



# MINISTRY ALLOCATES \$20M TO POOR RELIEF FOR BACK-TO-SCHOOL ASSISTANCE



The Honourable Desmond McKenzie CD, MP

OCHO RIOS, St. Ann: The Poor Relief Department will disburse \$20 million in Back-to-School Assistance to students registered under its programme for the upcoming 2023/2024 academic year, which begins in September.

“We have a very vibrant education programme in poor relief,” said Honourable Desmond McKenzie, Minister of Local Government and Community Development.

The Minister made the announcement at the recent official opening ceremony for the Ocho Rios Night Shelter in St Ann.

He also highlighted that the Government is determined to provide a sustained educational programme within the poor relief framework, and that there was an urgent need for increased assistance following discussions with the Board of Supervision.

The Board of Supervision operates under the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development and was established to supervise and monitor the delivery of poor relief services through the Municipal Corporations.

To date, over 3500 students islandwide are registered under the Poor Relief Department.

Minister McKenzie stated that education is pivotal to success for persons reliant on poor relief support, and noted that there have been several success stories relating to poor-relief beneficiaries who have excelled academically.

He also shared the story of a young man from the constituency of Kingston Western who achieved his dream of becoming a medical doctor.

“This young man went to Wolmer’s and ended up with about 16 distinctions and he said he wanted to become a doctor. He has graduated from one of the most prestigious universities in the world, Drexel University, [and] he came out of poor relief.”

The Minister also disclosed that more than \$150m has been allocated to councillors for back-to-school support, in a bid to ensure that needy students in their parochial divisions are provided with the required resources for the new school year.

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## OCHO RIOS GETS \$22M NIGHT SHELTER

OCHO RIOS, St. Ann: A \$22 million night shelter to serve the resort town of Ocho Rios, St. Ann and its environs is officially opened for operations.

The building, which is sited in Bucksfield, Ocho Rios, was opened by Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Honourable Desmond McKenzie on August 18.

The homeless shelter was constructed to the adjoining Ocho Rios Drop-in Centre and can sleep 13 men and seven women at a time. It will provide temporary shelter, meals, and bathroom amenities.

“The drop-in centre since it was established, we not only take them in and give them medical care and look after their needs, but we also try to rehabilitate them,” said Minister McKenzie.

Data from the Poor Relief Department points to the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of five homeless individuals into permanent employment. One of the Ocho Rios Drop-In Centre residents is pursuing a certificate in agriculture at Ebony Park Heart Academy.

According to Byron Gilzene, the homeless shelter will help him escape the violence on the streets.

“To contribute to homeless persons is a blessing. I was hospitalized two weeks ago and almost died from wounds inflicted by being homeless sleeping in the bus park. It gives me great enthusiasm that this place, that is now my home, will be protecting me,” he shared.

Mr. Gilzene also assists with the landscaping works at the new facility.

The Minister also disclosed that the town of Brown’s Town, St. Ann, which has a growing number of homeless individuals, is on the Ministry’s radar.

“Our next port of call will be the Brown’s Town area to see if we could put in something...that would deal with the issues there.”

Additionally, Minister McKenzie shared that the Government has allocated over \$100 million in social security for the poor and destitute in St. Ann for the 2023/2024 fiscal year to deal with homelessness and improving the lives of vulnerable citizens.



Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie (left), cuts the ribbon to officially open the Ocho Rios Night Shelter in St. Ann on Friday (August 18). Also taking part in the official opening are, Councillor for the Ocho Rios Division, Michael Belnavis; Member of Parliament for Northeast St. Ann, Hon. Marsha Smith; beneficiary, Byron Gilzene and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, Marsha Henry-Martin





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(From left) Member of Parliament for Manchester Central, Rhoda Moy Crawford, Minister Desmond McKenzie and beneficiary Nadine Lawrence.

## GROUND BROKEN FOR HOUSE IN KENDAL, MANCHESTER

-PROJECT PART OF \$300M SPEND BY LOCAL GOV'T IN THE PARISH

KENDAL, Manchester: Ground has been broken for the construction of an indigent house for a family in Kendal, Manchester under the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development's Municipal Social Assistance Programme (MSAP).

Portfolio Minister, Honourable Desmond McKenzie, at the groundbreaking ceremony on August 2, said the parish of Manchester has benefited from \$300 million in social programmes by the Ministry.

"We have not only built water shops, but we have also repaired roads. We have spent more money in the parish on building new infrastructure and carrying out repairs at the infirmary, than we have spent in any other parish."

Four water shops were built in the parish and more than \$70m invested in summer employment programmes for young people.

The Minister also shared that the Ministry recently provided funds to upgrade the Mandeville Tax Office in a move to bolster the capacity of the Manchester Municipal Corporation to generate more revenue.

There are also ongoing discussions about the rehabilitation of the Mandeville Market.

Mayor of Mandeville, Councillor Donovan Mitchell and Member of Parliament for Manchester Central, Rhoda Moy Crawford, also attended the groundbreaking ceremony.

The Indigent Housing Programme was introduced under MSAP in 2017 and is designed to address the housing difficulties faced by the poor and most vulnerable.

The Ministry has completed at least 60 units islandwide, with work ongoing on several others. Three types of solutions have been developed – studio units, one-bedroom units and two-bedroom family units. The houses are made of concrete and feature sloped roofs that enable rainwater harvesting.

Applicants are screened through the Poor Relief Departments, where an investigation and verification procedure are carried out to establish the need.

Potential beneficiaries must also demonstrate ownership of the property on which the house is to be built or provide documentation that they are lawfully entitled to tenure on such property.



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# FAIRFIELD, ST. ELIZABETH GETS WATER SHOP

FAIRFIELD, St. Elizabeth: Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Honourable Desmond McKenzie, has commissioned a \$12 million water shop into service at Fairfield District, St. Elizabeth.

“This is not the answer to the problems of bringing potable water to residents, especially in a parish like St. Elizabeth but truth be told, this is the most comprehensive approach to the water crisis that has ever been undertaken by any Government since 2016,” stated Minister Mr. McKenzie.

He noted that funds are to be provided for the procurement of a second water truck to help address the water crisis in sections of the parish. A unit was previously purchased for \$15 million.

“We have also been providing funding, not just in St. Elizabeth, but for other municipalities that require money for the trucking of water.”

Some 1,000 residents in Fairfield and surrounding areas will benefit from the facility that will provide up to 16,000 gallons of potable water daily.

The water shop was opened on August 21 and is equipped with the technologies to filter and purify the drinking water.

The Fairfield Water Shop brings to four, the number of such facilities commissioned in St. Elizabeth. The others are in Retirement, Malvern built at a cost of \$9.7m; an \$11.9m one in Tryall District in Junction and Top Hill, Southfield, erected at a cost of \$8.9m.

“I am proud to be part of an Administration that continues to remember those who need extra assistance, extra push, and St. Elizabeth is a parish that is important to the economic life of the country, because it is what is considered as the

breadbasket,” the Minister added. For Janique Witter, a resident of Fairfield, the water shop has brought relief to residents, eliminating the need to purchase water from supermarkets or rely on costly deliveries from water trucks.

“Now we don’t have to pay for water anymore for drinking purposes. Minister, thank you so much for this opportunity. I can get fresh water. I can come and fill my bottles and get my water,” she said.

Residents had to travel to a well in Cheapside to draw water or purchase the commodity at \$2,000 a drum from water trucks.







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## LOCAL GOV'T MINISTER COMMITS INDIGENT HOUSES FOR NORTH CENTRAL CLARENDON

KINGSTON, Jamaica: The Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Honourable Desmond McKenzie, has committed three indigent houses to the constituency of North Central Clarendon.

The Minister gave the assurance following a recent tour of the area.

“One is ready for construction because they have the title and we are going to be moving expeditiously in putting down the housing solution,” he said during a post-tour interview.

Minister McKenzie commended the Clarendon Poor Relief Department for bringing the cases to the Ministry’s attention.

He was accompanied on the tour by Member of Parliament and Minister without Portfolio in the Office of the Prime Minister with Responsibility for Information, Honourable Robert Morgan.

The Minister also announced that the construction of two additional water shops for the constituency which will increase the number of such facilities to three.

A 20,000-gallon water shop will be installed in the community of Garden Wood, while a 16,000-gallon facility is slated for Beckford Kraal.

The first water shop in North Cengtral Clarendon was commissioned during 2012 in the community of Pennants.

Minister McKenzie also disclosed that his Ministry will be allocating funds to the Clarendon Municipal Corporation to purchase another water truck to serve the parish.

The Ministry’s technical team will be working with the Municipal Corporation to formulate a plan to repair several badly-deteriorated roadways in the constituency.

He acknowledged work done by Minister Morgan to rehabilitate some of the roads, while highlighting others are “in need of attention.”

The Social Development Commission (SDC) is also tasked with conducting a survey in the constituency to ascertain what other issues require interventions.



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# NEW ADMIN BLOCK OPENED AT ST. ELIZABETH INFIRMARY



SANTA CRUZ, St. Elizabeth: A new administrative building built at a cost of \$20 million in partnership with the National Housing Trust (NHT) was opened at the St. Elizabeth Infirmarium in Santa Cruz.

“I can see the smile on the faces of those of you who would occupy the building. I urge you to continue to be as efficient as you have been, and never lose sight of your contribution to the growth and development of Jamaica,” said Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Honourable Desmond McKenzie, during official opening ceremony on August 21.

The new administrative building boasts several staff offices, a conference room, customer service area and storerooms. Additionally, handrails, metal grills, closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras and air conditioning units have been installed.

A new walkway and pavement leading to the facility were also erected and extensive landscaping works undertaken – making the space highly-functional and visually-appealing.

The Minister commended the Infirmarium staff and the St. Elizabeth Municipal Corporation for upholding the principles of decency and dignity in providing care for those who are under the protection of the State.

“This Government will never renege on its commitment in caring for those people (residents), regardless of the circumstances,” he said.

“We are presently reviewing our infirmaries to look at the ones that will be able to facilitate more social cases. We have done that already in about six parishes, and we are looking to further that engagement with the Ministry of Health and Wellness.”

The St. Elizabeth Infirmarium adds to other projects completed in Manchester, St. James, Portland and Westmoreland under the partnership with the NHT.

New Matron at the St. Elizabeth Infirmarium, Miss Bianca Mitchell, spoke of the appreciation of the staff and residents for the new infrastructure. According to her, the new administrative building will provide a more comfortable environment and improved workspaces for staff to continue delivering the highest standard of assistance and support.

“A heartfelt word of appreciation goes out to my dedicated staff at the St. Elizabeth Infirmarium. You work tirelessly behind the scenes for long hours. Your hard work, determination and attention to detail have ensured the smooth execution of this event. We look forward to future opportunities together to make a difference.”





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## REPAIRS FOR SOUTH, ST. JAMES ROADS

KINGSTON, Jamaica: The technical teams of the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development (MLGCD) and St. James Municipal Corporation are to pour over plans and provide an estimate for the repair of several roads in South St. James.

Portfolio Minister, Honourable Desmond McKenzie, gave the commitment for the rehabilitation of the roadways during a recent tour of the area.

“We are not going to be able to physically deal with all the roads at the same time, but we are committing a significant amount of funding from the Ministry through the Equalization Fund,” he said.

The Equalization (EQ) Fund is financed by ten percent of property tax collections islandwide. The EQ Fund is administered through the MLGCD and was created in 1997. A percentage of the fund

is allocated to the Municipal Corporations to carry out critical infrastructure work in the various parochial divisions.

Minister McKenzie toured sections of Maldon, Flagstaff and Maroon Town parochial roadways in South St. James with Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister and Member of Parliament for South St. James, Honourable Homer Davis. They were also accompanied by Councillor Everes Coke as well as representatives from the MLGCD and the Municipal Corporation.

He also highlighted that while some sections of the road network in the area were well-constructed, a lack of maintenance contributed to the deterioration of some roads.

Minister Davis extended his appreciation to Minister McKenzie for his visit and also shared that the condition of the roadways could also be attributed to erosion over the years.



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## JFB URGES PERSONS NOT TO LEAVE COOKING UNATTENDED

JIS NEWS- Kingston, Jamaica: The Jamaica Fire Brigade (JFB) is urging persons not to leave cooking unattended, in order to prevent fires.

JFB Commissioner, Stewart Beckford, told JIS News that within recent years, “cooking left unattended” has been among the causes of fires across the island.

He pointed out that the JFB has had cases where persons fall asleep while cooking.

Mr. Beckford noted that in several instances, persons come home from work tired, start cooking, move to sit in the sofa, then “the next thing you know, you dose off and that becomes full blown sleep and when you wake up, the entire place is on fire”.

He informed that there have also been incidents of fires where persons leave the house while cooking, saying they are going on the road “but not too far”, to get something, often an ingredient that is needed for the meal.

“What we normally encourage persons to do is, if you have to leave the house or if you feel tired, don’t start cooking. However, if you start, turn the stove off,” the Commissioner stated.

“It’s better to be safe than sorry. You can always resume your cooking. But when your house is burnt down, you are going to have to build from scratch,” he emphasised.

Meanwhile, Mr. Beckford is encouraging Jamaicans to invest in fire extinguishers and smoke detectors for their homes.

## MINISTER GETS COURTESY CALL FROM COLOMBIAN AMBASSADOR



Minister Desmond McKenzie received a courtesy call from Her Excellency Emiliana Bernard Stephenson, Ambassador of Colombia on August 10 at the Ministry’s Offices in Kingston. Jamaica and Colombia share strong historical and cultural ties, both Governments are committed to strengthening this alliance.



## MINISTER MEETS JPS’ NEW CEO

From left: Honourable Desmond McKenzie, new President & CEO at Jamaica Public Service (JPS), Steve Berberich and JPS’ Senior Vice President of Energy, Blaine Jarrett, enjoy a light moment during a courtesy call by the President on September 13.

The Minister and Mr. Berberich, an internationally recognized industry expert who has been at the helm of the island’s electric utility since late May, discussed the growing trend of electrification of transport, renewable energy, streetlight repairs and power reliability. The talks also touched on the matter of access to electricity by all, including the country’s most vulnerable – thereby reducing electricity theft.