



THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES

ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2023

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services has been positively transforming the lives of the people of this country through the provision of quality social services to: **older persons, men and women, young children or orphans, persons with disabilities, widows, socially displaced persons, victims of substance abuse and families.**

The Ministry continues to work diligently to ensure that we continue to help and empower our clients so that they will develop the capacity and resilience required to the point where there is little or no need for the Ministry's intervention.

During the last fiscal year of 2023, the Ministry maintained its focus on the mission to positively transform the lives of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, through the provision of grants, social services and programmes. Over 153,000 clients were in receipt of the various social welfare grants. In addition, over 2000 beneficiaries were able to access emergency relief assistance.

1. **Support for Persons with Disabilities:**

The Ministry drafted a comprehensive review of the clauses of the Trinidad and Tobago Disabilities Bill. Among other things, the Bill contains clauses that specifically focus on:

- Protection from discrimination, exploitation and abuse;
- Access to information, education, training, and equal standard of healthcare;
- Right to employment and insurance;

The Ministry also invited Organizations that work with persons with disabilities, Government Ministries, and personnel from UWI, to provide feedback on the clauses of the Bill. Persons with and without disabilities were able to provide feedback through this process.



September 6, 2023 - Minister Cox turns the sod with Government officials. (l-r) Minister of Energy & Energy Industries and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, Stuart Young; Minister of Health, Terrance Deyalsingh; Chief Executive Officer UDeCOTT, Tamica Charles; Minister of National Security, Fitzgerald Hinds; Minister Cox; Member of Parliament Port of Spain South, Keith Scotland; Mayor of the City of Port of Spain, His Worship, Alderman Chinua Alleyne; Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Camille Robinson-Regis; and Minister in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Adrian Leonce, for new Assessment Centre and Temporary Housing facility for socially displaced persons.



November 15, 2023 - Commissioner of Police Erla Harewood-Christopher joins Minister Cox during the launch of the National Parenting Programme.



August 26, 2023- Staff of the Ministry informs a member of the public about the various grants and services offered.

National Therapeutic and Resource Centre:

In fiscal 2024, the Ministry will finalize the outfitting of the National Therapeutic and Resource Centre (NTRC) with therapeutic equipment donated by Digicel Foundation. The therapeutic equipment will be used for the treatment/rehabilitation of various persons with various categories of disabilities. The Centre would provide assessment, therapy and training. These habilitative and rehabilitative services, are expected to improve the quality of life experienced by persons with disabilities.

Suicide Prevention Hotline:

In 2023, the Ministry launched its National Suicide Prevention Hotline 800-COPE (2673). This 24 - Hour Crisis Hotline is operated by specially trained personnel to efficiently address crisis issues related to suicidal ideations and other critical challenges faced by citizens. In fiscal 2023, the Hotline has received One Thousand, Six Hundred and Twenty-Eight (1,628) calls.

Assessment Centre:

During fiscal 2023, the Ministry turned the sod for the construction of an Assessment and Temporary Housing Facility for Socially Displaced Persons in South Quay, Port-of-Spain.

This 5-storey facility that our homeless citizens will call home, will accommodate 200 homeless persons and 25 staff. Socially displaced persons are expected to be at this facility for a minimum assessment period of 6-weeks.



December 1, 2023 - Dr. Seon Raymond (center) poses with staff to brandish their tokens as they have successfully participated in the "We Wear Red" activity for the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

THE NATIONAL SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

PROGRAMME (NSDP):

The National Social Development Programme is a social intervention that seeks to improve the standard of living conditions of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, through the provision of basic infrastructure for essential utility services.

The Programme offers:

1. The Minor House Repair Assistance Grant, which provides up to Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000.00) in materials only for the repair/upgrade of dwelling houses, and up to Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000.00) in materials only to effect repairs / upgrades in the event of a disaster;
2. The Sanitary Plumbing Assistance Grant which provides up to Fifteen Thousand (\$15,000.00) in materials only under normal circumstances, and in the event of a disaster for the repair/upgrade of toilet and bathroom facilities for a dwelling house.

In fiscal 2023, Two Hundred and Thirty-one (231) households benefitted from these Grants.



May 11, 2023 - The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services hosted its first ever Social Worker of the Year Awards Ceremony.

Outreaches:

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services as part of its ongoing efforts to provide information on available social services to various communities and stakeholders continues to participate in various outreaches held at the community level. For fiscal 2023, the MSDFS participated in a total of 50 outreaches.

Support to NGOs:

For fiscal 2022/2023, twenty-two (22) NGOs, inclusive of three (3) Statutory Boards, received funding to support the implementation of their work plans and to facilitate the delivery of specialised services to vulnerable persons. Furthermore, initiatives were also undertaken to support social sector NGOs through capacity building, knowledge exchange and information sessions as well as to promote deeper partnerships with the Ministry and other social sector NGOs.

Fraud Prevention:

In fiscal 2023, the Ministry's Investigations and Compliance Unit (ICU) consistently advanced its efforts in combatting error, fraud and corruption within the Ministry. Specifically, the Unit recorded a decrease in the number of incidents of fraud and corruption. The ICU identified 123 cases of fraud from 2021-2023. These cases involved cashing of large cheques at supermarkets, using identical birth certificates to access grants and receiving grants while residing abroad.

Public/Private Partnerships:

The Ministry entered into several partnerships in an effort to build and strengthen its capacity, namely:

- A Memorandum of Agreement with Digicel Foundation to outfit the National Therapeutic Resource Centre for Persons with Disabilities.
- A Memorandum of Understanding with the National Information and Communication Company Limited (iGovTT) through tconnect, which would allow Senior Citizens' Pension recipients to utilise tconnect's 800-TTCN toll-free number and eAppointment system for submission of their completed Life and Residential Declaration Form.
- A Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of National Security which would facilitate the seamless transmission of travel information and verification with respect to citizens and residents of Trinidad and Tobago applying for the Ministry's Senior Citizens' Pension and other social assistance grants offered by the Ministry.

New Arima Social Services Centre:

The Ministry intends to commission a new Arima Social Services Centre to properly serve clients of Arima and environs. This is expected to positively impact our client relations and improve customer service.



September 16, 2023 - Staff from the MSDFS promote the programmes and services provided by the Ministry at TTARP's 30th Anniversary.



February 13, 2023 - Minister Donna Cox and Her Excellency Candace A. Bond, newly appointed Ambassador of the United States of America to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago discuss social issues.



June 21, 2023 - His Excellency Fang Qiu, Chinese Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago hands over the bus to Minister Cox and Mr. Howard Sabga (not in photo), President of the Lady Hochoy Centres of Trinidad and Tobago.



February 15, 2023 - Momentous ribbon cutting moment- Minister Cox cuts the ribbon to open the Innovation Labs at the Pointe-a-Pierre Special School, with Desha Clifford, Chairperson of Digicel Foundation; Abraham Smith, CEO of Digicel; and Peter Smith, Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education.



September 29, 2023 - The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services on this day signed a historic agreement with Digicel Trinidad and Tobago Foundation. This Agreement signals the partnership between the two entities in establishing a multidisciplinary centre in Trinidad and Tobago that will provide rehabilitative services to persons with disabilities.

STEP UP Programme

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is in the process of re-structuring of our Adult Education Programme, aligning it to the STEP-UP Programme. Here, a client who receives a grant from the SEED Programme and, who enrolls in the Adult Education Programme, would also benefit from the budgeting, report writing, project management and other courses that will transform the way they do business, manage their daily affairs and even help find employment. It is anticipated that our clients will STEP UP and become financially independent and self-sufficient.

CONCLUSION:

As the Ministry of Social Development reflects on its achievements for 2023 and advance in the midst of challenging times, we will ensure that we continue to help, and empower our clients so that they will develop the capacity and resilience required to achieve sustainable human and social development.



December 1, 2023 - DPS Vera Deonanan-Balkaran (center) and Kathleen Sarkar, Assistant Director of National Family Services (left), were among staff of the Ministry as they released balloons into the air in celebration of World AIDS Day.



24 June 2023 - Geraldine Conliff receives a Certificate of Honour and Achievement among other gifts to celebrate her 100th birthday as part of the National Centenarian Programme.



November 15, 2023 - (l-r) Minister of in the Office of the Prime Minister (Gender and Child Affairs), Ayanna Webster-Roy; Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Communications Division); Symon de Nobriga, Minister in the Ministry of Education, Lisa Morris-Julian; PS Lenore Baptiste-Simmons; DPS Wendy Guy-Hernandez, and staff of the Ministry attends the launch of the National Parenting Programme 2023.