

BARBADOS HEALTH MINISTRY ANNOUNCES ESTABLISHMENT OF CLIMATE CHANGE UNIT



The government of Barbados has established a climate change unit within its Ministry of Health as part of a commitment to the United Nations' Global Environmental Facility project.

Health Minister Donville Inniss announced the move today, commending the efforts of the Pan American Health Organization and the United Nations Development Program.

"The government of Barbados considers this project to be important to the health and well-being of its citizens in light of the fact that climate change is considered to be the biggest threat that humans will face in the 21st century and, particularly for us in Barbados, a small island developing state.

Part of the GEF project entails improving practices of rainwater storage, which may help combat Barbados' rate of dengue fever, which is one of the highest in the Americas.

The GEF's global project aims to increase the capacity of health systems to respond to long-term health risks related to climate change. Barbados is one of seven countries selected for the program, which is a joint operation of the World Health Organization and the United Nations Development Program. Bhutan, China, Fiji, Jordan, Kenya and Uzbekistan are the other participants. Barbados was chosen in large part due to the fact that a high proportion of its population lives along the coastline.

According to Michelle Gyles-McDonnough, Barbados' resident representative of the UNDP for the Eastern Caribbean, climate change will interact with human health in a number of ways, and disproportionately affect those in poor countries.

"Ill health is one of the most powerful forces holding back the human development potential of poor households and poor countries," she said. "One obvious danger is that climate change will further adversely impact their well-being, thereby exacerbating already-extreme global inequalities in health and public health."

—Barbados Information Service

Article can be found:

<http://www.caribjournal.com/2011/07/13/barbados-creates-climate-change-health-unit/>