Books Build Bridges and the City of San Fernando Launch Literacy Initiative on International Literacy Day

Books Build Bridges in partnership with the City of San Fernando will place 10,000 children's books donated by Better World Books to Trinidad and Tobago Schools



Community leaders, educators and students gather to celebrate the joy of reading following today's book donation coordinated by Books Build Bridges.

SAN FERNANDO , TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, September 8, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Books Build Bridges and the City of San Fernando, led by Mayor Robert Parris, today announced the launch of a new Child-Friendly Literacy Initiative, beginning with the donation and distribution of 10,000 children's books to support young readers, schools in San Fernando, Trinidad and Tobago.

Books Build Bridges is working in partnership with the City of San Fernando, with the 10,000 books generously provided by Better World Books. This initiative is a shared commitment to literacy, youth engagement and community development.

This programme was formally launched on September 8, International Literacy Day, marking the beginning of a broader series of literacy and child-focused activities. A ceremonial book presentation in San Fernando will bring children together with community leaders, educators and literacy advocates. Representatives of the Ministry of Education, the National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS) and schools in and around San Fernando were among those who attended.

Children were at the center of the ceremony, receiving and celebrating books alongside the organizations and community leaders supporting the initiative.

"International Literacy Day reminds us that literacy begins with access," said Candice McMillan,

Founder and Managing Director of Books Build Bridges. “A book can open an entire world to a child, but first that child must be able to hold one in their hands. Through this initiative, we are putting this belief into action by empowering young readers, expanding opportunity and helping build brighter futures, one book at a time.”

McMillan added: “San Fernando’s commitment to becoming a more child-friendly city made it a natural place to launch this effort. The 10,000 books are further validation of our model which has already delivered thousands of books to Jamaica and Panama. We will continue to work towards expanding access to books throughout the Caribbean and Latin America through our growing network of partnerships.”

Building Literacy into a Child-Friendly City

Books Build Bridges’ literacy initiative complements San Fernando’s broader Child-Friendly Initiative to create a city in which children are supported, included and given meaningful opportunities to learn, participate and thrive.

UNICEF’s Child-Friendly Cities Initiative was launched in San Fernando in early 2025 in partnership with the Mayor and other United Nations agencies. The initiative aims to help shape San Fernando into a model municipality where children are safe, heard and able to access quality services and opportunities, while ensuring that the voices, rights and needs of children are reflected directly in local planning and decision-making.

“Creating a child-friendly San Fernando means investing not only in the physical spaces our children use, but also in their education, imagination and ability to see possibilities for their future,” said His Worship Robert Parris, Mayor of San Fernando. “Literacy is fundamental to that vision. We are pleased to partner with Books Build Bridges on an initiative that puts books directly into children’s hands and brings schools, families and the wider community together around reading and learning.”

“International Literacy Day gives us an ideal opportunity to begin, but our commitment does not end today,” Mayor Parris added. “We want this initiative to become part of a continuing effort to engage our young people and make San Fernando a city in which children know their voices and their futures matter.”

10,000 Books and a Longer-Term Programme

The September 8 launch marks the next chapter for Books Build Bridges’ growing literacy work across the Caribbean and Latin America, building on previous book access initiatives in Jamaica and Panama while expanding the organization’s reach in Trinidad and Tobago. The programme brings together book access, literacy, creativity and youth engagement, with the donation of 10,000 children’s books and a student-led community mural forming key components of the initiative.

Following the launch, the 10,000 donated children's books will be distributed to benefit the children, schools and communities, with the goal of increasing access to age-appropriate reading materials and encouraging children to make reading part of their everyday lives.

Activities under the Child-Friendly Initiative will continue through San Fernando City Month in November, including a student debate and a student-led community mural project celebrating San Fernando. The mural will give young people an opportunity to create a lasting visual legacy shaped by the ideas and imagination of San Fernando's children.

This Child-Friendly Initiative supports United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Quality Education, which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

As the world commemorates the 60th anniversary of International Literacy Day, this initiative also highlights how local action can help advance the wider goal of expanding literacy and opportunity for children.

Better World Books Supports Access to Reading

The 10,000-book donation was made possible by Better World Books, whose purpose promotes the pursuit of knowledge, supports access to books, and the support of literacy initiatives around the world.

"Access to books is foundational to literacy, learning, and opportunity," said Dustin Holland, President & CEO of Better World Books. "We are proud to provide 10,000 children's books for this initiative and to support Books Build Bridges and the City of San Fernando in getting books directly into the hands of young readers. A book can spark curiosity, build confidence, and create a lifelong connection to reading. We are excited to see these books begin the next phase of their lifecycle with children and communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago."

The collaboration reflects a shared belief among the three organizations that meaningful progress in literacy begins with the tangible-making sure children have books of their own to read, enjoy, and share.

"Ten thousand books represent an extraordinary opportunity for children, but this is about more than the books themselves," McMillan said. "It is about building bridges between organizations and communities so that resources can reach the children who can benefit from them the most."

About Books Build Bridges

Books Build Bridges is a nonprofit literacy organization working across the Caribbean and Latin

America to expand children's access to books and strengthen community-based literacy initiatives. The organization is dedicated to promoting literacy by increasing access to books through collaborative projects that connect book donors, community organizations, government partners, schools and volunteers to create practical, sustainable opportunities for children to read and learn. Books Build Bridges may be found at www.booksbuildbridges.org.

About the City of San Fernando

The City of San Fernando is committed to building a safe, inclusive and vibrant community for residents and to creating greater opportunities for children and young people to participate in the life and future of the city. San Fernando is Trinidad and Tobago's first pilot municipality under UNICEF's Child-Friendly Cities Initiative, supporting a child-centered approach to local development and civic participation.

About Better World Books

Better World Books is a for-profit socially conscious business and a global online bookseller that collects and sells new and used books online. Each sale generates funds for literacy and education initiatives in the UK, U.S., and around the world. Since its launch in 2003, Better World Books has raised over $35 million for libraries and literacy, has sold over 100 million books, has donated over 38 million books, and has reused or recycled more than 475 million books. Through its book donation and literacy programmes, Better World Books works with nonprofit organizations, libraries, and community partners to help books reach readers and communities where they can make a difference.

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