



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 05 December 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: **HIGH**

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services commemorates World AIDS Day (WAD) 2023

Port-of-Spain --- *“Since the early days of the AIDS crisis, tremendous strides have been made in our understanding of the virus, its transmission and its treatment. However, the journey is far from over. While progress has been made, millions of lives continue to be affected by HIV/AIDS, and many challenges still lie ahead.”* These were the words of Ms Vera Deonanan-Balkaran, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. Ms Deonanan-Balkaran, was at the time delivering remarks on behalf of Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services, at a small function to commemorate World AIDS Day (WAD) 2023 on Friday December 1, 2023. The event took place at the Ministry’s headquarters on St Vincent Street, Port of Spain.

Focusing on this year’s theme, “Let Communities Lead”, she indicated that the Ministry acknowledges the important role that all our communities play in achieving the objectives set out in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and that the theme highlights the full potential of community leadership to enable the end of the AIDS virus.

Additionally, she reminded those in attendance, that the Ministry’s programmes and services are geared to meeting the needs of the varied vulnerable segments it serves and maximizes impact to ensure that service, satisfaction and engagement are paramount in its delivery.

Ms Deonanan-Balkaran concluded that World AIDS Day is not just a day of reflection; but rather a call to action; and a reminder that each one plays a crucial role in combating stigma, spreading awareness, and supporting those with HIV, and urged that on this World AIDS Day, we should celebrate the resilience of those living with HIV and honour the memory of those we have lost; and that we also recognise that the journey ahead requires continued collaboration, innovation and dedication.

The event was organised by the Ministry's HIV/AIDS Coordinating Unit, and culminated with members of the executive of the Ministry and guests releasing red balloons as a stance of solidarity and support for person with HIV/AIDS. Also in attendance were representatives from stakeholder partner organisations such as the Rape Crisis Centre, Trinidad and Tobago Prisons and Jabulous, a non-governmental organisation for HIV/AIDS advocacy.

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World AIDS Day 1 - (l-r) Ms Kathleen Sarkar, Assistant Director of the National Family Services Division, Deputy Permanent Secretaries Ms Wendy Guy-Hernandez and Ms Vera Deonanan-Balkaran and Ms Cherries Lopez, Coordinator, HIV/AIDS Coordinating Unit take a photo following the brief ceremony.



World AIDS Day 2 -Staff release balloons in commemoration of World AIDS Day.