



THE AGENCY FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION

P.O Box 608, Kingstown, St Vincent and The Grenadines

Tel: (784) 456-1600, Fax (784) 456-2430

Email: apisvg2023@gmail.com

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CARPHA Collaborates with SVG for Healthier, Safer Tourism & Advanced Food Safety Training

St. Vincent and the Grenadines' Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment (MOHWE) together with the Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Sustainable Development and Culture (MOT) welcomes the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) and its Regional Tourism and Health Program (THP) for their week-long mission.

The CARPHA team, led by Dr. Lisa Indar, Director of Surveillance, Disease Prevention and Control and Head of the THP will be collaborating with both the health and tourism sectors to (i) officially launch the St. Vincent and the Grenadines' Tourism and Health Program, (ii) strengthen visitor-based surveillance and response, and (iii) build food safety capacity and strengthen foodborne disease surveillance. The enhancement of these fundamental pillars, through the integration of health and tourism via the THP program, will lead to healthier, safer tourism for St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG).

On Monday, November 27th, the CARPHA team began Day 1 of their mission engaging in a high-level ministerial meeting with the Hon. St. Clair Prince, Minister of Health, Wellness and the Environment, Dr. Simone Keizer Beache, Chief Medical Officer, MOHWE, Dr. Roger Duncan, Medical Officer of Health, MOHWE, Ms. Avaneil DaSilva, Acting CEO, SVG Tourism Authority, Mrs. Bianca Porter, Chairperson, SVG Tourism Authority and Ms. Kim Halbich, President, of the SVG Hotel and Tourism Authority.

The SVG-THP Steering Committee Meeting followed thereafter with the MOHWE surveillance team, and additional tourism stakeholders, during which a tagline was confirmed; "Tourism and Health working together to keep all safe."

The Hon. St. Clair Prince emphasized that, “Health is especially important for tourism in St. Vincent and the Grenadines as it is one country with many islands with porous borders”, thus making it susceptible to the spread of diseases.

The high-level discussion reiterated the significance of integrating health as a part of tourism and the crucial need for the THP in SVG, especially given its high dependence on tourism and hosting of the upcoming ICC Men’s T20 Cricket World Cup.

The CARPHA team, in conjunction with both tourism and health divisions, will be facilitating the following activities, culminating on December 1st, 2023:

- Launch of the SVG Tourism and Health Program
- Trainings in Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases for the Hospitality Sector, Regional Guidelines and THP’s land-based surveillance system, Tourism and Health Information System (THiS)
- Expansion and strengthening of THP’s land-based and sea-based surveillance systems
- Advanced Food Safety training and certification
- Distribution of the Hospitality Health, Safety and Environmental Sanitation Standards
- Strengthening of SVG’s outbreak investigation and food safety capacity
- Update of the integrated foodborne diseases national action plan, and
- Completion of THP and foodborne disease Communicable Disease Assessments.

SVG and CARPHA -THP initiated discussions on the establishment of the THP in 2021.

Following the completion of this current CARPHA - THP mission, SVG would be the second country in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to launch the THP, and have a cohort trained in the Advanced Food Safety training.

The first of its kind, Regional Tourism and Health Program, addresses the HSE threats to tourism with the aim of strengthening countries capacity to prepare and respond to public health threats. This, in turn, enhances the health and safety of visitors and locals, and improves the quality,

competitiveness and resilience of Caribbean tourism. Implementing countries have enhanced capacity to mitigate against HSE threats, like COVID-19, to sustainable tourism.

Both SVG and CARPHA -THP will continue to work toward the further integration of health and tourism, thus promoting the healthier, safer tourism of SVG for both their local and tourist population - “Tourism and Health working together to keep all safe.”