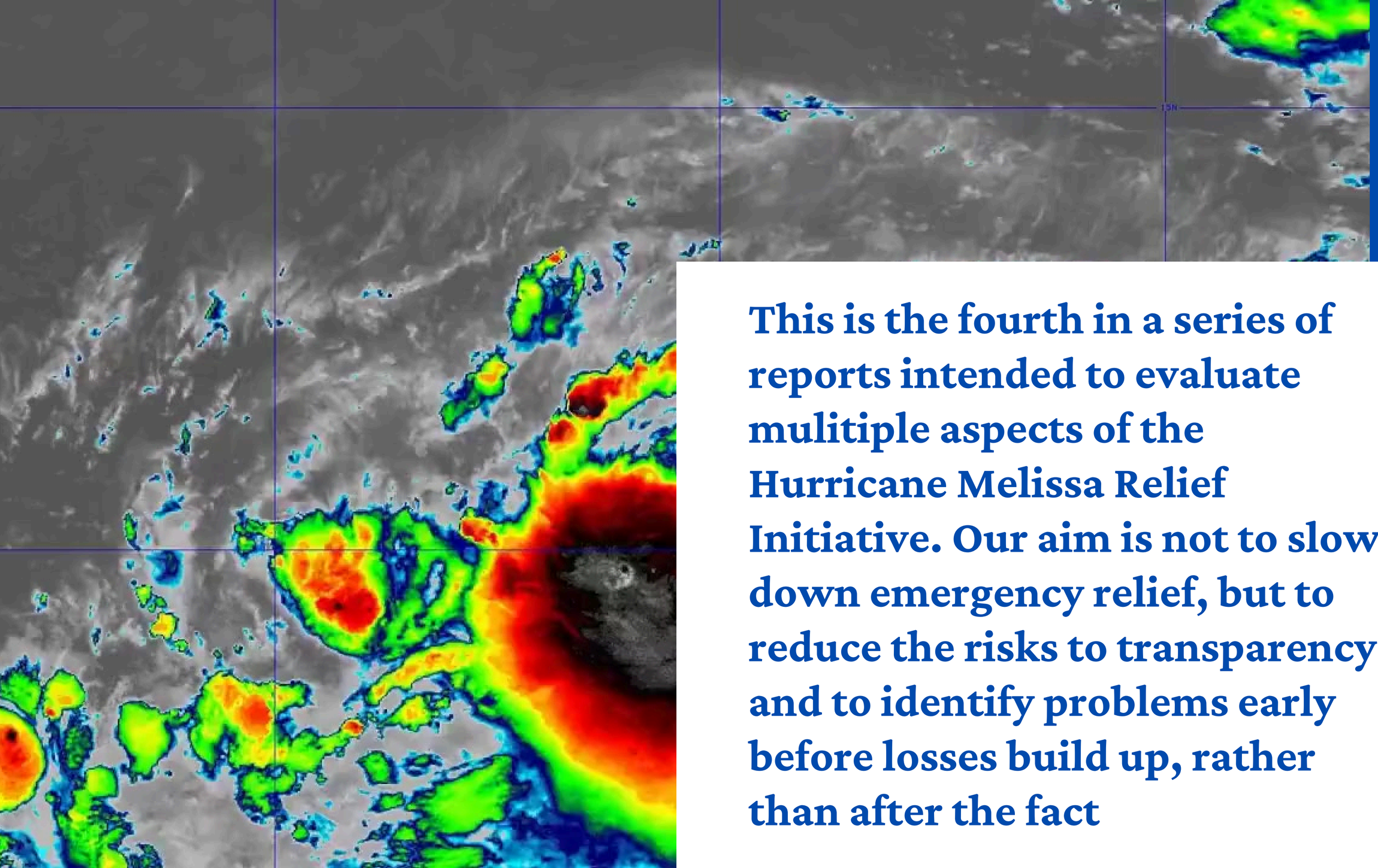
Hurricane Melissa Relief Initiative Audit

Management and Distribution of In-Kind Donations

Compliance Audit Report





This is the fourth in a series of reports intended to evaluate mulitiple aspects of the Hurricane Melissa Relief Initiative. Our aim is not to slow down emergency relief, but to reduce the risks to transparency and to identify problems early before losses build up, rather than after the fact



What Did We Look At?

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.



Here are our findings

Inadequate Documentation and Accountability for Donated Goods

ODPEM reported approximately J$6.3 billion in in-kind donations. Of that amount, approximately 1.46 billion was intended for the Government of Jamaica, while approximately 4.84 billion was intended for third parties. The audit however could not determine the accuracy of the reported sum, due to inadequate documentation.

ODPEM's donation schedule excluded shipments valued at approximately J$780 million, while a physical inspection identified 15 unopened containers and other unrecorded, unvalued items.

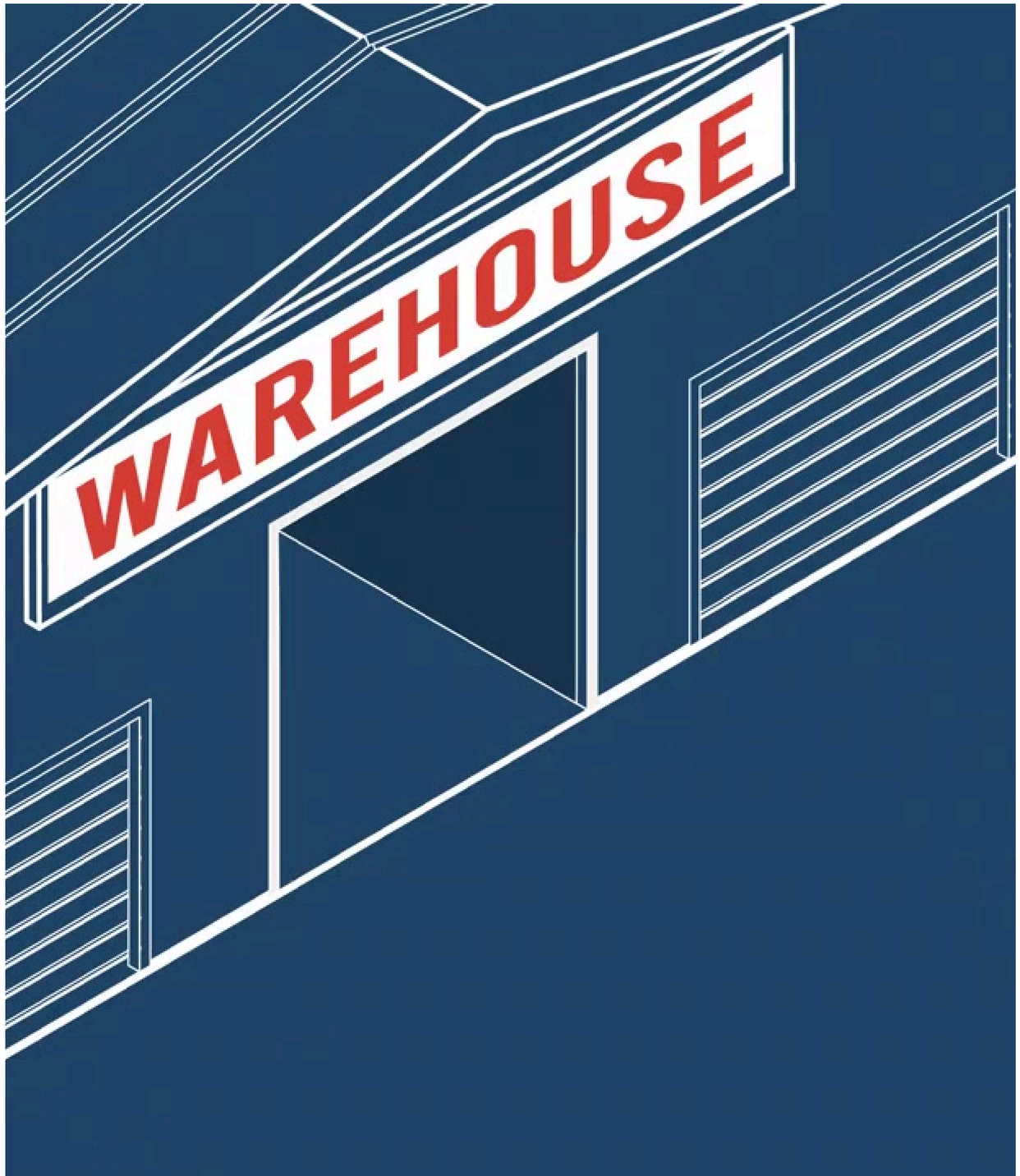
The audit also found that J$33 million in donated funds was used for port clearance costs on third-party consignments, which was outside of the approved use of the donated funds.



Inadequate Controls over Donated Relief Supplies

ODPEM did not establish adequate controls to ensure the complete, accurate, and accountable management of donated relief supplies. There was no evidence that its procedures were approved or consistently applied, or that donations were independently verified and separated according to their intended recipients. Consequently, ODPEM could not assure that supplies were properly accounted for and distributed as donors intended.





Weak Controls over the Tracking and Distribution of Donated Consumables

Of the J$1.46 billion in Government of Jamaica donations, J$859 million related to consumable items. However, the audit could verify only J$19 million (2.2%) of their reported value. Distribution records also did not adequately identify the quantities issued, communities served or final recipients. ODPEM could not demonstrate that supplies reached the communities and individuals affected by Hurricane Melissa.

Inadequate Inventory Records and Warehouse Controls

ODPEM did not maintain adequate inventory records to account for donated supplies and track stock held in its warehouses.

A physical count identified 359 boxes of crackers past their best-before date, as well as insects on the packaging of some consumable items.

Similar inventory and storage weaknesses had been identified in the 2024 Performance Audit of ODPEM, showing that long-standing issues remain unresolved.



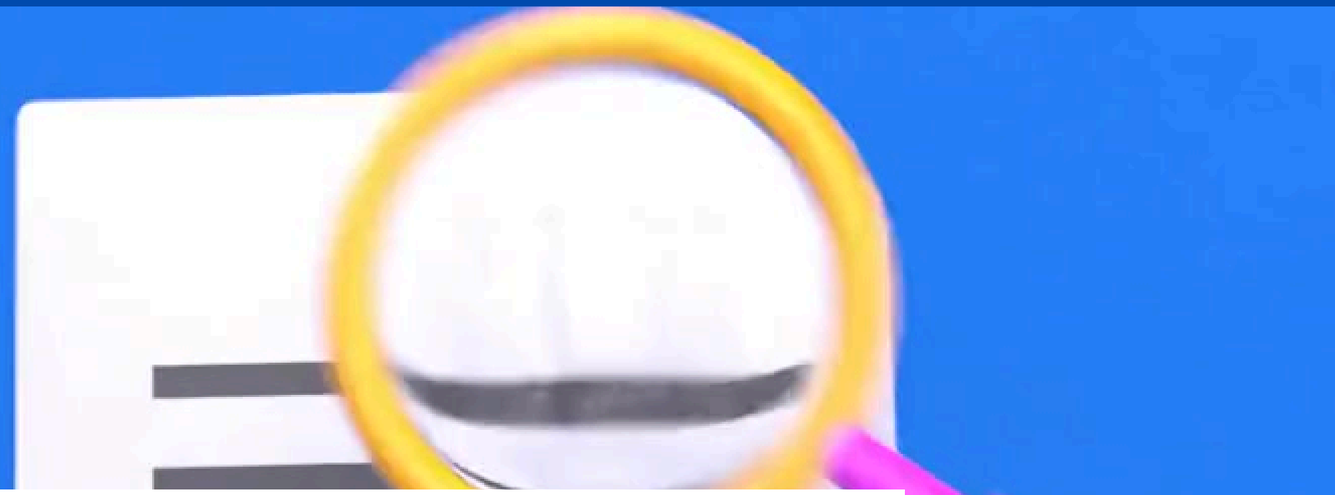
Weak Accountability and Record-Keeping for Donated Starlink Devices

The JCF was authorised to distribute and safeguard 696 donated Starlink devices, but had no records to verify how many it actually received.

It distributed 683 devices to 75 recipients without documented allocation criteria or formal transfer arrangements.

Of the 670 devices included in the audit's confirmation exercise, 513 were confirmed as received. The remaining 157 could not be confirmed because 37 purported recipients did not respond.





Conclusion

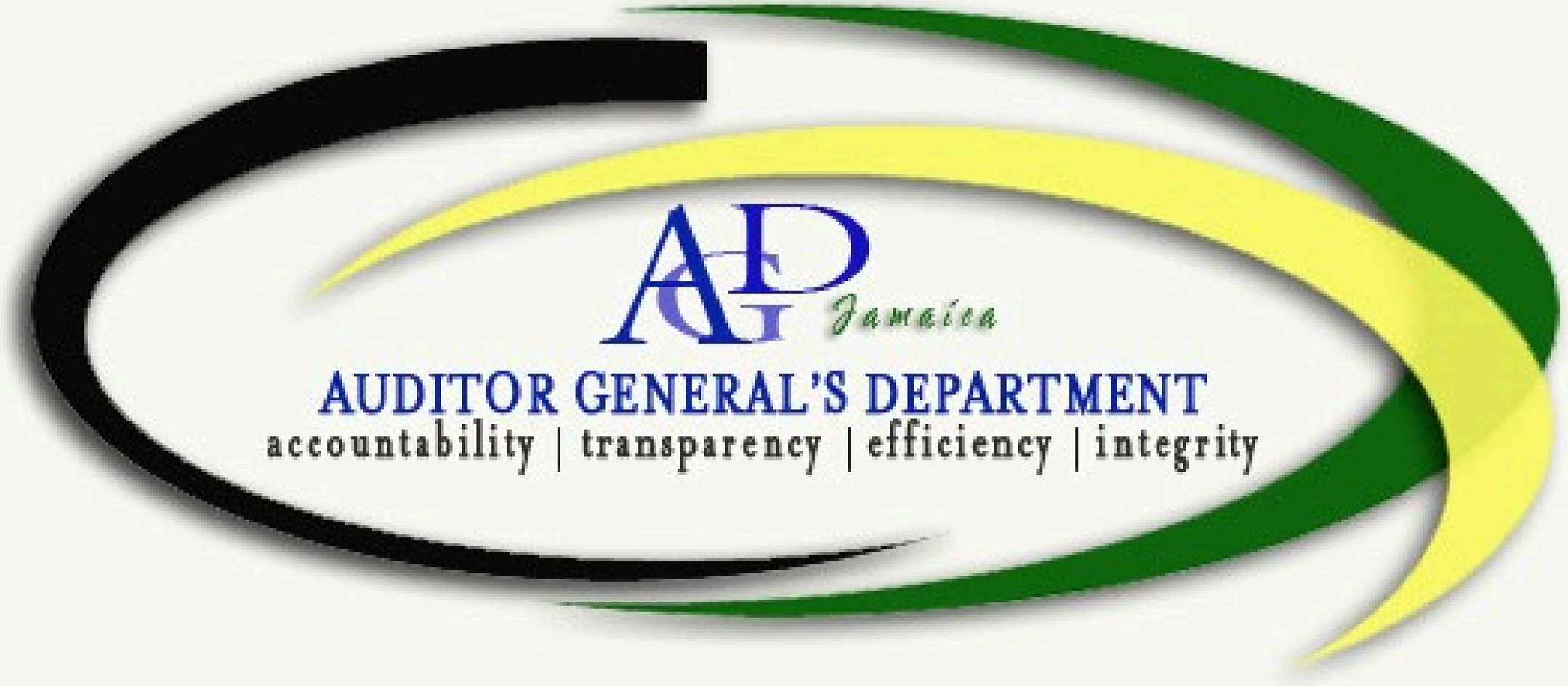
Weaknesses in oversight, accountability and controls meant ODPEM could not assure that donated supplies were properly recorded, safeguarded and distributed as intended.

The JCF also had accountability weaknesses in managing donated Starlink devices.

These issues increase the risk of loss, misuse and inequitable distribution.

Recommendations

- Strengthen Controls over Donated Supplies
- Improve Asset and Inventory Management
- Strengthen Accountability for Donated Starlink Devices
- Establish Fair and Transparent Distribution Criteria
- Clarify Responsibility for Donation Clearance Costs



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