



MEDIA RELEASE

Monday May 4, 2020

Priority: **HIGH**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RELIGIOUS BODIES RECEIVE FUNDING FOR FOOD SUPPORT

Port of Spain--- Faith Based Organisations in Trinidad and Tobago began to receive funding from the government on Friday May 1st, to assist with providing food to vulnerable individuals and families within various communities in the country. During a press conference hosted today – May 4, 2020, by the Minister of Social Development and Family Services, The Honourable Camille Robinson-Regis indicated that several religious bodies have been and will continue to receive cheques to distribute among their membership for the provision of emergency food support. This new measure is expected to provide food for the needy over the next three months and will cost taxpayers the sum of **\$10 million per month**. The first tranche of payments made to twenty (20) religious bodies, amounts to **\$7, 970,297**. Both nationals and non-nationals (including Venezuelans) will benefit from this measure, as the Government attempts to ensure that no one is left behind”.

According to Minister Robinson-Regis, “We all agree that we are in unprecedented times and therefore we are expected to take unprecedented measures to ensure that the required support is provided for the citizenry. Cognizant that emergency humanitarian efforts are now required to provide food and other critical supplies to the populace, the Government, through the Ecclesiastical Division of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, introduced this new initiative. The major aim of the initiative is to assist vulnerable individuals and families who are in dire need of food during these challenging times and may not be eligible for the Social Assistance Grants or may have not yet received their payments”.

According to the Minister, distribution will be done in tranches and each FBO representative will be required to sign an agreement upon collection of the cheques. The Office of the Prime Minister will administer the distribution of cheques to the umbrella bodies of the FBOs. Following this, each FBO will be required to submit a detailed report (bills and receipts) of how the money is distributed across their satellite organisations, with details of the type and quantity of items purchased, noting that the grant must only be used for purchasing goods to prepare hampers, meals and food support for those adversely affected by the pandemic. Once this condition is met, a second tranche will be distributed accordingly. “This will ensure transparency and accountability” said Minister Robinson-Regis.

Among some of the FBOs to receive funding are:

- The T&T Methodist Trust Limited
- Anjuman Sunnat ul Jammaat Association of Trinidad and Tobago
- The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Port of Spain
- Masjid al Tawbah Muslim Community of Trinidad and Tobago
- Trinidad Muslim League
- Sanathan Dharma Maha Sabha of T&T Inc.
- West Indian United Spiritual Baptist Sacred Order Inc.
- Shri Siddhi Vinnayak Org. Inc.
- SWAHA Inc.
- National Evangelical Spiritual Baptist Faith
- NCOIBOTT ARCHBISHOPS Council
- Incorporated Trustees of the Anglican Church of T&T
- The Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago
- The National Council of Orisha Elders of T&T
- The Southern Caribbean Conference of Seventh Day Adventist
- Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago
- Pentecostal Assemblies of Trinidad and Tobago
- The Trinidad and Tobago Evangelical Council
- The Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago
- The Ethiopian Orthodox Church
- All Mansions of Rastafarian

The Minister also indicated that the Office of the Prime Minister will continue to identify those other umbrella groups in an effort to ensure that all FBOs are provided with funding to participate in this effort. She also informed that the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government will also be receiving financial support for distribution at the local level in the tune of \$10 Million Dollars over the next 3-month period. Both initiatives therefore, will cost taxpayers a total of \$60 Million Dollars. She ended by reminding the media that all of the Food Support and Social Support initiatives being rolled out were testament to a Caring Government, working for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Upon receiving the grant on behalf of the National Council of Orisha Elders of T&T, Neil Ryan Rawlins stated, “We are very happy for this assistance and grateful to the Government. We know it will help tremendously as we face this mega crisis. As you would imagine, the needs of the poor have increased and we are happy to be able to provide hampers and food support baskets to help persons along the way for the next three months, especially those who would have to start over.”

For further information on this social support measure, FBOs may contact the Office of the Prime Minister at 622-1625.



Minister of Social Development and Family Services, the Honourable Camille Robinson-Regis at a press conference hosted today – May 4, 2020 to discuss funding to Faith Based Organisations in Trinidad and Tobago for COVID-19.



Minister of Social Development and Family Services, the Honourable Camille Robinson-Regis and Permanent Secretary at the Ministry Mrs. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers responds to questions by the media at a press conference today to discuss funding to Faith Based Organisations for COVID-19.

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For more information:

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