



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: **HIGH**

Social Development Ministry Launches Couva Social Services Centre to Strengthen Access to Social Support

Port of Spain, April 11, 2025- The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services officially opened the Couva Social Services Centre today, signalling a major step forward in decentralising and strengthening social service delivery for the people of Central Trinidad.

The Centre, located on Camden Road in Couva, is already operational and serves residents of Couva, California and neighbouring communities within the Couva-Tabaquite-Talparo region. The facility supports the Ministry's Single Social Entry model, providing more efficient and coordinated access to a wide range of social support services.

Speaking at the launch, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services noted the strategic importance of the Centre in improving equity in access to support.

"The Couva Social Services Centre is a transformative step in our mission to deliver dignified, accessible, and integrated support to every citizen. By bringing services closer to communities, we are not just building infrastructure-we are fostering resilience, equity, and hope. This Centre reflects our unwavering belief that no one should be left behind," she stated.

The Centre houses several core units of the Ministry, including the Social Welfare Division, the National Family Services Division, the National Social Development Programme, and the Citizens Engagement Unit. These units now operate collaboratively under one roof to provide client-focused, community-based services.

Permanent Secretary, Lenor Baptiste Simmons highlighted the administrative vision and operational impact of the Centre. She noted that the Centre removes longstanding geographic barriers, particularly for vulnerable persons who previously had to travel nearly 12 kilometres to the Caroni office to access services.

The formal launch follows a successful period of operational readiness and is part of the Ministry's broader commitment to modernising service delivery and promoting inclusion through decentralisation.

The Ministry expresses its sincere gratitude to all stakeholders who contributed to the development and activation of this Centre and remains steadfast in its mission to build resilient, people-centred communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

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For more information:

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Photos and Captions:



Photo 1: Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services (**centre**), cuts the ribbon to officially open the Couva Social Services Centre. Minister is joined by Permanent Secretary, Lenor Baptiste-Simmons (**left**); Permanent Secretary (Ag.) Ryan Ramcharan, (**right**); Deputy Permanent Secretary, Vera Deonanan-Balkaran (**2nd right**) and Director (Ag), Social Welfare Division, Elizabeth Villaruel (**2nd left**).



Photo 2: Minister Donna Cox unveils the plaque to commemorate the official opening of the Couva Social Services Centre. Looking on are **(from left)** Director (Ag), Social Welfare Division; Elizabeth Villaruel; Permanent Secretary, Lenor Baptiste-Simmons; Permanent Secretary (Ag.), Ryan Ramcharan; and Deputy Permanent Secretary, Vera Deonanan-Balkaran.



Photo 3: Minister Donna Cox delivers the feature address during the official opening of the Couva Social Services Centre.



Photo 4: Minister Cox engages with the interface system at one of the workstations during a tour of the Couva Social Services Centre. Minister Cox is observed by Permanent Secretary, Lenor Baptiste-Simmons; Permanent Secretary (Ag.), Ryan Ramcharan and Supervisor II, Caroni Local Board, Dr. Hafeeza Hosein Shah.



Photo 5: The Couva Social Services Centre was officially opened by Minister Donna Cox and now fully commissioned to serve Couva and surrounding communities.