Government of St. Lucia

Performance Audit Report
Of the Director of Audit
On the Public Assistance Programme
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this audit is to inform Parliament on the administration of the Government’s public assistance programme. The Ministry of Health, Wellness, Family Affairs, National Mobilization, Human Services and Gender Relations is the lead agency through which the Government of St. Lucia provides financial assistance to needy individuals. The Ministry’s Division of Human Services and Family Affairs (the Division) is responsible for administration of the public assistance programme. The legislative authority for delivery of public assistance benefits is the Public Assistance Act.

According to the St. Lucia country Poverty Assessment 2005/06, the number of St. Lucians considered to be indigent fell from 7.1 percent to 1.6 percent between 1995 and 2005. However, the number of individuals considered to be poor increased from 25.1 percent to 28.8 percent over that period. In the country’s population of roughly 175,000, this means that 50,000, or almost 30 percent, of St. Lucians are poor.

Our audit examined four significant areas of the public assistance programme: eligibility determination, cash management, information management, and programme oversight. There were 16 audit criteria associated with our nine audit objectives. Management agreed to the suitability of our audit criteria as reasonable standards for programme performance. Our audit covered programme operations from April 2006 to March 2010.

We tested a selection of 106 applicants who became eligible for benefits between 2006-07 and 2008-09. During these three years, the Government expended $10 million in financial support to roughly 2,500 recipients each month. These monthly payments reached many more beneficiaries in the families supported.

With respect to eligibility determination, we found that financial benefits were paid to individuals who did not qualify under the Public Assistance Act’s definition of needy. The Division did not have clear and explicit criteria for determining eligibility, and decisions to approve or reject an applicant for benefits were not made consistently. Further, the Division did not reassess eligibility twice yearly, as required, to determine whether benefits should be extended or terminated.

We also found that there was no recourse mechanism available to those applicants who felt they had been treated unfairly.
Concerning cash management practices, we found that monthly cash payments to recipients were properly accounted for and recorded. However, the handling and safeguarding of cash were not well controlled. For example, in the four regions outside Castries where payments were made by regional sub-accountants, there was no segregation of duties between, and limited supervision of, the cash handling, distribution, and recording functions.

As well, we found that individuals receiving payments on behalf of recipients did not present a letter of authorization from the recipient and, as a result, the rightful recipient may not have received the payment to which they were entitled.

We found that the recording and reporting of monthly and annual expenditures by the Ministry and Accountant General’s Department were neither accurate nor complete. We were not able to verify the amount of public assistance paid in the period tested.

Practices for the collection, storage, retrieval, and protection of the public assistance programme’s personal, financial, and performance information did not comply with the requirements of the Division’s Policy and Operations Manual. We found that individual case files were not maintained. The recipient records available were incomplete, and the validity and reliability of the information they contained were uncertain. Without complete records for all applicants, the accuracy and consistency of eligibility and entitlement decisions could not be established.

We also found that security over recipients’ personal information was poor. We found these records stored in unlocked filing cabinets and on open shelves. As a result, this sensitive information may be easily lost, accessed by unauthorized employees, or stolen.

We found that monthly and quarterly programme reports prepared by welfare officers were incomplete, unreliable, and, in many cases, unavailable. We also found there were no performance indicators for the public assistance programme, and that complete and reliable programme data was not collected. No programme monitoring and evaluation function had been established.

We concluded that the performance and effectiveness of the public assistance programme were not being measured and reported.
As a result, it was not possible for Ministry officials and Parliament to hold Division managers accountable for their administration of the public assistance programme.

Our report contains 14 recommendations for improvement.
INTRODUCTION

Many St. Lucians are at risk because they lack the financial means to provide the basic necessities of life. The Government of St. Lucia has the responsibility to provide financial support to needy individuals who cannot provide for themselves and their families.

The purpose of this audit is to inform Parliament on the administration of the Government’s public assistance program.

Over the three years of benefits that were audited, the Government expended $10 million in financial support to roughly 2,500 recipients each month. These monthly payments reached many more beneficiaries in the families supported.

The Ministry of Health, Wellness, Human Services and Gender Relations is the lead agency through which the Government of St. Lucia provides financial assistance to needy individuals. The Ministry’s Division of Human Services and Family Affairs (the Division) is responsible for administration of the public assistance programme.

The authority for delivery of public assistance benefits is the Public Assistance Act, which came into effect in 1968. The most recent revised edition of the Act is December 2005.

This report includes our audit findings, conclusions, and recommendations for improvement related to the Division’s administration of the Act and delivery of benefits.

This is the first performance audit of the public assistance programme conducted by the Office of the Director of Audit.

Prior to publishing this report, we submitted a draft to management of the Ministry for comments. Unfortunately, management did not respond.
BACKGROUND

Reducing population poverty levels has been an ongoing priority of the Government of St. Lucia. A report found on the Government’s website entitled ‘St. Lucia Country Poverty Assessment 2005/06’ shows changes in poverty rates over a 10-year period\(^1\).

The number of individuals considered to be indigent\(^2\) fell from 7.1 percent to 1.6 percent between 1995 and 2005; however, the number of individuals considered to be poor\(^3\) increased from 25.1 percent to 28.8 percent over the same period. This means that in the population of roughly 175,000, about 50,000 St. Lucians are poor.

It can be taken from this that the Government’s public assistance and other social programs have been, at least in part, responsible for significantly reducing the number of St. Lucians considered to be most vulnerable. However, population poverty rates of almost 30 percent must be cause for ongoing efforts to improve the socio-economic situation for a large number of St. Lucians.

In 2008 the Government increased the public assistance amounts paid to recipient categories.

In 2009 the Government of St. Lucia received a consultant’s report entitled ‘Social Safety Net Assessment’ prepared with support from the United Nations Children’s Fund, World Bank, and the United Nations Development Fund for Women. The consultant concluded that the country has a range of social assistance programs that could be reconfigured to address critical vulnerabilities among St. Lucians. With respect to public assistance, the report recommended:

- Modernizing the Public Assistance Act

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\(^1\) St. Lucia Country Poverty Assessment 2005/06 was commissioned by the Caribbean Development Bank and performed by Kairi Consultants Limited in association with the National Assessment Team of St. Lucia.

\(^2\) Indigence Line refers to certain basic nutritional requirements for survival. A basket of goods is selected in such a way as to maximise one’s nutrient intake at the lowest possible cost. Households unable to meet the cost of obtaining this basket of food items are indigent. The market cost of the basic food basket represents a lower limit of poverty that is the critical poverty line.

\(^3\) Poverty line represents a minimum budget that a household should spend, over a defined period, if it is to meet its basic food and non-food requirements. It was estimated in 2005/06 at ECS423.83 monthly.
• Modernizing the Public Assistance Act
• Targeting benefits to children
• Improving the benefit delivery system
• Introducing case management and appeals mechanisms
• Expanding the staff complement

AUDIT OBJECTIVES AND CRITERIA

Nine audit objectives related to the four significant areas were identified for the Division of Human Services and Family Affairs audit. These objectives were to determine whether:

Eligibility Determination

• The Division has established and approved criteria for selecting beneficiaries, and whether those criteria are followed.
• The eligibility criteria are consistent with programme goals.
• The Division has criteria for prioritizing eligible recipients.
• Only eligible individuals receive authorized assistance.
• There are systems in place and functioning to reassess recipients.

Cash Management

• The system for recording, monitoring, reporting, safeguarding, and authorizing cash payments for welfare recipients is functioning as intended.

Information Management

• The Division has an information management system for gathering, storing, and retrieving information.
• The information system produces timely and reliable reports which meet management needs.

Program Oversight

• The framework for programme oversight provides for monitoring and evaluation of programme performance, and is consistent with legislation.
There were 16 audit criteria associated with our audit objectives. These criteria were used to assess the Ministry’s performance in each of the four areas. Management agreed to the suitability of our audit criteria as reasonable standards for performance.

Our audit criteria are listed at Appendix A.

AUDIT SCOPE AND APPROACH

This audit looked at the administration of cash payments made to needy individuals under the Ministry’s Public Assistance Programme. Four specific activities were identified for audit.

1. Eligibility determination – the basis on which programme eligibility is determined, including clarity of the criteria and consistency of application. We did not audit the determination of benefit entitlement; that is, the cash benefit that an eligible applicant is entitled to receive.

2. Cash management – the controls over safeguarding of cash and for recording and reporting cash payments to beneficiaries.

3. Information management – the collection, storage, and retrieval of programme data, including information on programme applicants and beneficiaries.

4. Programme oversight – the mechanisms to monitor and evaluate programme performance.

The audit covered four years of programme operations from April 2006 to March 2010. A purposeful selection of 106 applicants who became eligible for benefits during the three years 2006-07 to 2008-09 was chosen for testing.

The audit was substantially completed by December 2010.

AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our audit findings are presented for each of the four programme activities that we examined. We include recommendations for improvement where significant deficiencies were identified.

Eligibility Determination
The Public Assistance Act relates to the aiding of needy individuals and the administration of public assistance. The Act defines a needy person as, ‘any and every person who by reason of infancy, old age, illness, disease, bodily infirmity or mental incapacity is unable to maintain himself or herself’.

- **Eligibility criteria were not clearly defined**

The Public Assistance Act does not contain any criteria or means by which a needy person can be evaluated and an eligibility determination made. The Division makes this determination based on its assessment of an applicant’s economic, social, and medical circumstances carried out by one of the Division’s welfare officers.

In 2008, the Ministry issued a Policy and Operations Manual for the Assessment and Payment of Public Assistance, Ageing and Social Protection Services.

The introduction to the Manual states that is was intended to guide the day-to-day delivery of services and that it described the various services available and the criteria for eligibility. We found that these criteria were described only in terms of the categories of individuals who may be eligible; for example, a lone person, a couple, or parents and children.

Welfare officers use several forms to document their assessment and to reach a determination on eligibility. The three main forms used are the Public Assistance Intake Form, Home Visit Report, and the SOAP Note. The latter form includes the applicant’s story and the welfare officer’s observations, assessment, and plan of action. The completion of these forms leads to a recommendation by the welfare officer concerning an applicant’s eligibility for public assistance benefits and, if recommended for benefits, the period for which benefits should be paid. The Division Director is responsible for approving welfare officers’ recommendations.

These assessment forms do not make the eligibility criteria explicit. The forms simply record an applicant’s economic and medical circumstances and living conditions. There is no quantitative rating of an applicant’s circumstances, so the welfare officer reaches a decision based on experience and professional judgement.

We examined the intake and assessment forms for 106 individuals determined by the Division to be eligible for benefits between April 2006 and March 2009. We found that the Division is defining a needy person
more broadly than the wording in the Act. For example, we found that being unemployed, being a single mother with children, and the passing away of a spouse were also used as conditions for being considered needy and therefore eligible for public assistance.

- **Programme goals and objectives were not established**

Beyond the Act’s broad mandate of aiding needy persons and the Ministry’s broad socio-economic objectives, we found no statement of strategic direction and goals for the public assistance programme. Strategic goals could guide development of more explicit eligibility criteria and aid in better targeting of benefits.

Such goals would also inform the development of programme performance indicators, data collection, and evaluation of programme outcomes. For example, quantified strategic goals related to reducing poverty levels would allow for the evaluation of program effectiveness. In turn, evaluation results could lead to changes in benefit categories or amounts.

- **Eligibility determination was inconsistent**

Without clearly defined criteria, there is a risk that eligibility determinations will be inconsistent. Welfare officers may reach different eligibility decisions for individuals with similar circumstances. The result would be that programme benefits may not be distributed fairly.

We requested a list of the applicants who had been rejected during the audit period. Our intention was to verify that the basis for rejection was in keeping with the eligibility criteria as implied in the assessment forms, and that they were consistently applied.

The Division was not able to provide such a list as there is no central system for recording and retrieving rejected applications. The Division was also not able to provide us with copies of rejection letters issued during the audit period.

Welfare officers, however, kept their own records of rejected applicants and we were able to obtain 17 of these from one officer.

The records contained applications and assessment forms and we were able to compare the circumstances of these individuals to those files selected from applicants who were approved. We found instances where applicants with similar circumstances received different results.
Based on these findings, we believe that approval and rejection decisions were not made consistently or in accordance with the assessment results.

- **No mechanism for individuals to appeal eligibility decisions**

Given the risk that the assessment tools may be inconsistently applied, it is important that individuals whose applications are rejected are informed of the reasons for the decision and be given an opportunity to appeal.

The *Public Assistance Act* and the Division’s Policy and Operations Manual make no reference to an appeal mechanism. We found that the form letter sent to individuals who had not been approved for benefits did not detail the reasons for the decision or the availability of an appeal process or other recourse mechanism.

- **Recipient records were not complete**

In the review of recipient files we found instances where the amount to be paid and the duration of benefits were not documented on the intake form. In addition, there were instances where the Director’s comments and signature were not recorded. As a result, we could not verify that the amounts shown on the pay list and the period of payment were correct.

When the approved period of assistance has expired, welfare officers are to reassess the recipient for continuing eligibility and to confirm that they are receiving the correct benefit amount. As well, the Policy and Operations Manual requires a review of all individuals on the public assistance list twice a year.

The purpose of this review is to determine whether the period of assistance should be extended or terminated, as there are a number of circumstances that could lead to termination of benefits.

In our testing of recipient files, we found no recorded evidence of reassessment or review. The reason given was a lack of staff to conduct this work, as welfare officers were busy with assessing eligibility and entitlement, maintaining payment lists, and paying the monthly benefits.

The deficiencies can lead to individuals receiving benefits for periods for which they are not eligible, and in amounts for which they are not entitled.

We found that a committee appointed by Cabinet completed a review of public assistance recipients in August 2009. The committee report included, for decision by Cabinet, a list of eligible individuals to be added to the public
assistance list and a list of recipients to be deleted from the list because they had died.

Recommendations

● *Management should develop strategic goals for the public assistance programme consistent with the Public Assistance Act, and explicit, measurable eligibility criteria consistent with those goals.*

● *Management should apply the new eligibility criteria on an accurate and consistent basis, and document and retain complete records of all decisions.*

● *Management should reassess all recipients for continuing eligibility for and entitlement to benefits, as stipulated in its Policy and Operations Manual.*

● *Management should implement an independent appeal mechanism for applicants who feel they have been treated unfairly.*

Cash Management

Good cash management practices are important at both the public assistance recipient level and at the organizational level where programme expenditures are recorded, reconciled, and reported.

● *Security of cash was compromised*

During the period audited, roughly 2,500 eligible individuals received monthly cash allowances paid in eight regions across the country. The Government increased the monthly allowances in August 2008 to range from $135 to $300 based on the number of individuals in the household.

The cash required to meet monthly pay lists is requisitioned and delivered to payment locations under police escort. We witnessed the payment of public assistance in March 2010 at the Castries City Hall store room. A police officer was present during this time and three Division welfare officers participated in the payment process.

However, we observed that the receipt and issue of goods by the Castries City Council continued, while the Division made the cash payments to beneficiaries. This activity and the presence of additional employees in the room compromised the security of the cash.
● **Monthly cash payments were accounted for and recorded**

During our observation of payment of cash at the Castries City Hall and through our examination of monthly pay lists, we found that monthly payments to individuals were accounted for and properly recorded. Payments were made to individuals on the presentation of a beneficiary payment card, national identification card, and medical book.

Paymasters made a note of the payment and date next to each recipient’s name on the public assistance list. The record of payments was balanced to cash on hand at the end of each day.

● **Payments to individuals acting for recipients were not well controlled**

There is a process whereby an individual can collect on behalf of a beneficiary. The individual is to present a letter of authorization from the recipient, the recipient’s pay card, medical book, and national identification card, as well as his or her own national identification card.

During our observation at Castries City Hall, we found the required documents were presented except for the letter of authorization. Welfare officers disbursed the payment to individuals based on their personal knowledge of the case and familiarity with the individual receiving the payment. We observed that the name of the person receiving the payment was written on the pay list. This practice was confirmed in our review of other monthly pay lists.

The risk is the reliance on the welfare officers’ familiarity with the situation. New staff would not have the same knowledge and payments could be made to individuals who are not authorized to receive them. As a result, the rightful recipients would not receive monies to which they are entitled.

● **Recording and reporting of payments were inaccurate and incomplete**

For the three years tested, we found significant variances between the public assistance expenditure figures reported by the Ministry and those reported by the Accountant General.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Accountant General</th>
<th>Variance</th>
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<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>$3.213 m.</td>
<td>$3.253 m.</td>
<td>$ .040 m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>$3.312 m.</td>
<td>$2.632 m.</td>
<td>&lt;$ .680 m.&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>$4.458 m.</td>
<td>$4.632 m.</td>
<td>$ .174 m.</td>
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We found, for example, that for the Castries region in 2007-08, expenditure journals totalling $378,285 were not posted to the Accountant General’s accounts. Due to a lack of documentation, we were not able to reconcile the differences between these accounts. We also found 10 imprest accounts in 2008 and 2009 with balances totalling $1.5 million, indicating that these accounts were not retired at the end of the year and that expenditure figures were misstated.

As a result, we were not able to verify the amount of public assistance paid in the period tested.

**Recommendations**

- **Management should implement controls to safeguard cash at all times.** 
  Cash should be balanced to receipt and disbursement records on a daily basis and both cash balances and reconciling statements should be verified by a second officer.

- **Management should verify all required documents before disbursing cash to individuals receiving payment on behalf of a recipient.**

- **Management should prepare complete and accurate monthly and yearly records and reports for public assistance expenditures, including the full retirement of imprest accounts.**

**Information Management**

Information management is essential for the efficient and effective administration of the public assistance programme. The Division must be able to collect, store, retrieve, and protect its personal, financial, and performance information.

- **Individual case files were not maintained**

The Division’s Policy and Operations Manual requires a case file to be established for each recipient of public assistance. We found that such files were not maintained. Instead, the intake and assessment forms were stapled together and filed by recipient number together with forms for other recipients.

We found deficiencies in the 106 recipient records that we examined.

- Intake forms were not fully completed.
• 12 percent did not contain the SOAP assessment form.
• 85 percent did not contain a home visit report (only required from 2008-09).
• There were no letters of approval or disapproval of benefits.

These incomplete recipient records raised doubts as to the validity and reliability of required information. In addition, they called into question the accuracy and consistency of individual eligibility and entitlement decisions as outlined in the report section, Eligibility Determination.

As noted, there were no centrally maintained records of applicants who were not approved for public assistance benefits. This deficiency further weakened the Division’s ability to support its benefit decisions.

- **Poor security over personal information**

Information collected from individuals applying for public assistance includes economic, social, and medical information. This sensitive personal information should be carefully secured and only available to Division and Ministry staff on a strict need-to-know basis.

There was no Division employee specifically responsible for the safe storage of applicants’ and recipients’ personal information. We found individuals’ personal information stored in unlocked filing cabinets and on open shelves. As a result, this information might be easily lost, accessed by unauthorized employees, or stolen. Consequently, the risk of error and fraud was heightened.

- **Monthly programme reporting was incomplete and inconsistent**

Welfare officers are to prepare monthly reports on the number and nature of cases, services provided, and meetings and training attended. We requested the monthly reports for the period audited. Of the 144 reports that should have been submitted during that time, we were given 10 reports or 7 percent of the total. Officials could not account for the missing reports.

For the 10 reports available, we found that the number of beneficiaries was included, but their gender and age were not. The quarterly reports were also incomplete.

We found that there was little demand for performance information on the public assistance programme from internal and external stakeholders. As a result, there was little incentive for officers to give priority to this activity.
Recommendations

- **Management should maintain individual case files for all applicants for public assistance, both those approved and disapproved for benefits. These files should contain all application and assessment/reassessment forms and information, as well as copies of approval and disapproval letters sent to applicants.**

- **Management should safeguard applicants’ and beneficiaries’ personal information at all times, making it available to Division staff and others only on a need-to-know basis.**

- **Management should develop and implement a computerized database of recipient and beneficiary information. All public assistance recipients should have a unique programme number such as their national identification number. The data base should contain information on beneficiaries such as name, age, gender, and relationship to the recipient.**

- **Management should, as complete and accurate data becomes easily accessible, prepare monthly performance reports indicating the number of recipients and beneficiaries, their characteristics, and the amounts paid.**

Programme Oversight

Program oversight is an important part of programme management. It monitors and evaluates program performance and confirms that planned programme objectives and outcomes are achieved.

- **National Assistance Board was not established**

The Public Assistance Act requires that a National Assistance Board be established to assist and advise the Minister on all matters pertaining to public assistance. Specific duties include administering and controlling all public monies appropriated for public assistance. The Operations and Policy Manual details the operation of the Board including membership, terms of appointment, remuneration, conduct of meetings, biannual review of recipients, and reporting.

The Act and Manual set out a very operational role for the Board, rather than one of oversight. As described, the Board would receive and assess applications, and biannually review the public assistance list.
We found that the National Assistance Board was never established, although we could not determine the reason. A committee appointed by Cabinet to review public assistance recipients recommended in its 2009 report that the Minister establish the Board. However, we noted that the 2009 United Nations/World Bank consultancy report did not recommend implementation of this provision of the Act.

● **No performance indicators to measure programme performance**

We found there were no performance indicators to measure and evaluate the performance of the public assistance programme. Examples of indicators that could be established include:

- number of individuals receiving benefits
- number of new individuals approved for benefits
- number of individuals whose benefits expired or were terminated
- number of individuals not approved for benefits
- average number of days to process an application

Indicators such as these could assist management in managing programme performance and evaluating the programme’s efficiency and effectiveness.

● **Programme monitoring and evaluation were not taking place**

The Ministry’s Corporate Planning Unit is responsible for assisting managers with the development of their programmes and plans, and with the design of systems for monitoring and evaluation. However, the primary responsibility for implementing monitoring and evaluation activities rests with programme management.

We found that there was no monitoring and evaluation of the public assistance programme, nor had performance indicators been established. We also found, as reported under Information Management, that monthly and quarterly reporting of beneficiary information were incomplete and inconsistent.

The result was that the performance and effectiveness of the public assistance programme were not being measured and reported. Without this information it was not possible for Ministry officials and Parliament to hold Division managers accountable for their management of the public assistance programme.
Recommendations

- Management should develop and implement indicators and targets to measure performance of the public assistance programme.

- Management should implement ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the public assistance programme to assess achievement of efficiency and effectiveness objectives.

- Management should implement oversight mechanisms to provide objective review of programme plans, operations, and outcomes.

AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

Eligibility Determination

We concluded that financial benefits were paid to individuals who did not qualify under the Public Assistance Act’s definition of needy individuals. The Division did not have clear and explicit criteria for determining eligibility for public assistance benefits. Eligibility decisions were subjective and were made based on the welfare officers’ experience and professional judgement.

Decisions to approve or reject an applicant for benefits were not consistently made in accordance with the assessment results. Applicants had no recourse mechanism available to them if they felt they had been treated unfairly.

The Division did not reassess eligibility as required to determine whether benefits should be extended or terminated.

We concluded that individuals may have received benefits for periods for which they were not eligible and in amounts for which they were not entitled.

Cash Management

We concluded that monthly cash payments to recipients were accounted for and recorded. The handling and safeguarding of cash, however, were not well controlled.

Payments to individuals acting on behalf of recipients were not well controlled. These individuals did not present a letter of authorization from...
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the recipient and, as a result, the rightful recipient may not have received the payment to which he/she was entitled.

We concluded that the recording and reporting of monthly and annual expenditures by the Ministry and Accountant General’s Department were not accurate and complete. We were not able to verify the amount of public assistance paid in the period tested.

Information Management

We concluded that practices for the collection, storage, retrieval, and protection of the public assistance programme’s personal, financial, and performance information did not comply with the requirements of the Division’s Policy and Operations Manual.

Recipient records were incomplete and the validity and reliability of this information were uncertain. Without complete records for all applicants, the accuracy and consistency of eligibility and entitlement decisions could not be established.

We concluded that monthly and quarterly programme reports were incomplete and unreliable. Without this information, programme performance could not be monitored. We concluded, however, that there was little demand for such information from senior management and other stakeholders.

Programme Oversight

We found that the National Assistance Board required by the Public Assistance Act was never established. Although the Board was intended to provide some oversight of the public assistance programme, it was also to have an operational role in programme delivery.

There were no performance indicators for the public assistance programme, and complete and reliable programme data was not collected. There was no programme monitoring and evaluation function.

We concluded that the performance and effectiveness of the public assistance programme were not being measured and reported. Without this information it was not possible for Ministry officials and Parliament to hold the Division accountable for its management of the public assistance programme.
APPENDIX A – Audit Criteria

The following 16 audit criteria were used as standards against which we assessed the Ministry’s performance in four significant areas of operation. The results of this work allowed us to conclude against our audit objectives.

Eligibility Determination

- There should be established and approved criteria for selecting beneficiaries.
- There should be eligibility criteria that are consistent with programme goals.
- There should be systems in place to prioritize recipients.
- Only eligible individuals should receive authorized assistance.
- There should be a reassessment process to ascertain the eligibility of existing beneficiaries, and it should be followed.

Cash Management

- There should be systems and procedures in place for the recording, safeguarding, and reporting of receipts and disbursements.
- There should be a documented authorization process for individuals receiving payments on behalf of beneficiaries, and this process should be followed.
- The Division should maintain accurate, complete, and timely records and accounts.
- The Division should adhere to the procedures for the handling of cash that are stipulated in the Financial Regulations.
- The Division should confirm that the beneficiary exists and is benefiting from public assistance.

Information Management

- The Division should have an information management system for gathering, storing, and retrieving information.
- The Division should have an information system that produces timely and reliable reports that meet management needs.

Programme Oversight

- There should be approved policies for programme oversight.
- Welfare operations should be consistent with governing legislation.
- There should be mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate programme performance.
- Oversight should entail feedback, advice, and support.