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Ref: /2021

04.08.2021

Press Release

Psychosocial Support and Gender Violence Awareness Major Part of Post Eruption Recovery Efforts

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of National Mobilization, Social Development, the Family, Gender Affairs, Youth Affairs, Persons with Disabilities, Cooperatives, Community Development and Housing and Informal Human Settlement, Catherine Defreitas has said that the eruptions of the La Soufriere volcano have significantly increased the social vulnerability in St Vincent and the Grenadines especially among the displaced population.

The PS who was at the time addressing a press conference being hosted by her ministry said “The Ministry has not only been involved in distributing food and supplies to the displaced people especially those in private homes but it has also invested heavily in providing psychosocial support interventions to displaced people and communities that were impacted by the volcanic eruptions with direct support from the United Nations Emergency Children Fund (UNICEF), UN Women, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the SVG Red Cross Association”, Defreitas said.

She also noted that evacuees were provided with hygiene protection kits, food hampers and personal protection equipment.

The PS pointed out that the Child Development Division in collaboration with the Ministries of Health and Education, the SVG Red Cross Association and IsraAID implemented the return to Happiness Program and child friendly spaces within shelters and the communities.

“These initiatives were undertaken to provide safe spaces in emergency shelters and to help support and protect children in the restoration of normalcy to those whose lives were disrupted”, the permanent secretary said.

She noted that the Gender Affairs Division is currently conducting gender based violence awareness within the emergency shelters to sensitize evacuees and shelter managers on issues of domestic violence and the support systems available. This awareness drive in shelters she emphasized is being complemented by community sensitization sessions with the SVG Red Cross Association that targets those evacuees in private shelters. She noted that the communities of Bequia, Kingstown and Layou are currently engaged and other communities will be targeted in the upcoming months.

Defrietas noted that the Ministry of National Mobilization with direct support from UNICEF and other ministries brought the Goodness Tours to St Vincent and the Grenadines between May and July during which therapeutic art sessions were undertaken with one hundred and ten (110) children in public shelters and communities. She noted that the tour painted six large murals, one each at the Georgetown Community Center, North Union Secondary School, Troumaca Government School, Petit Bordel, Layou Waterfront and at NEMOs headquarters. She said “these murals received much attention as extra effort was made to ensure that they captured and reflected the culture and essence of the communities.

PS Defreitas, commended the staff of the ministry who have worked and are still working tirelessly since the April 2021 eruptions of La Soufriere. She also thanked the donors and those in the diaspora for contributing effortlessly to the relief effort.

The press conference took place yesterday August 3rd at the Ministry of Housing conference room.