40 in total, amounting to about 8% of all complaints received – and this pointed to a need for the

Report on **Complaints Received by the Commission** (continued)

Commission to broaden its outreach activities in these areas. In the second half of 2015, the Commission began having monthly office days in Rio Claro, Debe and Pt Fortin, facilitated by the respective Regional and Borough Corporations. Despite this increased presence, there has not been any significant increase in complaints received from persons resident in these areas when compared to 2014. In fact, the only region from which there was an increase was Rio Claro/Mayaro which went from 0 in 2014 to 4 in 2015. Pt Fortin remained constant at 2 in each year, and both Siparia and Penal/Debe went from 4 each in 2014 down to 1 each in 2015.

Category and Status of Discrimination alleged

In order to understand the information presented under this heading, it is important to appreciate what kinds of behaviour the *Equal Opportunity Act* and by extension, the Commission, is concerned about. In Parts II to V the Act defines “discrimination” and specifies the fields in which the Act is and is not to apply.

According to section 4, the Act is concerned with discrimination in relation to the following *four broad categories*:

- **Employment**
- **The Provision of Goods, Services and Facilities**
- **The Provision of Education**
- **The Provision of Accommodation**

but it only applies if that discrimination is

- (i.) discrimination on the *ground of status* as defined in section 5, or
- (ii.) discrimination by way of *victimisation* as defined in section 6.

The Act is also concerned with a separate category of action known as “*offensive behaviour*” as defined in section 7.

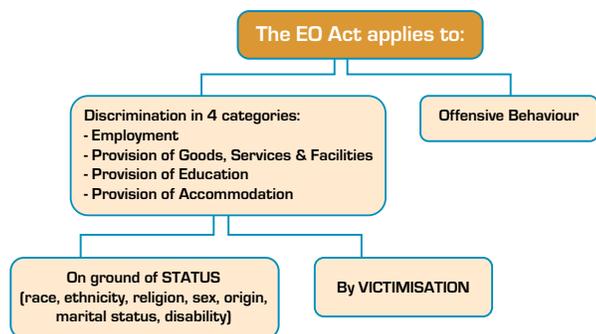


Table 6

A ‘status’ is a personal characteristic that the Act gives protection to. Currently there are 7 status grounds that are protected: Sex, Race, Ethnicity, Religion, Marital Status, Origin, including geographic origin and Disability

Category of Discrimination:

Of the 424 complaints lodged over the period January 2013 to December 2014:

- 320 alleged discrimination with respect to employment, which is about 75.5% of all complaints received;
- 57, or about 13.4% alleged discrimination with respect to the provision of goods, services and facilities;
- 17 or about 4% alleged discrimination with respect to the provision of education;
- 4 persons alleged discrimination with respect to the provision of accommodation, which is less than 1%; and
- 25 persons alleged ‘other’ or did not allege one of the four categories, which is about 5.9%

Category of Discrimination alleged 2013 -2015

Category	2015	% of Annual Total	2014	% of Annual Total	2013	% of Annual Total
Employment	75	73.5%	106	84%	137	70%
Goods, Services and Facilities	21	20.5%	13	10.3%	23	12%
Education	3	3%	4	3%	11	5.5%
Accommodation	1	1%	2	1.5%	01	0.5%
Offensive Behaviour	1	1%				
Other	1	1%	1	<1%	24	12%
Total	102	100%	126	100%	196	100%

Table 7

In 2015, employment continued to occupy the largest share of the pie at 73.5% of all complaints lodged; this was less than 84% of all complaints lodged in 2014. There was a significant rise in the percentage share of the category of goods and services which went up from 10.3% in 2014 to 20.5% in 2015. Education consistently decreased from 5.5% in 2013 to 3% in 2014 and 3% in 2015. Complaints received in the category

Report on **Complaints Received by the Commission** (continued)

of Accommodation remained relatively low over the years: less than 1% in 2013, 1.5% in 2014 and 1% in 2015. It is hoped that with continued public awareness and outreach programmes, that there will be a continuous increase in number and percentage of complaints received in the other three broad categories (besides employment).

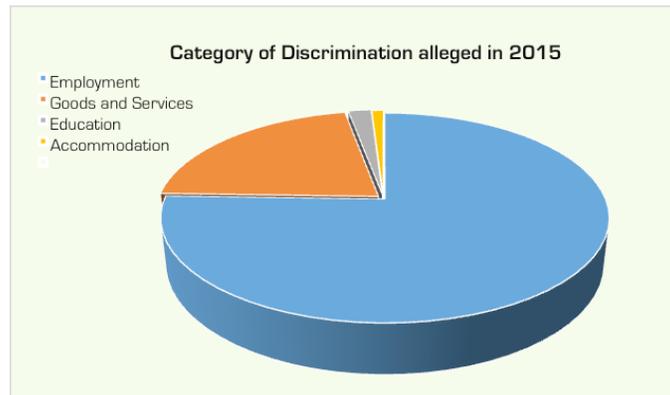


Table 8

Also noteworthy is that unlike in the years 2014 and 2013, no complaints have been received in 2015 as it relates to the number of 'other' complaints. This would suggest that persons are more aware of the focus of the Commission's jurisdiction.

Status/ Victimisation Alleged:

Of the 102 complaints lodged in 2015:

- 51 identified no status under the Act. Of this number, 04 identified statuses not covered by the Act, that is:
 - 2 alleged age and
 - 2 alleged nepotism/ cronyism
- 51 of the complaints lodged identified one or more status grounds (including victimisation). Of this number:
 - 32 complaints alleged only one status ground (or victimisation);
 - The remaining 19 persons alleged two or more grounds. For example, more often than not, both race and ethnicity are alleged together although these are two different (but related) concepts

Total Number of Complaints that alleged a status ground 2013 to 2015

	2015	2014	2013
Total Number of complaints received	102	126	196
Of which, total number that alleged one or more status ground	51 [50%]	93 [74%]	22 [11.2%]

Table 9

Report on Complaints Received by the Commission (continued)

The 51 complaints where persons alleged a status can be dissected as follows.

Race and/or Ethnicity	<p>17 complaints (16.5% of all received) involved an allegation of racial and/or ethnic discrimination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 persons alleged race alone; no one alleged ethnicity alone • 4 alleged race and ethnicity together • 2 persons alleged origin along with race and ethnicity • 4 persons alleged sex along with race and/or ethnicity; of this number 2 persons went on to allege religion • Those 2 persons are the only complainants who alleged religion along with race and ethnicity; • 2 persons alleged victimisation along with race and/or ethnicity.
Sex	<p>8 complaints (8% of all received) involved an allegation of sex discrimination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 2 complaints alleged sex alone; one of the complaints was jointly lodged by 3 persons but it was categorised as one matter because they arose out of the same facts; • 2 persons alleged race and/or ethnicity along with sex; • A further 2 went to allege religion as well as race and/or ethnicity along with sex. • 1 person alleged sex and religion together (making a total of 3 complaints that involved both sex and religion); • 1 person alleged sex along with marital status and disability.
Religion	<p>8 complaints (8% of all received) involved an allegation of discrimination on the basis of religion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 complaints alleged religion in its own; • 1 person alleged religion along with sex; • 2 persons went on to alleged race and/or ethnicity along with religion and sex (making a total of 3 complaints that involved both sex and religion); • 1 person alleged religion along with offensive behaviour.
Origin	<p>6 complaints (6% of all received) involved an allegation of discrimination on the basis of origin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 persons lodged complaints on the basis of origin alone; • 2 persons alleged origin in combination with race and/or ethnicity; • 1 person alleged origin in combination with marital status; • 1 person alleged origin along with victimisation.
Disability	<p>12 complaints (12% of all received) involved an allegation of disability discrimination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 complainants alleged disability on its own; • 1 person alleged disability along with offensive behaviour; • 1 person alleged disability along with sex and marital status.
Marital Status	<p>2 complaints (2% of all received) involved an allegation of discrimination on the ground of marital status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one alleged marital status on its own; • 1 person alleged marital status along with origin; • 1 person alleged marital status along with disability and sex.
Victimisation	<p>13 complaints (12.5% of all received) involved an allegation of victimisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 complaints alleged victimisation on its own; • 1 person alleged origin along with victimisation; • 2 persons alleged race and/or ethnicity along with victimisation.

Table 10

Report on **Complaints Received by the Commission** (continued)

It is to be repeated that many persons alleged two or more status grounds. As such the numbers presented in the above table may not easily add up and there will be obvious overlaps. For example, under the heading "Sex", the 1 person who alleged discrimination on the basis of sex along with marital status and disability, would be the same 1 person who, under the heading "Disability" alleged discrimination on the basis of disability along with sex and marital status, and would also be the same 1 person who, under the heading "Marital Status", alleged discrimination on the same three bases.

Types of Respondents

(The person or entity against whom the complaint was lodged)

Unlike the Ombudsman which is concerned with actions or decisions of public authorities, or the Integrity Commission which is concerned with persons in public life, the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act and the jurisdiction of the Commission extends to both the public and private sector. The Commission is empowered to enquire into matters originating from both sectors that may arise under the broad categories of employment, the provision of goods and services, education and the provision of accommodation.

In 2014, 74% of the complaints that were lodged were against public sector bodies and 24.6% were against the private sector. In 2015 the trend of public sector dominance continued. Even though there was a decrease in the number of complaints received against Public Bodies in 2015, there was a percentage share increase to 78.4% in relation to the overall number of complaints received. There was a decline from 31 (24.6%) in 2014 to 17 (16.6%) in 2015 in both the percentage share and numbers of complaints lodged against the private sector. The public sector therefore accounts for the majority of complaints of discrimination that are lodged with the Commission.

Type of Respondents 2014 and 2015

CATEGORY	2015	% of Annual Total	2014	% of Annual Total
State/ Public Sector	82	80.4%	93	74%
Private	17	16.6%	31	24.6%
NGO and Related	0	0	2	2%
Individual	3	3%	0	0
Total	102	100%	126	100%

Table 11

By public sector we mean:

- Ministries or Departments of the Central Government e.g. the Ministry of National Security, the Board of Inland Revenue;
- Service Commissions, that is Public Service, Police Service, Teaching Service, Judicial and Legal Service and Statutory Authority Service Commissions;
- Regional Administrative and Municipal Bodies, in particular, Regional Corporations and Regional Health Authorities ('RHA');
- State Enterprises, that is corporations and bodies that are owned and/or controlled by the State and/or financed by the public purse, e.g. Petrotrin, National Gas Company;
- Bodies that exist by or under any Statute or Law and/or exercise public and/or regulatory powers e.g. the Central Bank, the Chagauramas Development Authority, the Airports Authority
- Educational and Vocational institutions that are funded by the public purse e.g. The UWI or the UTT

Of the 82 complaints that are considered public sector, 37, representing 46.25% of all complaints lodged, were against the Central Government of Trinidad and Tobago:

- 19 complaints, or about 23.75% of all complaints, named a Ministry or Division of Central Government as the respondent;
- 13 named the Police Service as respondent;
- A further 3 complaints named a Service Commission as the Respondent;

With respect to complaints against public authorities:

- 3 complaints named a regional or municipal corporation from Trinidad (that is, not including THA bodies) as the respondent;
- 4 complaints named a Regional Health Authority from Trinidad (that is, not including the Tobago Regional Health Authority) as the respondent;
- 1 complaint was lodged against public transportation authorities (such as the Airports Authority and/or the Port Authority) and a further 2 complaints were lodged against publicly-owned transportation entities (such as Caribbean Airlines Ltd and/or Public Transport Service Corporation);
- 5 complaints, which represents 6.25% of all complaints received, named a Tobago entity as respondent (that is the THA or a department or division of the THA, or the TRHA);

Report on **Complaints Received by the Commission** (continued)

There were 8 complaints, representing 10% of all complaints received, that were lodged against State Enterprises in the energy sector.

There were 4 complaints lodged against two publicly-funded tertiary education institutions.

It is important to emphasise that the above simply presents information on who the complaints were lodged against; it does not necessarily mean that there has been finding for or against any party.

(B) Complaints referred to Conciliation in 2015

The Equal Opportunity Act Chapter 22:03 empowers the Commission to refer a matter to Conciliation where it finds that the subject matter of the complaint may be resolved by this process. Conciliation is facilitated in-house by the Conciliation Unit at the Commission. There is no cost attached to this process at the Commission, unless the disputing parties opt to hire representation.

Thirteen (13) matters were referred for Conciliation in the calendar year 2015. A summary of the complaints are as follows:

1.	A former employee claimed discrimination on the ground of origin in the recruitment process.
2.	An employee claimed discrimination on the ground of religion in being treated less favourably because of maintaining facial hair.
3.	An employee claimed discrimination on the ground of disability because of the employer's failure to make reasonable accommodation.
4.	A former employee claimed discrimination on the ground of race in the employer's decision not to renew the contract of employment.
5.	An employee with a mental disability claimed discrimination on the ground of disability in the manner in which the contract was terminated.
6.	A former employee claimed discrimination on the ground of victimisation.
7.	An employee claimed discrimination on the ground of race in not being promoted to a higher position.
8.	An employee claimed discrimination on the grounds of race and origin in receiving less favourable contract terms.

Report on **Complaints Received by the Commission** (continued)

Summary of the complaints (continued)	
9.	A former employee claimed discrimination on the grounds of race and victimisation in receiving less favourable contract terms and being terminated.
10.	An employee claimed discrimination on the ground of sex through sexual harassment.
11.	An individual claimed discrimination on the ground of origin in the recruitment process.
12.	A former employee claimed discrimination on the ground of origin because of less favourable contract terms.
13.	An employee claimed discrimination on the grounds of marital status and sex in being terminated after returning from maternity.

Table 12

All matters were based on the **category of employment**. Only three (3) matters were against private sector employers (that is, numbers 4 and 13 above). It should be noted however that the matters spanned the entire spectrum of the “employment relationship” as complaints were referred from job applicants, trainees, current employees and even former employees.

(C) Summary Prosecutions for Non-Compliance

In May 2015 the Commission laid summary complaints in the Scarborough Magistrates’ Court, Tobago against:

- Mrs. Gloria Jones-Knapp, proprietress of Bacolet Beach Club; and
- Eco- Industrial Development Company of Tobago Ltd (E-IDCOT)

In October 2015, the Commission laid a summary complaint in the Arima Magistrates Court against:

- University of Trinidad and Tobago

The three matters were filed pursuant to section 36 of the Equal Opportunity Act which provides:

A person who, without reasonable excuse, refuses or fails to comply with any requirement of a notice under sections 33 and 35(2), is liable on summary conviction-

- (a) *in the case of an individual, to a fine of one thousand dollars;*

- (b) *in the case of a body corporate, to a fine of five thousand dollars, for every day that the individual or body corporate refuses or fails to comply with any requirement.*

The cause of action in these cases is the alleged non-compliance with a Notice issued by the Commission under section 33 to provide information with respect to an on-going investigation.

As at 31st December, 2015 the matters in Scarborough, Tobago are being heard before Her Worship Magistrate Rehanna Hosein.

(D) Reports on Matters Published for Public Inspection

According to section 39(1) of the **Equal Opportunity Act**, where the matter cannot or has not been resolved by Conciliation the Commission shall:

- (a) *prepare a report relating to the investigation with its recommendations;*
- (b) *send a copy of the report to the parties to the complaint;*

Report on **Complaints Received by the Commission** (continued)

- (c) publish the report; and
- (d) make the report available for inspection by the public

The Commission published four (4) reports for public inspection on June 24, 2015 in the following matters:

Complainant	Respondent	Category	Grounds
Afroza Bhanji	SuperPharm Limited	employment	victimisation
Michael Mark Archbald	Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (TTDF)	employment	religion
Sharon Seales	Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited (PSAEL)	employment	race, ethnicity
Nicole Olivierre	National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (NGC)	employment	race

Table 13

The Commission published the following two further reports in October and November 2015:

Complainant	Respondent	Category	Grounds	Date of Report
AH	Princess Entertainment Corporation (Trinidad and Tobago) Ltd [Owners and Managers of Royal Princess Private Members Club]	employment	Sex and victimisation	2nd October 2015
Andy St Clair	Water and Sewerage Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (WASA)	employment	race	9th November 2015

Table 14

In each of these matters, a report was published and copies were sent to the parties. They are available for viewing by members of the public at the front desk of the Commission's office.

It is notable that all six matters are employment-based. As the statistics illustrate, the Commission consistently receives most complaints of discrimination under the category of employment.

In four (4) out of the six matters listed above, the respondents are entities of the State. In the Commission's 2014 Annual Report, it was reported that a prior complaint that Ms Afroza Bhanji had lodged against SuperPharm Ltd was referred to the Tribunal and that it was the first matter to be referred against a private sector business. Subsequent to this, Ms. Bhanji lodged a further complaint of victimisation against SuperPharm Ltd which allegedly stemmed from her initial complaint of discrimination

reported on in 2014. This subsequent complaint is the first matter listed above. It was investigated and a report was prepared and published; it has been referred to the Tribunal, and will, be dealt with by that Court.

Based on section 39 (2) of the Equal Opportunity Act, only where a Complainant consents to their matter being initiated in the Tribunal, can the Commission then proceed to initiate same. As such, once a Report is published, a matter may either be discontinued or initiated in the Tribunal based on the Complainant's ultimate decision.

In the first three matters (Bhanji, Archibald and Seales) and the fifth (AH), the Complainants have consented, and the Commission has initiated proceedings before the Tribunal on their behalf.

Report on **Complaints Received** by the **Commission** (continued)

In August 2015 the legal unit created a workflow for the handling of complaints. The document is referred to as a customer- centric complaints handling procedure which is used to assist in expediting the case management system in the complaints and investigation process.

The complaints handling procedure were broken down into three (3) phases.

- **Phase 1A – Intake and Processing:** Complaint received, acknowledged, and complainant contacted and interviewed
- **Phase 1B – Terminating matter:** A matter may be terminated subsequent to intake and review, or it may be closed after investigation
- **Phase 2 – Sourcing information from Respondent:** Notice to Respondent to provide information, documents received and considered
- **Phase 3 – End of Investigation:** Matter may be terminated (phase 1A), referred to conciliation, or referred to Tribunal

Report from the Conciliation Unit



As part of its mandate the EOC is required to investigate and conciliate complaints of discrimination. The EOC has an in-house Conciliation Unit which has been staffed with one (1) Conciliator/Mediator who is a certified Mediator, registered with the Mediation Board of Trinidad and Tobago and one (1) temporary Business Operations Assistant I to provide administrative support.

In the year 2015, thirteen (13) cases were referred for conciliation, with seventeen (17) cases being brought forward from the previous year. The conciliation sessions for these matters were held at the EOC office in Trinidad, with the exception of four (4) cases which originated in Tobago and was held there.

Of the thirty (30) cases referred, five (5) were settled with written agreements and these agreements were registered with the Equal Opportunity Tribunal. Seven (7) cases were unresolved and one (1) case was withdrawn by the complainant after the conclusion of the conciliation session. Thirteen (13) cases were

in progress as at the end of the year. In four (4) of the cases received, the conciliation process did not begin as at the end of December 2015.

Also, in the year 2015 the Conciliator/Mediator drafted a procedure manual to guide the Conciliation process at the EOC which was approved by the Board of Commissioners. It is intended that this document would be used for reference by persons who need to understand the Conciliation process at the EOC.

During the year 2015 the Conciliation Unit was staffed with one (1) Conciliator/Mediator based on the volume of matters that have been referred to Conciliation. In terms of administrative support for the Unit, one (1) temporary BOA I was provided due to the limitations applied by the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs and the Ministry of Public Administration. It is hoped that in the year ahead, 2016, a Business Operations Assistant II will be recruited to provide much needed competent administrative support to the Unit.

Conciliation Unit Report					
January - December 2015					
	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	
Details	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	2015
No. of Cases received for the period	0	3	2	8	13
Case Brought Forward from previous year	17	-	-	-	17
Total					30
Cases Completed with written Agreements	-	4	1	-	5
Cases Completed - Unresolved	2	4	1	-	7
Cases Completed with No Further Action	-		1		1
Cases in Progress	-	-		-	13
Cases not yet started	-	-	-	-	4
Total					30

Table 15

Report from the Research Unit



The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) has a legal duty to monitor and evaluate progress towards equality and human rights, taking into account, age, disability, ethnicity, employment status, gender and religion. The EOC undertakes and supports work across the range of equality grounds to facilitate evidence-based policy formulation and to support the work of the Commission, in general.

Section 27 (1) (e) of the Equal Opportunity Act lists one of the functions of the Commission which is relevant to research, as follows, *“to develop, conduct and foster research and educational programmes for the purpose of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status.”*

More specifically the Unit has the responsibility to:

- Review patterns and trends in complaint cases with a view to identifying discriminatory practices and make recommendations to combat such practices.
- Assess the inequalities experienced by vulnerable groups in the country and research and present suggestions to combat.
- Conduct research on issues relevant to discrimination and equal opportunities to guide the operations of the EOC in terms of policies and priorities.
- Keep abreast of public policy issues and international developments affecting equal opportunities, examining these issues and recommending solutions or way forward.
- Maintain effective relationships with relevant stakeholders on policy and research issues.

Build and strengthen relationships with local and international organisations and bodies advocating human rights.

Research Agenda

The Research Agenda for 2015 as set out in the EOC's strategic plan included the following key areas:

- An assessment of public awareness programmes;
- Formative research which includes data collection and statistical analysis of data;
- The conduct of investigative reports and surveys; and the
- Monitoring and evaluation of on-going and completed projects and programmes

Outcomes:

The main outcomes of the Research Unit for 2015 focused on:

- Increased capability to monitor attitude change of the public;
- Access data to inform future educational programmes;
- Monitoring of the attitude change of the public;
- Increased efficiency of the EOC service delivery;
- Improved effectiveness of EOC services; and
- The implementation of a monitoring and evaluation framework to support the work of the EOC

Report from the **Research Unit** (continued)

Research Activities for the period January 2015 -December 2015
1. Formulation of the EOC's evaluation forms that were used to conduct the specific in- evaluations for 2015.
2. Compilation of EOC's statistical data of complaints on:
Tobago 2008-2015
Complaints data for 2014 (4th quarter review)
Age Discrimination 2008-2015
Gender/ Sex Discrimination 2008-2015
3. Compilation and amendments of Research Unit Annual Report submission for EOC Annual Report 2015
4. Collaborated with the Legal Unit in the compilation of complainant data information for the period 2008-2012 for the proposed addendum to the EOC Annual Reports submission 2008-2012
5. Completed research paper on the <i>Impact of Age Discrimination on Society – Regionally and Internationally</i>
6. Provided statistical data to the Communications Unit for input into the Commissioner's request document pertaining to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The document entitled <i>The perception and awareness of the EOC</i> • An assessment of public awareness programmes 2013 - 2015
7. Compilation of programmes and research initiatives for Budget Estimates for fiscal 2016
8. Provided rapporteur services at the EOC's Public education programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaguanas Borough - February 2015 • Disability Conference – October 2015 • Press Conference on Human Rights and Gender December - 2015
9. Submitted a Report on a content analysis of newspaper articles which were compiled by the Communications Unit (referencing Human Rights and issues pertinent to the EOC) for the period from January 2014-March 2015
10. Provided input into the EOC's Strategic Plan 2015-2018 and the Unit's Work Plan 2015, 2016.
11. Evaluation of Public Awareness Programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Siparia Regional Corporation Session • World Day for Cultural Diversity (Rio Claro) • ROYTEC • Trade and Investment Conference 2015
12. An evaluation and Review of the age of consent for sexual activity in the regional and international sphere
13. Submitted draft report on Mapping Study on the relevant actors on Human Rights in Trinidad and Tobago:
14. Designed Research Documents on the Equality and Public Perception Survey on discrimination issues in Trinidad and Tobago

Table 16

Report from the **Research Unit** (continued)

Research Limitations of 2015

There was not enough information and data on the extent and nature of experiences of discrimination by all the groupings protected by the legislation. Meager statistical data for measuring inequalities is available and there are limitations regarding the collection and processing of sensitive data. In this regard, the EOC had proposed the conduct of a research survey on Equality and Public Perception of discrimination issues in Trinidad and Tobago. However, due to the reduction in the financial allocation, this research project was deferred to the next fiscal year.

Research Agenda for Fiscal 2016

Research Objectives

- To develop a conceptual framework for evaluating progress in equality and anti-discrimination efforts within the country
- An examination of the statistical data available at the national levels that might contribute to an evaluation of the progress made in equality and anti-discrimination efforts of the EOC

Main Initiatives proposed for fiscal 2016

- Client customer satisfaction survey
- Monitoring and evaluation of statistical complaint data
- Equality and Public Perception Survey on discrimination issues in Trinidad and Tobago

Report from the Communications Unit



This report provides details of the Commission's activities in 2015 with respect to **“Work towards the elimination of Discrimination, Promotion of Equality of Opportunity generally and Public Education (and Research) Programmes.”**

Functions of the Communications Unit

- Strategic Corporate Communications
- Public Education Campaigns
- Outreach
- Corporate Communications Protocol, Policies, Procedures and Guidelines
- Publications
- Event Management
- The Preparation of Budgetary Estimates and Expenditure
- Communications Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Strategic Corporate Communications

According to Hallahan et al., Strategic Communication is “the purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfill its mission.” The year 2015 was the year of re-visioning and remapping of the EOC’s Culture.” It was a well-anticipated exercise that was received by the Communications Unit with vigor and fervor. The strategic objectives served as the umbrella and the overarching plan for the work of the Communications Unit.

The Commission’s objective was to fulfill its mandate of building a compelling brand through public awareness of the work of the Commission among, local, regional and international stakeholders and to continue its advocacy and outreach activities to further its mandate to work towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity.

This exercise further directed the Communications Unit in executing its research and public education programmes.

A new Communications plan in line with the strategic objectives was proposed using data and statistics from the EOC’s 2014 Annual Report, the Proposed Amendments to the EOA and Content Analysis from newspaper articles.

Public Education Campaigns

- Twelve public awareness and education workshop sessions were facilitated from various public and private stakeholders across Trinidad and Tobago. As a result of these sessions, we have collected a number of questions and comments which are added to our research database.
- “DID YOU KNOW?” Press Campaign – In August 2015 the Commission launched the first part of its series of public education campaigns themed “Did You Know?” which focused on Offensive Behaviour as defined by section 7 of the Equal Opportunity Act. The aim was to sensitize persons that it is against the law to insult, humiliate or intimidate others with the intention of inciting hatred in public inclusive of social media-based on their Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Religion or Origin.

According to our annual report statistics, the ‘offensive behaviour’ category was the least known of the areas covered under the Equal Opportunity Act. This along with other awareness campaigns sought to educate

Report from the **Communications Unit** (continued)

the public and to foster greater awareness about discrimination as defined by the Equal Opportunity Act thereby facilitating behavioural changes within the citizenry.

- **Billboard Advertising** - The EOC also continued with its more traditional form of mass awareness via billboards located in Diego Martin, St. Augustine, San Fernando and Tobago. These billboards promoted and built awareness of our online client services which allows for complaints to be received via the Commission's website. The public can also access the Commission's publications on the website.
- **The EOC's Website** - The maintenance of the website allows it to remain one of the single largest Public Education tools ensuring that it is adequately integrated into the Commission's Operations.

Event Management - Advocacy

Human Rights and Disability Workshop - On October 14, 2015, the Equal Opportunity Commission hosted a Human Rights and Disability Workshop on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago. It is important to note that the Convention was ratified by Trinidad and Tobago on June 25, 2015, as such Trinidad and Tobago is expected to upgrade our Disability Rights Administration Systems with urgency and great effectiveness in order to ensure compliance with the Convention which it is now legally bound to uphold. The EOC's workshop targeted specific stakeholders and leaders in the sphere of disability rights such as Her Honour, Senator Kerry Ann Ifill, President of the Senate of Barbados who was our featured speaker and other persons living with disabilities with the intention of discussing the implications and responsibilities of this Convention.

CEDAW Press Briefing - On December 10, 2015, in collaboration with the Network of NGO's the EOC hosted a press briefing to discuss the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on Human Rights Day.

Outreach

In 2015, the Commission expanded its public outreach to include four new monthly office days at the different regional corporations throughout Trinidad and Tobago in order to reach the wider geographical population. The Communications Unit continued to engage the public by providing relevant information and facilitating stakeholders' requests by developing, implementing and evaluating the EOC's public education and communications

strategies and programmes for all stakeholders in accordance with the mission, vision and core values.

As a result of 2015 public education sessions we were able to reach over 1200 new targeted persons; distributed over 1,500 brochures, inclusive of flyers, copies of the Equal Opportunity Act, Guidelines for Employers Handbook and complaint forms. However, it is imperative to state that the statistics used inadequately represented the public's true perceptions of the EOC. Therefore, it was highly recommended that a proposed collaboration with the Research and Legal Units be conducted for a baseline assessment of discrimination issues in Trinidad and Tobago.

Furthermore, the proposed survey would equip the EOC with more accurate data on the discrimination issues and provide target settings for segmented audiences as well as identify vulnerable groups.

Corporate Communications protocol, policies, procedures and guidelines

- A series of memos outlining procedures and protocols were issued to members of staff.
- A training programme titled "Customer Service- Telephone Etiquette" was conducted for members of staff.

Publications

All significant milestones and events were communicated to the media posted on the EOC's website via a number of Press Releases and printed publication such as the Strategic Plan, Annual Report, Legal Notices and Freedom of Information Statement.

Public Education/Awareness Sessions

Public Education

By section 27(1) (b) the Commission is required “to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status generally.” Further section 27(1) (e) charges the Commission “To develop, conduct (and foster research and) educational programmes and other programmes for the purpose of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status.”

FEBRUARY



Rio Claro/ Mayaro Regional Corporation
Date: 25 February, 2015
Venue: Chaguanas.

MARCH



Courtesy Call: Mayor of Chaguanas
Date: 31 March, 2015
Venue: Chaguanas

MAY



United Nations World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development 2015 - Mayaro
Date: 20 May, 2015
Venue: Mayaro



Siparia Regional Corporation
Date: 26 May, 2015
Venue: Siparia.



United Nations World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development 2015 - Rio Claro
Date: 28 May, 2015
Venue: Rio Claro

JUNE



ROYTEC trading as UWI School of Business and Applied Studies Limited
Date: Friday, 5 June, 2015
Venue: North Campus, 1 36-138 Henry Street, Port of Spain



US Embassy Courtesy Call on the EOC - United States Judge G. Helen Whitener
Date: 17 June, 2015
Venue: Chaguanas



Ministry of Science and Technology
Date: 23 June, 2015
Venue: Port of Spain

JULY



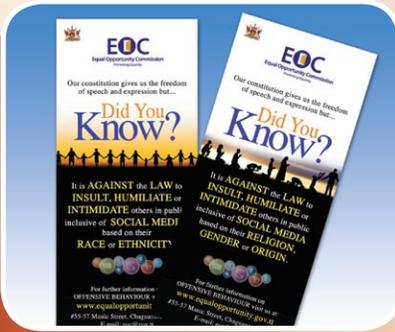
ROYTEC trading as UWI School of Business and Applied Studies Limited
Date: 2 July, 2015
Venue: Port of Spain



TTMA's Trade and Investment Convention
Dates: 8-11 July, 2015
Venue: Macoya

Public Education/Awareness Sessions (continued)

AUGUST



'Did You Know?' Advertising Campaign- Part 1 (Offensive Behaviour)

*Dates: 3-27 August, 2015
Published on EOC's Website and the three (3) daily newspapers.*

SEPTEMBER



National HIV/AIDS Workplace Advocacy and Sustainability Centre (HASC), Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development

*Date: 29 and 30 September 2015
Venue: Angostura House, Corner Eastern Main Road and Trinity Avenue, Laventille*

OCTOBER



National HIV/AIDS Workplace Advocacy and Sustainability Centre (HASC), Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development

*Date: 1 October, 2015
Venue: Claxton Bay*

OCTOBER



Courtesy Call by Visiting Her Honour, Senator Kerry Ann Ifill, President of The Senate of Barbados to President of The Senate of Trinidad and Tobago, Senator the Honourable Christine Kangaloo

*Date: 14 October, 2015
Venue: Port of Spain*

American Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago Health and Safety Conference

*Date: 8 October, 2015
Venue: Port of Spain*



Courtesy Call to His Excellency, Anthony Aquinas Carmona, ORTT, SC, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago by Her Honour, Senator Kerry Ann Ifill, President of the Senate of Barbados

*Date: 15 October, 2015
Venue: St Ann's*



NOVEMBER



MINISTRY OF FINANCE
*Date: 16 November, 2015
Venue: Port of Spain*

DECEMBER



The EOC in Collaboration with the Network of NGOs in Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women Press Briefing on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) On Human Rights Day

*Date: 10 December, 2015
Venue: Port of Spain.*

Report from the **Communications Unit** (continued)



Courtesy Calls

Notably, the Chairman and Board of Commissioners paid courtesy calls to the:

- **President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**, His Excellency, Anthony Aquinas Carmona, ORTT, SC. with visiting guest of the EOC, Her Honour, Senator Kerry Ann Ifill, President of the Senate of Barbados.
- **President of the Senate of Trinidad and Tobago**, Senator the Honourable Christine Kangaloo with visiting guest of the EOC, Her Honour, Senator Kerry Ann Ifill, President of the Senate of Barbados.
- **Attorney General**, the Honorable Faris Al-Rawi, Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs.
- **Mayor of Chaguanas**, His worship, Mayor Gopaul Boodan.
- The **United States Embassy** paid a Courtesy Call to the Equal Opportunity Commission with visiting United States Judge G. Helen Whitener in celebration of Caribbean-American Heritage Month and the promotion of human rights and tolerance by the US Embassy.

The Preparation of Budgetary Estimates and Expenditure

The Communications unit utilises allocations under votes 62 (Promotion, Publicity and Printing) and 66 (Hosting of Conferences, Seminars) and other functions.

Communications Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

- The unit was also able to monitor and archive daily newspaper clippings articles, broadcast and/or new media that mentioned the Commission or any member of the Commission in articles and stories. Additionally, a six (6) month media analysis/ review was generated to reflect matters related to equal opportunity and human rights locally, regionally and internationally.
- Evaluations were conducted after each awareness / workshop sessions and feedback provided for a database to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of Corporate Communications and client service provided for recommended necessary changes.

Staff of the Communications Unit

The Communications Unit currently comprises a Manager, Corporate Communications and a Corporate Communications Officer.

With the growing demands and requests from stakeholders for public education sessions throughout Trinidad and Tobago, recommendations have been made to have additional positions added to the department to cope with the increased needs of the organisation. These are notably, Public Education Officer and Web Communications Officer.

The Communications Unit looks forward to 2016 and implementing its initiatives. We continue to support the Commission's mandate in fulfilling its vision and mission through strategic communications both internally and externally, to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Report from the **General Administration Unit**



This report provides details of the work of the General Administration Unit of the Equal Opportunity Commission in 2015.

The General Administration Unit is currently staffed by the following members:

- Administrative Officer IV (Ag.)
- Clerk IV
- Accounting Assistant (Ag.)
- Receptionist/ Telephone Operator
- Driver/Messenger
- Office Support Assistant and
- Hospitality Attendant

Our purpose is to provide daily support, for all internal members of the Equal Opportunity Commission and by extension our external clients, the public.

Our activities would involve the administrative and accounting support to the Chairman and Board of Commissioners, Chief Executive Officer our internal managers and their support staff: Head Legal, Corporate Communications, Information Technology, Human Resources, Research and Mediation.

Accounts Section

Financial Expenditure

During the period January 2015 – December 2015 the Equal Opportunity Commission obtained releases in the sum of eight million, two hundred and sixty-three thousand, nine hundred and fourteen dollars (TTD \$8,263,914) from the Budget Division, Ministry of Finance. This sum was in relation to Goods and Services (02/003) and Minor Equipment (03/003).

Out of these releases the sum of eight million, fifty-three thousand, five hundred and ninety-six dollars (8,053,596) was spent under 02/003 – Goods and Services (this consisted of Fixed cost \$2,272,777 and Variable cost \$5,780,819) and one hundred and ninety-one thousand, six hundred and eighteen dollars (\$191,618) was spent under 03/003 – Minor Equipment.

A total of eight million, two hundred and forty-five thousand, two hundred and fourteen dollars (\$8,245,214) was utilized by the Equal Opportunity Commission for 2015.

(All figures have been rounded off to the nearest dollar)

Report from the **General Administration Unit** (continued)

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION STATEMENT OF EXPENSES FOR THE YEAR 2015	
Goods and Services (02/003)	TT \$
Fixed Cost	
Rent/Lease	2070,000
Janitorial Services	202,777
Total Fixed Cost	2,272,777
Variable Cost	
Travelling & Subsistence	93,853
Electricity	232,698
Telephone	237,902
Stationery	110,995
Books	15,369
Maintenance Vehicle	23,384
Maintenance Equipment	55,506
Contract Employment	3218,768
Training	101,703
Official Entertainment	2,443
Repair and Maintenance building	99,900
Fees	105
Other Contracted Services	57,649
Security	415,302
Postage	189
Medical	50,000
Travelling -Direct charges	116,640
Promotion/Publicity/Printing	618,745
Hosting of Conference	328,935
Fuel & Lubricants	733
Total Variable Cost	5,780,818
Minor Equipment	
Office Equipment	88,729
Furniture	50,050
Other Minor Equipment	52,839
Total Minor Equipment	191,618
Total Expenditure	8,245,214

Table 18

Report from the Human Resources Unit



This report provides details of the work of the Human Resource Unit at the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) during 2015.

Functions of the Human Resource Unit

The core functions of the HR Unit are:

- Recruitment and Selection
- Training and Development
- Human Resource Planning
- Employee Relations
- Administrative Human Resource Service
- Performance Management
- Develop and Implement Policies and Procedures
- Strategic Human Resource Management

During the year 2015, the Human Resource Unit was kept fully occupied with all of these functions and the following are highlights of some achievements and the work done.

Staffing at the Commission in 2015

The EOC comprises of employees on fixed-term contracts, short-term engagements, public service employees, On the Job Trainees and officers under the purview of the Salary Review Commission (SRC). During the year 2015, there were four resignations, one retirement, two expired fixed term contracts, one renewal of a fixed term contract, four new fixed term contracts, several short-term engagements and movement of public officers. As at December 31, 2015 the EOC was staffed with thirty-one people.

It is to be noted that the EOC supported the In-Service Training Programme partnership between the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs and the Hugh Wooding Law School by

facilitating In-Service Training of nine students during the period of June 1, 2015 to August 31, 2015.

The EOC's Six Year Contract Employment Staffing Plan for New Positions was submitted to the Public Management Consulting Division (PMCD), Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) in May 2014. The Human Resource Unit worked on this plan consistently to provide additional information and clarification to PMCD until the comments were completed on September 4, 2015. Prior to completion of these comments, the HR Unit was required to provide workload statistics, process maps, additional justifications and had several meetings with PMCD. The EOC was unable to submit the comments from PMCD on the Six-Year Contract Employment Staffing Plan for New Positions to Cabinet as, the general elections were called on September 7, 2015 and thus Cabinet had been absolved at the time. Further, with the change in government administration and the merging of ministries a rationalisation exercise of staff was undertaken and the EOC was instructed to hold on submitting the approved comments to Cabinet for approval.

Recruitment and Selection

In December 2014 the EOC advertised the following vacant positions:

- Business Operations Assistant I
- Business Operations Assistant II
- Legal Officer II
- Investigating Officer
- Supervisor, Investigating Officer
- Transcriptionist

Report from the **Human Resources Unit** (continued)

For some of the positions, an overwhelming number of applications were received. These applications were received in January 2015, however, the short listing did not begin immediately due to Human Resource staffing constraints and a decision by the EOC to pause the recruitment for some of the positions based on the number of complaints being received. The Human Resource Unit resumed the recruitment for the Business Operations Assistants I & II, completed the shortlisting for these positions, conducted telephone reference checks and structured panel interviews by October 2015. The recruitment for the positions of Business Operations Assistants I & II was placed on hold following the undertaking of the rationalisation exercise in the public service which arose out of the change in government administration and subsequent merging of Ministries.

Staff of the Human Resource Unit

The Human Resource Unit continues to be led by the Chief Executive Officer and comprises of one Human Resource Officer I and one Human Resource Specialist who is employed on a short term basis. The major challenge of the Human Resource Unit is that it is understaffed and, therefore, unable to adequately meet the growing needs of the Commission, at all times. The EOC made a proposal to Public Management Consulting Division (PMCD), Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) in its Six-Year Contract Employment Staffing Plan- New Contract Positions for technical Human Resource contract staff, however, the Human Resource positions were not approved by PMCD. The Human Resource Officer I proceeded on vacation leave in September, 2015 and no suitable replacement was sourced. Despite the human resource constraints of the Human Resource Unit, the existing staff endeavoured to do their best to satisfy the Human Resource needs of the EOC.

Report from the **Human Resources Unit** (continued)

Organisational Structure

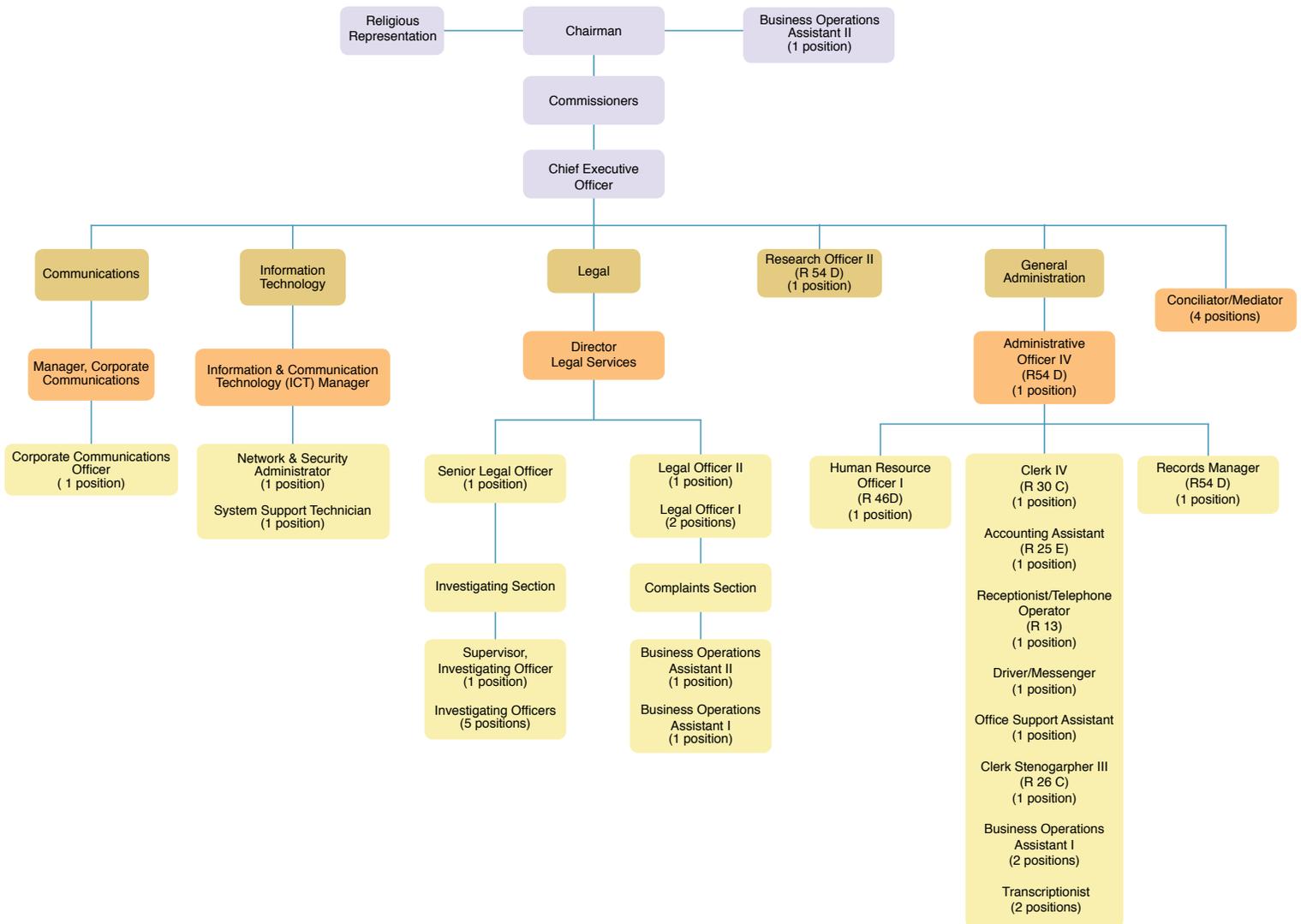


Table 19

Report from the **Human Resources Unit** (continued)

Training and Development

The EOC was allocated one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00) in the 2014/2015 budget for Training. We continue to recognise the importance of training and developing our human resources to enable a higher standard of performance. In 2015, the Human Resource Unit coordinated several training programmes which were facilitated both internally and externally. Organisations such as the Public Service Academy, Chief Personnel Officer (CPO), Employers Solution Centre and other private institutions were engaged. Please see below Table 1 – for a list of training provided to staff in 2015.

In late 2014, the Human Resource Unit with guidance from the Chairman sought proposals to engage a consultant for a Strategic Planning Retreat. DRA Consulting led by Ms. Dawn Richards the Principal Consultant was selected to facilitate the retreat which was hosted at The University of the West Indies, Inn and Conference Centre on 23 & 24 January, 2015. The retreat was entitled “Re-visioning Retreat – Remapping our EOC Culture.” On 23 January, 2015 all members of staff except one (1) person attended the retreat and the participants committed to moving to high performance and embraced the concept “Change begins with me.”

On January 24, 2015 the Management team and the senior officers were engaged and they drafted the way forward. Ms. Richards provided the Commissioners with a report on the retreat and that paved the way for the work that was done on the EOC Strategic Plan 2015-2018.

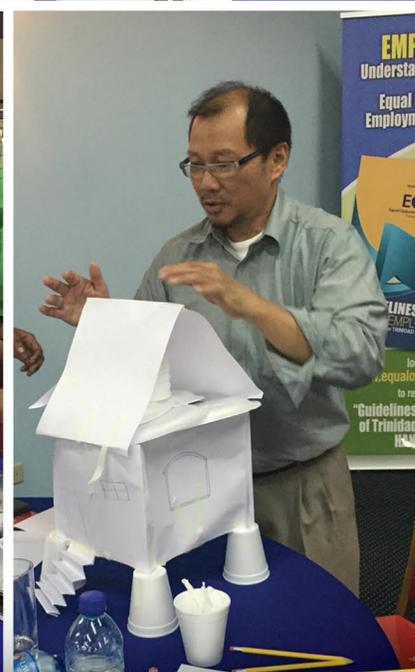
The EOC did not receive any allocations under the vote for Official Overseas Travel, but was able to access funds in 2015 from the Ministry of the Attorney General renamed Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs to facilitate foreign travel for two Commissioners. Please see below for details:

- Our Vice Chairman Dr. Beverly Beckles attended the 31st Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability and Diversity: “Deep Impact” in Honolulu, Hawaii, United States of America May 17-20, 2015.
- Our Chairman Mrs. Lynette Seebaran-Suite was invited to and attended the Women’s Leadership Advocacy Event in Nairobi, Kenya on June 10-11, 2015.

Specific training in Human Rights, Discrimination and Investigations is not available in Trinidad and Tobago and thus, the EOC seeks international training to build the expertise of its technical staff, however, the EOC needs funding to source this training.



Re-visioning Retreat- Remapping our EOC Culture 2015



Report from the **Human Resources Unit** (continued)

Name of Training/Seminar	Institution/Facilitator	Participants (Position)	No. of persons trained
Formal Launch & Technical Workshop on the National Standard for Accessible Buildings	Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vice Chairman 	1
Performance Management & Appraisal System	Office of the Chief Personnel Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative Officer IV Manager, Information & Communication Technology Senior Legal Officer Legal Officer I Conciliator/Mediator 	5
Cabinet Note Writing for Senior Officers	Public Service Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director, Legal Services 	1
Critical Thinking Skills	Public Service Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief Executive Officer Senior Legal Officer 	2
Global Equality & Diversity Conference – Online Access	Neil Stewart and Associates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vice Chairman Chief Executive Officer Director, Legal Services Legal Officers I Investigating Officers Conciliator/Mediator Research Officer II Manager, Corporate Communications Corporate Communications Officer Manager, Information and Communication Technology System Support Technician 	14
HRMATT's 10th Biennial Conference	The Human Resource Management Association of Trinidad & Tobago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief Executive Officer 	1
Mediator's Forum Part 1 – Mediation Unscripted	Mediation Board of Trinidad & Tobago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conciliator/Mediator 	1
Sensitisation Session	National Centre for Persons with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff members 	25

Report from the **Human Resources Unit** (continued)

Name of Training/Seminar	Institution/Facilitator	Participants (Position)	No. of persons trained
Basic Training – Office 365 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online Email & People - Skype for Business - Calendar - One Drive for Business 	Information and Communication Technology Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff members 	22
Customer Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Telephone Etiquette 	Corporate Communications Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone Operator/ Receptionist • Office Support Assistant • Hospitality Aide • Administrative Officer IV • Manager, Information and Communication Technology • System Support Technician • On The Job Trainee 	7
Share Point 2013 Deployment & Upgrade	iGovtt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network & Security Administrator 	1
Microsoft Office 365 Exchange Online: Administration & Configuration	iGovtt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network & Security Administrator 	1
Microsoft Office 365 Share Point Online: Administration & Configuration	iGovtt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager, Information & Communication Technology 	1
Proposed amendments to the Industrial Relations Act and its impact on the business community	Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive Officer • Director, Legal Services • Human Resource Officer I • Human Resource Specialist 	4
Network & Outreach for Disability Education & Sensitisation Conference in collaboration with the Disability Studies Unit (NODES)	University of the West Indies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive Officer • Director, Legal Services • Manager, Corporate Communications • Investigating Officer 	4
Inventory Management	Public Service Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office Support Assistant 	1
Developing Leadership Skills for Middle-Level Officers	Public Service Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Legal Officer • Manager, Information & Communication Technology 	2
Building Emotionally Intelligent Leaders	Public Service Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager, Corporate Communications 	1

Table 20

Report from the **Human Resources Unit** (continued)

Strategic Human Resource Management

Following the “Re-visioning Retreat – Remapping our EOC Culture” in January 2015, the Commissioners and the Management team began work on the EOC’s Strategic Plan 2015-2018. There were a series of meetings and brainstorming sessions to come up with the strategic plan and the Human Resource Specialist together with Human Resource Officer I were actively involved in the sessions. Arising out of the strategic plan was a Work Plan for the Human Resource Unit for the period 2015-2018. The Human Resource Unit is responsible for implementing this plan and provides quarterly updates to the Chief Executive Officer. The Work Plan of the Human Resource Unit seeks to accomplish objectives under the Goal: “To maximise the efficiency and the effectiveness of the Commission.”

Developing and Implementing Policies and Procedures at the EOC

A Policy Review Committee was formed in February 2015 consisting of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, one Commissioner, the Senior Legal Officer and the Human Resource Specialist. This committee is charged with the responsibility of drafting, reviewing and implementing policies and procedures at the EOC. The committee works closely with the CEO and the Human Resource Unit to determine the policies to be implemented and has to frequently conduct research into the Public Service Regulations. Several policies and procedures have been implemented over the year 2015 and the Human Resource Unit has developed and distributed a working Staff Policy Manual. The Human Resource Unit will continue to work closely with the Policy Review Committee to develop, review and update this manual.

Performance Management

The Human Resource Unit has completed the implementation of the Performance Management and Appraisal System. Performance Appraisals for officers of the EOC were completed by December 31, 2015 and the next set of appraisals are due in 2016.

Human Resource Committee

In October 2015, the Commissioners set up a Human Resource Committee to provide guidance and support to the Human Resource Unit. This committee consists of the Chairman, Vice Chairman and the Human Resource Specialist. The committee has already begun working together and has handled several Human Resource matters.

As we look forward to 2016 the Human Resource Unit will continue to work towards the development of the staff of the EOC so that they will be true assets to the EOC and by extension the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The Human Resource Unit looks forward to working with the various committees and staff to improve efficiency at the EOC.

Report from the Information Technology Unit



This report provides details of the work of the Information Technology Unit (ITU) for the Equal Opportunity Commission in 2015.

Overview

One of the objectives of The Equal Opportunity Commission is to improve the levels of service to the public. To help deliver this objective, the ITU must now transition itself to be more focused on service delivery than just a technology focused operation. "An Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Service delivery model refers to the processes and practices employed by an organisation to ensure consistent delivery of reliable, cost effective and of consistent high quality service to business users." (William Makatiani, Business Daily Africa, Sept. 2012)

Traditional ICT units spend most of its time resolving system failures, service outages, etc., however, most staff don't really focus on inner workings of services but just the general experience of using these services. To achieve this, the ITU will consider different cloud solutions to assist with the monitoring and maintenance for some of its services, while they focus on the business operations of the organisation through technology.

During the annual year of 2015, the unit had the addition of an ICT Manager (joined February 2015) and maintained its technical staff of Systems Support Technician (joined August 2013) and a Network and Security Administrator (joined September 2013). During this time period, we also had the assistance of one other resource, an Information Technology Assistant for a period of one year, however, this short term engagement came to an end in September 2015.

ITU Project Achievements for 2015

At our last Annual Report of 2014, a list of seven projects were targeted to improve the EOC operations. The achievements of those projects were as follows:

- **Improved the Email services to employees with better flexibility and availability in a mobile environment**

The biggest project for the ITU was migrating the email and personal storage services of staff to a Microsoft cloud-based environment called Office 365 (shortened as O365). This new O365 platform facilitated a more secure and flexible collaboration between employees, bringing more productivity, which in turn better supported the demands of the organisation.

The unit took the initiative to implement this solution and train the EOC staff in June 2015. As a result, this saved the organisation costs which would have otherwise run approximately \$7,200 TTD for implementation and \$50,186.80 TTD for the training of thirty-four (34) staff users.

- **Worked with our voice service providers to reduce the monthly operational cost**

Effective February 2015, the ITU reduced operational costs, by utilising Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) Card features of our Private Branch Exchange (PBX) system to make cost effective calls and consolidate our services.

Report from the **Information Technology Unit** (continued)

Area	Previous (e.g. Jan 2015)	Current (e.g. Apr 2015)
Service Provider	TSTT	TSTT
Monthly Rental	\$4,530 TTD	\$1,861 TTD
Avg. Usage Costs	\$16,990.17 TTD	\$201.25
Final Bill (per month)	\$22K - \$28K	\$2K - \$2.5K

Table 21

It must be noted that Four (4) SIM cards from our local service provider, Telecommunication Services of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT) are being rented at an additional cost of \$2,900 TTD a month i.e. (4 x \$725 TTD). Using these services, the costs have had an overall reduction of monthly rental costs by 80.4%. This saved the organisation approximately \$22,500 TTD monthly or \$270,000 TTD annually.

By extension, our mobile phone services were also reviewed for all staff where monthly packaged plans of eleven (11) users were changed from the "GOLD" plan package to the "SILVER" package. This change brought a reduction of the overall monthly rental costs by approximately 25% which saved the organisation approximately \$1,265 TTD monthly or \$15,180 TTD annually.

- **Worked with our internet providers to improve the services and reduce rental costs**

Effective April 2015, the internet services of the EOC were reviewed and more cost effective services were contracted.

Area	Previous	Current
Service Provider	TSTT	Digicel
Up Speed	2 Mbps	50 Mbps
Down Speed	6 Mbps	100 Mbps
Cost (per month)	\$2,570.40 (VAT Inclusive)	\$804.99 (VAT inclusive)

Table 22

The change in internet service provider improved the service speeds by 94% and a reduction of monthly rental costs by 68.7%. This saved the organisation approximately \$1,765.41 TTD monthly or \$21,184.94 TTD annually.

- **Expanded network capabilities using best practices for a secure Wi-Fi infrastructure:**

Upon reviewing the Equal Opportunity Commission' infrastructure, our existing Wi-Fi was not reliable and did not suit the needs of the organisation to provide an environment for mobile users. The Wi-Fi had limitations of providing basic internet services to our mobile users, but it could not be configured to provide access to on-premise data that resides on our network. Research showed that we needed equipment that was compatible with our existing wired network and purchase of a proper firewall and compatible access points were necessary. To avoid the responsibility of maintaining and supporting additional hardware which can lead to more costs, a decision was made to have FLOW provide managed firewall security and Wi-Fi Services. This decision has served the commission well with little downtime and quick resolution to network failures by the service provider.

- **Update the organisation's software with the latest version to take advantage of the new and improved features**

The Equal Opportunity Commission utilised the existing physical hardware and maximised its use by upgrading its servers and machines to newer technologies, therefore allowing new and improved features to assist with the ITU's day to day operations. This includes business continuity and disaster recovery procedures. The following upgrades were completed:

- Upgrade of user desktops to a mixture of Windows 7 and Windows 10 operating systems
- Upgrade of user office suite to Office 2013 Pro and Visio 2013 Std.

Report from the **Information Technology Unit** (continued)

- Upgrade of our main server to Windows Server 2012 R2 - Datacentre, therefore, utilising Hyper-V virtualisation
- Installation of Symantec Backup Exec for our Business Continuity plan including disaster recovery

Outstanding Projects, challenges and direction for 2016

Due to budget cuts and prioritising projects, the following are now planned for 2016

- Improve the Surveillance Systems of the Building including the Parking Lot
- Update the organisation's software with the latest version to take advantage of the new and improved features
- Implement a Legal and Case Management System for tracking complaints of the commission
- Improving the Website making it more interactive with the General Public
- Integrate all solutions on a common collaborative portal for all units to access securely

With these special projects implemented, The ITU of the Equal Opportunity Commission will keep to its strategic direction by becoming more focused on the day to day business operations especially as it relates to complaints.

Review of the Equal Opportunity Act

Under section 27(1)(c) of the Equal Opportunity Act Chapter 22:03 the Commission is mandated "to keep under review the working of the Act and any relevant law and, when required or otherwise thinks it necessary, to draw up and submit proposals for amending them."

Following a review in 2010, proposals were initially sent to the Attorney General by letter dated 19 July 2010. An Amendment Bill was drafted and laid in the 1st Session of the 10th Parliament on 1 June 2011 as the **Equal Opportunity Amendment Bill (No 2) 2011**. The Bill lapsed on 17 June 2011 and has not been re-laid. The Commission took the opportunity to reassess the proposals and under cover of letter dated 26 February 2014, the Commission advised the Attorney General that:

- some of the proposed amendments should be pursued
- some of the proposed amendments should no longer be pursued
- some of the proposed amendments should be reformulated and
- other new amendments are now proposed and respectfully, should be included.

A report was attached in which these recommendations were detailed. In summary, the major proposals are:

A. Amendments proposed in the 2011 Bill that should be pursued

1. Include cohabitants in marital status: The Act provides for protection from discrimination on the ground of 'marital status' and this is defined to mean being one of the following: single, married, married but separated, divorced or widowed. The 2011 Bill proposed an amendment to include half-blood relationships and Cohabitants (as defined in the Co-habitational Relationship Act Chapter 45:55) in the definitions of 'family' and 'marital status' which the Commission felt was still relevant and necessary.

- 2. Change the threshold for receiving late complaints:** Section 30 of the Act provides that a complaint of discrimination shall be lodged within 6 months of the alleged act of discrimination, but the Commission may accept a complaint outside of this time 'in exceptional circumstances'. The 2011 Bill proposed an amendment to change the words 'in exceptional circumstances' to 'if it is reasonable to do so', and to add a new subsection (4) to empower the Commission to accept complaints that relate to matters that occurred between January 2001 to April 2008. The Commission supports this.
- 3. Include a duty to assist:** The 2011 Bill proposed the inclusion of a new section 30B which provided that the Commission has a duty to assist persons who wish to lodge a complaint. The Commission supports this.
- 4. Allow the Tribunal to grant interim injunctions:** The 2011 Bill proposed the inclusion of a new section 32A which allowed the Commission to apply to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal (the 'Tribunal') for an interim injunction. The Commission supports this.
- 5. Allowing for appeals to the Tribunal:** Under the present schemata of the Act, if upon investigating a complaint, the Commission found no evidence of discrimination, it informs the complainant accordingly and closes off the matter. This brings the matter to an end. The 2011 Bill proposed an amendment to allow a complainant to request that their matter be referred to the Tribunal if they disagree with the Commission's decision that there is no evidence of discrimination. The Commission supports this.

Review of the **Equal Opportunity Act** (continued)

6. Allow the Commission to institute contempt proceedings: Under the existing provisions of the Act, if a matter has been referred to conciliation and an agreement has been reached, the agreement is drawn up, signed and registered with the Equal Opportunity Tribunal. The 2011 Bill proposed an amendment to allow the Commission to initiate contempt proceedings before the Tribunal that where there has been a breach of an agreement. The Commission supports this.

B. Amendments proposed in the 2011 Bill that should no longer be pursued:

- 1. Remove the proposed prescribed forms:** The 2011 Bill proposed that the form on which a complaint should be lodged should be provided for in an Appendix to the Act but the Commission did not think it desirable that the forms to be used should be cemented in statute, as this would not allow for flexibility in revising and restructuring the form
- 2. Remove the proposed requirement that the Commission inform a Respondent that there was no case of discrimination:** The 2011 Bill proposed that where the Commission has found no evidence of discrimination to support the complainant's allegations, the Commission should be mandated to write to a respondent and inform them of this. While the Commission felt that this should be part of a good customer-relations process, it was not felt desirable that this be mandated in statute. Firstly, this may be useless, as there are instances when, based on the existing information supplied by a complainant, the Commission was able to dispose of a complaint without ever writing to a respondent, and secondly, there may be instances where the Commission may think it appropriate and necessary to revisit an earlier decision, and it should have the freedom to do so.
- 3. Remove the proposed extra steps in sanctioning a party for non-compliance:** Under the present the Act, the Commission is empowered to send a notice to any person to provide information by a certain date and a notice to a party to attend conciliation. If someone fails and/or refuses to comply with either such notice, the Commission can institute a summary prosecution

before the Magistrates Court. The 2011 Bill proposed that in the case of non-compliance by a respondent, the Commission would issue a certificate, apply to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal for an *ex parte* order and then thereafter file a summary complaint before the Magistrates Court. The Commission did not see the need to encumber the process with the extra steps of issuing a certificate and applying to the Tribunal for an order and recommended that this be removed.

- 4. Removing the proposal that conciliation is deemed unsuccessful after 28 days:** The 2011 Bill proposed that conciliation should be deemed unsuccessful if a matter is unresolved after twenty-eight days. While the Commission agreed that the process should be done with due expedition, it was not felt that a limitation period should be cemented in statute. Conciliation is a voluntary process where the parties seek to arrive at a mutually acceptable resolution between themselves, and the parties may need more than 28 days to consider proposals, respond, and have meaningful dialogue.

C. Amendments proposed in the 2011 Bill that ought to be reformulated:

- 1. HIV/AIDS as well as other illnesses ought to be included as part of disability:** The 2011 Bill proposed that HIV/AIDS ought to be added as a status ground. However, Disability Discrimination Legislation in other countries (in particular, in the **Americans With Disability Act 1990** (as amended in 2008) and **United Kingdom Equality Act 2010**) provide for HIV/AIDS as a disability rather than a separate status ground, and the Commission believes that this approach should be favoured. Further these other legislations provide that certain other diseases ought to be deemed disabilities as well, in particular, cancer and multiple sclerosis, and certain conditions, ought not for reasons of public policy, be given protection, such as paedophilia, kleptomania, compulsive gambling. The Commission favoured this approach
- 2. A more comprehensive definition of disability:** The definition of disability ought to be amended to bring it closer to what is contained in the two aforementioned

Review of the **Equal Opportunity Act** (continued)

pieces of legislation, where emphasis is placed on the day-to-day and long-term effects of disability on a person, rather than on their medical condition. Concurrently, the proposed amendments with respect to 'reasonable adjustment/accommodation' would have to be revisited given that to some extent it already exists via the exception for 'unjustifiable hardship'.

D. New or additional amendments that ought to be included:

1. **Status should not be limited to only one protected characteristic:** "Status" as defined in the existing section 3 suggests that it must be an individual characteristic (for example, a person's race, a person's religion). The Commission recommended that "status" should mean any one or more of the listed characteristics, given that in our society, a person may be discriminated against not because of an individual characteristic, but because of a combination of characteristics that apply to them.
2. **Age ought to be added as a status ground, and hand-in-hand certain exceptions ought to be provided for:** The Commission has previously proposed that age be added as a "status" and this has been incorporated into the 2011 Bill. However, it was recognised that there are instances when it is acceptable for legislation or policy to provide for an entitlement or obligation to be based on a person's age, for example, the minimum age to obtain a driving permit or purchase cigarettes or alcohol. In the absence of a specified minimum or maximum age, decisions would have to be made by some person or entity on a case-by-case basis; this opens the door to subjectivity and arbitrariness even in the best of cases and corruption and abuse in less-altruistic situations. The Commission recommended that using sections 33 to 43 of the *Australian Age Discrimination Act No 68 of 2004* as a guide, provision ought to be made for exceptions where decisions or considerations based on age would not be considered discriminatory. Additionally, provision ought to be made exempting employment promotions based on seniority and mandatory retirement ages.

3. **Allowing the Commission to discontinue an investigation where it is frivolous, vexatious or has already been adequately dealt with:** The current section 32 mandates the Commission to investigate all complaints lodged with it. Read in conjunction with section 34, it would seem that a matter can only be discontinued where after an investigation the Commission has found no evidence of discrimination. The Commission recommended that it should be empowered to discontinue an investigation where it is of the opinion that the complaint is:
 - (i.) trivial, frivolous, vexatious or not made in good faith, misconceived or lacking in substance
 - (ii.) involves a subject matter that has been adequately dealt with by another court, tribunal, public body, entity or forum
 - (iii.) involves a subject matter that would be more appropriate for another Court, tribunal, public body, entity or forum
4. **Power to request documents:** The current section 33 empowers the Commission to request information via notice in writing. Given that information may be contained in documents, the Commission has regularly requested documents and has not had a difficulty receiving any. However, the Commission recommended that for the sake of clarity, it should also be expressly empowered to request documents as well.
5. **Expanding the range of persons who may be convicted:** The current section 36 provides that persons who have failed and/or refused to provide information to the Commission can be summarily convicted, but only either an individual or a body corporate could be sentenced by way of fine. There are, however, many entities who are regularly asked to provide information, who are neither individuals nor bodies corporate, for example Ministries, Government Departments, Service Commissions, faith-based organisations, community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations. The Commission has expressed concern that if the Act is not modified to capture all of these persons then the Act itself becomes discriminatory in that while it recognises where the offence can be committed by anyone, only some are subjected to sanction while

Review of the **Equal Opportunity Act** (continued)

others can walk away with impunity. The Commission recommended that all entities be brought under the sanction.

6. **'Referring' a matter to the Tribunal, rather than 'initiating proceedings':** The current section 39(2) provides that where a complaint before the Commission is unresolved (and the Commission has taken certain steps), the Commission shall 'initiate proceedings' before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal on behalf and with the consent of the complainant. The Commission would prefer that the section be amended to task the Commission with 'referring' the matter rather than 'initiating proceedings' as the latter has led to a number of practical difficulties.
7. **Empowering the Commission to give assistance to persons before the Tribunal:** While the Commission does not want to bear the obligation to institute proceedings in all matters, it would like to give effect to the intent of the framers of the Act and provide assistance to some complainants in taking their matter before the Tribunal. It is to be noted that Commissions in other jurisdictions do this (e.g. Hong Kong). The Commission would like to have this power expressly stated in the Act. The mechanics as to how it should be exercised should be left to the Commission to formulate and modify over time.

8. **Extending the privilege of things said in conciliation to proceedings before other Courts:** The current section 40 provides that evidence of anything said or done in the course of conciliation proceedings shall not be admissible in proceedings before the Tribunal. The Commission has recommended that this privilege extend to any other Court and not just limited to the Tribunal as there are unresolved complaints that the complainant would prefer to take to another Court for example the Industrial Court (through a Trade Union) or the High Court rather than to the Tribunal, as the complainant may feel that the other Courts may offer a more appropriate remedy.

Subsequent to this proposals being sent, the Commission, by letter dated October 15, 2014, the Commission sought to include the following additional proposal:

9. **Sexual Orientation** ought to be added as a Status ground for protection.

In December 2014, the Attorney General referred the Commission's proposals of February 2014 to the Law Reform Commission. That Commission has sent the proposals out to select stakeholders for consultation and feedback. The Equal Opportunity Commission looks forward to a prompt resolution of that process and to the drafting and tabling of the necessary amendment Bill before Parliament.

Preparation and Publication of Guidelines

Under section 27(1) (f) of the Equal Opportunity Act Chapter 22:03 [Act No 69 of 2000 as amended], the Commission is mandated “to prepare and publish appropriate guidelines for the avoidance of discrimination.”

The Strategic Planning booklet was prepared and published by the Management team in 2015.

Under the guidance of the Commissioners and the Chief Executive Officer, the Legal and Communication Unit will work together to create and publish appropriate publications for dissemination to all stakeholders in 2016.

Submission of Report

This Report is submitted to the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, pursuant to Section 52 of the Equal Opportunity Act, Chapter 22:03 [Act No. 69 of 2000 as amended] on March 31, 2016.

Staff Social Events Committee

The Staff Social Events Committee for 2015 comprised of the Director, Legal Services, the Human Resource Specialist, the Corporate Communications Officer and the System Support Technician.

This committee arranged several events during the year which were successful. The staff contributed and participated wholeheartedly in these events and comradery was evident. The intention of the Staff Social Events Committee was to increase cohesiveness and to encourage socialisation among the staff.

The events for 2015 included the following:

- January 2015 Welcome to 2015
- April 2015 EOC's first Cook Out
- May 2015 Mother's Day
- May 2015 Annual Cricket event
- June 2015 Father's Day & Labour Day
- August 2015 Republic and Independence Day
Lime
- November 2015 Divali luncheon followed by
activities
- November 2015 Tree Trimming Party
- December 2015 Annual Christmas Eve Day
Brunch

The Human Resource Unit also arranged its Annual Mini Health Fair which was conducted by officials of the North Central Regional Health Authority (NCRHA) on August 14, 2015, at the EOC.

The NCRHA provided the following services:

- Blood Pressure Screening
- Cholesterol Testing
- Blood Glucose Testing
- HIV Testing and Counselling
- Body Mass Index (BMI) and Nutrition
- Mental Health Screening

Internal Events

EOC's Cookout



EOC vs EOT Cricket



Internal Events

EOC's Annual Mini Health Fair



Divali



EOC's Christmas Tree Trimming and Christmas Eve Luncheon





Profile of Commissioners

Chairman –

Mrs. Lynette Seebaran-Suite has over 35 years' experience as a litigator. She is currently the principal of her own firm, Lynette Seebaran and Company. Mrs. Seebaran-Suite has been an advocate for the rights of women and girls, and an avid supporter of the rule of law, due process and social justice. She was highly influential in the national discourse which led to the passage of the Sexual Offences Act in 1986 and spearheaded the national debate leading to the passage of the Domestic Violence Act in 1986, and its amendment in 1991. She also headed the public debate which highlighted the mischief of sexual harassment in the workplace and which has led to the adoption in many workplaces of codes of behaviour.

Over the years, Mrs. Seebaran-Suite has been a member of several statutory bodies, such as the Law Reform Commission, the National Commission on the Status of Women, YTEPP and is a past Chairman of the Port Authority. For many years, she was Legal Advisor to the Cooperative Credit Union League of Trinidad and Tobago and acted as a Director of the League's Stabilisation Fund. She was a board member of the Trinidad Publishing Company Ltd (publisher of the Guardian Newspaper) for more than a decade and during that period served as its legal advisor.

She has also been a member of various ethics committees of CAREC. She heads ASPIRE, which partners with the Family Planning Association in promoting the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women, girls and men in Trinidad and Tobago and regionally. She is the author of many reports and papers on women and children issues and has attended and presented at numerous international and regional conferences.

Mrs. Seebaran-Suite acted as Secretary of the Bar Association for several terms in the 1980's and is currently engaged in establishing a Family Law Association. She currently sits on the Council of the Law Association and was its nominee on the Medical Council of Trinidad and Tobago over the period 2010 to 2013.

At the 50th Independence Awards in 2012, Mrs. Seebaran-Suite was awarded the Medal for the Development of Women, Gold, for her contributions in the area of law. She is married to Engineer Professor Emeritus Winston Suite and is the mother of a daughter, Dara-Chameli who recently graduated in the UK as a medical doctor.



Commissioner –
Dr. Beverly Ann-Marie Beckles – Doctoral Degree in Organisation and Management with Honours from the University of Capella, Minneapolis, USA. Masters in Rehabilitation Administration from Mc Laren School of Business, University of San Francisco, USA.

Dr. Beverly Ann Marie Beckles is the Chief Executive Officer of the National Centre for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD). She has thirty (30) years' experience in the field of disability. As a defender of inclusion of persons with disabilities in all walks of life, her work has been key to the development of National Policy for Persons with Disabilities in seven Caribbean Countries. Her work involves close contact with governments, international agencies and civil societies in the promotion of equal opportunity for persons with disabilities.

Dr. Beckles is highly respected in her field as demonstrated by her involvement in a multiplicity of public and private scenarios. She is a past Director of the Global Applied Disability Research & Information Network on Employment and Training (GLADNET), an international organisation based at Cornell University, USA, past chair and a member of the National Coordinating Committee on Disability. Dr. Beckles has received several acknowledgements for her work in the field of disability nationally, regionally and internationally.

In 1993, she received a National Award in the recognition of community service for persons with disabilities and an international award from Goodwill Industries Inc. in recognition of extensive contribution to persons with disabilities in the Caribbean. She has also received awards from other internationally recognised institutions and has the distinction of being the 1st recipient of the Inter-American Development Bank's Award for Social Entrepreneurship (1999).



Commissioner –

Dr. Indira Rampersad holds a Bachelor of Arts in Language in Literature; a Diploma in International Relations; a Certificate in Translation from Spanish to English; a Master of Philosophy in Latin American Literature; a Master of Philosophy in International Relations and a Ph.D. in Political Science.

She has been awarded two Fulbright scholarships for study in the United States, one at the Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois, to explore the American Political System, the other to undertake her Ph.D. in Political Science at the University of Florida, Gainesville, where she majored in International Relations and minored in Public Policy. Her doctoral dissertation focused on American foreign policy to Cuba on which she has published and presented at many academic and non-academic forums. Her research now extends to Latin American and Caribbean Politics and International Relations, American foreign policy, alternative energy, food security and crime with specific emphasis on the Caribbean.

Dr. Rampersad speaks Spanish fluently and has undertaken extensive research throughout the United States including Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, New York and Washington D.C. Her research has also taken her to Latin America namely Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Panama, Columbia, Brazil and Cuba. She has also been an election observer for the Organisation of American States in Grenada and El Salvador. She has also been writing a regular column for the Trinidad Sunday Guardian and the New York-based Guyana Journal. In addition, she is a regular media commentator on national, regional and international issues.

Dr. Rampersad is now based at the Department of Behavioural Sciences at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, where she is a Lecturer in International Relations.



Commissioner –
Mr. James Chin Chuck is a Senior Product Specialist with the Telecommunication Service of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT) where he leads the charge of innovating new products. This portfolio ranges from managing existing products to generating products and services from inception to commercialisation.

His experience spans the private sector of banking, insurance, credit union and one of the largest conglomerates in food and financial services. He has been able to contribute to the

various companies in the areas of strategic direction, marketing strategies, the competitive intelligence of emerging technologies and driving customer satisfaction programmes.

Mr. James Chin Chuck holds a BSc in Management Specialisation from the University of the West Indies St Augustine with a focus in Marketing, Finance and Management Information Systems. He is currently pursuing an MBA from the Australian Institute of Business.



Commissioner –

Mr. Eric Colin Cowie is a retired career banker having moved through the ranks at RBC Royal Bank. During this time, he amassed extensive experience in the banking industry with specialised knowledge in regulatory compliance, money laundering and anti-terrorist financing.

He also was appointed by the Tobago House of Assembly and was the Vice President of the Pigeon Point heritage park as well as the Tobago hotel association. Mr Cowie is an alumnus of Presentation College San Fernando.