



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: **HIGH**

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services **Launches New Transitional Centre in Penal**

Port of Spain, April 8, 2025- A meaningful partnership between the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and the Heritage Petroleum Company Limited came to life today with the official handover and launch of the Penal Transitional Centre. Designed to serve families and individuals uprooted by disaster, the facility is set to be a beacon of hope in times of crisis.

The Penal Transitional Centre is designed to provide short term shelter, psychosocial support and referral services to individuals and families affected by emergencies such as floods and fires. It stands as a symbol of national preparedness and compassion, offering a critical stepping stone for those working to rebuild their lives.

Speaking at the launch, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services, said the facility represents a tangible step toward a more responsive and client centred social service system.

"This facility embodies our goal to promote resilience for all, empower families, reduce poverty, and create a high performance, client centred organisation that can respond to the most urgent needs of our citizens," the Minister said. She elaborated that the centre "is a lifeline to those who have lost their homes or their means of survival."

Delivering remarks on behalf of Heritage Petroleum, Chairman of Trinidad Petroleum Holdings Limited, Mr. Michael Quamina SC, stated that *"Heritage is pleased to hand over this facility to the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, as its purpose aligns with our commitment to develop our communities and foster environments where families can heal, grow, and thrive."*

He added that the project is part of a broader effort to support national development. *"We are leveraging our resources to support the Ministry in achieving our objectives of improving the standard of living and the quality of life for individuals in Trinidad and Tobago."*

Through an agreement with the former Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago (PETROTRIN) in November 2022, the Ministry received the Clarke Road compound and undertook extensive refurbishment works to ensure the facility meets standards of safety, dignity and comfort. The building now includes family friendly living quarters, security enhancements and dedicated spaces for counselling and social support.

The Penal Transitional Centre can accommodate up to five families for periods of up to three months, with flexibility based on individual circumstances. It is expected to serve as a model for similar facilities across the country, particularly in disaster prone areas.

Minister Cox also extended heartfelt thanks to Heritage Petroleum and its leadership for their partnership in making the facility a reality.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services remains committed to building an inclusive society through responsive social services and strong partnerships that put people first.

For more information:

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Photos and Captions:



Photo 1: Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services presents a token of appreciation to Michael Quamina, S.C., Chairman, Trinidad Petroleum Holdings Ltd., in recognition of the company's generous support in providing the facility for use by the Ministry, during the handover and launch ceremony.



Photo 2: Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services with (from left) Avonelle Hector Joseph, Founder, Is There Not A Cause; Lenor Baptiste-Simmons, Permanent Secretary, the Honourable Fitzgerald Hinds, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister; Michael Quamina S.C., Chairman, Trinidad Petroleum Holdings Ltd and Ryan Ramcharan, Permanent Secretary (a.g) during the cutting of the ribbon to officially open the Penal Transitional Centre.



Photo 3: Minister Cox with (from left) the Honourable Fitzgerald Hinds, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister; Avonelle Hector Joseph, Founder Is There Not A Cause Foundation; Michale Quamina, Chairman, Trinidad Petroleum Holdings Ltd; and Lenor Baptiste-Simmons, Permanent Secretary with the newly installed plaque at the Penal Transitional Centre.



Photo 4: Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services, with the Honourable Fitzgerald Hinds, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister; Mr. Michael Quamina, Chairman, Trinidad Petroleum Holdings Limited; Lenor Baptiste-Simmons, Permanent Secretary and Avonelle Hector-Joseph, Founder, Is There is Not a Cause, during a tour of the facility.



Photo 5: An external view of the spanking new facility.