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PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Economic Development and the MIDH Sign MOA for Rural Roads Upgrade

Belmopan. August 25, 2022. 4:15 p.m.

Today, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) was signed between the Ministry of Economic Development (MED) and the Ministry Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH) for the implementation of component two of the Resilient Rural Belize (RRB) program.

The purpose of the MOA is to enhance 4.3 miles of the Valley of Peace Road in the Cayo District, 3 miles of the Trio Village Road in the Toledo District, and 3.7 miles of the San Carlos Road in the Orange Walk District.

In November of 2018, the Government of Belize (GOB) entered into an agreement with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) for a loan of BZ\$16,000,000 and with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for a loan of BZ\$4,829,600 and a grant of BZ\$12,170,400. In addition, there were counterpart contributions from the program beneficiaries of BZ\$1,644,800 and GOB of BZ\$6,360,000, all totaling BZ\$40,000,000 towards the implementation of the RRB program over six years ending in 2024.

The first component of the RRB is to build the resilience of small farmers' cooperatives to climate change by adopting climate-resilient practices, increasing and diversifying production and facilitating their access to commercial market chains. The second component of the RRB program looks at rehabilitation and provisions of agricultural feeder roads, drainage and irrigation in rural communities, while the third component addresses institutional strengthening of RRB partners such as the Department of Cooperatives.

The program, which is operating in all six districts, is expected to reach a total of 6,000 households or approximately 30,000 persons, with importance placed on women in the rural economy. Beneficiaries include:

1. Poor and vulnerable rural families;
2. Farming cooperatives of less than 25 acres; and
3. Institutional partners such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Rural Transformation and the MIDH.

The GOB reports progress under the RRB with the upgrade of the Nago Bank Road in the Belize District, which is slated to be completed in October 2022. The enhancement of the Valley of Peace Road will commence in November 2022 and both the Trio and the San Carlos roads in 2023.

The MOA was signed by Dr. Osmond Martinez, CEO for MED, and the Mr. Victor Espat, CEO for MIDH. Present at the signing were Dr. Geraldo Flowers, RRB Programme Manager, and Mr. Irving Thimbriel, MIDH Senior Executive Engineer.

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