

CARIBBEAN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

A YOUTH:WORK PROJECT



Antigua and Barbuda

CYEP





The Challenge

Youth in Antigua and Barbuda face significant barriers to reaching their full potential as productive and engaged citizens. A fifth of them live under the poverty line, a quarter live in single-parent homes and almost a third have no more than a primary education. Between high unemployment rates and an education system that neither meets the needs of today's labor market nor supports a successful transition from school to work, youth have few opportunities to secure employment. As a result, a growing number of young people in Antigua and Barbuda have lost hope in the future and all too often are drawn into the drug trade, gangs and criminal activities—thus continuing a downward spiral into poverty.

The Initiative

In 2008, the International Youth Foundation (IYF) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) launched the **Caribbean Youth Empowerment Program** (CYEP) to improve the job prospects of under-served young people in Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Jamaica, and Saint Lucia. The program offers market-driven

training in areas such as life skills, information technology, remedial education, and vocational and entrepreneurship skills, along with internships, job placement services and business support. In addition to building the capacity of youth-serving organizations to address the employment needs of vulnerable youth, CYEP works to strengthen alliances with public and private stakeholders to further expand job training and other opportunities for the region's vulnerable youth.

In its initial phase, CYEP benefitted over 1,000 young people through skills training and additional support services, with 92% of employers reporting satisfaction with CYEP-trained interns and employees. With additional funding in 2011, the program is reaching an additional 1,100 youth across the region with an expanded menu of services that includes career guidance and entrepreneurship training.

Who Do We Serve?

CYEP targets young school leavers, ages 17 to 25, with particular attention given to young males, who

I am grateful to the GARD Center for giving me a second chance, a second opportunity at life.

— Mikeika, a CYEP Basic Cookery trainee



are unemployed, under-employed, lack the skills to participate in the increasingly service-oriented economy, or are unable to successfully initiate and sustain small business enterprises. In addition, the program supports youth serving as positive agents of change in their communities through its service learning component.

In Antigua and Barbuda specifically, the project targets youth from vulnerable communities. The project aims for gender parity and offers courses that are attractive to both young men and young women.

CYEP's Approach

CYEP partners utilize a market-driven approach to its employability training, which is viewed as critical to secure partnerships with employers for internships and job placement. Special emphasis is

placed on the tourism sector and related areas such as construction, in response to the tourism labor market and the government's focus on strengthening the competitiveness of the tourism sector. Through Career Days, in-house visits with employers and field trips, youth connect with potential employers and get exposure to the world of work.

CYEP's partner, the Gilbert Agricultural & Rural Development Center (GARD Center), implements this project in cooperation with the Antigua and Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute (ABHTI), the Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education (ABICE) and the Directorate of Gender Affairs. Working with partners enables the project to have a multiplying effect of its efforts and ensures its long term sustainability.

In secondary school I began to forget about my goals and started smoking marijuana. The principal found out and I was expelled. I then joined the Rastafarian movement and learned how to do agriculture, but left them because of disagreements. Then I heard of the courses offered at the GARD Center that showed me how to do land cultivation on a commercial basis. I must say [the course] was wonderful.

— Delano, GARD Center trainee



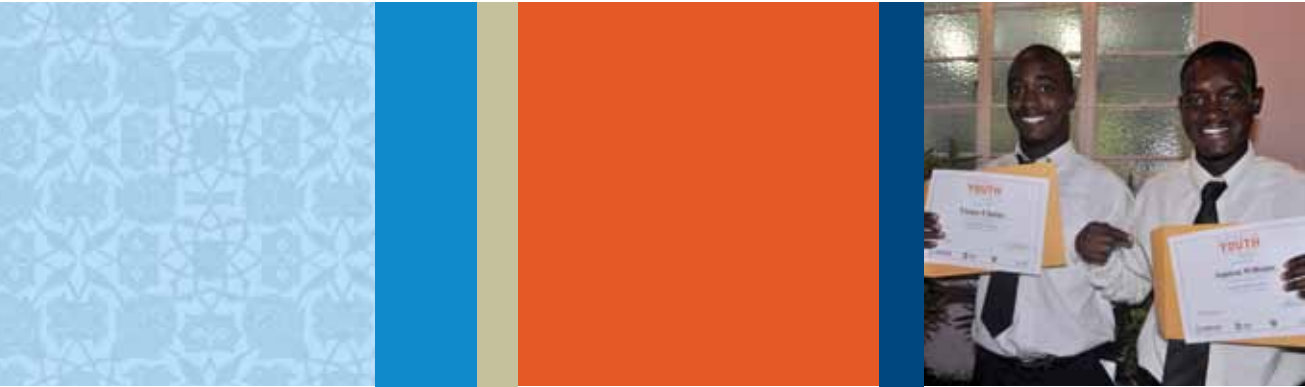
Supporting Long-term Change

Working together, CYEP partners in the region seek to maximize their institutional capacity and strengthen their services, thereby positioning themselves to secure additional funding and new partners to replicate and expand this successful model. The further development of multi-sector partnerships ensures that a network of collaborating agencies and organizations is actively advocating for a national youth employment agenda that is focused on the most vulnerable and at risk members of that population.

In Antigua and Barbuda, the GARD Center has become a recognizable authority on youth employability, building a foundation for sustainability and advocacy strengthened by its support from government agencies and the private sector. Activities such as career days and partnering with job placement agencies connect employers to beneficiaries as well as build program visibility. These linkages also help build a framework for sustained pathways to employment for youth across the country and ultimately the greater Caribbean region.

CYEP has played a very vital role in my accomplishments because through the program I learned a lot about today's business world.

— Tarissa Francis, CYEP Graduate and Receptionist / Customer Service Representative Junior Clerk, Medical Benefits Scheme (MBS)



CYEP in Antigua and Barbuda: Results to Date

- 369 youth enrolled in program
- 188 trained in life and employability skills
- 51% of graduates employed
- 23% returned to school
- Successful targeting of youth at risk; 99% identified as poor/extremely poor
- Strengthened capacity of partner organizations to deliver quality training and job placement services

Join Us

CYEP is working in Antigua and Barbuda to improve the lives and prospects of its vulnerable youth. The project's ability to leverage in-kind support and financial resources and build multi-sector alliances is critical to its success. The GARD Center has formed strategic alliances with public and private sector entities, such as the Antigua and Barbuda Employers Federation, Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority, CIBC/First Caribbean International Bank, the Mill Reef Board,

Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Sports, NCO Financial Company Ltd, and the Pan-American Development Foundation.

Examples of in-kind support received include delivery of complementary training for specific courses, facilitation of contact with potential employers for internships and job placement, mentorship of youth, cash donations to sponsor events such as Career Day, and in-kind donations such as computers. More support is needed, however, from local companies, government agencies, and civil society organizations if we are to have a significant impact on the lives of the country's young people.

Please join CYEP in this far-reaching effort to expand opportunities among Antigua and Barbuda's youth at risk so they have the skills and support they need to be productive and engaged citizens.

For more information on CYEP activities in Antigua and Barbuda, please contact:

The GARD Center

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My department was recruiting for a receptionist and the HR Manager provided the resume of Miss Tarissa Francis [GARD Center graduate who had interned at MBS]. The staff had been so impressed with her during the internship that two departments were fighting to recruit her. My department got her. Working with the GARD Center has been a very successful experience and a collaboration we hope to continue.

— Ms. S. Butters, Support Supervisor/
Customer Service Department Medical Benefits Scheme, St. John's



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The International Youth Foundation (IYF) invests in the extraordinary potential of young people. Founded in 1990, IYF builds and maintains a worldwide community of businesses, governments, and civil society organizations committed to empowering youth to be healthy, productive, and engaged citizens. IYF programs are catalysts of change that help young people obtain a quality education, gain employability skills, make healthy choices, and improve their communities. To learn more, visit www.iyfnetwork.org.

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