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PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Economic Development Signs FPIC Agreement with Leaders in Santa Rosa Village

Belmopan. November 29, 2022.

On November 27, 2022, eligible residents of Santa Rosa Village in the Stann Creek District gave their written “YES” to the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) Agreement and the Indigenous Peoples Plan (IPP). The agreement indicates that Santa Rosa Village has given its consent for the Resilient Rural Belize (RRB) Programme to commence work in the community.

For any activity to be implemented in areas where indigenous people are present, such as Santa Rosa Village, the RRB Programme has to implement the legally required process of the FPIC, which is a relatively new practice in Belize. The FPIC was developed using international instruments such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development and Green Climate Fund requirements, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Caribbean Court of Justice Ruling of 2015, and the Maya of Southern Belize FPI Consultation Protocol.

Consultation with the leaders and villagers of Santa Rosa commenced in January 2022 with the following goals:

- (i) to adequately inform the community about the project, including its risks and benefits;
- (ii) to negotiate the content of the programme and implementation mechanisms; and
- (iii) to bring the community to a point where they can decide whether to give consent.

The process provided the elements for an IPP and FPIC agreement to be developed with the community.

The consent agreement was signed by Hon. Oscar Requena, Minister of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government; Dr. Osmond Martinez, CEO in the Ministry of Economic Development; Dr. Geraldo Flowers, RRB Program Manager; and community leaders of Santa Rosa.

CEO Martinez stated that this output of the consultation process is not a simple yes or no, but an agreement and plan that specifies the way forward, including how the project will be implemented, the benefits shared, how conflict may be resolved (grievance mechanism), and how additional consent, if necessary, will be obtained.

The Programme Management Unit of the Resilient Rural Belize (RRB) Programme, acting through the Ministry of Economic Development (Lead Programme Agency) and working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, has overall responsibility for programme implementation. Under Component 1 of the RRB is the administration and implementation of the programme's Matching Grant Fund (MGF), the main objective to support the achievement of the programme's objectives by co-financing investments that would improve, in volume and quality, smallholder farmer agricultural production and safeguard food security in the context of existing and projected climate change effects. Under Component 2, there is a possibility for the upgrade of rural roads to benefit beneficiaries of the project and the community as a whole.

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