AUDITOR GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT OF JAMAICA

HURRICANE MELISSA RELIEF INITIATIVE AUDIT

COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT

MANAGEMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF IN-KIND DONATIONS

The Auditor General is appointed by the Governor General and is required by the Constitution, Financial Administration and Audit Act, other sundry acts and letters of engagement, to conduct audits at least once per year of the accounts, financial transactions, operations and financial statements of central government ministries and departments, local government agencies, statutory bodies and government companies.

The Department is headed by the Auditor General, Pamela Monroe Ellis, who submits her reports to the Speaker of the House of Representatives in accordance with Section 122 of the Constitution of Jamaica and Section 29 of the Financial Administration and Audit Act.

This report was prepared by the Auditor General's Department of Jamaica for presentation to the House of Representatives.

Auditor General of Jamaica
Auditor General's Department
40 Knutsford Boulevard
Kingston 5, Jamaica, W.I.
www.auditorgeneral.gov.jm

AUDITOR GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT OF JAMAICA

'A better country through effective audit scrutiny'

Document No.:	Date Submitted
AuGD 521 – 1601.20.2	October 29,2026


1
RECEIPT
2
INSPECTION & VERIFICATION
3
INVENTORY & RECORDING
4
STORAGE & SAFEKEEPING
5
DISTRIBUTION & HANDOVER
6
USE & IMPACT

Auditor General's Foreword

We continued the audit of the Hurricane Melissa relief. We examined how donated resources were received, recorded, valued and safeguarded, and whether activities are being carried out transparently while relief is still under way. Our aim is not to slow down emergency relief. It is to reduce risks to transparency and to identify problems early, before losses build up, rather than after the fact.

This report examines how in-kind donations for Hurricane Melissa relief were managed. It covers how local and international donations were classified and valued, and whether donated items were entered in the inventory and fixed asset records of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) and the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF). It also looks at accountability for items sent to third parties, and at the use of donated funds to offset transportation costs, brokerage and demurrage fees related to relief shipments through the ports. We have shared our findings with the entities concerned. They are intended to help improve disaster response, strengthen accountability and protect public resources.

I wish to thank the management of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), ODPEM and the JCF for their responsiveness and the courtesies extended to my staff.

Pamela Monroe-Ellis, CD, FCCA, FCA
Auditor General

Audit at a glance

$6.3B	$1.5B	$4.8B	696
TOTAL IN-KIND DONATIONS AS AT JULY 2026	INTENDED FOR GOJ	INTENDED FOR 3RD PARTIES	DONATED STARLINK DEVICES

Total Donations Received

TOTAL DONATIONS

- $1.5B in in-kind donations intended for the GoJ
- Of the $1.5B, $1.3B was internationally donated items
- $45.1M of donated cash was spent on brokerage, and other fees
- The $6.3B excludes consignments valued at about $780M on which ODPEM incurred clearance fees; 15 unopened containers had not been valued or recorded

Documents Gaps

DOCUMENTATION

- No documentation provided to show donor intent for the $4.8B stated as intended for 3rd parties
- No stock count or reconciliation performed of items received and issued
- No documentation of items in the warehouse prior to the audit count

Post Issue Authorisation

STARLINK DEVICES

- 683 of 696 donated devices issued to 75 recipients
- No allocation criteria or needs assessment
- Authorisation letter issued four months after distribution began

Executive Summary

This report is the fourth in a series of audit reports intended to evaluate multiple aspects of the Hurricane Melissa Relief Initiative. On October 28, 2025, Hurricane Melissa, a Category 5 hurricane, struck Jamaica and caused widespread devastation, especially in the western parishes of the island. The Government launched a coordinated relief effort, led by the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM).

The audit examined whether ODPEM and the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) managed resources received under the Hurricane Melissa Relief Initiative transparently. It also assessed whether their internal controls were adequate to prevent and detect fraud, waste and abuse of public resources. This report covers: (a) the management of in-kind goods and assets donated by local and international donors; (b) the funds used to clear those donations through the ports; and (c) the allocation of, and accountability for donated Starlink devices, which were held and distributed by the Jamaica Constabulary Force.

We found weaknesses in three areas: how in-kind donations were classified, valued, recorded and distributed; how donated fixed assets and Starlink devices were accounted for; and the authority for, and control over, the use of donated and public funds to pay clearance costs for goods meant for third parties. In response to our findings, ODPEM convened an internal inquiry in July 2026 to determine the circumstances surrounding the identified weaknesses. Following its preliminary review, ODPEM referred the matter on September 7, 2026, for further investigation.

Key Findings

Receipt and Verification of Donated Relief Supplies

1. **ODPEM did not establish adequate controls to ensure the complete, accurate, and accountable management of donated relief supplies.** ODPEM had an Inventory Management Procedures Manual and an SOP for delivering humanitarian aid after Hurricane Melissa. However, there was no evidence that either was approved, or that their controls were consistently applied. ODPEM should have checked the quantity, type, condition and intended recipients of donated items against the donors' shipping and delivery documents. There was no evidence that donated relief supplies were independently verified against supporting records before items were recorded and distributed. ODPEM also could not show that it had controls to separate shipments meant for the Government of Jamaica (GoJ) from those meant for third parties, or to account for their costs separately. As a result, ODPEM could not give assurance that donated supplies were fully and accurately recorded, or that they were distributed as donors intended. This weakened accountability for humanitarian aid, increased the risk of inaccurate inventory records, and limited ODPEM's ability to show that donated items reached the people they were meant for.

Classification and Valuation of In-Kind Donations

2. ODPEM reported in-kind donation of $6.3 billion broken down as follows:

Classification	$
Local Donations- GoJ	171,445,844
International donations – GoJ	1,292,306,087
Sub Total - GoJ Donations	1,463,751,931
International donations - 3rd parties	4,842,048,254
Total In-Kind Donations	**6,305,800,185**

i. We sought to determine the accuracy of the reported sum, but were unable to do so, as the required information was not provided. By way of correspondence dated August 25, 2026, we requested ODPEM to indicate how it had verified that the items identified for other organisations (third parties - $4.8 billion) were ultimately released to or received by the intended third parties, and to provide the relevant evidence of transfer and receipt. To date, ODPEM has not provided a response. ODPEM's donation schedule was not complete; as it did not include shipments worth approximately $780 million. Further, we conducted a physical inspection on September 4, 2026, during which we identified 15 unopened containers and other items at Warehouse 2 which had not valued or entered into ODPEMs records.

ii. We found that ODPEM incurred $298 million for transportation cost, brokerage and demurrage fees for donated items intended for Government of Jamaica (GoJ) as well as those consigned to ODPEM for third parties **(Appendix 6)**. We also determined that of the $298 million, $45 million was paid from ODPEM's Donation Account, whereas the balance of $253 million came from the Contingencies Fund and the National Disaster Fund **(Table 4)**. Further, of the $45 million from the Donation Account, $33 million represented sums used to offset transportation cost, brokerage and demurrage fees for goods intended for the third parties referred to above. ODPEM could not provide documents showing its authority to use donated relief funds in this way. It stated that the donated funds had been approved to support the Government Directed Roof Repair and Semi-permanent Housing Solution Programme under the broader Shelter Recovery Programme, and that the brokerage fees were outside the approved expenditure. ODPEM also could not show that all items cleared for third parties with these funds reached the intended beneficiaries or otherwise supported the Government's relief effort.

iii. ODPEM on July 10, 2026, submitted to us an in-kind donations schedule which showed $146.7 million (GoJ) and $56.4 million (third parties) in relation to building materials **(Appendix 1)**. We requested evidence to determine the receival, distribution and use of the building materials; however, as at the report date, ODPEM had not presented the requested information.

Distribution and Traceability of Donated Relief Items- Consumables

3. Of the $1.46 billion donations to the Government of Jamaica, approximately $859 million[1] related to consumables items received from local and international organisations **(Appendix 1)**.

    i. ODPEM employs a process where Warehouse Receipt Forms are prepared to record the intake of goods and Warehouse Issuing Forms prepared when there is distribution of goods. We sought to trace donated consumable items throughout the distribution process, from receipt through to delivery to beneficiaries. ODPEM provided 65 Warehouse receipt forms relating to internationally donated items **(Appendix 4)**. However, the receipt forms or other supporting documentation for locally donated items were not provided. We reviewed the 65 warehouse receipt delivery forms. Of the 65, only two forms had supporting commercial invoices, which detailed the value of the items. These items carried a value of $19 million. ODPEM did not provide us with the relevant supporting documents for the remaining 63 Warehouse Receipts Forms. Also, the warehouse receipts did not carry a monetary value. Therefore, we could not confirm the accuracy of the value of the internationally donated items as shown on ODPEM's Hurricane Melissa In-Kind Donation Tracker (V.6). Resultantly, we were only able to validate 2.2 per cent (or $19 million) of the $859 million of the consumable goods ODPEM reported as having received.

    ii. As it pertains to the distribution of donated items, ODPEM provided us with 114 Warehouse Issuing Forms. The issuing forms did not carry a monetary value. We reviewed the 114 forms to identify the quantity and type of items distributed, the details of which can be found in **Table 1, Appendix 8.** Consumables were given to both public and private entities without any documented criteria for deciding who should receive them and in what order. The records also did not show that quantities issued were checked, or identified the communities served or the final recipients. Consequently, ODPEM could not provide a complete distribution trail to confirm that donated consumables reached the intended communities and individuals. As a result, there was no complete trail to show that donated consumables reached those affected by the hurricane.

Inventory Control, Stock Counts and Expiry Management

4. **ODPEM did not maintain accurate inventory records or effective warehouse controls over donated relief supplies (consumables).** ODPEM provided a Microsoft Excel schedule, which listed donated items received from donors. The schedule did not indicate the quantity and description of the items to facilitate the comparison with the goods on hand in the warehouse. In the absence of detailed inventory records, we undertook a 100 per cent stock count at Warehouse 3 on June 18, 2026 **(Appendix 2).** We were able to determine the consumable items at hand at the specified date. Owing to the absence of proper store records, we were not able to satisfy ourselves that the goods in the warehouse represent what ODPEM should have on hand. Our physical inspection found 359 boxes of crackers, which were past their best-before date, and insects on the packaging of some consumable items. Of note, ODPEM fumigated Warehouse 3 in May 2026 for $450,000. The weaknesses in the inventory system identified during the physical count were previously reported to ODPEM in the 2024 Performance Audit of ODPEM, which cited limited storage space, staff shortages,

[1] ODPEM's records further indicated that donations valued at $849.3 million and $9.5 million in relief items were received from international and local donors.

poor stock rotation and unsuitable storage conditions, showing that long-standing issues remain unresolved.

Governance and Oversight of Donated and Procured Starlink Devices

5. By way of letter dated February 2026, the Minister of Energy, Transport and Telecommunications authorized the JCF to distribute and safeguard 696 donated Starlink devices. However, the JCF did not keep a record of the devices received and provided no evidence of the items being recorded as inventory for distribution. Consequently, we were unable verify the total amount of devices received by the JCF. Further, the JCF distributed 683 of the 696 donated Starlink devices to 75 recipients without documented allocation criteria or formal transfer arrangements. We sent confirmation request to 70 recipients, who together received 670 Starlink Devices, (representing 530 issued to GoJ recipients and 140 non-GoJ recipient) to determine whether they received the devices. Of the 70 recipients, 33 responded, comprising 28 of the 57 GoJ recipients and five of the 13 non-GoJ recipients. Of the 670 devices issued, 513 devices were confirmed as received. Thirty-seven of the purported recipients in relation to 157 devices did not provide a response to our confirmation request.

Conclusion

The audit identified weaknesses in the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management's (ODPEM) systems of oversight, accountability and control for managing in-kind donations received under the Hurricane Melissa relief initiative. ODPEM had procedures for receiving, recording, distributing and monitoring donations, but could not show that they were formally approved or consistently applied. As a result, it could not give assurance that donations in its care were completely and accurately recorded, properly valued, safeguarded and distributed. We recognise that ODPEM operated under exceptional conditions following a Category 5 hurricane, managing an unprecedented volume of donations within a short period. However, these conditions increased, rather than reduced, the need for basic controls over the receipt, recording and distribution of donated resources.

We also found instances where ODPEM did not comply with laws and regulations on managing, holding, recording and disposing of public resources, further weakening accountability and transparency. Weaknesses in classifying and valuing donations, managing inventory and assets, monitoring distribution and overseeing third-party recipients meant that ODPEM could not show that donations were managed lawfully, as donors intended and in line with sound public financial management.

Similar accountability weaknesses were identified in the JCF's management of donated Starlink devices. Further, the distribution of the devices was not supported by documented allocation criteria or formal transfer arrangements establishing ownership and custodial responsibilities.

Collectively, these weaknesses heighten the risk of loss, misuse, waste, unauthorised disposal, inaccurate reporting, and inequitable distribution of relief supplies. Similar issues were reported in the 2024 Performance Audit, which shows that long-standing control weaknesses remain unresolved and need urgent action.

Recommendations

Given the significance and recurrence of the weaknesses identified, the following recommendations are proposed for implementation as a matter of priority:

I. ODPEM should put in place documented procedures for receiving, recording, valuing and distributing donated consumables. Every donation should be backed by complete source records, entered promptly into an inventory system, and classified and valued under Section 9.5(ii) of the FAA Act Financial Instructions. This includes non-physical donations such as skilled labour and services from international partners. ODPEM should match its customs clearance records to the donation schedules so that every consignment cleared on its behalf is accounted for, including relief supplies that do not appear on any donation schedule and consignments that remain unopened or unrecorded in its warehouses. Distribution records should show what was issued, where it went and who received it. ODPEM should also carry out regular stock counts and reconciliations to keep a full audit trail and introduce expiry and stock-condition controls and proper storage, to prevent further losses.

II. ODPEM should strengthen asset management and inventory controls for donated fixed assets by ensuring that all items, both local and international, including any assets identified in the unopened containers and unrecorded items at ODPEM's warehouses, are promptly recorded in an integrated inventory system, with unique identification numbers and, where applicable, serial numbers. Discrepancies between warehouse receipt forms, inventory records and donation schedules should be investigated, reconciled and formally documented. Loan agreements should be formalised in accordance with Section 6.6.1 of the GOJ Comprehensive Asset Management Policy (2020) and periodic physical counts should be undertaken across all warehouse locations.

III. The JCF, in consultation with ODPEM, should immediately reconcile all Starlink devices received, distributed and still in inventory, using verifiable records such as serial numbers, recipient details and dates of issue. The JCF should also record all emergency assets received in its Inventory Register and, with ODPEM, establish a documented framework for the allocation and transfer of donated technological assets, including allocation criteria, prior approval and written transfer terms.

IV. ODPEM should develop and implement a formal allocation framework for the distribution of donated goods during disaster relief actions, incorporating documented needs assessments, transparent and equitable prioritisation criteria and a clearly defined approval process, in accordance with the Disaster Risk Management Act (2015) and Government of Jamaica property management guidelines.

V. ODPEM, in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service, should clarify the authority governing the use of donated and public funds to meet brokerage fees, demurrage and related clearance costs; establish controls to distinguish and separately account for consignments intended for the Government of Jamaica and those intended for third parties, so that every consignment on which clearance costs are incurred is captured in the consignment register and traceable to the in-kind donation schedules; and pursue recovery of clearance costs incurred on behalf of third-party consignees where appropriate.

The measurable targets, deadlines and priority ratings for each recommendation, together with management's acceptance, are set out below.

Schedule of Recommendations – Implementation and Management Acceptance

No.	Measurable target	Deadline	Priority	Management Acceptance (Yes/No)
I	• Warehouse Management Policy and Valuation of Donated Inventory SOPs approved and issued. • 100% of consumable donations received supported by a source record (donor letter/packing list/manifest) and recorded in the inventory system within 5 working days of receipt. • 100% of donations classified and valued at prevailing market rate. • 100% of issues supported by a Warehouse Issue Form identifying quantity, recipient location and final beneficiary. • Quarterly stock counts completed and reconciled; variances investigated and cleared within 30 days. • Expiry register in place; zero relief items written off due to undetected expiry. • 100% of consignments cleared on ODPEM's behalf matched to the donation schedules, with the approximately $780 million in consignments not on any schedule identified, valued and recorded; all 15 unopened containers at Warehouse 2 opened, inventoried, valued and recorded. • Donated skilled labour and services from international partners identified, classified and valued under Section 9.5(ii) of the FAA Act Financial Instructions and included in the donation schedules.	Expiry protocols and expiry register: Dec 31, 2026 Assessment of infested stock: Nov 30, 2026 Consignment reconciliation and unopened containers: Dec 31, 2026 Full implementation: Mar 31, 2027 Warehouse Management Policy and the Valuation of Donated Inventory Standard Operating Procedures: Nov 30, 2026	High	Yes
II	• 100% of the donated fixed assets recorded in the integrated inventory/fixed asset register with a unique identifier and, where applicable, a serial number. • Documented reconciliation of the warehouse receipt forms and physical count results, with every variance explained and signed off. • 100% of temporary loans of donated assets covered by an executed MOU or contractual agreement.	Reconciliation and MOU regularisation: Dec 31, 2026 Full asset tagging and count cycle: Mar 31, 2027	Medium	Yes

No.	Measurable target	Deadline	Priority	Management Acceptance (Yes/No)
III	• Reconciliation completed for all donated and procured Starlink devices, recording serial number, source, custodian, location, activation status and returns. • Formal confirmation requests issued to 100% of recipients, with non-responses escalated. Ownership status and terms of issue documented for every device, including temporary loans returned. • 100% of Starlink devices and other emergency assets received recorded in the JCF Inventory Register, showing serial number, source, value, custodian and location, and reconciled to the device reconciliation. • Allocation and transfer framework for donated technological assets documented and signed off by the JCF and ODPEM, setting out allocation criteria, prior-approval requirements and written transfer terms; 100% of subsequent allocations and transfers supported by a recorded prior approval and written transfer terms.	Dec 31, 2026	High	Yes
IV	• Allocation framework approved by the Board/Accounting Officer and issued to all distribution points. • Framework includes documented needs-assessment template, prioritisation criteria and approval/delegation matrix. • 100% of distributions in the next relief activation supported by a needs assessment and an approval recorded before issue. • Framework tested through at least one simulation or after-action review before the 2027 hurricane season.	Framework approved: Mar 31, 2027 Operational before June 1, 2027, hurricane season	Medium	Yes
V	• Donation Account reimbursed in full for the $45.1M charged, including the $33 million relating to third-party consignments. • Consignment registers in place distinguishing GOJ from third-party consignments at point of entry; 100% of clearance payments coded to the correct consignee category.	MoFPS determination and consignment controls: Dec 31, 2026 Reimbursement/recovery: Mar 31, 2027	High	Yes