



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: **HIGH**

Seven children receive tablets following fires in Quarry Street, Port of Spain and Avocat, Fyzabad

Seven children of families that were adversely affected by fires in Fyzabad and Port of Spain, received electronic devices (tablets) to assist with their online school on January 6, 2022. The Ministry has partnered with other agencies to make available devices for the children.

The East Port of Spain Development Company presented tablets and school supplies to five (5) children adversely affected by the Quarry Street fire which destroyed their homes on January 1, 2022. At Ackbar Trace, Avocat Village, Fyzabad, Ricky Choon, and Lisa Boodram, joined Vicky and Karina Choon, in receiving tablets on behalf of their children. These tablets were donated by the East Port of Spain Development Company and Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services.

According to reports, fires at Ackbar Trace, Avocat, and Quarry Street, Port of Spain destroyed several homes leaving persons homeless including ten children.

Recognizing the need to ensure there is access to education in light of the disaster, given the necessity to access online classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry liaised with its partners to acquire the electronic devices for the delivery to the children impacted by the disaster. The electronic devices will facilitate the educational development of the children attending a public school. The devices were presented by Managing Director at East Port of Spain Development Company, Dr. Deborah Thomas- Austin. In recognizing the nature of this unfortunate event, Dr. Thomas- Austin indicated that she was saddened by the loss experienced by the families but stated that she was pleased to partner with the Ministry to bring restoration and a sense of normalcy to the affected families, particularly the children.

In response, the parents expressed that they were indeed grateful for the devices as the items would ensure that their children continue their online learning. National Director of the National Social Development Programme Ms. Patricia De Leon-Henry also presented tablets to Ricky Choon and Lisa Boodram, Vicky and Karina Choon in Fyzabad who also expressed thanks to the Minister and Ministry.

The Ministry also engaged the families to provide emergency relief. The affected families were assessed to receive assistance under the Ministry's disaster relief grants including the clothing grant which is up to \$1,000.00 per person as well as the school supplies grant which amounts to \$700.00 for primary school children and \$1,000.00 for secondary school children. Through the Social Welfare Division, household items (up to a maximum of \$10,000.00) may also be replaced. Additionally, affected persons may claim for minor house repairs in the sum of \$20,000.00 worth of materials from the Ministry's National Social Development Programme (NSDP). The affected families would also receive counselling and psychosocial support from the Ministry's National Family Services Division.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services once again remains committed to assisting in restoring some level of normalcy to the affected families.



National Director of the National Social Development Programme Ms. Patricia De Leon-Henry presents tablets in Fyzabad donated by Minister Cox.



National Director of the National Social Development Programme Ms. Patricia De Leon-Henry presents tablets to affected families in Fyzabad.



Ms. Natalie Walters Communications Manager (L) at the Ministry join the Managing Director of East Port of Spain Development Company Dr. Deborah Thomas-Austin (R) in distributing tablets and school supplies to fire victim Ms. Chantel Lynch.



Nicole Bennett (second left) and Crystal Lynch (second right) and their families take a photo with Ms Natalie Walters Communications Manager at the Ministry and Managing Director of the East Port of Spain Development Company, Dr. Deborah Thomas-Austin following the tablet and school supplies distribution.