



MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, March 30, 2020

Priority: **HIGH**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES URGES COMPASSION

Port of Spain--- As Minister of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS), I am deeply concerned by the content of a video which is circulating, demonstrating alleged bullying and harassment of citizens. I applaud my colleague Minister of National Security Stuart Young's decisive action to ensure that an investigation is done as it appears to involve officers representing the law.

Although the Officers of the Social Displacement Unit of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services were able to verify only one of the men in the videos as a citizen, within the street dwellers cohort, I am adamant that all citizens must be treated with dignity and compassion.

On behalf of the Ministry, I wish to assure the national community that despite the fact that the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services can only use moral suasion to remove these persons from the streets, we are working with the Ministry of Health who assesses their mental health and the TTPS and Municipal Police who have the authority to remove such persons involuntarily if required and with the City and Regional Corporations; to have them seek shelter in the several places available in various parts of Trinidad.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services remains committed to the provision of care and rehabilitation services during this Stay at Home period. The Ministry encourages the street dweller population to seek the services of the Shelters at the Centre for Socially Displaced Persons at Riverside Plaza and also the Court Shamrock in San Fernando as it works to increase the available accommodation as necessary. The Ministry commits to continuing the collaboration with all the NGOs involved in the provision of services to this target group and thank them for their invaluable contribution.

During this challenging time, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services will work assiduously to ensure that the most vulnerable find some form of solace.

For further information persons may contact the Ministry's Social Displacement Unit at 623 – 2608; Ext 5700.

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For more information:

Communications Unit

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