



STATEMENT

Response to issues raised in the media about the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

In the spirit of comradeship and solidarity, this nation has always seen a nice mix of philanthropic support, barter and trade in books and uniform every year around the opening of the new school. It is no different this year as many people and organisations, including the business sector, Non-Government Organisations and Faith Based organization seek to make their charitable and social responsibility contributions to society in the form of books and support for children heading back to school. As a society we should support these initiatives of our citizens to ensure that every child has the wherewithal to begin the new school term. The Ministry stands firmly with those philanthropic persons and organizations who support such initiatives in communities, schools and churches. The Ministry continues to support in areas where it has responsibility.

Substantive issues raised in the media regarding situation of the Scrap Iron dealers

Scrap iron dealers can apply for any of the grants once they are eligible. It is well known that any member of the public can apply for the grants offered by the Ministry. The Ministry has the responsibility to plan and determine the adequacy of its allocation each year. It is for this reason that Ministry approached the Parliament for an additional allocation, at Mid-Year and received this additional allocation to meet its projected expenditure in fiscal 2022. I turn now to some issues raised in the media as follows:

Food Support

The Food Support Grant is offered to all eligible citizens and legal residents of Trinidad and Tobago. Scrap iron dealers in need of food can apply in the event that they are in need of poor. The applicant must pass the Standard Means Test. Once there is no source of income for the household and if the income is equal to or less than \$552.47 the applicant is entitled to food support.

Students in Need of Glasses

Once client can provide the evidence to show that the child is in need of a glasses the child will be provided with a pair of glasses.

Eligibility requirements:

- Must be citizens or legal residents of Trinidad and Tobago.
- Applicants must pass a Standard Means Test. The net income for the Household must be equal to or less than Household Poverty line which is \$1,439.00.
- Quotation from a registered and certified Optician.
- The Identification Card of the applicant and birth certificate of the dependent child.

A maximum of \$1,500.00 is paid to the applicant for and on behalf of the child.

Public Assistance for Children

The Ministry remains committed to providing the interim support for any one deemed eligible for the grants. As it is the workers in that industry can be provided with Public Assistance for the children, if they meet the following eligibility criteria.

Public Assistance is provided for the Child, if that unemployed parent is solely responsibility for the child and is unemployed. The Ministry must certify that the child does not have the other parent's support due to death, permanent illness, disability, imprisoned or abandoned.

- The applicant must pass the Standard Means Test: The net income for the Household must be equal to or less than Household Poverty line which is \$1,439.00.
- Must be citizens or legal residents of Trinidad and Tobago.

- The Identification Card of the applicant and birth certificate of the dependent child.

One Person (child/Adult)- \$1,300.00

Two Persons - \$1,550.00

Three Persons- \$1,750.00

Four or more Persons- \$1,900.00

The Ministry does in fact offer an Education Grant of \$500.00 to assist parents in the receipt of Public Assistance for children attending Secondary School with additional expenses aligned to their schooling.

Access to the SEED Grant

Anyone can apply for our grants, including the SEEDs grant, which is a grant for small business entrepreneurs to start a business or to grow a business. The grant offers \$15,000 for goods and \$7,500 to facilitate skills training at a recognised, accredited institution, with funds being paid directly to the training institution. This is an opportunity for persons to seek alternative business opportunities or for retraining. All that is required is a visit to the one of the Ministry's regional offices.

A Case for the need to support Parents and Families

There is empirical evidence since 2011 which support the need for parenting programmes in Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, since 2014, the Government has been hosting parenting Workshops throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The development of the Parenting policy identifying Parenting and Parenting support as a critical element of family life, forms the basis of the draft Parenting Policy of 2014 and the current Government Policy which was laid as a Green Paper in the Parliament 2017. This Policy had several nationwide consultations and focus group on the issue of families and parenting. Some of these date back to 2011 and include the following:

1. Phase I: High Level Consultation: targeting Government Ministries and Agencies, Associations, Academia, selected Civil Society Organisations, International partners and Educational Practitioners held in 2013, 2016 and 2017.
2. Phase II: Public Open Forum Consultations: targeting the general public and specially invited organisations. A series of seven consultations were held in 2014 and 2017 in five regions in Trinidad and two in Tobago.

The empirical information therein culminated in the laying of the Parenting Policy as a Green paper in 2017. **The data regarding children gravitating to a life of crime can be sourced from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the Children's Court.**

The strategies outlined in that Policy addressed the needs expressed by the public for parenting training and the creation of parenting support groups, crisis hotline for parents in need of advice and counselling and other social mechanism to support parents, children and communities in the care and protection of children. The Policy denotes what is good and bad parenting and the role of the State in ensuring and supporting good parenting practices. It is disingenuous to speak of these parenting programmes in communities as unnecessary and a waste of funds. I would encourage all persons to take a view of the Parenting Policy which was laid as a Green Paper in the Parliament and is available on both the Parliament's website and the Ministry's website.

A case for the Radio Programme – It’s Family Time; Let’s Talk

The Radio Programme, entitled: “***It’s Family Time: Lets Talk***”, which is presently aired on 95.5FM , 98.1FM, and 103FM, was introduced in 2008, as a part of the overall commemoration of the United Nations International Day of Families, observed annually on May 15th. The programme is facilitated by Social Workers from the National Family Services Division and various expert guest speakers from several spheres, who speak on a wide range of topics that are carefully selected and aligned to the major challenges being faced by families in this country. It also provides information on how persons may access counselling, psychosocial and parenting support from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and any of its associated stakeholder partners including the Children’s Authority, Office of the Prime Minister (Gender and Child Affairs), as well as the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and other civil society organisations.

It is customary for the Radio Programme to be hosted on a radio talk station and is also aired live on the station’s Facebook page for repetition and reinforcement purposes. In this way, the level of reach is also expanded as social media facilitates unlimited participation worldwide.

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For more information:

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