



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: HIGH

Shadow Pandemic growing amidst COVID-19 crisis says Minister Cox at Virtual Report to the Nation on Gender-Based Violence in the Time of Covid

“Any report that provides the opportunity for us, as a nation, to evaluate our performance against specific metrics, and to determine the next steps to close any identified gaps, is worthy of noting,” said Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services. Minister Cox was speaking at the “*Report to the Nation on Gender-Based Violence in the Time of Covid*” held virtually on April 6th, 2022 hosted by the Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago (FPATT).

According to the Minister, data emerging from the National Domestic Violence Registry shows that assault by beating, verbal abuse, malicious damage and breach of protection orders are by far the most common offences associated with domestic violence and these have increased by over 30 per cent in some cases.

“Assault by beating doubled in 2021; from 450 reported cases in 2019 to 865 in 2020 and was already close to 865 in March 2021. Sadly, it must be noted that these are only reported cases. This is the Shadow Pandemic growing amidst the COVID-19 crisis and there is certainly the need for a global collective effort to bring it to an end,” said Minister Cox.

Noting COVID-19’s continued strain on health and other services, Minister Cox told the virtual audience that the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services continues to give priority to establishing and strengthening programmes and services to address family conflicts, and as such, the Ministry through its National Family Services Division will be launching its suicide prevention and crisis hotline, manned by fully trained personnel.

Remarks were also delivered by the Secretary for Health, Wellness and Social Protection of the Tobago House of Assembly, Assemblyman Dr Faith B. Yisrael and Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister, Gender and Child Affairs, Mrs Jacintha Bailey-Sobers.

Delivering the Report to the Nation was the President of the Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago, Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine.

Delivering on the FPATT’s vision and strategic plan for the future, Professor Antoine indicated that the Association witnessed first-hand the gender inequity posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. She further noted that though the Covid-19 pandemic emerged as a debilitating public health, social, and economic burden in mankind’s history, the FPATT, in existence for over sixty-five years, rose to the challenge and reevaluated and reimagined its focus to suit pressing needs. Along with advocacy and outreach efforts, Professor Antoine stated that the FPATT bridged critical gaps between demand and access to vital sexual and reproductive health services including cervical breast and prostate cancer screening, HIV services, sexually

transmitted infections screens and treatment, general practitioner and specialist consultations and diagnostic services.

Also addressing virtual attendees was an interactive panel discussion with experts in Health and Gender-Based Violence including Ms Sabrina Mowlah-Baksh, General Manager of the Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Dr Tracie Rogers, Lecturer at the UWI, Mona, Jamaica, Mr Amilcar Sanatan, Gender Development Specialist and Mr Chinua Alleyne, Community Activist. The panellists engaged in a profound discussion on the issue of gender-based violence some noting that the issue of gender-based violence, a pandemic itself, was prevalent long before the Covid-19 pandemic and more conversations are needed on gender-based violence in the pre-post pandemic phase.

The Ministry was pleased to participate in such a forum that brings awareness of the need to address gender-based violence and applaud the FPATT for its proactive approach to addressing the root factors that negatively impact the vulnerable, especially women.



Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services delivers remarks at the Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago's Report to the Nation on Gender-Based Violence in the Time of Covid.



Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, President of the FPATT, delivers the Association's Report to the Nation on Gender-Based Violence in the Time of Covid.



Panelists engage in an interactive session on gender-based violence.

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