



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services



MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 30th October, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: HIGH

Minister Cox meets with USAID Y-RIE to discuss prosperous opportunities for vulnerable youth

Earlier today, October 30, 2023 Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services met with representatives of the USAID Youth Resilience Inclusion and Empowerment (Y-RIE) Program to discuss ideas in the sphere of social protection that will support youth to build more prosperous and resilient societies. The meeting, which took place at the Ministry's Head Office, St Vincent Street Port of Spain, forms part of the Minister's ongoing strategy to collaborate with various Missions and Embassies towards a more responsive and multifaceted social services delivery. Joining the meeting were Trinidad and Tobago Country Director of the USAID Y-RIE Program, Marlon Bascombe; Jenifer Neidhart de Ortiz, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Trinidad and Tobago; Phelps Feeley, Chief of Party, USAID Y-RIE; Courtney Brown, Deputy Chief of Party, USAID Y-RIE; Chloe Noble, General Development Specialist of the USAID Eastern and Southern Caribbean.

The USAID Y-RIE program aims to address the unique challenges faced by young people in the Caribbean region, empowering them to build safer societies. Through a multi-faceted approach, the program seeks to create opportunities for youth engagement, foster inclusion, and provide necessary resources and support systems.

During the meeting, Minister Cox took the opportunity to reaffirm that the Ministry and the USAID have many shared goals, particularly promoting healthy functioning families. "Our crime-fighting initiatives must also focus strategically on social determinants which include parenting, values, attitudes and behaviours and the family. It is from the family, issues emanate and spill over into the wider society." Noting the importance that the Ministry presently places on family, she further stated that the Ministry wishes to provide opportunities in capacity training and coaching for social workers and family workers, in order to equip staff with the necessary skills to identify vulnerabilities within the home and meet specific needs of today's family structure.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for the USAID Y-RIE team to share information on the its regional development strategy, produced to guide USAID's programmes which will provide critical assistance to the region. Its focus is to support a safe, prosperous, and resilient Caribbean

region that assists its vulnerable populations and promotes accountable institutions and economic development. Mr. Marlon Bascombe, Country Director of USAID Y-RIE shared that their organization wishes to add value to the Ministry's programs, specifically those that focus on reintegration, juvenile justice and child protection. He also indicated that the USAID Y-RIE has strengthened systems in Guyana, St Lucia and Grenada which led to positive youth development.

In response, the Minister noted the importance of sharing experiences and best practices in preventing crime and violence in families, and anticipates that the Ministry will apply these practices in areas deemed fit.

From the discussions held, all parties agreed that there are collaborative initiatives that align with national priorities, as well as strengthening policies and strategies to help transition persons from welfare to a state of sustainability.

In closing, Minister Cox extended her gratitude to the USAID for their continued support in the areas of sustainable social development.

Also in attendance were Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry, Lenor Baptiste-Simmons and Ryan Ramcharan; Deputy Permanent Secretary, Vera Deonanan Balkaran; as well as various heads of the Ministry's divisions.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services remains committed to enhancing the lives of the vulnerable, through a network of integrated and accessible social services.

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For more information:

Communications Unit

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Minister Cox discusses areas for partnership with Jenifer Neidhart de Ortiz, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Trinidad and Tobago; Phelps Feeley, Chief of Party, USAID Y-RIE; and Trinidad and Tobago Country Director of the USAID Y-RIE Program, Marlon Bascombe



(l-r) Courtney Brown, Deputy Chief of Party, USAID Y-RIE; Chloe Noble, General Development Specialist of the USAID Eastern and Southern Caribbean; Permanent Secretary of the MSDFS, Lenor Baptiste Simmons; Minister Cox; Jenifer Neidhart de Ortiz, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Trinidad and Tobago; Phelps Feeley, Chief of Party, USAID Y-RIE; and Trinidad and Tobago Country Director of the USAID Y-RIE Program, Marlon Bascombe



Minister Cox and Jenifer Neidhart de Ortiz, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Trinidad and Tobago at the meeting held earlier today at the Ministry's Head Office in Port of Spain