INTRODUCING OUR PROJECT PARTNER

The Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development Center

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Executive Director

Tell us about The GARD Center and provide a brief description of your work in Antigua and Barbuda?

The Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development Center (GARD Center) is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation registered under the Companies Act of 1995. The Center evolved from a two-year pilot project in 1989 sponsored by the Canadian Government, the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA), and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda. Due to success of the pilot project and the determination of the MCCA, the GARD Center was established as a leading training facility, targeting youth, men and women; and providing positive entrepreneurial and employment alternatives.

Mission: GARD Center facilitates the holistic development and empowerment of vulnerable youth, men and women through life skills, agriculture, entrepreneurship, technical vocational skills; business development training and job services to improve their living standards.

The Center's focus is in three major areas: Youth Service; Entrepreneurship; and Agriculture.

What is your role in the Multi-Actor Partnerships (MAPs) project?

The GARD Center plays a vital role in providing logistical and coordination support for the Multi-Actor Partnerships project, serving as the national focal point for Antigua and Barbuda. Its initiatives focus on inviting key stakeholder groups to training sessions, ensuring that farmers actively participate in Climate and Disaster Risk Finance and Insurance, as well as enhancements in resilience building. The GARD Center actively encourages farmers and relevant stakeholders to engage in these efforts, aiming to strengthen the agricultural sector in the face of Climate Change impacts. Additionally, the Center collaborates closely with CPDC and their partners to effectively achieve these objectives.

What role does your organisation play in combatting the effects of climate change on the region?

GARD Center is a vocational training facility, which offers training courses on Climate Smart Agriculture to a variety of stakeholders, including farmers, Agri-Science Teachers and their Students, entrepreneurs and the general public over the years. It is through training programmes, and networking that GARD Center is able to reach the public to improve their knowledge about Climate Change adaptation and resiliency strategies.

How can the region adapt to the impacts of climate change/natural hazards?

The main beneficiaries of the GARD Center are the farmers, among other stakeholders. The way in which they could be encouraged to adapt to the impacts of climate change would be through capacity building in Climate Smart Agriculture, and of course Climate and Disaster Risk Finance and Insurance. As a training facility, GARD Center's strengths lie in capacity building and therefore this is the route we would take to build resilience.

What role do you think Climate and Disaster Risk Finance and Insurance (CDRFI) can play in building resilience in the region?"

In Antigua and Barbuda, the impacts of Climate Change such as severe elongated periods of drought, unprecedented rainfall, and hurricanes, have been known to devastate both crop and livestock farms. Generally, there is no protection (especially financial) against these disasters and as a result many farmers have become parttime. There is a role for a strong CDRFI network in building resilience in the Agricultural Sector, where these farmers could be supported to have fulltime farms and spend most of their time producing food. This would improve food security, which should lead to a reduction in the food import bill.