



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

## Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

### MEDIA RELEASE

March 17, 2022

Priority: HIGH

#### Social Development celebrates World Social Work Day!

In an effort to endorse the social work profession and expose its Social Workers to emerging trends in the field, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services in collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago Association for Social Workers hosted a Virtual World Social Work Day Symposium on March 17, 2022 at 9:00am.

The hybrid event was held in commemoration of World Social Work Day under the theme: *'The Time is Right for Social Work'*. World Social Work Day highlights the achievements of social work, and provides an opportunity to increase the visibility of social workers and recognise their contribution to the future of societies, social justice and human rights for all. Aimed at generating a discourse among Social Workers in Trinidad and Tobago, this symposium examined the evolving trends in the profession, as it relates to the changing needs of vulnerable persons and their basic rights. The webinar attracted over 200 participants who logged on to hear outstanding presentations from advocates for social work, as well as technical experts in the field.

Senator The Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services delivered the Keynote Address and announced that from 2023 A Social Worker of the Year Award will be presented to person(s) deserving of such.

According to Minister Cox, "Today, as we commemorate World Social Work Day, I want to pay tribute and express my sincerest gratitude to the many dedicated Social Workers of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and indeed, all Social Workers. I want to express a heartfelt thank you for your towering level of expertise, service and commitment. Your commitment and extra-ordinary skill-sets were evident especially in the crisis management aspects of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The timely interventions to casework, group work, and community emergencies brought tangible relief to thousands of citizens and opened up the prospect of enhanced resilience for all of us".

Colonial Life Building, 39-43 St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad, W.I.

Telephone: (868)-623-2608

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Another highlight of the event was the Panel discussion which was moderated by Ms Josanne Leonard and which included a cadre of distinguished presenters, among whom included Dr Cheryl Ann Boodram, Hanif Benjamin, Verna St Rose-Greaves and Sule Atiba Anthony Joseph.

Among the topics presented included:

- The Changing Paradigm of Social Work;
- Self and the Social Worker;
- Social Work Education for the Future World;
- Gender and Social work; and
- Perspectives/Testimonials from Social Workers with specific reference to the future of social work.

President of the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Social Workers, Mr. Hanif E. A. Benjamin presented on the topic, “The Changing Paradigm of Social Work”. He shared on the importance of unity and togetherness, stating that social workers are responsible for the change required. “What we learn in school versus what we learn on the field must be brought together in order for the paradigm for shift” he said.

Social activist, Mrs. Verna St Rose Greaves, in her presentation, explained to the audience that self-care is crucial in the social work field. “A positive sense of self strengthens us to do the change that is required” she said. She further emphasized on the importance of training social workers in complex areas such as poverty and community tradition.

Lecturer and Co-ordinator of the Social Work Programme at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Dr Cheryl-Ann Boodram shared on social work education in the future world. “We need to grow the profession so that the profession looks like us. Education for the future needs to be inclusive. We also need to legitimize Caribbean knowledge and practices in the social work fields” said Dr Boodram.

Counselling Psychologist, Mr Sule Joseph, during his presentation stressed on the need to be cognizant of gender biases in the social work profession. This he related to gender based biases in society and households. “Let us continue to push for a gender inclusive social work field. This must happen at all levels of social work functioning” said Mr Joseph.

The symposium targeted Social Workers, School Social Workers, Academia, Guidance Counsellors, Health Social Workers and Family Social Workers. These 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 via the Ministry’s website [www.social.gov.tt](http://www.social.gov.tt).

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services remains committed to strengthening the safety net for the most vulnerable.

**END**



Minister Cox delivers the keynote address



Minister Cox cuts the celebratory cake with President of T&T Association of Social Workers and Permanent Secretary Sheila Seecharan of the MSDFS



(l-r) Hanif E.A Benjamin, Minister Cox, PS Seecharan and DPS Jasmine Pascal of the MSDFS



President of the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Social Workers, Mr. Hanif E. A. Benjamin presents on the topic, "The Changing Paradigm of Social Work".



Social activist, Mrs. Verna St Rose Greaves delivers her presentation on Self Care



Lecturer and Co-ordinator of the Social Work Programme at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Dr Cheryl-Ann Boodram shares on social work education in the future world.



Counselling Psychologist, Mr Sule Joseph presents on Gender