FEMALE SPORTS DIPLOMACY & CHILD SAFEGUARDING PROGRAMME

Move to register local coaches to better protect youth

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 21 - SAINT LUCIA, Castries: A new child safeguarding and public education programme, where UK sports personalities and graduates will work closely with Eastern Caribbean coaches and youth mentors was officially launched on Wednesday by new British Resident Commissioner Mrs. Annie McGee.

The Female Sports Diplomacy & Child Safeguarding (FemDip) programme will work in St. Lucia and neighbouring St. Vincent and Grenada on child safeguarding issues and will encourage more young women to participate in physical activity. The programme run by the Sacred Sports Foundation is supported by FIFA’s Football for Hope Initiative and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and will seek to identify best practice in communities working directly with affected local youth, peer mentors and coaches to help re-educate and register coaches and officials as child safe mentors.

“We are delighted to be able to assist youth in the three territories and get this important programme underway,” said Mrs McGee, the Resident Commissioner speaking at the launch at Rodney Bay’s Palm Haven Hotel on Wednesday morning. “This programme will make it safer for children to play and do the things they love as well as educate coaches and mentors on best child safeguarding practices.”

The programme’s two key objectives are focusing on child centred rights development and in the process improving child safeguarding practices and public diplomacy, where an advocacy campaign will educate on the need for safe spaces to play and include interventions from well-known UK sports personalities in a bid to strengthen links between the UK, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenada.

Working in local communities, the programme will extend existing efforts to reach the most vulnerable segment of the population. It will also establish one of the region’s first child safeguarding registration programmes, providing training in child safeguarding methods and registration of 45 coaches/youth mentors, the first programme of its kind in the Eastern Caribbean.

“We must ensure the best possible environment for our children when they are outside of school and playing on our fields and courts,” said Nova Alexander, Executive Director of Sacred Sports Foundation. “This programme is an important step in the right direction to ensuring that our coaches and mentors understand the role they have in creating a safe and secure space for our kids to play.”

Training efforts began earlier this month with a train the trainers’ workshop in St. Lucia, designed to help increase the number of skilled female coaches/youth mentors and young girls equipped with effective tools to tackle child safeguarding issues. Substantial health and education benefits are expected to accrue from the subsequent increase in participation in sport, and increased number of girls that will continue to play sport as they get older. The programme will improve coaches and youth understanding of basic child rights and an improved ability to communicate and handle conflict situations.