



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

MEDIA RELEASE



Wednesday, 20 October 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: HIGH

MSDFS hosts a Webinar on Poverty Eradication

Port-of-Spain --- Focused on the theme “Building Forward Together: Ending Persistent Poverty, Respecting all People and our Planet”, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, in collaboration with the University of the West Indies, St Augustine and the United Nations Development Programme, hosted a Virtual Webinar today, October 20, 2021. The Webinar forms part of several activities being hosted in commemoration of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, which was recognized on Sunday October 17. The webinar provided an opportunity for the general public to gain evidence-based information, coupled with real-life experiences regarding poverty, with the aim of helping those in poverty to pull themselves up and out.

The webinar attracted over 100 participants who logged on to hear outstanding presentations from advocates for the eradication of poverty, as well as technical experts in the field. Topics included Gender, Inclusion, Climate Change the nexus between Health and Poverty as well as research studies associated with poverty. The panellists included the Former Director of UWI Health Economics Unit, Professor Karl Theodore; Chairman of Kairi Consultants, Dr Ralph Henry; Coordinator at the Centre for Health Economics The UWI St. Augustine Campus, Dr. Christine Laptiste; Founder of ‘Is There Not a Cause’, Avonelle Hector-Joseph; University Director, Institute of Gender and Development Studies, The UWI Headquarters, Jamaica, Professor Paula Morgan and UWI Economic Student, Ruqayyah Scott.

In welcoming online participants to the Webinar, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry, Jacqueline Johnson noted that the national community at large has a critical role to play. She stated that “The Ministry continues to prioritize collaboration and engagement with social sector partners to strengthen and implement effective social protection initiatives designed to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable, including children, women and older persons”.

Delivering the Keynote Address, Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, stated that the prevailing worldwide economic conditions have been compounded by the COVID-19, posing many challenges on the vulnerable; who fall victim to poverty, extreme poverty and hunger. The Minister further cited data from the United Nation records, which revealed that between 71 million to 100 million people worldwide are being pushed into poverty, as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

According to the Minister, “The Ministry is working diligently to implement its STEP UP Programme (Social Transformation and Empowerment Programme - Uplifting People)- a strategy to provide short-term assistance combined with developmental programmes to economically challenged and other vulnerable families who are experiencing psycho-social barriers, which prevent such families from achieving their fullest potential.” Minister Cox also noted that the Ministry continues to chart a course for the development of a National Poverty Reduction Strategy which will result in an expansion of the Ministry’s portfolio to one which encourages resilience, enabling clients and beneficiaries to graduate from social support and transition into more self-sufficiency and a better quality of life.

Founder of ‘Is There Not a Cause’, Avonelle Hector-Joseph presented on the topic, “Civil Society’s impact on Poverty Reduction”. She shared on the importance of collaboration, stating that there should be a more intentional three-point approach among the Government, Private Sector and Civil Society Organizations. “We can do great things together to truly make an impact. A national assessment on the needs of communities is critical. A better understanding of who these people are and what they need to be lifted from where are there is necessary. We stand committed towards a better Trinidad and Tobago where there is equity and food for all” she said.

Professor Paula Morgan, in her presentation, explained to the audience that poverty is diverse and complex. She further touched on the types of poverty, particularly absolute poverty and generational poverty, emphasizing that women have suffered disproportionately.

Former Director of UWI Health Economics Unit, Professor Karl Theodore, in his presentation, shared on the link between poverty and health. He expressed “COVID- 19 has exacerbated the impact of the health poverty nexus. There is evidence in some countries that COVID-19 has been hitting the poor harder- no reason to expect a different result for Trinidad and Tobago. He attributed poverty as a major cause of ill health and a barrier to accessing health care when need. This is partly due to the costs of seeking health care, but also transportation costs and any informal payments to providers. Even as we prepare to cope with the increase in hardship caused by covid-19, we have to look examine the vicious cycle linking health and poverty operational. Since one of these factors is the health financing system, we need to deal with this without delay.”

Dr Ralph Henry, during his presentation stressed on the need to think of Trinidad and Tobago as a society that shares. This he related to the risks associated with health and unemployment. “Due to economic system we developed, we find that some get left out while some get included, but we have to find ways to create a sharing society” he said.

The session was chaired by Director of the Social Investigations Division at the Ministry Seon Raymond and moderated by Maxine Hunte, Research Specialist at the Ministry; and Isele Robinson-Cooper of the UNDP

Attendees were able to hear insights and took advantage of opportunities for discussion at the end of the webinar, in the form of a live question and answer segment. In an effort to allow a wider audience to benefit from the valuable insights and interactive discussions, the recording of the webinar is available on the Ministry’s Facebook page. All presentations and speeches related to the Seminar are available vi the Ministry’s website www.social.gov.tt.

For more information:

Corporate Communications and Education Unit
Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
(868) 623-2608; Ext 5405/5445/5432
Email: cceu@social.gov.tt
Website: www.social.com



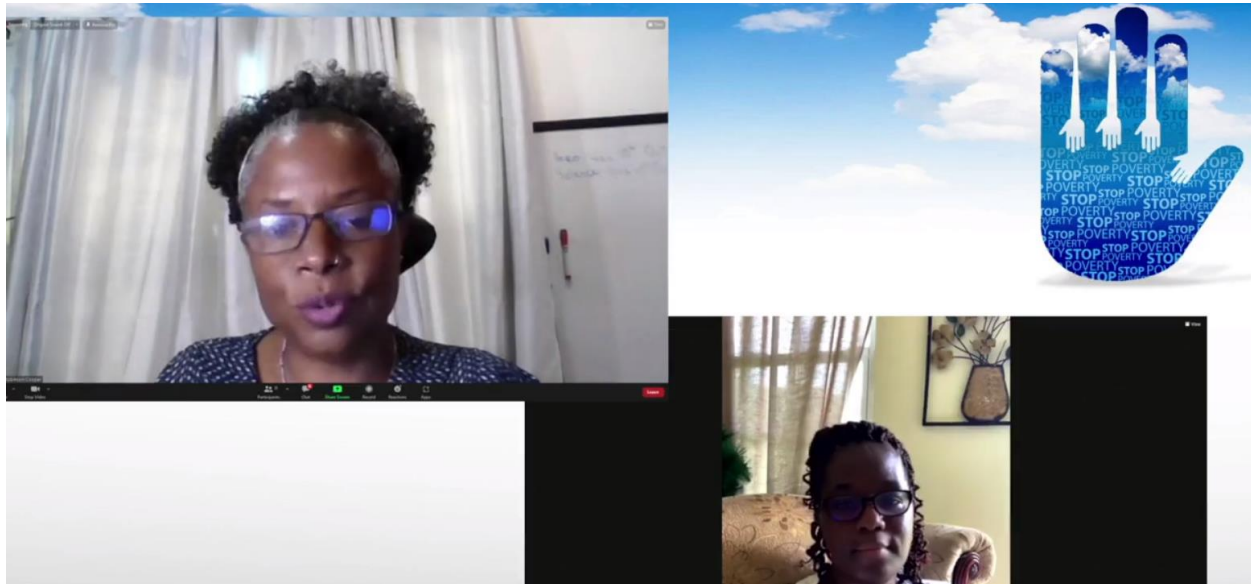
Minister Cox delivers the keynote address during the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty Webinar



Permanent Secretary at the Ministry, Jacqueline Johnson gives welcoming remarks during the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty Webinar



Chairman of Kairi Consultants, Dr Ralph Henry delivers his presentation on “Ending Persistent Poverty; leaving no one behind.”



Founder of ‘Is There Not a Cause’, Avonelle Hector-Joseph chats about “Civil Society’s impact on Poverty Reduction” with the moderator, Isele Robinson-Cooper of the UNDP



University Director, Institute of Gender and Development Studies, The UWI Headquarters, Jamaica, Professor Paula Morgan speaks to moderator, Maxine Hunte about the link between Gender and Poverty