



**GREETINGS BY**

**MR. OMAR SWEENEY, CD. PE,**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR -JAMAICA SOCIAL INVESTMENT FUND**

**AT THE**

**Handing over ceremony for the**

**Pisgah Primary & Infant School rehabilitation and Pisgah Community  
Health and Wellness Fair**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2026**

## Salutations:

- Master of Ceremonies – Mr. Brian Brown,
- **Mrs. Susan Nelson Smith** - Regional Director, Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth & Information – representing the Hon. Dana Morris Dixon, Minister of Education, Skills, Youth & Information,
- **Mr. Andrew Morris** - Member of Parliament, St. Elizabeth Northwestern,
- **Hon. Beryl Hope Rochester** - Custos Rotulorum for St. Elizabeth,
- **His Worship, the Mayor Councillor Richard Solomon** - Mayor of Black River and Chairman of the St. Elizabeth Municipal Corporation,
- **Bishop Devon Anglin** – Chairman, Pisgah Primary and Infant schools,
- **Mrs. Patricia Forrester** - Principal of Pisgah Primary and Infant schools,
- Representatives from the Social Development Commission,
- Members of the JSIF team,
- Members of the media,
- Teachers, parents, students, and neighbours from Pisgah and surrounding communities.

Good morning.

Today, we hand over more than buildings—we hand over safety, dignity, and opportunity for every child who walks through these gates.

When we first assessed Pisgah Primary and Infant School, we found a school in distress: leaking roofs, bat infestation, inadequate bathrooms, a failing reed-bed contaminating the community's main water source, and no perimeter fence to secure the school compound. This compound is also a priority ODPEM disaster shelter—yet the facility could not safely serve the community in an emergency. That was unacceptable. We set a clear objective: repair, modernize, and future-proof this school and shelter, then equip the people who operate it to succeed.

Through the tenth cycle of the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF-10th)—with the Caribbean Development Bank as the funding agency and the Jamaica Social Investment Fund as the implementing partner, we invested **J\$178 million**, complemented by a **J\$3.1 million** contribution from the community. The scope of work undertaken included: the construction of an Infant Block with two classrooms and a sick bay; two new Primary classrooms with an adjoining sanitation block; a tertiary

Wastewater Treatment System to replace the failed Reed Bed; a staff room and Guidance Counsellor office with adjoining bathroom; installation of perimeter fencing; a covered linkway, and access ramps for inclusivity; a multipurpose court; parking area; rainwater harvesting, and full termite treatment to protect the newly built infrastructure. Pisgah Primary and Infant School now boasts modern infrastructure, that is designed for learning in calm and for shelter in crisis.

This project directly serves 105 students, 7 staff members, and more than 70 parents. Inclusively, this school plant has been strengthened to serve as a designated disaster shelter that can adequately accommodate over 2,000 residents of Pisgah and neighbouring communities. In one investment, we have successfully upgraded classrooms, a community refuge, and a public-health asset. That is value for money—and value for lives.

As you are aware, rehabilitation without re-tooling is only a half-measure. We have therefore equipped the campus with classroom furniture for students and teachers, beds for sick bays, Fire and Safety equipment, Literacy and Numeracy materials, and a six-burner stove, to support nutrition. Five staff members received training in Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), and three teachers were instructed in the Lindamood-Bell programme, so that struggling readers can develop the skills necessary for reading and comprehension. Every teacher at Pisgah Primary and Infant School completed Trauma-Informed Care training—because after a disaster or a family crisis, a supportive space is part of recovery.

Today's Health & Wellness Fair stands on a foundation we have built together: recent health and dental clinics serving over 200 people; a community march taking a public stand against child abuse, and two

summer camps that reached about 150 children through learning and trauma-informed counselling, courtesy of the KT Foundation. From 2024–2025, monthly parenting sessions have provided psychosocial support and practical skills. After all, a resilient school is a resilient village.

We believe that when parents thrive, pupils thrive, so under the Livelihoods Development component of this project, six parent groups comprising 15 parents, received Enterprise Development grants—each valued at over J\$200,000—plus a 3-day residential Business-Development course. Fifteen community members were trained in hairdressing and barbering, thereby creating income pathways that keep resources circulating locally. Education, protection, health, and livelihoods—this is how we build resilience end-to-end.

The project that was undertaken to rehabilitate the Pisgah Primary and Infant School is part of a wider commitment. Through the tenth cycle of

the Basic Needs Trust Fund, the JSIF has invested over **J\$1 billion** for the holistic development of our children. This has translated into Capacity Building programmes for Special Education, and interventions in Literacy and Numeracy; the construction of Special Education units at Frankfield and Lowe River Primary and Infant Schools; construction of safe-Routes, so students at Old Harbour and Grange Hill Primary schools can safely traverse the busy roadways to and from school. We have begun rehabilitation and expansion works on the Mount Salem Infant School, and the Mount Moriah and Kendal Primary schools. But these buildings will only fulfil their purpose if we steward them well. I ask our school board, PTA, and community to take care of the facility; protect the fence; maintain the gutters; service the treatment plant and model the care our children deserve.

To our students: this campus is your launching pad—use it; take care of it; enjoy it. To our teachers, you now have the tools. Let your classrooms

become laboratories of curiosity and care. To our parents and residents: this is your shelter, your refuge; help us keep it ready. To our partners at the Caribbean Development Bank, the Ministry of Education Skills Youth and Information, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management, and the local leadership, thank you for proving that when we work together, rural communities come first, not last.

On behalf of the Jamaica Social Investment Fund, I officially hand over the newly rehabilitated Pisgah Primary & Infant School. May this space protect in the storm, inspire in the sunshine, and stand as a promise kept to every child in Pisgah.

Thank you—and enjoy your new school and the ensuing Health & Wellness Fair.