



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Minister Cox receives Courtesy Call from Her Excellency Maria Elisa Teofilo de Luna, Brazilian Ambassador**

Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, received a courtesy call from Her Excellency Maria Elisa Teofilo de Luna, Brazilian Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago, at the Ministry's Head office on St Vincent Street, Port of Spain on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2024. The meeting included cordial discussions on ways in which the Ministry and the Embassy can collaborate to improve the social services offered to citizens in Trinidad and Tobago.

Both Minister Cox and Ambassador Teofilo de Luna, discussed existing social programmes and services in both Brazil and Trinidad and Tobago, and discovered very similar initiatives adopted and implemented by the both countries. Like the Senior Citizens Pension, Disability and Public Assistance Grants in Trinidad and Tobago, the elderly, persons with disabilities and those who live below the poverty line in Brazil, receive cash transfers to assist them under a programme known as the Cash Benefit Programme .

Additionally, Brazil's Single Registry for Social Programmes (Cadastro Unico) which offers free professional courses, entrepreneurial support, financial assistance and employment opportunities reflects similar elements of the MSDFS's Sowing Empowerment through Entrepreneurial Development (SEED) programme and the Social Transformation and Empowerment Programme – Uplifting People (STEP-UP), where focus is placed on the empowerment and graduation of poor and vulnerable citizens out of poverty.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for discussions on proposed areas for a mutual partnership, such as study tour opportunities for suitable representatives from the Ministry to visit Brazil to participate in capacity building and knowledge transfer on best practices and standards in the delivery of social services.

Minister Cox took the opportunity to expound on some of the Ministry's ongoing and upcoming projects, particularly the National Register for Vulnerable Persons, which will be used to collect, store, and process vital information on vulnerable persons across Trinidad and Tobago. She also informed Ambassador Teofilo de Luna of the Ministry's upcoming establishment of three transitional facilities, as well as a therapeutic centre, which are all aimed at improving the lives of vulnerable persons.

Her Excellency Teofilo de Luna was quite pleased to learn about the Ministry's various programmes and services, and looks forward to maintaining an excellent working relationship with the Ministry. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services remains committed to proactively exploring opportunities to help, empower and transform lives, and to ensure that no one is left behind.

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**For more information:**

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Minister Cox and Her Excellency Maria Elisa Teofilo de Luna, (right) Brazillian Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago and Permanent Secretary, MSDFS, Lenore Baptiste-Simmons (left) discuss important matters related to Social Development .



Minister Cox presents a token of appreciation to Her Excellency Maria Elisa Teofilo de Luna, Brazillian Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago.