

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY MRS WYNDA F CHANDLER
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AT GRADUATION CEREMONY
FOR
CAPACITY BUILDING IN LA BREA
NESC BUILDING
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It is always a pleasure to represent NGC.

We are here today, as you all know, for the graduation ceremony of NGC's Capacity Building Programme for members of two La Brea community organisations – the La Brea Police Youth Club and the NGC La Brea Nightingales Steel Orchestra – as well as 8 members of the Community Police Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

At NGC we operate from the principle that while funding is essential, knowledge is transformational. Our ultimate goal has always been to improve people's lives, or rather, to give them the tools they need to improve their own lives. That is the essence of sustainability.

Late last year we conducted a formal evaluation of the community groups that we support. Through that exercise it was determined that even though the groups were made up of deeply committed and enthusiastic people, they needed organisational strengthening, particularly in the area of management and related skills. It was from that process that the Capacity Building Programme was born.

Although you have completed the programme and are graduating today, we at NGC do not see the conclusion of your training as an ending, rather as a milestone in an ongoing journey towards the sustainable development of La Brea and its people.

I don't have to tell the people of La Brea about NGC's careful management of one of our country's natural resources for the benefit of all citizens.

I don't have to tell the people of La Brea about NGC's commitment to national development through sustainable programmes such as the one you've recently completed. After all, we've been partners in development for many years.

Before us today are the more than 30 graduates of this programme. Graduates that we hope will use the skills and knowledge gained to be better leaders, more efficient managers, and mentors who have the ability to uplift the young people of La Brea who most need their help. I speak with confidence when I say that we have little doubt that you will do just that. Not only have you shown aptitude and willingness to learn and grow by successfully completing the programme, you were already exemplars of good citizenship through the work you have been doing with your respective community groups. I therefore look forward to another milestone of this undertaking, that is, completion by the respective management teams of a three-year strategic plan to guide the Police Youth Club and the steelband.

I want to make special mention of the members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service who participated in the programme. We believe community policing is an incredibly valuable tool in the kit of sustainable social development. As part of the La Brea Police Youth Club, police officers were already included in the Capacity Building Programme. NGC was however, surprised and pleased to be approached by the TTPS which asked us to add to the programme eight additional community police officers who serve other youth clubs in Trinidad and Tobago. NGC welcomed the opportunity to assist the Police Service and collaborated in the interest of community development.

I must also mention Mr Richard Braithwaite and his team for the professionalism with which they carried out this programme. Not only is Mr Braithwaite a skilled consultant in the area of training, he is also an outspoken advocate for community development, especially in the south western peninsula of Trinidad. Without a doubt, that mix of professionalism and passion has contributed to the success of this programme.

I turn my attention now to the graduates. Once more on behalf of NGC and on my own behalf, I congratulate you for your commitment to the programme. Now comes the work of applying what you have learned to make the NGC La Brea Nightingales and the La Brea Police Youth Club 21st century community groups. Your new management skills, combined with your devotion to the people of La Brea and the steelpan, will greatly advance the development of your groups and the sustainable growth of your community.

I said earlier that we at NGC viewed this graduation as a milestone, not a conclusion. That statement is as true for us as it is for you. Our commitment to La Brea does not end because the Capacity Building Programme has been completed. And we look forward to continuing our partnership as your labours bear fruit.

Thank you.