

IDRF Engages in Critical Mental Health Dialogue at CARPHA's 69th Annual Health Conference in Barbados

BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS, May 9, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The International Development and Relief Foundation (IDRF) is pleased to have participated in the 69th Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) Annual Health Conference, held in Bridgetown, Barbados, from May 7 to May 9, 2025. This important event, centered around the theme "Mental Health: The Hidden Pandemic," brought together a diverse group of experts, health professionals, and community leaders to explore the critical and often overlooked issue of mental health in the Caribbean. With a particular focus on mental health challenges affecting Caribbean youth, the conference provides a valuable platform for discussing innovative solutions and sharing best practices across the region.



Elyas Burney, Director of Programs and Social Impact at IDRF, at 69th Annual Health Conference

As an organization deeply committed to addressing mental health in underserved and vulnerable communities, IDRF was honoured to be part of this essential dialogue. Elyas Burney, Director of Program and Social Impact at IDRF, was representing the organization at the conference. His participation allows IDRF to not only share the impactful work being done through its programs in Guyana but also to learn from other regional leaders about effective approaches to mental health care.

"Throughout the Caribbean, mental illness continues to be a largely hidden epidemic, with stigma surrounding mental health issues preventing many from seeking the help they need," said Elyas Burney. "This is especially true for young people, who face immense societal pressures without adequate mental health support. By participating in this conference, we are not only able to share our experiences from the SPAR initiative, but we also have the opportunity to deepen our understanding of the regional challenges and strengthen our efforts to bridge the gap in mental health access."

IDRF's work in Guyana is led by its SPAR (Safeguarding the Human Dignity and Rights of Populations at-risk for ill-mental health in Vulnerable Communities Across Guyana) initiative. Through SPAR, IDRF is actively addressing the urgent mental health needs in Guyana, especially in communities facing deep social and economic challenges. The initiative offers community-based mental health education, training for healthcare providers, and the creation of robust support networks to help individuals dealing with mental health struggles. The SPAR program is designed to reach populations that are particularly vulnerable and underserved by traditional healthcare systems.

IDRF's efforts are particularly timely as the conference highlights the ongoing crisis facing youth, with experts warning of a "silent state of trauma" affecting Caribbean youth, as reported by one of the conference's speakers. With this in mind, IDRF is dedicated to ensuring that mental health care becomes a central priority for public health initiatives in the Caribbean. By participating in this conference, IDRF seeks not only to share the successes and lessons learned from its work in Guyana but also to collaborate with other regional leaders, mental health professionals, and organizations to enhance the collective response to the mental health crisis facing Caribbean communities.

IDRF's commitment to mental health advocacy is a cornerstone of its broader mission to deliver sustainable and life-changing aid to the most vulnerable communities across the globe. Through strategic partnerships and targeted interventions, IDRF continues to empower individuals, support communities, and promote long-term resilience.

For more information about IDRF's mental health initiatives and the ongoing work in Guyana, visit IDRF Mental Health in Guyana or learn more about our multi-million, five-year project here: <https://idrf.ca/2022/11/17/canadian-organization-launches-5-year-multi-million-dollar-mental-health-project-in-guyana/>.

About IDRF

The International Development and Relief Foundation (IDRF) is a Canadian charitable organization dedicated to empowering vulnerable communities through sustainable development, disaster response, and humanitarian assistance. To learn more, visit www.idrf.ca.

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