



## MEDIA RELEASE

PRIORITY: HIGH

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### Minister Cox launches 'Sign Language in Schools Initiative'

Port-of-Spain --- Earlier today, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services paid a visit to two (2) schools in the Port of Spain region, one being her past Primary School, Eastern Girls Government Primary School and the other, St Mary's College. The visit forms part of the Ministry's launch of its '**Sign Language in Schools Initiative**', which is in commemoration of the International Day of Sign Language, which is commemorated annually on September 23. The Minister distributed Sign Language posters, as part of the Ministry's education, engagement and sensitization efforts, to get more members of our society to learn sign language.

While at St Mary's College, Minister Cox took the opportunity to expound on the tremendous value of learning sign language. She informed the students that being sign language proficient is a skill that can increase their marketability to future employers. "For those of you who are thinking of a career in the social service sector, learning Sign Language would indeed be an asset. Social workers and other professionals in the social service sector are required to assist persons from all walks of life, including persons with disabilities, hence being able to communicate effectively with these persons is essential" said Minister Cox.

During her visit to Eastern Girls Government Primary School, Minister Cox, as a past pupil, was proud to present 2 tablets to two students to assist them with their education. She encouraged teachers and students to embrace learning sign language as an opportunity not only to enrich their life, but also to enhance the lives of others. "There are benefits to learning sign language as well as other languages, which allow us to think broader and have meaningful conversations with people from different backgrounds; particularly those with hearing disabilities" said Minister Cox. The Minister then had a brief meeting with Principal, Betsy Howard Braxton, to discuss how she can help the vulnerable families in the school.

Both Principals, Nigel Joseph of St Mary's College and Betsy Howard Braxton of Eastern Girls Government Primary School thanked the Ministry for this initiative, and look forward to promoting Sign Language in schools as it is the key to inclusion.

Also in attendance was the Permanent Secretary of the MSDFS, Sheila Seecharan, who was elated to raise awareness of Sign Language.

As a frontline Ministry for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, the Ministry remains committed towards building an inclusive society, so that there is greater participation of persons with disabilities in social, educational, cultural, economic and recreational spheres in our society.

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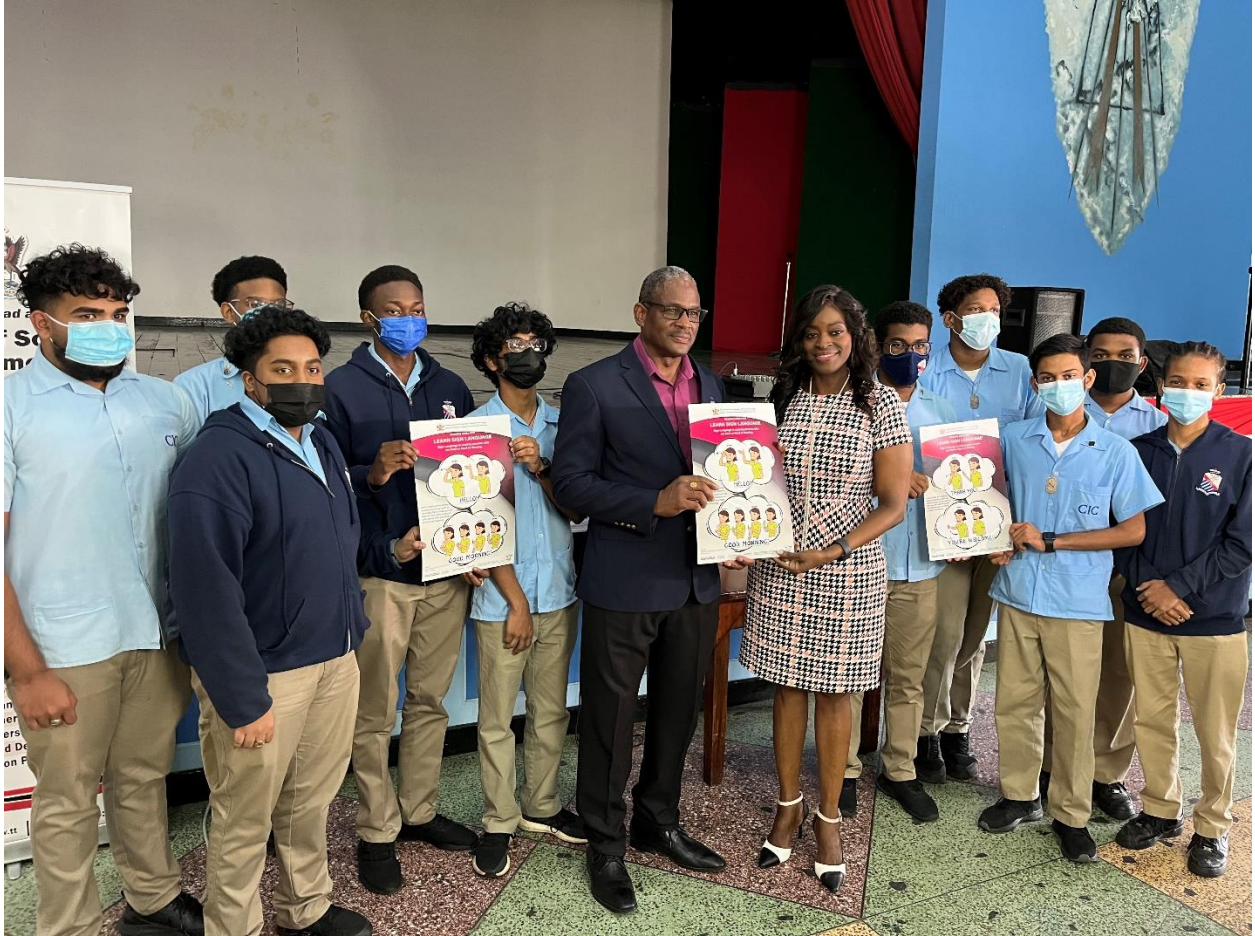
Minister Cox presents two tablets to two pupils of Eastern Girls Government Primary School



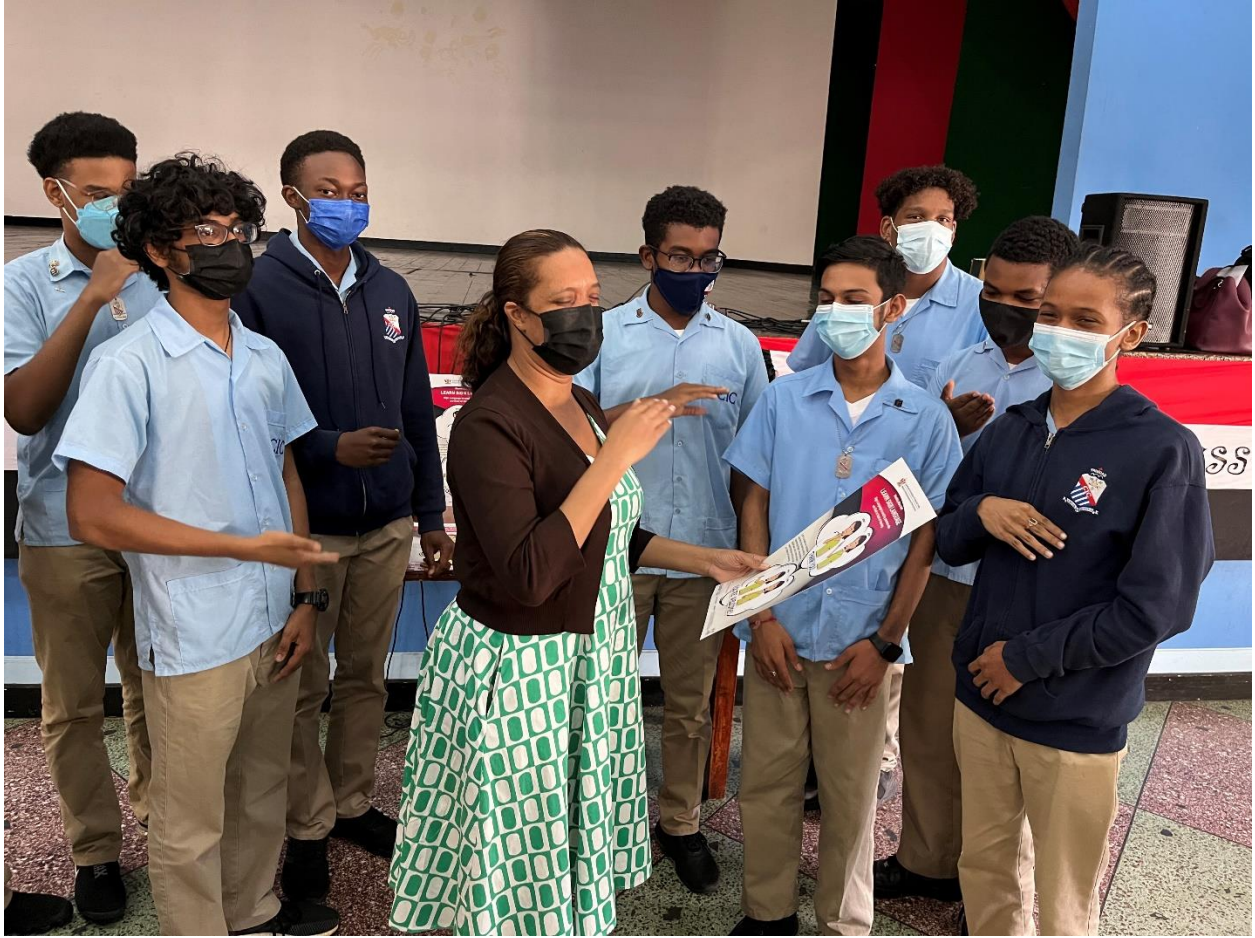
Minister Cox and PS Seecharan distribute sign language posters to the Principal of Eastern Girls Government Primary School, Betsy Howard Braxton and students



Permanent Secretary, Sheila Seecharan teaches sign language to the pupils of Eastern Girls Government Primary School



Minister Cox presents sign language posters to Mr Nigel Joseph, Principal of St Mary's College and students



Tessa Pascal, Disability Affairs Specialist of the MSDFS teaches sign language to students of St Mary's College