

## **Belize and the Caribbean Public Health Agency Launches Tourism and Health Program**

*Belmopan. October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016.* The Ministries of Health and Tourism in collaboration with the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) are pleased to announce the launch of a national initiative to enhance the health and well-being of its visitors and locals while promoting sustainable and profitable tourism. The launch ceremony was held at the Radisson Hotel on the 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2016. The launch was preceded by a week of activities that included training for hotel operators and public health inspectors in the country.

Belize is one of six Caribbean countries that will benefit from this project funded by a grant from the Inter-American Development Bank. It will be implemented from 2016-2018 by CARPHA through its regional tourism and health program, in collaboration with Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) and Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) along with Private-Public Teams in each country. The Regional Project Steering Committee will comprise of CARPHA, IDB, Caribbean Tourism Organization, Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association, the Chief Medical Officers or the Permanent Secretaries of Tourism in each country.

The Caribbean tourism industry is facing Health, Safety and Environmental Sanitation (HSE) threats resulting in disease outbreaks which has contributed to a decline in tourist arrivals. Inadequate health response systems, the absence of standards and certification and also the lack of training has been identified as the contributing factors to the food safety and environmental sanitation issues in the region leading to a potential tourism crisis.

The “Regional Tourism Health Information, Monitoring and Response System and Standards to Enhance Sustainable Tourism Project’s” primary objective is to see fewer, less costly outbreaks and other negative public health events occurring in the tourism industry, promoting a healthier, safer, more reputable Caribbean tourism product on the global stage and for both visitors and locals, as well as to strengthen regional safety and security. The Project also aims at strengthening human resource capacity and skills in health, food safety, and environmental management and promote public-private sector intersectoral partnerships at national and regional levels in support of HSE tourism threats. By enhancing sustainable tourism, the results will include promoting economic development, poverty eradication and the quality of life for Belizeans.

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