

## Findings in latest TTCSR Review: Time to rethink CSR investments

Editor of the recently launched 2013/2014 T&T Corporate Social Responsibility (TTCSR) Review, Donna Ramsammy said a different approach to responsible governance demands co-operation at all levels, from government, business, community, church and civil society, to confront social ills and improve living conditions and quality of life for all.

“We can choose to work in silos, or we can opt to work together to effect change sooner and in ways that are more sustainable. None of us can do it alone. Working in isolation can be slow and ineffective. Not all of us have access to the same resources—but what we all have is an active conscience, the will and the knowledge and expertise to make the difference,” Ramsammy said at the launch of the second annual edition of TTCSR.

Ramsammy, who heads Virtual Editors which publishes the TTCSR Review, was at the time outlining “disturbing trends” on youth, delinquency and crime from affiliate JWS International Consultants which provided data from research projects undertaken with the Caribbean judicial systems, UNDP and human rights organisations.

“These should compel us to rethink how we prioritise our investments,” said the publisher, adding that while there are many worthwhile projects that are attractive, boost corporate ratings and also having positive impact, there are troubling issues that demand partnership and collaboration across the CSR fraternity.

“As we are all aware thematic and geographical saturation were identified by the UNDP as a concerns for all of us, so this is an area that requires our focus. It might be an indicator that other aspects which require critical intervention are being neglected. Across Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean there are social indicators that are screaming at us. If we don’t act now we may face a societal implosion from which recovery could prove difficult,” she said.

According to data from JWS International Consultants, recidivism is at an estimated 30 to 40 per cent in the Caribbean. Many young people are held for years for non-legal offences. In T&T for example, researchers reported in the Caribbean Human Development Report 2012 that “in the entire population of three juvenile institutions, 58.5 per cent of youth in an institution for young boys and 92.8 per cent of youth in an institution for girls were institutionalised for non-legal acts.

On the issue of violence against children, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has called child sexual abuse “a silent emergency.” It often goes unnoticed and is grossly surrounded by “a culture of silence and stigma”. One in ten children is abused in the Caribbean. Of these, 40 per cent are abused by parents or step-parents; 25 per cent by relatives and 10 per cent by strangers.

“Research has also identified links of sexual abuse in the region to poverty, poor parental supervision, paedophilia, a low prosecution rate, and the widespread accommodation of the commercialisation of sex as a tourist attraction—including the commoditisation of sex with children,” Ramsammy said.

Quoting from a UNDP report published earlier this year, she said it found that high levels of violent crime are hindering development in the Caribbean. The report notes that 8.5 per cent of the global population resides in Latin America and the Caribbean and yet 27 per cent of the world murders take place in the region.

She noted that some of the most significant societal changes, especially those of human rights have occurred worldwide because business joined with civil society to advocate and to act as a force for good.

“In very many ways, that’s what companies are doing—using resources to transform lives, to build skills and professional capacity, to increase wealth distribution and to make communities safer. Some of you are creating great learning spaces in your work places, others are entrenching a culture of safety and care, while others are giving employees the time and means to give back to the communities they live in,” Ramsammy said.

Copies of the latest TTCSR Review have been delivered to government ministers and communications officers, business leaders and chambers of commerce, diplomatic representatives, T&T missions abroad, all tertiary libraries and some secondary school libraries, UN organisations and other international organisations, local tea shops, restaurants and hotels and media houses. A copy has also been posted on the website of Caribbean PR Agency (CPRA) at <http://caribbean-pr-agency.com>

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