

## **SALUTATIONS**

- Senator 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. Vera Deonanan-Balkaran, Permanent Secretary (Acting), Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services.
- Ms. Patricia De Leon Henry, National Director, National Social Development Programme
- Staff of the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services
- Esteemed Grant Recipients
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning to all gathered here today.

Today is not an ordinary day. Today is a day of renewal. A day of restoration. A day when relief meets responsibility and hope meets action.

To the twenty-three (23) beneficiaries gathered here, each of you representing a household, a family, a story of resilience, we welcome you warmly. To the dedicated staff of the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services, thank you for being part of this meaningful moment.

What brings us together is more than a grant distribution. It is the simple but powerful truth that when our citizens face hardship, their Government must respond, not tomorrow, not eventually, but decisively and compassionately and nay I say this government follows this mantra.

And that is exactly what today represents.

You are not alone! Your government is with you.

When disaster strikes, whether by heavy rainfall, flooding, fire, fallen trees, structural collapse or other unforeseen hardship, it does not knock politely. It disrupts lives in an instant. It damages homes that took years to build.

It threatens security. It unsettles families. And in those moments, what people need most is reassurance that help will come and that it will come swiftly.

This Ministry understands that urgency.

For the Diego Martin region, today we are distributing a combined total of **one hundred and seventy-one thousand, one hundred and twelve dollars (\$171,112.00)**.

That figure comprises **forty-seven thousand, eight hundred and eighty-one dollars (\$47,881.00)** in Disaster Relief Assistance and **one hundred and twenty-three thousand, two hundred and thirty-one dollars (\$123,231.00)** in Minor Home Repair Grants.

For the Port of Spain region, we are distributing a combined total of **two hundred and forty thousand, one hundred and seventeen dollars (\$240,117.00)**. This includes **thirty thousand, three hundred and eighty-eight dollars (\$30,388.00)** in Disaster Relief Assistance and **two hundred and nine thousand, seven hundred and twenty-nine dollars (\$209,729.00)** in Minor Home Repair Grants.

Collectively, for both regions represented here today, the total distribution amounts to **four hundred and eleven thousand, two hundred and twenty-nine dollars (\$411,229.00)**.

Invested directly into families. Into roofs. Into walls. Into safety. Into peace of mind.

But behind those figures are real stories.

There is the single parent whose electrical wiring was compromised. The family who woke up to find part of their structure weakened and unsafe. These grants are not abstract line items in a ledger, they are lifelines.

The Disaster General Assistance Grant or Disaster Relief provides immediate relief for urgent needs following unforeseen events. It is meant to stabilise households in that critical period after loss. The Minor Home Repair Grant goes further, addressing structural concerns and other essential works required to restore habitability and safety.

And beyond these, the Ministry continues to administer complementary interventions, public assistance support, food support, disability assistance, senior citizens' pensions, and other targeted programmes that work together to strengthen vulnerable households.

These interventions accumulate and operate in tandem with Disaster Relief and Home Repair assistance to ensure that recovery is not temporary, but sustainable.

This is what people-centred governance looks like.

It is not enough to make promises. It is not enough to issue statements. We must deliver. And we must deliver with speed, compassion, and accountability.

I want to acknowledge the hardworking staff of the Ministry, our social workers, assessing officers, administrative teams, finance officers, and regional coordinators. Many times, their work happens quietly.

They ensure compliance with established guidelines so that assistance reaches those who qualify.

To our staff in Diego Martin and Port of Spain, thank you. Your diligence makes days like this possible. Your commitment reflects the values of this Ministry.

Let it be known that when applications are submitted, they are not placed in a pile to gather dust. They are assessed. They are prioritised, and they are actioned. The mandate is clear, where there is verified need, there must be responsive support.

To the recipients gathered here today, this assistance is your entitlement as citizens in a society that recognises the importance of social protection. It is an affirmation that your safety and wellbeing matter.

A home is more than concrete and galvanize. It is where children sleep peacefully. It is where meals are shared.

It is where elders rest. It is where hope resides. When that space is compromised, the emotional impact can be as heavy as the physical damage.

Today, we take steps toward restoring both.

Twenty-three families who can begin repairs. Twenty-three households who can breathe a little easier. Twenty-three reminders that government must be present not only in policy, but in practice.

The work does not end here.

As climate patterns shift and weather events become more unpredictable, the demand for disaster assistance will grow.

This Ministry is strengthening its systems, improving turnaround times, enhancing field assessments, and ensuring that resources are mobilised effectively.

We are building resilience, not only in infrastructure, but in communities.

To the families here today, use these grants wisely. Restore your homes. Strengthen your structures. Protect your families. And know that this Ministry remains accessible to you.

To our staff, continue to serve with the same integrity and heart.

And to all present, let this be a reminder that when we invest in people, we invest in national strength.

May these grants bring relief. May they restore safety. May they renew hope.

Thank you, and may God bless you all.