



Helping rural women build climate-resilient small businesses and networks

Laventille (CANARI) 01 November 2012 – Small businesses based on the sustainable use of natural resources are at risk from climate change impacts. Help in building the resilience of these businesses and the rural communities that depend on them for their livelihoods is on the way, through an eighteen-month project that is facilitated by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), through the support of grant funding from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UN WOMEN).

Climate change is upon us and impacts are already being seen on natural resources such as forests, reefs and coastal ecosystems. Rural communities, including rural women, are highly dependent on the use of natural resources for their livelihoods, including for generating income by running small businesses. Information is being collected from resource users to document how they are already seeing the impacts of climate change on their livelihoods and businesses. However, there are few initiatives looking at how to build the resilience of rural small businesses to protect and enhance rural livelihoods in the Caribbean.

The CANARI project will build understanding, knowledge, and capacity on how to build the resilience of rural small businesses that will be applicable across Trinidad and Tobago and the rest of the Caribbean. The project will initially conduct a series of training workshops to a core group of 25 rural women who are engaged in leadership roles in the operation of small businesses based on the sustainable use of natural resources. Participants in the workshops will analyse their areas of vulnerability and identify ways of building climate-resilience of their businesses, including via enhancing financial management, networking and communication.

A network of rural women engaged in natural-resource based businesses will be formed. CANARI will provide mentoring support to the network in its initial start up phase and document case studies of the progress of its development through the enhanced operations of the rural enterprises managed by the women.

This network will be well placed to share the recommendations on ways of building climate-resilience of businesses of rural women. Network members will be able to reach out to other women in their communities to raise their awareness about how the livelihoods of rural women are being impacted by climate change and what needs to be done. They will also be able to communicate to policy-makers across key sectors (such as community and social development, fisheries, forestry, tourism, environmental management and small business development) about what needs to be done to support rural women to build their resilience.

The project will facilitate several opportunities to communicate to key policy makers. Participants in the project will attend a regional forum to share their analysis and recommendations. Additionally, a policy brief will be produced at the project's conclusion that

will highlight to policy makers what is needed by rural women to implement and manage small businesses based on the sustainable use of natural resources.

Nicole Leotaud, Executive Director of CANARI emphasises the importance of this project, noting that “While climate change is increasingly being recognised as a serious threat to the Caribbean, there still is much to be done to build understanding of people on how this will affect people on the ground, and to support them to take concrete actions to build their resilience. Policy statements are important but adaptation really needs to take place on the ground involving the people who are most at risk.”

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About CANARI

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute is a regional technical non-profit organisation which has been working in the islands of the Caribbean for more than 20 years. Our mission is to promote and facilitate equitable participation and effective collaboration in the management of natural resources critical to development in the Caribbean islands, so that people will have a better quality of life and natural resources will be conserved, through action learning and research, capacity building, communication and fostering partnerships.

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Stakeholders from the Community Development Fund - Ministry of Community Development, Forestry Division - Ministry of Water and the Environment, Institute of Gender and Development Studies - the University of the West Indies, National Entrepreneurship Development Company and the Prime Minister's Best Village Trophy Competition assist in development of criteria for selection of rural women in the UN Women - funded CANARI project.