



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 Repair Grant Distribution –
Sangre Grande Region

Saturday 18th July 2026
2:00PM

SALUTATIONS

- The Honourable Wilfred Nicholas Morris, MP, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, and Member of Parliament for Mayaro
- The Honourable Shivanna Sam, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Public Utilities, and Member of Parliament for Cumuto/Manzanilla
- Senator Dr. Natalie Chaitan- Maharaj, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services
- Mr. Raymond Cozier, Chairman, Mayaro / Rio-Claro 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. Patricia De Leon Henry, National Director, National Social Development Programme

- Ms. Michelle Pierre, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services.
- Staff of the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services
- Staff of each respective Constituency Offices present.
- Councillors of the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation
- Esteemed Grant Recipients

Welcome to our 37th Grant Distribution Ceremony.

Thirty-seven.

That number is a testament to a Government that understands that service is not measured by speeches, promises or headlines, but by lives improved, burdens eased, and hope restored.

Every distribution we have conducted represents another community reached, another family supported, another promise honoured.

When this Government assumed office, we inherited years of uncertainty, mounting backlogs and thousands of citizens who had simply been waiting, waiting for assistance that should never have taken so long to reach them.

Some had been waiting since 2021.

We made a commitment that those days would come to an end.

Today, I can say with confidence that we have remained steadfast in that commitment.

We have been systematically clearing backlogs in Disaster Relief Grants.

We have been clearing backlogs in Home Repair Grants.

We have been addressing long outstanding pension applications.

We have accelerated the processing of social assistance applications across the country because our philosophy has been simple:

People cannot put their lives on hold while bureaucracy catches up.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Permit me to begin by sharing with you a few of the things this Ministry, and by extension, your Government, has accomplished since assuming office.

Because I want the people of Trinidad and Tobago to know one thing.

We did not come here to play.

We came here to work.

- We operationalised the National Enrichment Centre, where clinical services officially commenced earlier this year,

providing meaningful support for children and families living with autism and developmental disabilities.

- We completed the draft of Trinidad and Tobago's first comprehensive National Disability Legislation, bringing us closer to creating a society where inclusion is no longer optional, but guaranteed.
- We secured Cabinet approval for the establishment of an Inclusive Sporting Arena at Carlsen Field, ensuring that persons with disabilities can participate fully in sport, recreation and community life.
- We advanced accessible housing initiatives in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing because every citizen deserves a home that accommodates their abilities, not their limitations.
- We progressed the ELDAMO Para-Transit Policy, creating better mobility opportunities for persons who have too often been left behind.
- We led national stakeholder engagements with UNICEF on Child Poverty, helping shape policies that will protect the next generation.

- We introduced Social Services Delivery Officers, an entirely new frontline approach that is transforming how this Ministry reaches communities.
- And most recently this Government has regularized a total of **Fifty-Three Million, Nine Hundred and Twenty-One Thousand, Five Hundred and Sixteen Dollars and Ninety-Four Cents (TT\$53,921,516.94)** in outstanding debts and unremitted statutory obligations through two major funding tranches underscoring its unwavering commitment to restoring the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago's financial stability and accountability.

No longer must vulnerable citizens feel forgotten or disconnected from Government services.

Today, Government is coming directly to them.

That is what people-centred governance looks like.

We also demonstrated that accountability is not just a word.

Earlier this year, this Government settled **One Million, Five Hundred and Ten Thousand, Seven Hundred and Forty-Five Dollars**

(\$1,510,745) owed to former employees of the St. Jude's School for Girls, workers who had waited far too long for justice.

We honoured that obligation because people deserve fairness.

Not someday.

Today.

We expanded temporary food support during Christmas.

We provided food cards for Eid-ul-Fitr.

For Divali.

For Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day.

Because we recognise that dignity extends beyond survival, it includes ensuring that families can celebrate their faith and culture without the added burden of hardship.

Friends all,

One of the most significant changes we have made has been the implementation of the Revised Standard Means Test.

For years, deserving families found themselves excluded because the system itself had become outdated.

The old assessment often failed to reflect the realities of today's cost of living.

It judged people by formulas that no longer reflected the hardships they faced.

We changed that.

The Revised Standard Means Test is fairer.

It is more compassionate.

It is more realistic.

It removes unnecessary barriers and ensures that assistance reaches those who genuinely need it.

In simple terms, we have replaced a system that often said "No" with one that gives deserving citizens a genuine opportunity to hear "Yes."

That is what compassionate governance looks like.

Friends,

Government is not only about building infrastructure.

Government is about rebuilding confidence and restoring dignity, giving people hope that somebody still cares.

Today, here in the Mayaro/Rio Claro Region, we continue fulfilling that promise.

Today, the Ministry will distribute:

- Disaster General Assistance Grants to **Thirteen (13)** households, benefiting **Forty-Seven (47)** persons, at a value of **One Hundred and Twenty-Four Thousand, Five Hundred and Six Dollars (\$124,506.00)**.
- Home Repair Grants to Six (6) households, benefiting Twenty-Two (22) persons, at a value of **One Hundred and Fifty-One Thousand, Four Hundred and Fifty Dollars (\$151,450.00)**.

Together, today's distribution will directly support Nineteen (19) households, representing Sixty-Nine (69) beneficiaries, with assistance totalling **Two Hundred and Seventy-Five Thousand, Nine Hundred and Fifty-Six Dollars (\$275,956.00)**.

And when we add today's distribution to those already completed since assuming office, we have now delivered:

One Thousand, Five Hundred and Eighty-Seven (1,587)

Disaster General Assistance Grants

and

Three Hundred and Twenty-Three (323) Home Repair Grants to families across Trinidad and Tobago.

That is not just a statistic.

That is thousands of lives touched.

Thousands of opportunities restored.

Thousands of reminders that Government can still be a force for good.

Before I conclude, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Director of the National Social Development Programme and her exceptional team.

Your professionalism, your commitment, and your willingness to go beyond the call of duty have made these achievements possible.

I also extend heartfelt thanks to the Permanent Secretaries, Deputy Permanent Secretary, the Chairmen and members of the Local Public Assistance Boards, our Social Welfare Division, the dedicated officers throughout this Ministry, and every public servant who continues to serve our people with compassion and integrity.

Your work often happens quietly.

Behind the scenes.

Without recognition.

But today, I want you to know that your efforts matter.

Finally, to every recipient here today.

This assistance represents partnership.

It represents your government walking alongside you during difficult times.

Use it wisely.

Continue believing in yourselves.

Continue believing that tomorrow can be better than yesterday.

Because this Government believes in you.

And as long as we have the privilege to serve, we will continue doing exactly what we promised the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Not politics.

Not excuses.

Not delay.

But Service.

Compassion and Action.

May God continue to bless each of you, bless the people of Mayaro/Rio Claro, and may God continue to bless our beloved Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you