**PROJECT: Strengthening Women Owned Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the Tourism Sector**

The ACS Directorate of Sustainable Tourism (DST), has recognised that In the Greater Caribbean today, the decline of agriculture and manufacturing has propelled tourism to be the most important industry in the Region. More importantly however, is the fact that tourism also offers great entrepreneurship opportunities for women.

The burgeoning sector in many destinations has driven the growth and development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), many of which are skills-based service enterprises that are owned and operated by women, mainly in the realm of entertainment services related to specific cultural art forms and expressions, production of arts and craft, local cuisine/culinary art and some traditional skills like basket weaving and hair braiding.

Now aware of the formidable women component in the sector, the DST in collaboration with the Directorate of Trade, Development and External Economic Relations (DTDEER) has embarked on this new initiative to enhance the opportunities for trade and entrepreneurship generated by tourism for women entrepreneurs owning SMEs.

While the overarching goal of the project is to increase awareness of the potential and provide up-to-date information, tools and strategies to improve the competitiveness and maximise the entrepreneurship opportunities for women in the tourism sector, there are some very specific goals like being an engine for increased trade and the socio-economic development of women and the transfer of knowledge and resources to build the entrepreneurial skills of women-owned SMEs.

With the successful execution of this initiative, the Region can expect results like an increase in the fostering of socio-economic growth through the support of small and medium enterprise development; promotion of initiatives that support the development and productivity enhancement of Tourism SMEs. More particularly, those owned and operated by women can serve as a strategy for employment generation and poverty eradication.

***Overall Objective:*** *The overarching goal or objective is to increase awareness of the potentialities and provide information, tools and strategies to improve the competitiveness and maximize the entrepreneurship opportunities for women, generated by tourism.*

***Specific Objectives:***

*• Highlight the importance of tourism as an engine for increased trade and the socio-economic development of women;*

*• Produce literature and tools to build the entrepreneurial skills of SMEs in general and women owned SMEs in particular;*

*• Transfer knowledge and resources to increase the competitiveness and contribute to the promotion, adoption and implementation of strategies for capacity-building geared towards entrepreneurial strengthening of women with SMEs in the tourism industry;*

*• Showcase women-owned SMEs to generate interest, exposure and opportunities for increased business;*

*• Facilitate cooperation and dialogue for the strengthening of the regional tourism industry and the adoption of pro-poor and sustainable tourism practices.*