



Some 48 houses are earmarked for construction at a cost of \$20 million, under the pilot phase of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security's Social Housing Project.

The initiative, being jointly undertaken with charity organisation, Food for the Poor (FFTP) which is spearheading the construction, is being facilitated through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by both entities.

This agreement will see delivery of the units to 150 targeted Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH) beneficiaries island-wide, when the pilot ends in May. At that time, the Ministry will evaluate the initiative to determine the way forward in efforts to provide additional housing solutions for PATH beneficiaries.

Labour Minister, Hon. Derrick Kellier, on Tuesday, March 19, officially handed over the first two completed units to Ivy Gordon of Hayes, and Lilieth Gunness of Rocky Point, during brief ceremonies held in the Clarendon communities.

Another 12 units, for which applications are being reviewed by the Ministry's Parish Appeals Committees, are slated to be completed and delivered within four weeks.

In his remarks, Mr. Kellier underscored the security and family stability, which home ownership provides. He noted that this takes on added significance for PATH beneficiaries, "as it signals a major step towards breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty."

He said the MoU is demonstrative of how much can be achieved through Public/Private Partnerships (PPPs), while citing the Social Housing Project as an example of the Government's "ongoing commitment to providing adequate social protection to address the basic needs of the most vulnerable in our society."



“It is within this context, and as part of the Ministry’s mandate of promoting human capital development to reduce dependence on the state, that the Social Housing Project provides the Ministry with an opportunity to move from referring PATH beneficiaries in need of housing assistance, to actually providing the assistance directly to them,” Mr. Kellier said.

FFTP’s Executive Director, Jacqueline Johnson, said the organisation welcomes the opportunity to partner with the Ministry to provide the houses to the PATH families.

“No nation can be successful without the provision of adequate shelter solutions for its people. The age old saying, ‘home is where the heart is’, rings true for our recipient families today, because we cannot become our best selves without having adequate housing,” she contended.

Mrs. Johnson said that over its 30 years of operation, the charity has provided houses for over 22,000 needy Jamaicans, and, over the next five years, will be constructing in excess of 9,000 houses for indigent and low income families.

This will be done through the Social Housing Project, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing, and the National Housing Trust (NHT).

Chairman of the Clarendon Parish Council and May Pen’s Mayor, Councillor Scean Barnswell, as well as Member of Parliament for South East Clarendon, Rudyard Spencer, welcomed and underscored the importance of the initiative.

Both recipients, Ivy Gordon and Jacqueline Gunness, expressed gratitude for the gesture, pointing out that the houses will provide them with the necessary boost to advance their lives.

By Douglas McIntosh, JIS Reporter