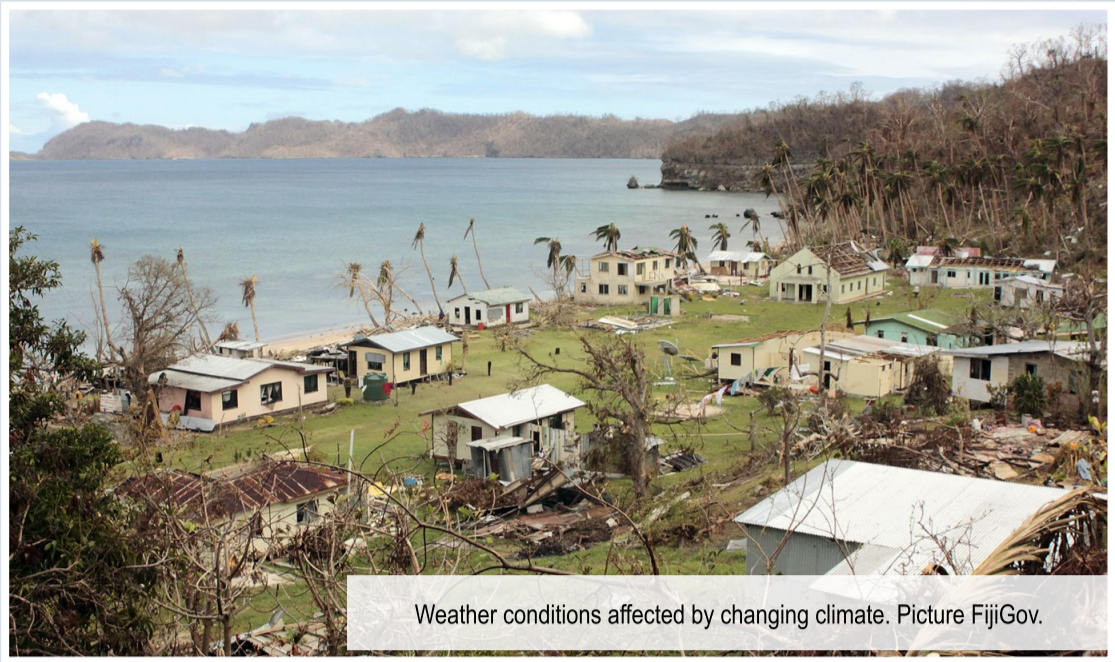


Climate Action through Education at FNU



Weather conditions affected by changing climate. Picture FijiGov.

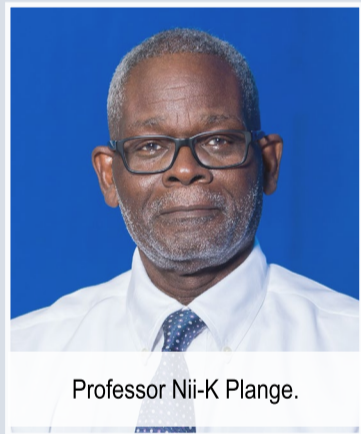
The adverse impact caused by changes in climate conditions is being felt around the world. From melting ice, extreme temperatures to more frequent and severe disasters and rising sea levels, all of these phenomena are causing a great distraction to livelihoods and the economy of countries.

Small island countries in the Pacific such as Fiji are facing the full brunt of the impact with rising sea levels forcing the migration of villagers inland, saltwater intrusion destroying gardens, crops and trees, ocean acidification affecting the coral reef systems and extreme weather patterns including severe and destructive winds. Those residing in coastal communities, tourism and other business operators are being forced to mitigate such factors on a more frequent basis.

As per Fijian Government's briefing in 2017 during its Presidency at the Conference of the Parties (COP) 23, Fiji requires "sufficient technical expertise, human resources and financial capacity to fully implement protective measures" to counter the crisis.

As part of its mission to support the economic and social development of Fiji through relevant, high-quality education and training Fiji National University (FNU) remains attuned to the needs of the country and responds accordingly.

Through programmes such as the Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Diploma and Masters programme in Climate Change Resilience and Mitigation, FNU provides a response to this need through education and research.



Professor Nii-K Plange.

The primary focus of the Programme is on the impact of climate change and it is designed with two key objectives; first to make the University itself resilient and adapt to the effects of climate change by strengthening our internal response strategies and mechanism.

Secondly, it aims to build relevant skills through teaching and research that can contribute to

addressing the immediate and long term effects of climate change in the country.

A subset of the second objective is to be an agent of action in providing technical assistance to affected communities and advise where needed. In recognition of the multiple and complex impact of climate change, the programme has been purposefully developed as an interdisciplinary Studies.

This is meant to give students the flexibility to broaden their outlook and acquire skills in responding to the multiple and complex impact of climate change that is beyond the narrow confines of disciplines but with connections and linkages between disciplines.

With the focus on impact, the programme is designed to combine the different sciences to explore the areas of real and potential impact and the required adaptation and resilience strategies. In this way, the FNU programme is grounded in the development challenges and the existential threat to the livelihood of communities, families and key industries.

These threats include current and future effects from sea-level rise, high destructive winds, flooding of farmland by seawater, and destruction of mangroves as well as the exposure of some of the nation's key industry such as tourism.

The practical aspects of our programme will continue to involve collaboration with affected communities to repair and rebuild community infrastructure and provide basic health and food security strategies for sustainability in the future.

The rebuilding of houses at Koro Island through community and FNU collaboration from the College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST) after Winston, the response to Tuvalu and Vanuatu, after Hurricane Pam, from experts in Public Health from the College of Medicine, Nursing and the Health Sciences (CMNHS) are

just examples of grounding our programme, and providing real-time experience, for students and faculty, in effects of climate change and practical efforts at rebuilding communities and livelihoods.

These are extremely valuable experiences and they provide viable and fertile situations for action research, which is critical to impact studies and problem solving and provide resources to inform teaching.

Meanwhile, from the humanities aspect of the interdisciplinary studies there are initiatives, in the College of Humanities and Education (CHE), to collect and archive indigenous adaptation and resilience practices given that communities have had to live with climate variability and hurricanes for many years.

And from the College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF), there are initiatives for community outreach to farmers and research into water-resistant seedlings as response to effects of climate change.

Other programmes at FNU, such as the Agriculture Engineering certificate, Diploma in Engineering (Renewable and Sustainable) and Post-Graduate Diploma (Environmental Conservation and Climate Change) emphasises the need for sustainable learning and development.

Our staff and students have also contributed to the climate action through tree planting and cleanup campaigns.

Through our membership of the Commonwealth Climate Resilience Network, our programme is linked to other Commonwealth initiatives and we will be receiving students from the Caribbean next semester.

Through this network, our programme will be collaborating with climate change experts from the University of West Indies and University of Durham to develop modules on climate change impact on livelihoods.

The University of the West Indies has also developed a template to assess the Resilience of Universities in Small island states to Climate Change and at the recent Conference in Jamaica, we requested to try this at FNU.

At the international level, FNU is also making its presence. The Pro-Vice Chancellor, Learning and Teaching, Professor James Pounder, recently presented The FNU Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Programme at a reputable QS international conference and there was a positive response and the acceptance of the programme as a model for others.

With climate change as a global issue, it is important to network with other institutions and organisations to seek viable solutions. Fiji is well-known and respected in the global climate change network and as the national university FNU will continue to contribute however it can to address this issue.

This in line with the International Day for Climate Action, celebrated annually on October 24 to highlight the need for decisive actions to combat climate change.

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1. <https://cop23.com.fj/fiji-and-the-pacific/how-fiji-is-affected-by-climate-change/>



FNU staff and students with seedlings before planting.