



President's Report

IWFTT 3rd fiscal year - A deeper understanding of our identity and confidently growing the Forum.

Our third year as the Trinidad and Tobago chapter of the International Women's Forum (IWF), much like a typical third-year of university or college, has been a time when our consolidated knowledge and growing confidence have been leveraged to produce marvelously accelerated results.

September 2016 – IWFTT conference, Chicago USA

We kicked off the fiscal year with the IWF Conference in Chicago, themed “Crossroads of Change”.

Consistent with all IWF conferences, the plenary sessions were engaging and featured an impressive assortment of attendees, feature speakers, and panelists. Chicago, home of the first American female Nobel peace prize winner; Jane Adams was a fitting venue for a World Leadership Conference.

By the end of the conference, attendees seemed to share a clear desire to return to their professional lives, rejuvenated and re-committed to making a difference in their respective spheres of influence.

The Trinidad and Tobago IWF Chapter was represented by six members: Dr. Monica Davis, Patricia Kong Ting, Indu Sharma, Anya Schnoor and Gisele Marfleet.

Milestone event

In October 2016, our founding President, **Sharon Christopher**, who was nominated in June for a position as a Director at Large of the IWF International Board of Directors was successfully elected for a two-year term until September 2018.

This is a tremendous feat for one of our members to be elected to the Board of Directors—we congratulate Sharon on both her personal accomplishment and her representation of our Forum. Now having direct access to the direction, philosophy, and objectives of the IWF, we look forward to Sharon advising us regarding these matters and working to localize these objectives.

November 2016 - Christmas party

Our inaugural Christmas party came off this year with a delightful party hosted by Sisters **Indu Sharma** and **Joanne Salazar**. Members and partners were treated to a delightful evening with a sumptuous meal prepared by Chef Joe Brown, seasonal drinks and live music. We all indulged in quality sharing time and relaxation with each other while bringing in the Yuletide season and giving thanks for our blessings to date.

Of course, our chapter's signature dance, the Electric Slide, made an appearance—to the appreciation of all, as usual!

January 2017: Milestone Event – Induction of 12 new members to our Chapter

Clearly the highlight of our year, January 2017 saw the chapter induct 12 additional highly accomplished women, to accompany the founding 20 that began the Forum in September 2014. Our new inductees have added to the Forum a wealth of experience, acumen in their respective fields, and the prestige of their individual accomplishments.

With the enlargement of the Forum comes an increase in energy—the compatibility and synergies between the two inductee classes being quite evident. We look forward to both individual and collective contributions by members of our Forum, which now numbers over thirty members from a variety of disciplines, such as the Energy Sector, Banking, Corporate and Entrepreneurial Business, Arts, Finance and Accounting, Media, Public Service, Education, Law, Public Relations, Occupational Therapy, Psychological Professional Services, Medicine, Fashion, Manufacturing, and Human Resources.

February 2017 – Discussion on Sexual Harassment held.

In February, we had our Chapter meeting at Sister **Jacqueline Quamina's** home in Goodwood Park. We had selected for discussion the topic of Sexual Harassment in the workplace and the issues surrounding same, as it was a current affair in the media. Our feature speaker was our new Sister **Teresa White**, HR Director for the Ansa McAl group of companies.

Teresa advised us about the importance of established sexual harassment policies in our work places, so that employees may be guided by the Company's documented accepted behavior in this regard. Members listened keenly to Teresa's sage advice as they received best practices to implement in their respective organizations.

April 2017- Discussion on Human Trafficking held.

In April 2017, we met for another Chapter meeting at the home of Sister **Karen Darbasie**. On this occasion, we selected the topic of Human Trafficking - another topic that dominated media attention and members wanted to find out more.

For this we were fortunate to have our own resident expert, namely, Sister **Charmaine Ghandi Andrews**, Chief Immigration Officer for Trinidad & Tobago. Charmaine spoke to us candidly and confidentially about the matter, citing examples of modern day indentured servitude and captivity of unsuspecting foreigners that come to Trinidad seeking a better life.

While members were comforted to know that there were competent protective forces in the Immigration Department to assist victims under Charmaine's stewardship, it was clear that members were startled at the inhumanity that can occur by predators on the vulnerable and defenseless.

May 2017- Cornerstone conference in Sweden

In mid-May, seven of our members travelled to Stockholm, Sweden for the Cornerstone Conference which featured the topic of "A more Sustainable World: Movements and Markets."

These members were; **Sharon Christopher, Patricia Kong Ting, Rene Ferguson, Dr. Monica Davis, Indu Sharma, Joanne Salazar and Dhisha**

Moorjani. International guests were made to feel at home while appreciating the beauty and attributes of Sweden. In Sweden, the breakout sessions which are part of every IWF conference were impressive as they were varied. The excellence in technological innovation and passion for the environment were highly evident throughout the attendance. Reports on the conference from these members were very favourable.

Milestone – A new Executive Committee for a new term.

During the month of May, our Founding President, Secretary and Public Relations officer each indicated that they would like to retire from active participation on the Executive due to time constraints.

As a result, Vice President/President Elect, **Gisele Marfleet**, assumed Presidency of the Forum for the remainder of Sharon's term, ending September 2018. **Jacqueline Quamina** was selected by the Executive Committee to finish the term of **Sandra Chin Yuen Kee** as Secretary. Finally, **Giselle Thompson** was selected by the Executive Committee to finish the term of **Lisa Ann Joseph** as Public Relations officer. **Patricia Kong Ting** would continue as Treasurer for the remainder of her term to September 2018. The office of Vice President, would remain vacant and elections would be held for the vacant position at the AGM in accordance with the by-laws of the IWFTT. Tiffany Reid was invited as a guest of the Executive meeting to assist the Committee in its activities.

June 2017 – Relaxed mixer at The Residence, One Woodbrook Place

The first week of June saw us gathering for a fun, enchanting and engaging social evening at The Residence, One Woodbrook Place. The purpose was to carve out quality time to have meaningful conversations with each other in a relaxed environment. This was accomplished superbly and a lot of fun was had by all.

We did pause our individual conversations for a wonderful thirty-minute video/audio presentation by the Members who attended the Sweden conference. The presentation was informative and allowed those who could not attend to share in their experience.

At the end of the evening, members Lisa Ann Joseph and Dr. Monica Davis won a bottle of Prosecco each after answering correctly three fun facts about each other that they had learnt that night.

July 2017 – Attendance at the Caribbean Corporate Governance Institute breakfast symposium on Women in Governance.

Though not a formally organized meeting, some of members of the IWFTT organized to share a table at this breakfast symposium on Women in Governance because it was a topic and speaker in which we were all interested.

Hosted by the Caribbean Corporate Governance Institute, of which Sisters **Jacqueline Quamina** and **Rani Narace** are Board Directors, the Symposium attracted a quality audience of female professionals in both public and private sector positions.

The event was well attended by women in all stages of their careers. This bodes well for Trinidad in developing its female professionals for more leadership positions. We encourage our members to identify more seminars that align with our interests so that we can encourage each other to go to as a group instead of waiting for a planned Chapter meeting. Our WhatsApp group is a great place to circulate the information and get feedback.

Philanthropic activity for 2017

On an initiative advanced by Sister **Patricia Kong Ting** at our last AGM, the Chapter chose to fund ten women to develop their literacy skills through ALTA for fiscal year 2017. The women were selected from seven different geographical ALTA locations in Trinidad. The annual cost of each student was \$600. We received progress reports on each of these women at the end of the academic year and these were very encouraging, with students making great strides. The ability to empower these women with reading and writing skills is a privilege. The Chapter can decide if they would like to continue supporting the program or chose another project instead.

Members' Milestones

In the last year some of our members have had personal career milestones that we take the opportunity to celebrate and applaud.

Sister **Dr. Elaine Monica Davis** was appointed as the first female Dean of the Consular Corps of Trinidad & Tobago. Elaine is the Honourary Consul for Bahamas.

Sister **Roxane De Freitas** retired from Unilever Ltd after a sterling twenty-five year career with this multinational. Roxane was a former Managing Director of

Unilever Trinidad Ltd and retired at the end of July 2017 from the position of Managing Director, Unilever Caribbean Limited.

Sister **Jacqueline Quamina** will retire from Republic Bank Limited on September 15th, 2017 after a twenty-one year exemplary career in banking and legal counsel. Jacqueline was the first female Corporate Secretary, Group General Counsel and first female Executive Director of Republic Bank Limited.

Sister **Nicole Matouk** recently in July assumed the post of President of the Rotary Club of Port of Spain Central. Nicole's term of presidency is for one year. Nicole is the Joint Managing Director of National Cannery Ltd.

We congratulate all of you on your accomplishments. You are inspiring!

Conclusion

Upon reflection, we certainly had an active year with good, meaningful, and frequent contact. Our Forum is stronger, more purposeful, and more supportive. I hope you are looking forward to what the next year will bring, as much as I am. Constructive participation in IWFTT, and in support of IWF's goals, requires Vision, Commitment, and a degree of Selflessness.

Let us dare to do better together.

Kindest regards,

Gisele Marfleet

Chapter President, IWFTT

1 September, 2017