



REMARKS BY

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE DONNA COX
**MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND
FAMILY SERVICES**

LAUNCH OF
**VISION ON MISSION'S
TRIANGLE OF HOPE PROJECT**

WEDNESDAY MAY 04, 2022

10:30 A.M.

Allow me, ladies and gentlemen, to express my sincerest gratitude to the Board and Management of Vision on Mission, and especially to Mrs. Giselle Chance, who has so admirably and ably stepped into the immense shoes left by her deceased husband, Wayne. In reviewing the scope and intent of this Triangle of Hope Programme, I am convinced that not only is she wearing those shoes well, but sooner rather than later, she would have outgrown them and begun to walk in her own shoes.

There can be no doubt that the arrest and removal of a mother or father from the home can cause a host of emotional, social and economic consequences for each member of the family. Despite these identified challenges, research has shown that there are more positive outcomes when families are provided with the support required to help them to remain strong and resilient.

The Triangle of Hope Programme seeks to address the circumstances of families and children of incarcerated offenders who are at high risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour.

In this regard, it will bring together the resources of the national community in an effort to identify ways of breaking intergenerational cycles of crime and criminality in families and communities.

We are extremely inspired by this initiative proposed by the Vision on Mission organisation. We are encouraged, not only because of its benefit to the families concerned and the peace and stability it will bring to their lives, but also because of the wider positive, national implications of this programme, when successfully executed.

This is in fact, the core of our work; this is our mandate at the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. Our job is to address the social challenges of poverty, social inequality and social exclusion, with particular emphasis on developing and executing programmes and services that protect and assist vulnerable and marginalized groups in society such as women, children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, the poor/indigent, the socially displaced, ex-prisoners, deportees, widows and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

We also seek to empower our clientele through rehabilitative and skill enhancement initiatives, which promote human prosperity in the wider context of sustainable development.

This is why, ladies and gentlemen I am here today to cheer on this pioneering organisation and to support its efforts, even as it takes on some of the work that will bring our own vision for national social development to reality.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services has consistently played a critical role in ensuring that the vulnerable in our society are in receipt of goods and services which will not only impact significantly on their daily lives, but ultimately move them to a place of empowerment and self-sufficiency. Many of Vision On Mission's clients, the families and children of prisoners and ex-prisoners, fall into this category.

In this regard, we remain committed, within our means, to providing the necessary support for vulnerable families and at risk children, through our social safety net programme that provides financial aid to those who need it.

These include:

- The Public Assistance Grant, which is provided for persons whose household income is deemed inadequate.
- Our Food Support Programme, also known as the Food Card or Debit Card, that provides social protection, by promoting nutritional and food security to vulnerable households.
- We also offer general assistance grants under our Social Welfare Division for medical equipment, funerals, rental support among others, to qualified applicants.
- Our National Social Development Programme offers support for minor house repairs and sanitary plumbing assistance.
- Our Sowing Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Development (SEED) Grant, which can assist eligible ex-inmates and their families with making a fresh start to begin or improve their own businesses. There is also provision within the grant to facilitate skills training at a recognized / accredited institution of his/her choice.

These are practical financial support offered by the Ministry that can be readily accessed by families within the Triangle of Hope Programme, once the eligibility criteria are met.

But this is not all!

Our National Family Services Division further supports families by providing:

- free counselling, advice, advocacy, referrals and placement, where necessary;
- parenting programmes, which address the urgent need to develop the basic competencies of parents, providing assistance, guidance and support and practical ideas and tools which empower them to become effective parents; and
- information to families on the keys to building a healthier family life through community workshops, our radio programme - **It's Family Time, Let's Talk** - and through outreaches via lectures to various Government and Non-Government Organizations.

- In fact, our Corporate Communications and Education Unit facilitated a special Public Information and Education Seminar (PIES) specifically for Vision on Mission staff and the Prison Welfare Office last September. This was to ensure that those who are incarcerated and their families are made aware of all the services that are available to them at the Ministry.

We know that when parents are incarcerated, many grandparents step in and take up full duty as parents, so last year we introduced our ‘grand parenting’ programme, specially designed for grandparents raising their grandchildren. This programme includes important strategies for such grandparents including ‘best interest of the child’, ‘navigating technology’ and ‘legal matters affecting grandparents’, among others.

We have also inducted ‘Widows’ into our category of ‘vulnerable’ groups, recognising that the wives of some offenders could become widows, prematurely. This allows them to receive dedicated access to the resources available under this programme.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are constantly striving to improve the service we offer to our clients. We can assure you that we are working diligently to provide you with a level of service you can appreciate and of which we can all be proud.

To this end, ladies and gentlemen, we have three (3) major transformational initiatives that will create dramatic changes in the way we deliver services and the outcomes for clients such as those under the Triangle of Hope Initiative. I call them the ‘Transformational Trio’.

They are:

- i). Integrated Social Enterprise Management System (ISEMS) digitalisation project, designed to enable 24-hour online access to our services and improve service delivery;
- ii). The Social Service Empowerment Unit (SSEU) our one-stop-shop facility that will facilitate not only the Ministry’s services but a multiplicity of transactions with other government agencies, without our clients having to move from office to office to get their transactions completed; and

iii). Social Transformation and Empowerment Programme (STEP-UP), which seeks to empower and uplift our clients, so that they will graduate from social support and transition into a better quality of life, that is, moving them from dependence to self-sufficiency.

Together, these three (3) initiatives will bring relief and greater levels of support to beneficiaries of the Triangle of Hope, other projects of the Vision On Mission Team and NGOs supporting our vulnerable citizens. We remain committed to supporting families.

I am also pleased to announce yet another initiative that will support the Triangle of Hope Programme.

Our Citizen Engagement and Outreach Service, which will be formally launched within the next few weeks, is a dedicated client service bureau that will provide even greater access and support to Vision On Mission. Dedicated personnel will be available to receive your queries and fast track responses to bring quicker results to your clients.

Apart from NGOs, the Ministry has also been seeking out public/private partnerships in order to help, empower and transform the lives of citizens. Through the combined efforts of government, non-profit organizations such as Vision on Mission, socially conscious companies can work together to change the narrative and help previous and current incarcerated persons and their families to create more positive pathways forward.

Today, I applaud the Vision on Mission team for this new outreach programme, which is necessary, meaningful, and will go a long way towards building strong and resilient families and children and reducing the rate of recidivism.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is therefore extremely pleased to be associated with this initiative, particularly since it aligns with our own mandate, to ensure that no one, especially children, is left behind. I reassure you of my personal support and that of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, as we work together to ensure that the lives of vulnerable persons are empowered and transformed.

Joel A. Barker once said, “*Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world!*”

Ladies and gentlemen, together we can change the world!

I wish an abundance of God’s blessings on you and on this most valuable programme.

I thank you.

Senator the Honourable Donna Cox