

## BARBADOS CHOSEN FOR CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECT

**BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Friday July 8, 2011** - Barbados is the only country in the Western Hemisphere chosen to participate in a global project aimed at increasing the capacity of seven countries "to respond to climate-sensitive health risks".

Known as the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Project on Piloting Climate Change Adaptation to Protect Human Health, it is slated to kick off next Wednesday, July 13 with a launch and workshop jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Health, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organisation/Pan American Health Organisation (WHO/PAHO).

The project recognises that climate change, including climate variability, has multiple influences on human health.

"Both direct and indirect impacts can be expected including alterations in the geographic range and intensity of transmission of vectors, such as ticks and mosquitoes. It can also result in rodent borne diseases and food- and waterborne diseases, changes in the prevalence of diseases associated with air pollutants and aeroallergens," said a government statement.

Changes in climate can alter or disrupt natural systems, making it possible for disease to spread or emerge in areas where they have been limited or not existed for years. It can also have the effect of making diseases disappear through making areas less hospitable to the vector or the pathogen.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the phenomenon may already be causing over 150,000 deaths per year.

Despite the increasing understanding of health risks associated with climate change, the WHO says, there has been limited implementation of strategies, policies and measures to protect the health of the most vulnerable populations. It says one reason for this may be that there has been relatively recent appreciation of the links between climate change and health.

Six other countries - Bhutan, China, Fiji, Jordan, Kenya and Uzbekistan - were selected along with Barbados to maximise the opportunities for learning internationally relevant lessons to increase adaptive capacity of the public health community.

The selection process identified those countries which exhibited evidence of significant population vulnerability to climate change; heightened awareness of health risks from climate change; strong commitment to national agencies, WHO and (United Nations Development Programme country offices; and at least basic national capacity to respond.

While Barbados and Fiji were recognised as small island states with high proportions of their population living on coastlines, the water-stressed nature of Barbados also singled it out for selection.

The emphasis of the global project is water scarcity and the impact that it will have on the health of the population, and the adaptation measures which will be implemented.

Article can be found:

[http://www.caribbean360.com/index.php/news/barbados\\_news/476432.html](http://www.caribbean360.com/index.php/news/barbados_news/476432.html)