



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: **HIGH**

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services tackles the issue of Substance Abuse

Port-of-Spain --- As part of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services' enhanced focus on the development of healthy functioning families, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox along with the Ministry's Executive team, visited and toured the *Piparo Empowerment Centre (PEC)* on Monday. The visit, according to Minister Cox, is one of several Ministry-wide visits planned to ensure the integrated approach now being undertaken by the Ministry, is established and aligned to fostering a multi-faceted and responsive social services delivery system. In this way, the Ministry will be better positioned to meeting to the needs of persons and families affected by substance abuse and other social challenges.

The centre, which was established by Cabinet in 2001, is operated by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and serves as a therapeutic community for adult males who are struggling with substance abuse. Such persons can voluntarily admit themselves and access treatment, inclusive of family therapy and counselling, remedial education, as well as, support for re-integration into society following the successful completion of the programme. Additionally, since the PEC was initially conceptualised as a self-sustaining model for the holistic development of residents, priority is not only placed on the development of life skills amongst residents, but also on the nurturing of sustainable behaviours and attitudes through the use of grow box technology, the cultivation of crops, basic construction skills and home economics. These activities are undertaken with the support of various technical and vocational (TVET) training providers, to ensure compliance with international best practices and the certification of competencies that are gained. As such, the PEC plays a critical role in the fight against poverty and ensuring social justice and equality for all its residents.

In speaking with staff of the Piparo Empowerment Centre, Minister Cox reminded those present that in response to the socio-economic uncertainties that are being experienced by households and families globally, the Ministry has to persist in making the *specialized services of the facility accessible to the families and communities that are most in need of them*. She also spoke to the critical role that such services would play in the implementation of the First Responders Initiative, which is intended to strengthen the psycho-social resilience of communities through the establishment of an integrated support system for families that are faced with crises such as bereavement, critical illness or family disputes.

Men and families of adult males that are interested in learning more about the admission criteria for the Piparo Empowerment Centre can call 623-2608 ext. 3000 – 3005 or visit the Ministry's Social Displacement Unit at 45 – 45C St. Vincent Street, Port-of-Spain. Alternatively, emails can be sent to piparoempowerment@gmail.com

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For more information:

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Figure 1: Minister Cox and members of the Ministry's Executive during their tour of the Piparo Empowerment Centre on Monday.



Figure 2: Deputy Permanent Secretary, Vijay Gangapersad provides Minister Cox with further insight into the facility's sustainable agriculture initiative during Monday's tour.