

Connections

August 2024



The Fellowship Issue

In a world where individual achievements often take center stage, the true magic happens when we come together in a spirit of support and solidarity. At the International Women's Forum Trinidad & Tobago, we celebrate the transformative power of fellowship—a force that fuels our journeys, inspires our dreams, and amplifies our voices. This issue is dedicated to the incredible women who understand that success is not a solitary endeavor but a shared adventure. Through stories of connection, collaboration, and mutual empowerment, we honor the bonds that uplift us all. Join us as we explore how fellowship can light up our lives, spark innovation, and build communities that thrive on shared strength and collective wisdom.



President's Message

Dear Members and Friends of IWF Trinidad and Tobago,

In our celebration of 50 years of continuous growth, the International Women's Forum has not only expanded its reach but also its impact. Boasting a membership of 8,000+ members spanning six continents and 33 countries as of September 2023, the IWF global organization is a testament to the power of unity, resilience, and shared vision. The experience of continuous growth has been mirrored by the local forum which started with twenty-three members in 2014 and has grown to a membership of fifty-one.

The strategic target of the global organisation is to extend its presence even further, aiming to establish forums in 50 countries. This ambitious goal is driven by the commitment to fostering women's leadership and creating platforms where top women leaders from diverse professions can connect, collaborate, and inspire one another. The strongest reason our members give for joining IWF is the unparalleled opportunity to be part of a group of extraordinary women leaders—including heads of state, astronauts, entrepreneurs, innovators, and more.

Beyond professional growth, IWF offers the invaluable gift of life-long friendships and support networks within a leadership peer group. Our members continue to be involved because of the deep, meaningful connections they form and the collaborative efforts to advance women's leadership globally. These relationships and our shared commitment to women's advancement are at the heart of IWF's enduring success.

Critical messages outlining the immediate and long-term direction of our global organization will be delivered by IWF's President, Carolyn Carter, in-person, at the IWFTT's Inspirational Women Awards Gala on September 17. This Gala will be a celebration of the outstanding achievements of four Trinidad & Tobago women (Rhonda Maingot, Deborah Christiana de Rosia, Professor Judith Gobin and Akosua Dardaine-Edwards), who are pioneers in their fields. Their stories of determination, innovation, and leadership will undoubtedly inspire us all and reinforce the importance of our core purpose.

As we look forward to this momentous occasion, I invite each of you to reflect on your own journeys and the impact you have made within IWF and beyond. Together, we are shaping a world where women's leadership is celebrated, supported, and empowered.

Warmest regards,
Joanne,
President,
IWF Trinidad and Tobago

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IWA Committee Chair's Message

The Inspirational Women Awards (IWA) Gala is our signature annual event at which extraordinary women are celebrated. They inspire those around them to be more and do more. These inspirational women are everyday heroes, entrepreneurs, business leaders, changemakers, game-changers, and role models who lead by example with courage, confidence, commitment, and integrity. They are being honoured for their accomplishments, diligence, dedication, and the contributions they have made in their fields of endeavour or community. It is an opportunity for their recognition and elevation. When the achievements of one woman are celebrated, all women are celebrated. The Inspirational Women Awards Gala is aligned to IWFTT's mandate to unite, inspire, and celebrate accomplished women, to advance exemplary leadership and to learn from, support each other, and empower the next generation of women leaders.

In commemoration of the IWFTT's 10th anniversary in 2024, a special Inspirational Legacy Award was added to the slate of three awards already bestowed on women whose lives and work in Trinidad and Tobago, serve as an inspiration to others. Well known and highly respected co-founder of the Living Water Community, Rhonda Mary Maingot will receive the inaugural Inspirational Legacy Award, the Inspirational Champion of Women Award will be given to Deborah Christiana de Rosia, the director of four non-profits which create opportunities for women, men, and other young adults, through education and vocational training. The first female Professor of Life sciences at the University of the West Indies, former Professor Judith Gobin, will receive the Inspirational Advocate Award for her significant contributions to marine biology and environmental advocacy in the Caribbean. Akosua Dardaine-Edwards founded the NiNa Foundation in Trinidad and Tobago, which supports girls and young women transitioning from the St. Jude's School, will receive the Inspirational Emerging Leader Award.

We look forward to celebrating their accomplishments at the Inspirational Women Awards Gala which is less than 1 month away!

Regards,

Anna-Maria Garcia Brooks,
Chair,
Inspirational Women Awards Committee.



Women in engineering in bpTT



[Click here](#) to read their stories

Inspirational Women Awards

INSPIRATIONAL LEGACY AWARD



Rhonda Mary Maingot

We honor **Rhonda Mary Maingot**, a woman whose unwavering dedication and compassionate heart have transformed countless lives across Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean. As co-founder and directress of the Living Water Community, Rhonda has spent nearly five decades living out her mission to "love and show the world how to love." Her journey began at age 28, when she felt a divine call to serve, sold everything she owned, and took to the streets of

Port of Spain to help the poor and needy. This act of kindness led to the birth of the Living Waters Community, a beacon of hope for the disenfranchised. Under Rhonda's leadership, the community has expanded to include ministries like the Ave Maria Centre for Homeless Persons, a halfway house for abandoned children, and drug rehabilitation centers. They also established a hospice for the terminally ill, a home for HIV/AIDS sufferers, and a school for migrant and refugee children. Rhonda's work extends beyond Trinidad and Tobago, with missions in the Netherlands Antilles, Barbados, St. Lucia, and even a mission to Russia after the fall of communism.

Rhonda also founded the Trinity Communications Network and the Caribbean School for Catholic Communications, using media to spread the Gospel and create jobs. A natural leader, she has nurtured leadership within the community, ensuring it thrives even in her absence, with a team inspired by her example.



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Inspirational Women Awards

INSPIRATIONAL CHAMPION OF WOMEN



**Deborah
Christiana de Rosia**

We honor **Deborah Christiana de Rosia**, a tireless advocate and true Champion of Women. Fondly known as "Sr. Debbie," Deborah has spent her life empowering women and children, providing them with the tools and support to overcome adversity and achieve their full potential.

Deborah's journey began in education, where she taught for thirteen years, guiding countless young minds. A profound spiritual experience led her to

dedicate herself entirely to serving those in need. In 1983, she founded the Eternal Light Community Vocational School in Tunapuna, offering education and vocational training to young women and children with special needs. Her work has enabled many to become self-sufficient and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities.

Seeing the rising tide of domestic violence, Deborah co-founded Goshen Home and Vision of Hope, safe havens for battered women and their children. She extended her compassion by establishing Amica House and Joshua House, providing shelter and care for abandoned girls and boys. Deborah's commitment to nurturing vulnerable populations is also evident in her creation of Agape House, which offers counseling and support, and Casa de Luz, a home for the elderly.



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Inspirational Women Awards

INSPIRATIONAL ADVOCATE AWARD



**Professor
Judith Gobin**

We honor **Prof. Judith Gobin**, a distinguished marine biologist and environmental advocate whose contributions have had a profound impact on the Caribbean and beyond. In 2020, Dr. Gobin became the first female Professor of Life Science at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, marking a historic achievement in academia.

Dr. Gobin's work has been instrumental in expanding our understanding of marine biodiversity. Her extensive research, which includes approximately 298 new marine species and records, has provided invaluable insights into the unique ecosystems of Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean. As a leading benthic ecologist, she has explored a range of marine habitats, from coastal sediments to the deep sea, sharing these wonders with the world through her book and DVD series *Deep Sea Wonders*.

Beyond her research, Dr. Gobin has been a powerful advocate for ocean conservation. She has represented Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in negotiations for the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and played a key role in the historic agreement of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty in 2023, which aims to protect the high seas from unregulated activities.

In recognition of her contributions, a deep-sea tube worm species, *Lamellibrachia judigobini*, was named in her honor. Dr. Gobin also serves as a CARICOM Adviser on Marine Genetic Resources, demonstrating her unwavering commitment to safeguarding our oceans.

Our commitment to women in leadership.

At **Grant Thornton**, we understand that diversity drives innovation and success. Our commitment to women in leadership is evident through our initiatives that support and promote female leaders within our organisation and beyond.

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Inspirational Women Awards

INSPIRATIONAL EMERGING LEADER AWARD



**Akosua
Dardaine-Edwards**

We celebrate **Akosua**, an emerging leader whose impactful work with the NiNa Foundation is transforming lives and empowering communities. Her dedication to supporting girls and young women from the St. Judes Home in Trinidad and Tobago exemplifies leadership and resilience in the face of adversity.

Akosua's journey is marked by her profound commitment to those who have faced exceptionally challenging circumstances, including abusive family situations and troubled relationships. Through the NiNa Foundation, she has provided essential support and guidance to these young women as they transition to adulthood, often without the support of traditional family structures.

Her visionary approach goes beyond immediate aid. The NiNa program is designed to instill resilience and leadership qualities, preparing these young women for a brighter future. By offering training and employment opportunities, Akosua helps them transition out of the care system and into meaningful roles within society, fostering independence and personal growth.

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Fellows Programme




Now in its 26th year, the Fellows Programme was launched in 1994 with seed-funding from the U.S. Labor Department as a direct result of the Glass Ceiling Commission. The programme annually convenes approximately 35 Fellows from around the world for a total of 20 days, offering customized leadership training for female executives on their path to the C-suite. The approach is holistic and focused on the participant's personal and professional development, career path, and trajectory, while embracing the value of an outside perspective.

Reaching
NEW HEIGHTS



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Fellows Experience

While many women have taken on leadership roles in Trinidad and Tobago there are some unique challenges faced by women in leadership are different from those faced by men. I have been inspired by many women members of IWFTT and the support that they provide both individually and collectively to young women. Stepping into a leadership role as a relatively young woman has not been easy and the International Women's Forum Leadership Fellows Programme provided a guided, valuable opportunity for growth and development within a cohort of my peers from around the world.

I was able to build strong connections with my fellow participants. I met women who had gone through similar experiences and had overcome numerous challenges to achieve their successes. We shared our experiences and we realized that we were not alone. The cohort became a sisterhood of women who had mutual understanding from which I found a deep sense of comfort and support.

The programme provided us with learning opportunities at INSEAD France and Harvard Business School in Boston.



Our time at INSEAD set the tone for who we are as leaders, what we bring to our roles, and how we can foster leadership traits that position us to be successful leaders of our teams. The care and diligence placed by the IWF Fellows planning team ensured that we had the best-personalized experience by strengthening our decision-making capabilities, understanding how culture plays a vital role in environments, and ensuring that we remain agile to drive change and adapt under pressure.

Our experience at Harvard Business School delved deeper through the Case Method in to how leaders bring teams together for the ultimate success of any organization. We viewed cases that helped us appreciate leaders like Mellody Hobson and Fawn Weaver who drove change in a world that seemed impossible. The power of having grit to push forward when no one believes or understands your vision. It was an amazing experience to talk with the professors and individuals whose cases we reviewed and get their views on what keeps them going, and why it was important for them to continue on their path. This experience surpassed all my expectations.

We women often underestimate our value but this program ensures that you walk away confident, passionate, and focused to create the change you want to see in this world. The beauty of it all is you experience the journey with an international peer group of sisters who willingly provide continued support and friendship. It has been the most rewarding experience of my life.

Tea at Heritage House



On July 18th, members of the IWFTT enjoyed a delightful afternoon of tea and fellowship at the Heritage House of Angelo Bissessarsingh in Belmont, Trinidad. The visit included a fascinating tour of the historic property, where we were captivated by the rich stories and colorful tales that brought the history of the house to life. The experience was both educational and deeply inspiring, leaving us with a profound appreciation for the legacy preserved within those walls.



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Highlights from last year's Gala



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Capturing the moment with Award winner
Prof. Rose-Marie Belle Antoine

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2024 Upcoming Events

IWFTT'S 10TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING THURSDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER, 2024 LOCATION TO BE CONFIRMED



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We remain committed not only to our financial performance, but also to our Environmental and Social Governance responsibility and our employees. This year, we were recognized as **Trinidad and Tobago's Best Bank 2024 by Global Finance Magazine (New York)**. This award would not be possible without the continued loyalty of our clients and passion of our employees. We remain committed to supporting our clients in achieving their goals and strengthening the communities we serve, through innovative products and providing a best-in-class client experience. Highlights of this year's recognition include:

- Strong financial performance, outperforming the market in key ratios, including Return on Assets, Return on Equity and Operational efficiency.
- Progress in **Digital Transformation**, with 72% clients enrolled in digital platforms and a 54% digital adoption rate.
- Digital enhancements such as the introduction of **digital account opening**, leading to an improved sign-up experience that provides a simple, fast and secure way for clients to engage with us 24/7. New **accessibility features** were added to the Scotia Caribbean App, including the launch of a **Digital Collaboration Tool** for select client groups, which allows chats, audio and video calls between

clients and their assigned Advisors, all within a secure environment and much more.

- A robust **Environmental and Social Governance** agenda, making an impact through sustainable investments and strong employee volunteerism in the communities in which we live and work.

All our accomplishments this year were made possible by our strong and energized team. We continue to strive to create a unique and diverse employee culture because we understand that our employees are integral to our future. We're excited to announce that we've been recognized again this year as one of the **Best Workplaces in the Caribbean and Central America 2024 by Great Place To Work®**. We remain committed to being an employer of choice, and to prioritizing our employees' satisfaction and well-being. This recognition stems from both our employees' surveyed feedback and a written submission that highlighted the remarkable efforts of our internal teams. Some of the initiatives that our employees have successfully conceptualized and executed are as follows:

- Enhancing our Parental Leave
- Improving Employee Benefits and Allowances
- Training and Development Programs
- Advancing our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Culture

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**Notice Of Elections to be held at the Annual Meeting
of the IWFTT on September 26, 2024.**

Vacant Positions

August 5, 2024.

Dear Members,

In accordance with IWFTT By-Laws Article 12.1(a), the membership is hereby notified that the following positions will become vacant on the Board at the end of the next AGM on September 26, 2024:

1)President - Joanne Salazar has served two 2-year terms as President. The position of President will become vacant at the end of the next AGM on September 26, 2024.

2)Vice President - Anna-Maria Garcia Brooks will have completed a two-year term as Vice President. The position of Vice President will become vacant at the end of the next AGM on September 26, 2024.

3)Treasurer - Karen Yip Chuck will have completed a two-year term as Treasurer. The position of Treasurer will become vacant at the end of the next AGM on September 26, 2024.

4)Public Relations Officer - Indira Nicole Couch will have completed a two-year term as Public Relations Officer. The position of Public Relations Officer will become vacant at the end of the next AGM on September 26, 2024.

5)Secretary - Yvonne Roberts-White will have served 1 year of a 2-year term as Secretary. She will vacate the position. The position of Secretary will become vacant at the end of the next AGM on September 26, 2024.

The Board invites nominations from the Membership for five (5) positions on the Board:

- President
- Vice President
- Treasurer
- Public Relations Officer, and
- Secretary

Nomination and Election Process

In accordance with IWFTT By-Laws Article 12.1:

a)Not less than 30 calendar days prior to a scheduled Annual Meeting, at which elections are to be held, a list of positions on the Board of Directors that will be vacant shall be circulated to the Members electronically.

This notice meets this requirement.

(a)Any Member may nominate another Member (a Nominee) as an Officer of the Board of Directors by email to the Secretary (iwf.trinidad@outlook.com). Each Nominee must be seconded by a second Member and all Nominees must confirm their acceptance of the nomination with the Secretary.

(b)The names of all Nominees shall be submitted to the Secretary at least 21 calendar days prior to the date of the Annual Meeting.

The deadline for the submission of nominations is August 28, 2024.

(c)The names of all eligible and confirmed Nominees will be sent by email to the Members by the Board of Directors no later than 10 calendar days prior to the Annual Meeting.

The Board will notify members no later than September 8, 2024.

(d)The election of Officers shall be conducted by ballot at the Annual Meeting on **September 26, 2024.**

(e)Each Member shall be entitled to one vote for each position at the Annual Meeting to be exercised in person or by proxy.

Additional Notes

- In support of their nomination all nominees shall submit a write-up (max. 350 words) to be shared with Members in support of their nomination. The write-up must be submitted via email to the Secretary, Yvonne Roberts-White, no later than end of day September 4, 2024.
- It is important for nominees to note that the Board typically meets monthly, but seeks to avoid peak months, currently the duration of meetings averages 2 hours each, commencing around 5:30 pm. Additionally, to progress agreed actions a commitment of hours equivalent to around three to four days a month is usually required. This is in addition to attendance at Member meetings.

We will circulate all the nominee information for the vacant positions, at least 10 business days prior to the Annual Meeting, no later than September 15, 2024.

Sincerely,



Yvonne Roberts-White
Secretary IWFTT

IWF CORNERSTONE CONFERENCE ON 20TH NOVEMBER IN HONG KONG



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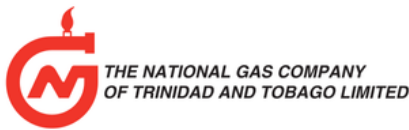
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