



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

Minister of Social Development and Family Services spreads Christmas joy to San Juan families

Port-of-Spain --- The beaming faces of toddlers and the smiles of their parents were just some of the early afternoon sights that greeted Senator the Honourable Donna Cox and staff of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, during their community walkabout in Weekes Trace, San Juan earlier this afternoon.

Following the distribution of support in the form of food hampers and toys from the Ministry, Minister Cox described the decision to visit affected households, as part of the Ministry's mandate. Noting the significance of the day, she revealed that staff, like herself, *were not content to remain at home* while there were many others who still faced considerable uncertainty during the yuletide season. Additionally, the walkabout was used as an *instrument for assessment* of families and households within the area, so that a customised approach could be developed by the Ministry in the promotion and implementation of its programmes, grants and services.

Local resident Tricia Straker, who is a mother of eight, was amongst the first to express her gratitude to Minister Cox for what she deemed, *a timely gesture*. She affectionately referred to Minister Cox as her *christmas angel* as she thanked her for putting food on her table and bringing joy to her family; especially her children. Other persons who were visited today in the community included Mr. Lucien Joseph, who is a patient of Buerger's disease. He too, was presented with a food hamper by Minister Cox.

Minister Cox also took the opportunity to impress upon residents the strategic role that the Ministry's *First Responders' Initiative* will continue to play in bringing greater relief to marginalized and vulnerable households, particularly in times of crisis or disaster. She advised that as part of government's thrust to revitalise the social services sector, the programme would ensure that citizens are able to receive *immediate and appropriate assistance* from a *whole of government approach*, which would make the Ministry, as well as other stakeholders, more accountable, responsive and efficient. Minister Cox further proffered that the *First Responders' Initiative* would serve as the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services' *eyes and ears* on the ground, during a period in which, all Ministries and State agencies were being called upon to *do more with limited resources*.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services remains committed to helping, empowering and transforming the lives of Trinidad and Tobago's most vulnerable.

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For more information:

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Figure 1: Tricia Straker asks Minister Cox to accept a small thank you from her unborn child following the family's receipt of support from the Ministry.



Figure 2: Minister Cox reminds the Straker children of the importance of wearing their masks.



Figure 3: Minister Cox speaks with Welfare Officer, Edith Carrol-Gibbs about additional strategies that the Ministry can employ to further assist families in the area.



Figure 4: Community Activist, Kwesi Antonie accompanies Minister Cox during her walkabout.



Figure 5: Mr. Lucien Joseph, who suffers from Buerger's Disease, directs Minister Cox's attention to his neighbour's house, where he shares the washroom facilities.