

■ Revamping St Lucia's education system...

CDB to invest US\$17m

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ment Bank (CDB) has approved a US\$17 million loan to support the government of St Lucia's mission to expand access to quality education, modernise infrastructure, and enhance teacher training.

'The 'Programme for Education, Realignment and Transformation-Saint Lucia' aims to tackle key challenges in the education system by improving its quality, equity, and relevance.

'Designed to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the 21st century, the programme aims to drive both social and economic development,' a release from the CDB stated yesterday.

'As part of the initiative, a dedicated school for students with special needs will be constructed, and several existing schools will be retrofitted to meet modern safety and design standards.

'The programme also seeks to expand access to quality education by improving early childhood development and creating inclusive learning environments that support students with special educational needs.

'To ensure its success, teacher training and professional development will be strengthened, equipping educators with expertise in special education, psychosocial support, gender sensitisation, and modern teaching methodologies,' it stated.

The CDB's funding for the project will cover 56% of the total costs of just over US\$30 million-with the government of St Lucia contributing US\$9.3 million, and an additional US\$4 million provided by the Global Partnership for Education.

Pointing to research showing that improvements in lighting, ventilation and sanitation positively impact academic achievement and reduce dropout rates, Dr Martin Baptiste, CDB division chief, Social Sector Division, noted the project's focus on improving infrastructure was driven by evidence demonstrating a direct link between the physical learning environment and student outcomes.

'This investment in school infrastructure is crucial for ensuring that all St Lucian students have the opportunity to reach their full potential. By enhancing the learning environment, the project will help to create a more conducive atmosphere for both teachers and students, fostering a positive and productive learning experience," Baptiste said.

He added that by addressing long-standing gender disparities in enrolment, academic performance, and subject selection, the programme is poised to create a more inclusive, equitable and high-quality education system that benefits all learners.

'This is not just an investment in infrastructure or teacher training; it's an investment in the future of every child in Saint Lucia. By creating a more inclusive and resilient education system, we are laying the foundation for a generation of young people who will be empowered to drive innovation, economic growth, and social transformation in their communities,' Baptiste said.

'The commitment to the Programme for Education, Realignment and Transformation reaffirms CDB's commitment to empowering St Lucia through sustainable development and investment in its people.

'The Bank has a long history of supporting St Lucia's development, including previous investments in health, water supply and fire services," the CDB stated.