



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

Disaster Relief and Home Repairs Grant Distribution

Saturday July 4th 2026
12:30PM

PENAL DEBE/SIPARIA REGIONS

Salutations

- The Honourable Davendranath Tancoo, Minister of Finance, and Member of Parliament for Fyzabad,
- The Honourable Dr. Roodal Moonilal, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, and Member of Parliament for Oropouche East,
- The Honourable Michelle Benjamin, Minister of Culture and Community Development, and Member of Parliament for Moruga / Tableland
- The Honourable Dr. Lackram Bodoie, Minister of Health, and Member of Parliament for Oropouche West
- The Honourable Clyde Elder, Minister in the Ministry of Public Utilities, and Member of Parliament for La Brea
- The Honourable Ernesto Kesar, Minister in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and Member of Parliament for Point Fortin
- Senator, Dr. Natalie Chaitan- Maharaj, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services

- His Worship Doodnath Mayrhoo, Mayor Siparia Borough Corporation and, Councillor for Avocat/San Francique North
- Gowtam Maharaj, Chairman of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation
- Mr. Ryan Ramcharan, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services.
- Ms. Vera Deonanan-Balkaran, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services.
- Ms. Michelle Pierre, Deputy Permanent Secretary, 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
- Staff of the Siparia Constituency Office
- Esteemed Grant Recipients
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

It is always a privilege to stand among the people, not because I am your Minister, but because I am one of you.

I know what it means to work hard, to worry about tomorrow, and to carry responsibilities that no one else sees. I know that behind every smile is often a struggle that never makes the headlines.

That is why days like today matter.

Because today is not simply about Government assistance.

It is about restoring confidence in people who may have wondered if anyone still cared.

It is about letting every family gathered here know that, in your most difficult moments, your Government will not look away.

Today, it is especially meaningful to be here in the Penal/Debe and Siparia Regions. This part of our country has always been defined by resilient, hardworking people, people who have weathered many storms, both literal and figurative, but who have never lost their spirit or determination to move forward.

It is therefore fitting that we gather once again in the constituency of our Honourable Prime Minister, whose vision has always been that governance must be measured not by promises made, but by lives improved. Today is another demonstration of that commitment, a Government that is present, responsive and determined to ensure that no citizen is left behind.

When disaster strikes, it does not ask whether you are prepared.

It does not ask whether you have savings tucked away or family nearby to help.

It simply arrives.

It may be heavy rains that force you from your home.

It may be winds that tear away your roof.

It may be flood waters that wash away everything you spent years building.

In those moments, the greatest fear is often not the damage itself.

It is wondering whether anyone will come.

Today, we are here to answer that question.

Yes.

We came.

And we will continue coming.

Today, the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services will provide assistance to **thirty (30)** households, benefiting **one hundred and one (101)** citizens, with a total investment of **two hundred and sixty-five thousand, one hundred and eighty-eight dollars and eighty cents (\$265,188.80)**.

This includes Disaster General Assistance Grants to **twenty-six (26) households, benefiting eighty-nine (89) persons, totalling two hundred and ten thousand, four hundred and thirty-seven dollars and eighty cents (\$210,437.80)**, as well as Home Repair Grants to **four (4) households, benefiting twelve (12) persons, valued at fifty-four thousand, seven hundred and fifty-one dollars (\$54,751.00)**.

Those figures are important.

But what matters even more are the lives behind them.

Because every household represents parents trying to rebuild.

Children longing for normalcy.

Seniors hoping to feel safe once again.

Families refusing to let hardship define their future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

One of the greatest lessons I have learnt in public life is that poverty is not always visible.

Sometimes it hides behind a freshly painted gate.

Sometimes behind a neatly pressed shirt.

Sometimes behind the words, "I'm managing."

But when you enter people's homes, when you sit with them, when you hear their stories, you begin to understand that many people are carrying burdens they were never meant to carry alone.

That is why I have always believed that social development cannot be confined to an office.

If we truly want to serve people, we must meet them where they are.

And that is exactly what we are doing.

Over the past year, this Ministry has travelled throughout Trinidad and Tobago, bringing relief directly into communities.

In many instances, we have gone beyond these public distributions.

We have visited individual homes to ensure that elderly citizens, persons with disabilities and those unable to travel still receive the assistance they deserve.

Because compassion should never have an address.

It should reach wherever the need exists.

This Ministry is changing the way Government delivers social services.

Not simply by working harder.

But by working smarter.

We revised the Standard Means Test to ensure that assistance reaches those who genuinely need it, fairly and objectively.

We introduced Social Services Delivery Officers.

We operationalised the National Enrichment Centre, advanced digital inclusion for vulnerable citizens and continued building systems that place people, not paperwork, at the centre of decision-making.

These are not isolated initiatives.

They are all connected by one simple philosophy.

Government should never feel distant from the people.

Ladies and gentlemen,

What gives me the greatest satisfaction is knowing that this Ministry has not slowed down since we assumed office.

Whether in the north, south, east or central we have remained on the ground, consistently delivering relief to families who need it most.

Every distribution reinforces a simple promise, that this Government will not wait for people to come to us. We will continue going into communities, visiting homes where necessary, and ensuring that help reaches every corner of our nation.

This is not our first distribution in these regions, and it certainly will not be our last.

As long as there are families in need, this Ministry will continue to answer the call.

I often remind our officers that every application on a desk belongs to someone's life.

It is not a file, It is not a number, It is someone's grandmother.

Someone's child, Someone who has exhausted every option before walking through the doors of our Ministry.

That understanding must guide every decision we make.

Efficiency matters. Accountability matters. Transparency matters. But empathy must always remain at the heart of public service.

I want to sincerely thank every member of staff within this Ministry.

Regional teams, assessment officers, drivers.

Everyone who works behind the scenes.

You often do your work quietly, without recognition.

But families across this country are rebuilding because of your dedication.

You represent the very best of public service.

To our recipients, please accept this assistance not as charity, but as your rightful support from a Government that believes every citizen deserves the opportunity to recover with dignity.

I know this grant cannot replace everything that was lost.

But I hope it reminds you that hope itself has not been lost.

That tomorrow can still be brighter than yesterday.

That rebuilding is possible.

And that your Government is walking this journey with you.

As your Minister, I make you this commitment.

We will not become comfortable while our people remain uncomfortable.

We will not celebrate progress until every community feels its benefits.

And we will never allow compassion to become seasonal or selective.

This work does not stop today.

Tomorrow we continue.

Next week we continue.

Next month we continue.

We will continue travelling across Trinidad and Tobago.

We will continue visiting communities.

We will continue knocking on doors.

Because the true success of this Ministry will never be measured by how many meetings we attend or how many reports we produce.

It will be measured by how many lives we help rebuild.

And that is a mission worth dedicating ourselves to every single day.

To every family receiving assistance today, thank you for your resilience, thank you for your courage.

And thank you for reminding us why public service must always begin and end with humanity.

Together, we are proving that when Government listens, acts and cares, lives change.

That is the Trinidad and Tobago we are building.

A nation where no one is forgotten, no one is overlooked and every citizen knows that there is a Government prepared to stand beside them in their time of greatest need.

May God continue to bless you and your families.

May God bless the people of Penal/Debe and Siparia.

And may God continue to bless our beloved Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you.