

## Trinidad Members Focus on Taking Personal Responsibility

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“I will advance, and anyone who wants to join me is welcome.” This sentiment, once expressed by SGI President Ikeda, formed the core message of a recent day-long workshop for Emerald Isle Headquarters in Port of Spain, Trinidad.

In a first for the headquarters, which has had workshops for leaders, today’s workshop was open to all members.

“The enthusiasm of the members was the highlight of the day,” Zola Holder, the headquarters chief, said. “The format gave members a chance to air their views, to speak out honestly.”

Such speaking out doesn’t come naturally to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, according to Jessica James, the young women’s division chief. “We need a little push to speak out to authority figures,” she said. “But the message we wanted to convey was that everyone needs to take responsibility for kosen-rufu and not depend on the leaders.”

The workshop centered on five major discussion topics: communication, faith equals daily life, success in society, practicing joyfully in the group and taking care of members. People were asked how they felt the organization was doing in each of these areas and what they could do to contribute.

“Participating in today’s workshop has caused me to reflect on my practice,” Kwesi Charles said. “It has inspired me to study more. And I also realized that a good gongyo can create a good day. I am determined to work for the kosen-rufu of my country.”

The frank exchange — or “compassionate straight talk” as one member put it — gave most participants a new perspective. “When I came here I was at a crossroads, but this workshop has helped me to find my mission again,” Smitha Kumar, who traveled from Grenada, said. “I now better understand what I am expected to do for kosen-rufu.”

Janice Quamina said the communication with the members will help her as a leader to develop her practice and grow as a person.

“Already through the preparation activities I have improved my practice and can better deal with members,” she said. “From today, I am determined to work harder for kosen-rufu.”

*Jessica James and Valiska Henry contributed to this report.*