



MINISTRY OF LABOUR
& SOCIAL SECURITY

"Providing Opportunity, Stability & Social Protection"

Statement to Parliament

by The Hon. Pearnel Charles Jr.
Minister of Labour and Social Security

**Disaster Relief for Persons
Affected by Hurricane Beryl**

July 23, 2024



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Disaster Relief for Persons Affected by Hurricane Beryl (July 2024)

Madam Speaker, I rise to address a matter of great urgency, one which pertains to the well-being of the people of our beloved nation, Jamaica. I refer to the matter of the provision of relief to the households affected by the passage of Hurricane Beryl, which battered the southern parishes of Jamaica on July 3, 2024.

As the chair of the Humanitarian Assistance Committee (HAC) of the National Disaster Risk Management Council (NDRMC) the Ministry of Labour and Social Security activated its disaster relief management plan.



BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) is the primary agency responsible for:

- coordinating emergency welfare activities
- distribution of relief supplies to victims of disasters, including persons in shelters
- household damage assessments and
- payment of any grants/emergency relief assistance



PRE-HURRICANE PREPARATION

The Ministry's response included the following:

- In preparation for the Hurricane, parish offices with storage capacity were issued with emergency relief supplies
- Lines of credit totaling \$15.5M were activated with suppliers, within the parishes of St. Thomas, Portland, Trelawny, St. James, St. Elizabeth, Manchester, Clarendon, Hanover, St. Mary and Westmoreland, to facilitate procurement of relief supplies to enable immediate response.

HURRICANE RESPONSE

On July 4, the Ministry initiated its humanitarian response to Hurricane Beryl, with the deployment of Multi-agency Humanitarian Assessment Teams responding island-wide to provide relief and conduct household damage assessments.

These multi-agency teams are led by Social Workers from the Ministry and are comprised of representatives from:

- Food For the Poor
- Social Development Commission
- Jamaica Red Cross
- the Municipal Corporations
- the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)
- the Salvation Army
- and other volunteers



Initially, the teams in the worst affected parishes experienced obstacles in providing relief supplies.

This was due to limited mobility, blocked roads, damage to the telecommunication and electricity infrastructure network and limited accessibility for some workers, who themselves reside in communities that were 'cut-off'.



On Tuesday July 9 the Jamaica Defence Force's Disaster Assistance Relief Team (DART) joined the Ministry's relief activities in Clarendon, subsequently, they were also present in Manchester and St. Elizabeth.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

Relief Items:

Madam Speaker, the task of providing relief to affected persons has been monumental. I am proud to report that as of July 22, 2024, the Ministry has provided the following relief items in response to the needs of households in affected communities:

- 11,697 food packages
- 1,925 tarpaulins to assist in protection from the elements for households experiencing roof damage
- We have provided approximately 989 mattresses
- 1,911 hygiene-kits and
- 500 cases of water

In addition, the parishes of Clarendon & Manchester were provided with additional supplies including

- 650 sets of mosquito nets,
- 12 bags of detergent and
- 3 cases of hand sanitizers

Provision of Relief Supplies in Shelters

Madam Speaker, please recall my earlier reference to providing relief supplies to persons in Shelters as one element of my Ministry's responsibility.



During the Hurricane, 229 shelters were opened across the island, housing 1,907 persons.

Most shelterees returned home from the shelters on July 4.

The Ministry provided food supplies to persons in the shelters and the Jamaica Red Cross assisted with preparing meals. Currently 2 shelters with 46 persons remain open.

These are:

- Rocky Point in Clarendon with 44 residents and
- Manchioneal in Portland, housing 2 persons.

HOUSEHOLD DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

Madam Speaker, the multi-agency teams have been conducting assessments on the level of damage to houses in the affected communities, using the Jamaica Household Disaster Impact and Needs Assessment (JHDINA) tool.

JHDINA is the primary assessment tool that is used to assess post disaster household needs and conditions, and to determine safety net responses following a disaster.

- A total of 8,397 household assessments have been completed as of July 22, 2024.



Of this number 453 houses have been assessed as totally destroyed, 3221 severely damaged and 4723 with minor damage.

The Ministry has completed the assessment process in most parishes, however, the process is ongoing in the southern parishes of Clarendon, Manchester and St Elizabeth.



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Assessments in these three parishes should be completed by tomorrow, Wednesday July 24, with only a few areas outstanding.

Madam Speaker, while we are currently in the final stages of the household assessment exercise, we recognize that there may be instances where our teams will have to engage with some remaining households.

We are calling on our fellow Jamaicans, Madam Speaker, to assist in identifying persons who may have been affected by the hurricane and have not yet been assisted or assessed by our teams to reach out to us, either by contacting our parish offices, or by calling our Customer Contact Centre at 876-922-8000-13.

To my colleague Members of Parliament: last week I extended my personal invitation to each of you to contact me directly, if you have constituents that have not yet been contacted. The invitation still stands. This response requires, Madam Speaker, a collaborative approach, and we need your assistance to make sure that no one is left behind.



So far, the highest incidence of damage occurred in St. Elizabeth, with 1,919 households affected, followed by Clarendon, where 1,243 households have been affected.

- Clarendon experienced the highest incidence of totally destroyed houses – with 133 houses. Another 617, nearly 50% of the 1,243 are severely damaged. The remaining 493 experienced minor damage.
- St. Elizabeth experienced the highest incidence of damage, and the highest occurrence of severely damaged houses (952 of 1,919). 3.33% of the affected houses (64 of 1919) were completely destroyed. The remaining 903 (48.09%) experienced minor damage.

PROPOSED ASSISTANCE FOR AFFECTED PERSONS

Against this background, Madam Speaker, the MLSS will be implementing several measures and new initiatives to support the households that have been impacted by the hurricane.

Leveraging Existing Social Programmes

We will be leveraging the various social programmes managed by the Ministry to provide assistance to the affected population.

Through the current assessment process, the Ministry has increased targeting and identification of beneficiaries for its programmes, including the Social Pension, Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities and National Council for Senior Citizens.

This process will have a twofold benefit, Madam Speaker. In the first instance, it will increase our ability to provide ongoing assistance to these vulnerable groups, and secondly, in the event of other emergencies, it allows us to more readily respond since we will have records of who these persons are, and where they are located.



THE REHABILITATION GRANTS PROGRAMME

The Ministry's Rehabilitation Grants programme provides a range of benefits that include funeral grants, micro business grants and school assistance for persons in need. The Ministry will be targeting 500 micro business operators who have been identified using the JHDINA- damage assessment tool as losing their livelihoods because of the hurricane and providing each with a grant of \$100,000.00. This is estimated to cost \$50M.



SOCIAL INTERVENTION PROGRAMME (SIP)

Madam Speaker through the SIP, \$30M has been allocated to provide grants valuing \$150,000 each to 200 students at the tertiary level. These students will be identified from households that have been severely impacted by the hurricane.



EMERGENCY GRANT ASSISTANCE FOR REBUILDING OF HOUSES

Madam Speaker, historically, the Government has provided rehabilitation grants to victims of disasters, who have suffered damage to their houses, to assist in their recovery and rebuilding process. At this stage the government has allocated \$1 Billion dollars to support the rebuilding efforts.

Madam Speaker, based on the analysis of the damage assessments completed so far, we are projecting that approximately 8,700 houses island-wide will require some level of support from the government to aid in their recovery and rebuilding. Of this amount the vast majority would have suffered minor damages.

Families whose houses have been totally destroyed will receive grants of up to \$400,000.

Those whose homes have been severely damaged will receive grants of up to \$150,000, and those who experienced minor damage will receive up to \$50,000. We recognize the immediate challenges presented by using cheque payments and we are exploring options for electronic payments and cash cards to expedite these grants and improve service delivery.

Madam Speaker, we must approach this restoration process as a partnership of all stakeholders; it is therefore expected that these grants will be supplemented by a range of other initiatives, including donor funds, contributions from the diaspora, private sector initiatives such as the recently launched National Commercial Bank Foundation's Building a Better Jamaica Fund, the CDF, and Food for the Poor.

Madam Speaker, I have received a report that Food for the Poor has already replaced 20 roofs in the most affected area and has mobilized and will activate similar efforts in St Elizabeth this Thursday.



INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR VICTIMS OF HURRICANE BERYL

Madam Speaker, the Government of Jamaica through the MLSS, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, and the Planning Institute of Jamaica has been in dialogue with a number of international partners to provide assistance to persons affected by Hurricane Beryl.



Specifically, Madam Speaker, MLSS has been in discussions with the United Nations' World Food Programme and UNICEF. So far, these talks have led to some pledges of support.

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

Madam Speaker, through a collaboration with the World Food Programme, the MLSS will be implementing a cash assistance programme to provide food support. This will provide support to severely affected families with meeting their basic needs, especially for food, over a period of two months.

Priority will be given to households that meet specified criteria as established by the WFP, as well as the calculation of a vulnerability score, using four criteria, specifically:

- Level of damage to home
- Economic vulnerability, as determined by employment status
- Number of persons with disabilities in the household
- Additional vulnerabilities (female or elderly-headed households, or elderly persons living alone)



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The actual benefit size will be calculated once the number of persons to be assisted and available grant funds have been finalized.

Madam Speaker, some offices of the MLSS have been impacted by disruptions in electricity and telecommunications services. In addition to providing Technical Assistance to aid with the digitization of the post-disaster assessment information, the WFP will be implementing a food assistance programme through cash-based transfer (CBT) interventions in collaboration with the MLSS.

They will also be supporting the Ministry to increase its resilience for future disasters, through the provision of portable, easy to deploy generators, training in logistics and supplies management and other areas.



UNICEF

UNICEF is collaborating with the Ministry, with the primary objective of bolstering support for children and their families, with an emphasis on children with disabilities, so that they can quickly return to normality in the affected areas.

Benefits will be targeted to households within the most affected parishes who are registered on the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH) with a special focus on households with children with disabilities from 0-6 years old and pregnant and lactating women.



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, the level of dislocation occasioned by the passage of Hurricane Beryl requires our most urgent response. While the Ministry's response has provided and continues to provide relief, a strategic response providing a safety net to prevent the impacted families from falling into worsened socio-economic states must be paramount on the national agenda.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) remains steadfast in continuing to provide relief to those affected. We continue to boost the nation's recovery efforts and I ask each member of this august assembly to support this critical exercise. This is the time to make a tangible declaration of our commitment to the well-being of our people.

Thank you

