One Year After Melissa, AFJ Recovery Effort Restores Homes, Farms and Classrooms in Western Jamaica



One year after Hurricane Melissa devastated sections of western Jamaica, the American Friends of Jamaica (AFJ) has disbursed US$7.4 million (J$1.17 billion) towards hurricane recovery, helping to restore 919 homes, support more than 2,000 farmers and get thousands of students back into classrooms.

The organisation raised US$11.74 million (J$1.86 billion) following the October 28, 2025 hurricane, with contributions from Jamaicans at home and abroad, corporate donors and other supporters. To date, AFJ has disbursed US$2.2 million for emergency relief through 23 partner organisations across seven parishes, US$4.9 million for rebuilding and associated project costs, and US$300,000 in grants to 16 community organisations. AFJ has also allocated a further US$3.3 million to ongoing recovery projects



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Following its initial emergency response, AFJ focused its rebuilding efforts on five hard-hit communities: Maggotty, Darliston, Cambridge, Wakefield and Hopewell/Green Island. Under its five-community rebuilding programme, the organisation has earmarked US$1.5 million for housing, US$1.25 million for education, US$1 million for healthcare facilities, and US$500,000 for agriculture.

AFJ has reroofed 761 homes across the five communities, benefiting approximately 3,044 residents. Another 158 roofs, completed in partnership with the BREDS Foundation, bring the total to 919 homes and approximately 3,676 beneficiaries. The organisation is working towards its commitment to restore 1,000 roofs.

The recovery programme has also assisted 2,077 farmers who lost crops, livestock and equipment during the hurricane. Of these, H&L Agro provided vouchers to 1,519 farmers in the five communities to buy fertiliser, animal feed and other supplies needed to resume production, while the BREDS Foundation assisted another 558.



Pineapple farmer Louis Foster was among those who received support. His J$50,000 voucher helped cover the cost of agricultural supplies at a time when restoring his farm was placing considerable pressure on his finances.“Normally, we would spend like a hundred or a hundred and fifty thousand for one crop of fertiliser for the pineapple,” Foster said. The assistance covered part of that expense, allowing him to use his own money for other farm needs.



AFJ has also supported the reconstruction of damaged schools, provided temporary learning spaces and invested in infrastructure to help schools withstand future disasters.

At Cove Primary School in Green Island, Hanover, AFJ helped finance the reconstruction of hurricane-damaged facilities, allowing 125 students who had been attending classes in tents and a nearby church hall to return to improved learning spaces. The US$328,000 project included a reinforced roof, solar power, a library, smart boards and computers, and was delivered in partnership with the Sandals Foundation, which managed the project, and the NCB Foundation, which provided matching funds.



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Recalling her reaction when she saw the completed work, Principal Patrice Campbell said, “When I walked in after reconstruction and saw all that had happened, I said, ‘What the enemy meant for harm, God meant for good.’”

AFJ’s wider education recovery programme includes a J$100 million joint allocation with the NCB Foundation, comprising a J$50 million matching contribution from NCB and funding from AFJ. The partnership supports resilience projects in Wakefield and Trelawny, as well as modular classrooms at Burnt Savannah Primary and Rusea’s High.

Schools in Glen Stuart and Wakefield have received technology, solar power, and canteen appliances, while construction continues on additional resilience projects in Cambridge and Darliston.

Across western Jamaica, AFJ has funded 31 temporary classrooms at 12 schools, serving about 4,700 students. AFJ has also installed solar power systems at 14 schools.

AFJ expects to complete another 10 modular classrooms in November at five schools undergoing major reconstruction. Those schools serve approximately 2,925 students. AFJ also plans to re-equip kitchens at approximately 24 schools.
The organisation is also helping to restore agricultural programmes at five high schools: Maud McLeod, Cambridge, Maggotty, Muschett and Hopewell. The initiative, being undertaken with H&L, will replace chicken coops, equipment and crop supplies lost during the hurricane.



AFJ is also working to strengthen healthcare facilities in communities still recovering from the storm. In partnership with the National Healthcare Enhancement Fund (NHEF), the organisation is preparing to equip and improve four health centres in its priority communities. The planned improvements include solar power and water systems to help maintain services during emergencies.



Repairs are under way at four health centres in Hanover: Bramble, Chester Castle, Lucea and Mount Pelier, with completion targeted for November. Work to re-equip the outpatient clinic at Savanna-la-Mar Hospital and the Williamsfield Health Centre in Westmoreland is also scheduled to begin in November.

AFJ has awarded US$300,000 in grants to 16 community organisations supporting trauma-responsive teaching, after-school programmes, youth agriculture and medical outreach. The organisation has also received targeted contributions, including a donation from The Home Depot Foundation for reroofing and seeds from Back to the Roots to support agricultural recovery.



“One year later, families have roofs over their heads, farmers are getting back on their feet, and children are back in classrooms. We are proud of what has been achieved, but there is still a lot of work to be done,” said outgoing AFJ President Wendy Hart, who will hand over the presidency to Mark Newman on November 1.

Over the next six to twelve months, AFJ will focus on completing outstanding school projects, improving healthcare facilities and continuing reconstruction in communities still affected by the hurricane.

The recovery effort has involved partnerships with Food For The Poor, Global Empowerment Mission, the Sandals Foundation, the NCB Foundation, H&L Agro, NHEF, The Home Depot Foundation, Back to the Roots, Government agencies, and community organisations.

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