

New poverty reduction plan announced

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The Turks and Caicos Government is embarking on an attempt to rid poverty from the country. This was stated by Minister of Social Development, the Hon. Dr. Lillian Boyce who was delivering the feature address at a Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) meeting to promote gender equality at the Department of Social Services on Friday, March 3rd.

Boyce, who is also Minister of Social Development and Gender Affairs, acknowledged the important contribution which the CDB and BNTF have made to the Turks and Caicos Islands. She said the CBD and BNTF programme both have impressive track records in terms of offering advice and assistance to the country in order to enhance sustainable community development towards the reduction of poverty.

She then talked about her Government's new initiative, a Poverty Alleviation Citizens Empowerment (P.A.C.E.) programme, which, as the name suggests will eradicate the pockets of poverty and empower Turks and Caicos Islanders.

The programme, she added, will involve all the ministries of Government and will tackle social issues, household issues, community issues and issues that each Island is facing. She attributed the level of increased poverty in the country due to the growing economic development.

Boyce also shared strong remarks about her belief that education and continuous learning are the gateways to poverty reduction and eradication in our country and compassionately testified that this is her key motive in being committed to seeing to it that the citizens of her constituency are given a fair opportunity to apply and successfully obtain Government Scholarships.

Commenting on the Community Center that is under construction in Five Cays where she is the Parliamentary representative, Boyce said: "It is a large development that will amount to one million dollars after completion and is a way to help eradicate poverty in this community."

The Centre will have a library, computer lab, a day care centre for parents who need to drop off their children and other amenities.

She stated that the private sector will help to refurbish shacks and old homes along with the Government housing project, adding that the Minister of Finance has started a programme in Grand Turk to rid the island of latrines in order to give the people a chance to have flush toilets. The programme continues throughout the rest of the islands.

The minister said the private sector has as much responsibility as the Government in ensuring that poverty is eradicated in our country and she extended an open invitation to the private sector to get involved more and play a part in this endeavor.

The Minister added that her Government will form partnerships with the private sector and other

stake holders in the society to help eradicate poverty and address the social issues and problems that are affecting the country.

With regard to promoting gender equality and the women in the country, Boyce said the Chief Minister sees all the women in this country as midwives and that she shares his belief.

In a country where it is known that women are the backbones of their families, caregivers of young and old, the father-figure in some homes, stewards of natural resources, spiritual teachers, leaders and the pillars of community life, Boyce referred to the women of this country as her sisters.

She strongly stressed that her Government has pledged to give the women in our country a greater opportunity by developing more programmes to get women more involved in the development of this country.

Minister Boyce received a roaring applause by all those at the meeting when she said that “it is her personal belief that the best man for the job is a woman”. She encouraged women to come together in unity and look out for each other.

Also in attendance at the meeting was Chairman, Mr. Earle Fulford the Community Liaison Officer (BNTF/TCIG Steering Committee), Guest Speaker the lovely Mrs. Denise Noel-DeBique from Trinidad, members from the Private Sector, media, and Mr. William Clare who opened with a victorious prayer.