



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

RISE Project Fashion Show

Wednesday July 30, 2025

10:00 a.m.

Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service Recreational, Sports and
Cultural Club

Waterloo Road Extension,
Golden Grove, Arouca

Salutations

- The Honourable Roger Alexander, Minister of Homeland Security
- Dr. Natalie Chaitan Maharaj, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services
- Mr. Ryan Ramcharan, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services
- Ms. Wendy Guy-Hernandez, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services
- Mr. Carlos Corraspe, Commissioner of Prison
- Representatives of the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service
- Ms. Shelley-Ann Hart, Director, Gender Affairs Division
- Heads of Divisions and Units of the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services
- Representatives of Family Counselling Services Limited
- Programme Facilitators and Trainers
- Specially Invited Guests
- Members of the Media
- Most importantly, the participants of the RISE Project

Good morning ladies and gentlemen,

It is truly an honour to be here with you today as we acknowledge the benefits that these ladies have reaped from this programme. I begin by asking you all a simple but important question: Who are you? Beyond your name and your role, who are you when you face challenges, when you feel lost, or when you need to find strength to start anew? As a Government, we aim to ensure that all of our citizens are given opportunities to bring themselves up out of any unfortunate circumstance, by providing the tools necessary to forge their way forward.

Today, we gather to celebrate women and girls who have asked themselves this very question - who am I - and who have chosen to rise above their circumstances. This is the essence of the Re-Integration Support and Empowerment Pilot Project, known as RISE.

RISE is more than just a programme. It is a journey of healing, learning and transformation. It empowers incarcerated women and girls to rediscover their worth, develop new skills and build the confidence needed to reintegrate into society with dignity and hope.

The Fashion Show you will see today, while focussed on showcasing art, is a powerful expression of this journey. It is a celebration of creativity, resilience and the promise of new beginnings.

Through the leadership of the Ministry's Gender Affairs Division, and with the valuable support of the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service and the Family Counselling Services Limited, this project has created an opportunity for incarcerated women and girls to reflect, heal and grow.

Many of these women have faced extraordinary challenges. Some are survivors of trauma, victims of abandonment, or affected by circumstances beyond their control. They have been isolated not just physically, but socially and emotionally. This programme gave them something that too often they are denied: the chance to be seen, to be heard, and to be believed in.

The training included trauma therapy, life skills development, and artistic expression through jewellery making, garment design and more. These are more than skills. They are tools for self-discovery and empowerment. They are steps towards dignity and independence.

To our participants, I say this to you directly. Today, you walked with purpose. You presented your work with pride and showed your courage through adversity. Know that your past does not define you, and your future is

filled with hope. You have every right to build a life filled with meaning and possibility. And we, as a Government, are here to support you on that journey.

I must also acknowledge the volunteers and facilitators who offered their time, their talent and their compassion throughout this entire programme. Your service uplifts not just individuals, but the nation as a whole.

As a Ministry, we are committed to investing in social programmes that reach all segments of our population, including those behind prison walls. Too often, incarceration leads to invisibility. But we must remember that the women and girls in our prison system are not outside the scope of social development. They are part of our national community, and they deserve our attention, our support, and our investment.

Rehabilitation and reintegration are a guaranteed part of the restorative process. They are necessary pillars of a society that values justice, equity and humanity. We must provide the means for individuals to return to society with purpose, with skills, and with the confidence to contribute meaningfully. This is why initiatives like RISE are so critical. They not only address emotional healing and skill-building, but also reaffirm the value of every human life, regardless of past mistakes.

I implore you to let us continue to support programmes that do not discard those who stumble, but help them stand again. Let us invest in the kind of transformation that uplifts every citizen.

Once again, congratulations to all who made this programme possible, and to the incredible women who chose to rise. Thank you, and may we all continue to rise together.