

A helping hand to protect vulnerable homes from hurricanes

Resilience Cayman launches new programme

By Reshma Ragoonath - July 6, 2023

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A month into the Atlantic hurricane season, the Resilience Cayman charity is helping Cayman's vulnerable get their homes storm-ready.

"We're talking mould on the walls, babies on mattresses that have water leaking down on them, so it is quite serious," Resilience Cayman director Jan Gupta told the *Cayman Compass*.

"It's a health and safety issue for many families who don't really have anywhere else to go. It's not as easy as to just go off and rent somewhere else, with the cost of rents."

West Bay resident Waldo Hilton Parchment is one of those in need of a helping hand to have his home ready in case a hurricane hits.



West Bay resident Waldo Hilton Parchment and Resilience Cayman director Jan Gupta in front of one of the old windows at Parchment's home that needs to be replaced. – Photo: Reshma Ragoonath

Speaking with the *Compass* recently at his home, Parchment expressed hope that his pleas for help are being heard and his family will be dry this hurricane season.

“It will give me more assurance that the windows and [repairs] they do [will make my home] semi-protected until I put my shutters on,” he said.

His home, which urgently needs repairs of its windows and roof, is one of at least 30 residences set to benefit from the new hurricane-preparedness programme which is being funded through a \$500,000 donation from the **R3 Cayman Foundation**, Gupta said.

However, Gupta said, there is a pressing need in the community and she is hopeful more people will step forward with donations to protect those who need the help.

She said the charity needs donations and materials. She added that there is a need for doors, windows and roofing materials especially.

“Anything will help, as well as hands on deck. If there are contractors who would want to adopt a home... and be able to provide a crew to do the repairs, that’s something that we would definitely welcome,” she said.

Parchment’s home, like many others listed for hurricane-preparedness repairs, requires much more work, but Gupta said, for now, the priority is protection from any storms that may come this way.



This image shows a section of Parchment's damaged roof and windows that have been earmarked for repairs. – Photo: Reshma Ragoonath

“In the interest of trying to make sure, at a minimum, that that family in that home was safe and dry, we redefined the scope of work with the private [donation] portion of the programme to be more geared towards roof repairs and windows and doors and structural damage, because, in some cases, we actually had homes that had an exterior wall that was collapsing,” she explained.

She said, in cases like Parchment's, homeowners are being advised that storm-preparation repairs will be taken care of immediately so homes are ready for the hurricane season.

“We realise that other repairs are needed as well, but they're not as high a priority... [S]hould funding become available in the future, we will revisit,” she said, adding that she is hoping for more financial support to be able to assist.

Parchment said he would like government to support the programme, so he can have his electrical wiring, which dates from 1973, upgraded. He added that he doesn't have enough power “to put in air conditioning in the house”.

He added that upgrading his wiring would enable him to do a lot of the other interior work himself, as he constructed his home from the ground up with his own two hands.

But he acknowledged that he needs help with the larger repairs at the house, so “I would like graciously to ask that they look into the major needs, and maybe a little further than that, make sure that local people get jobs so that they can help themselves”.

Shifting gears

Resilience Cayman, which was established during the pandemic to assist local families struggling as borders closed, shifted gears last year to provide home-repair assistance to vulnerable families in the community, with help from government.

That initiative began in February 2022, with **339 homes identified for assistance**. However, Gupta said, inspections of some of those homes showed the scale of the work needed was beyond what was initially envisioned, and quickly the \$1.5 million grant from the Social Development Ministry was exhausted.



Gupta pictured with R3 executives Tommy Ebanks (left), Woody Foster and former R3 chairman Bryan Hunter (second from left). – Photo: Supplied

By the end of last year, 209 of those homes were repaired under the original initiative, but with the arrival of Hurricane Ian last year, which compounded **damage already caused by Tropical Grace** in 2021, some of the homes in the pipeline for repairs had to be bumped up the queue.

“What’s key about this [programme] is that it’s all spread out over the island, so it isn’t just one district or one neighbourhood that we focus on. We go looking at the extent of the damage in the homes and the personal situation for that family. That’s really how we’re prioritising it. We have a certain percentage that were done in East End, in Bodden Town, West Bay and George Town,” Gupta said.

The focus for the general home-repair programme right now, she said, are homes in East End and North Side.

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