



MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday May 21, 2020

Priority: HIGH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and BHP Trinidad and Tobago in a show of solidarity in the fight against COVID-19

Tuesday May 19, 2020 --- In support of the personal health and safety of front line staff, as well as, those engaged in site visits for the verification of applications regarding rental assistance and income support, the *Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS)* recently received a donation of face masks and cases of hand sanitizer from *BHP Trinidad and Tobago* at the former's Head Office on St. Vincent Street in Port-of-Spain.

On Tuesday May 19th 2020, Permanent Secretary of the *MSDFS*, Mrs. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers received one thousand (1,000) face masks and accompanying boxes of hand sanitizer from *BHP's* Manager of Corporate Affairs, Dr. Carla Noel-Mendez. The facial masks are triple layered, reusable and also locally-produced.

In her remarks to Permanent Secretary Bailey-Sobers, Dr. Noel-Mendez commended the Executive and staff of the Ministry for its *on-going efforts* to bring relief to the thousands of vulnerable citizens, who have been impacted by this country's *stay at home* restrictions. She also noted the necessity of the Ministry's services alongside those who are employed within the medical field and the protective services. As such, *BHP* was pleased to supply the Ministry as part of its company's continued commitment to *the general health and well-being of all communities*.

Permanent Secretary Bailey-Sobers in thanking *BHP* for their kind gesture, assured Dr. Noel-Mendez that the supplies were *indeed timely* and in direct support of all on-going efforts to *efficiently and expeditiously bring relief to those who are genuinely in need at this time*. She also took the opportunity to highlight that on occasions, the staff who are usually responsible for field assessments are sometimes met with unsanitary and risky conditions and as such, the masks would be *an invaluable incentive*.

In related news, following the implementation of *stay at home* restrictions on April 1, 2020, the *Ministry of Social Development and Family Services* has received in excess of nine hundred (900) applications for rental support in Trinidad. According to the Executive, ninety (90%) of these are

actively being processed and verified via telephone and house visits by staff. These house visits have become necessary in an attempt to counter fraudulent claims for assistance by applicants that are being encountered daily.

The *Ministry of Social Development and Family Services* is therefore making another appeal to applicants to be honest in their declarations and mindful of the impact of untruthful or questionable claims on the overall system and timeline for rental assistance approvals.



Permanent Secretary of the MSDFS, Mrs. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers receives face masks and hand sanitizers from BHP's Corporate Affairs Manager, Dr. Carla Noel-Mendez at the Ministry's Head Office on Tuesday.

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