

RGD and MLSS, to Assist with IDs for PATH Benefits

The Registrar General's Department (RGD) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishing the Civil Registration Initiative to assist Programme for Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH) householders to be documented.

Minister of Labour and Social Security Hon. Parnell Charles, speaking at the signing at the Courtleigh Hotel, New Kingston, on Wednesday, September 14, said many persons remain in vulnerable circumstances, because of their inability to access benefits without legal proof of identity. He said that the new initiative is geared at providing additional social protection support to poor households within PATH, by assisting over 20,000 beneficiaries with appropriate identification.

Under the initiative the RGD will provide civil registration documents, such as birth, death, fetal death and marriage certificates, for members of PATH households across Jamaica. These families will be identified through the Ministry of Labour and Social Security's Beneficiary Identification System (BIS) and will be targeted through civil registration fairs, island-wide.

Chief Executive Officer of the RGD, Dr. Patricia Holness, said that the RGD has identified over 20,000 individuals who needed to access PATH benefits, but could not do so because they did not have proper documentation.

Dr. Holness also stated that an assessment of information from RGD's database showed that over 300,000 persons, who are registered, have not yet secured a birth certificate. This was evidence that many Jamaicans do not have the documentation to access mainstream services and this Government initiative will significantly benefit citizens, help to alleviate the cycle of poverty and promote national development.

Mr. Charles remarked that the signing of the MoU was quite meaningful and a step, by the government, to empower citizens. He stated that, not having legal proof of identity can affect a variety of rights, therefore the country must ensure that all citizens have access to the opportunities offered by the society.

"Many of us take civil registration for granted because of our means in life. However, some citizens are marginalised because they do not have the documentation," he said.

Mr. Charles noted that in order to provide this benefit, the Ministry has allocated some \$20 million, to purchase birth certificates for persons in PATH households who fall within specific groups. These include: heads of registered PATH families unable to enroll other family members on PATH; PATH families who have qualified, but include members unable to complete the enrolment process; and families who have started the application process, but are unable to continue due to the absence of civil registration documents.

PATH is a conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme funded by the Government and the World Bank, and is aimed at delivering benefits by way of cash grants to the most needy and vulnerable in the society.