



The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited

Media Release

Strengthening the Pan industry - NGC-sponsored Mechanical Engineering Technology with Steelpan Manufacturing Programme is completed

25th October 2022

With three title-sponsored bands and as a partner of the steelpan industry, NGC recognises the importance of education and training to the sustainability of our country's national instrument. In 2018, NGC signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the MIC Institute of Technology (MIC-IT) for the delivery of a customised Mechanical Engineering Technology with Steelpan Manufacturing Programme. In September 2022, after surmounting the many challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, six members from NGC-sponsored bands — successfully completed the programme.

“The opportunity that NGC and MIC-IT has provided me to expand on my craft as a pannist has been invaluable. I am eager to apply my newly gained knowledge on pan manufacturing and tuning not only to benefit my band and the larger steelpan industry, but also to continue growing and honing my individual skills” – Victor Daniel, La Brea Nightingales.

The triumph of the six newly trained pan artisans deserves special recognition as the group persevered through the many physical restrictions and periods of lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the unexpected constraints, the pannists remain committed to their learning and were trained in the areas of sinking and counter sinking, marking, grooving, setting/backing cutting and tuning of the steelpan.

As Trinidad and Tobago looks to push for greater support of the national instrument, demand for specialist pan makers and tuners is on the rise. The instructor-led training sessions, which were funded by NGC and delivered by MIC-IT, sought to address the growing gap in the market. The programme's aim was to embark on the development of a new generation of skilled craftsmen equipped to build the capacity and self-sufficiency of their respective steelbands. This training was also envisioned out of a desire to build the bands internal capacity for tuning of their instruments, as it is a costly skill that is currently outsourced. These skills are not meant for the sole benefit of the bands but also, more directly, the individuals who now have a marketable trade that can be used to pursue their own entrepreneurial endeavours, which will ultimately serve to bolster the pan industry in Trinidad and Tobago.

NGC intends to facilitate further development of the six pannists through continued instruction with MIC-IT in October/November 2022 to expand on their technical capacity. Plans for 2023

include a mentorship programme, which will allow the trainees to benefit from the tutelage of experienced pan tuners as they put their skills and knowledge to practice in the field.

MIC-IT's Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Anil Ramnarine remarked that "This programme was developed specifically with NGC's vision for sustaining the steelpan industry. We are honoured to create and deliver such a programme via education and training by some of the best in the industry."

NGC President, Mark Loquan, commented on the potential impact training programmes such as these could have on the industry. He emphasised the importance of making the required investment to develop the skill set within the pan fraternity as a means of building a generative industry. "The successful completion of the Mechanical Engineering Technology with Steelpan Manufacturing Programme adds to NGC's motivation to continue its involvement with the national instrument. The training programme is part of NGC's broader focus on steelpan to incubate growth across the value chain of the industry. Our support will remain focused on furthering the sustainability of our sponsored steelbands. NGC's investment in the training of its sponsored bands is simultaneously an investment in the industry as a whole, as graduates can go on to specialise and service the national market."

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