



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago  
Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services

**The Honourable Vandana Mohit**  
**Minister of the People Social Development and Family**  
**Services**  
**on the occasion of the**  
**IDEP 2024 Spoken Word Competition**  
**Prize Giving Ceremony**

**Saturday May 24, 2025**

**10:30 a.m.**

**6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Head Office**  
**CL Financial Building**  
**St Vincent, Street Port of Spain**

**Salutations**

**Senator Dr. Natalie Chaitan-Maharaj, Parliamentary  
Secretary in the Ministry**

**Mrs. Lenor Baptiste Simmons, Permanent Secretary**

**Mr. Ryan Ramcharan, Permanent Secretary, a.g**

**Ms. Vera Deonanan-Balkaran Deputy Permanent  
Secretary**

**Ms. Wendy Guy Hernandez, Deputy Permanent  
Secretary**

**Dr. Seon Raymond, Director, Social Investigations Unit  
Staff of the Ministry**

**Distinguished Judges**

**Honoured Winners**

**Members of the Media**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good morning,

It is truly a privilege to be here today as we celebrate the conclusion of a meaningful and inspiring initiative. The Ministry's Spoken Word Competition held in commemoration the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (2024), has provided a creative and spirited platform for young people to speak up about the realities of poverty in our country.

This competition is part of our broader commitment to commemorate the **United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**. In 2024, the Ministry took a bold step by expanding our observances to include a space for youth expression and advocacy.

It should be noted, that this new Government of Trinidad and Tobago, which is grounded in a deep commitment to the people we serve, remains steadfast in its promise to ensuring the well-being of all citizens, and is actively working toward achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of reducing poverty in all its forms everywhere by the year 2030. Guided by a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach, we continue to make measurable progress in tackling poverty and developing sustainable solutions that empower our people and communities.

At the Ministry, we have been advancing the development of a National Poverty Reduction Strategy to guide our national approach to addressing poverty in a sustainable way.

The strategy is built on five key focus areas:

1. Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building – Enhancing the capabilities of institutions to deliver efficient and effective poverty reduction interventions;
2. Harmonisation of the Social Services Delivery System – Creating a more cohesive, streamlined, and people-centred approach to the provision of social services;
3. Data-Driven Social Protection System – Leveraging accurate and timely data to inform policy decisions, target support, and monitor outcomes effectively;
4. Improving Access to Digital Infrastructure, Technology, and Services – Ensuring that the poor and vulnerable are not left behind in the digital age and can fully participate in the modern economy; and
5. Addressing Poverty and Vulnerability Multi-Dimensionally – Tackling the many interlinked factors that contribute to poverty, including education, health, employment, housing, and social exclusion.

These focus areas align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal (1) which seeks to end poverty in all its forms everywhere.

It is therefore important that we extend the involvement of all our citizens in advocacy, thereby encouraging the necessary changes that as Minister, I would like to see come to fruition.

Ladies and gentlemen, the theme for this year was “***Poverty has a face a name and an address***”, and it reminds us that poverty is not a distant concept. It is real and exists in our homes, our schools and our communities.

The twenty-eight (28) participants, who represented a wide cross section of schools from across the country, were asked to create spoken word pieces on the topic ***Ending social and institutional maltreatment acting together for a just peaceful and inclusive Trinidad and Tobago by 2030.***

It is my honour to inform you that the content received was both thought provoking and insightful.

I express sincere appreciation to all participants .... thank you. You used your voices to challenge injustice and imagine a better future. We at the Ministry were moved and encouraged by your efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen, no single Ministry or organisation can end poverty alone. This competition is a clear example of what is possible through collaboration. I wish to thank the **Ministry of Education** for its invaluable support in mobilising schools and students.

Special thanks also to our judges for their service. Your contributions helped ensure the integrity and success of this competition.

Looking ahead, the Ministry is committed to strengthening these partnerships. We firmly believe that sustained and effective collaboration can create the kind of transformative synergy that uplifts individuals, empowers families, and builds resilient communities. Together, we can make meaningful strides toward breaking the cycle of poverty and building a more just and inclusive society for all.

To the winners of this competition I extend my sincere congratulations. Your spoken word pieces have been described as powerful, moving.

You have used your voices to shine a light on the realities of poverty and to call for justice inclusion and change. Your courage and creativity are commendable and your contributions have made a meaningful impact.

As we celebrate your achievements, let us also remember that the work continues. The fight against poverty is not yet won and it requires all of us working together, with purpose and determination.

Your words are not only expressions of art. They are calls to action. May they continue to inspire change far beyond this moment.

Thank You.