



Senator the Honourable Donna Cox
Minister of Social Development and Family Services

FEATURE ADDRESS

NSDP DISTRIBUTION CEREMONY

Tuesday, July 20, 2021

10:00 a.m.

6th Floor, CL Building
St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain

Salutations

- Permanent Secretary at the MSDFS – Ms Jacqueline Johnson;
- Chief Technical Officer, Mr. Michael Reid;
- Director of the National Social Development Programme, Mrs. Patricia De Leon-Henry;
- Deputy Director of the National Social Development Programme, Ms Maricia Patterson;
- Other Heads of Divisions and Staff at the MSDFS;
- Recipients of Grant Funding;
- Members of the Media

Good morning

It is an honour for me to address you today, as we continue Government's drive, through the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, to ensure that all citizens are able to benefit from the country's resources.

Today's distribution of cheques, organized through the Ministry's National Social Development Programme (NSDP), is only one of many tangible demonstrations of our commitment to enhancing the quality of life available to citizens of our beloved Republic.

Ladies and gentlemen, while there are those who contend that the indigent will always be with us, I give you the assurance today, that this Government will ensure that the country's resources would be spent, not only in generating new wealth, but also in ensuring that the minority, who, for a plethora of reasons, find themselves in situations of poverty, are also provided with opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the national economy.

Our role as Government, and exercised through this Ministry, is to provide the wherewithal for those so minded, to not only improve their current quality of life, but also to ensure that successive generations are given a start.

We recognize that one of the key indicators of poverty is the quality of living conditions under which our vulnerable populations exist.

The Housing Development Corporation is specifically charged with providing housing accommodation for persons qualified to receive such, and the Land Settlement Agency regularises the living conditions of persons whose history of housing includes squatter settlements. However, the whole of Government approach demand that the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services also provide opportunities to improve the housing stock of the country, and more importantly, enhance the living standards and quality of lives of our citizenry.

There can be no doubt, that there has been a worsening of the living conditions for many persons occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic, and many families have been further challenged to make ends meet on a daily basis. I have seen this first hand in my previous role as a Member of Parliament, and more recently when I visited two families who, either because of life circumstances, or as a result of a natural disaster, were thrown into the throes of poverty.

These visits have reinforced my view that in order to truly address poverty in our country, a collaborative and whole of Government approach is absolutely necessary. Together with our partners and committed stakeholders then, this Ministry will redouble our efforts to ensure a seamless delivery of our services to those most in need.

Ladies and Gentlemen, while Government will continue to increase our efforts to reach out, and offer our citizens a helping hand, there is a concomitant responsibility on all of us, to re-examine our personal choices and seek out the means through which we can help ourselves and create enabling environments for sustainability.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services will certainly do our part, as we continue to explore opportunities for partnering with the business sector and civil society organisations, to afford persons avenues to be trained in simple skills that would lead to greater self-sufficiency and economic independence.

Today, I am confident therefore, that this grant funding would facilitate the improvement of the physical conditions of homes, be it through minor structural repairs, improvement to sanitary plumbing, electrical wiring installations or upgrades. Undoubtedly, providing an opportunity for you, as well as other eligible citizens to improve the quality and structural integrity of their homes, is one mechanism which can be used to enhance living standards, as well as the quality of family life; as we attempt to leave no one behind.

Today we are presenting grants to the value of **One Million, Four Hundred and Eighty-Two Thousand and Fifteen Dollars (\$1,482,015.11)** where a total of **One Hundred and Seven (107) households** will benefit.

This intervention will allow families the joys and comfort of decent living accommodation, and will serve as the springboard towards the eradication of poverty.

I also wish, at this juncture to remind the representatives of the many family units present here today, that education is the key to becoming empowered and transitioning to a better standard of living. I therefore urge all recipients and by extension all our clients and beneficiaries of our grants, to ensure that your children are afforded the opportunity of a good education, as this will assist in moving your family forward and enhance your overall quality of life and well-being.

It would be remiss of me though, if I concluded without sincerely commending the staff of the National Social Development Programme, ably led by its Director, Mrs. Patricia De Leon-Henry, for their hard work in continually improving the efficiency of our social services delivery. Your efforts have been essential to the fulfilment of the Ministry's strategy to ensure that indigent and vulnerable citizens throughout the country reside under habitable conditions.

As I thank you for the courtesy of your attention, allow me as well, to extend continued health, wellness and prosperity to all recipients and your families.

May God bless you.

I thank you.