

FNU undertakes key role at Climate Change Resilience meeting in Jamaica



Professor Nii-K Plange chairs a session at the CCRN meeting in Jamaica

To provide necessary and relevant solutions and mitigating responses to the prevailing and future devastating impact of climate change, critical efforts must be articulated in education programmes.

These are the views of Fiji National University's (FNU) Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies, Nii-K Plange, which he expressed at a recent Commonwealth Climate Resilience Network (CCRN) meeting held in Jamaica.

Professor Plange who is also the Director of FNU's Interdisciplinary Programme in Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience, further stated that "these programmes must be pragmatic and provide sustainable adaptation and resilient strategies of benefit to communities and national development."

He said such programmes should be innovative forms of Learning and Teaching to produce a generation of learners who are both climate-conscious and climate literate citizens.

According to Professor Plange, the challenge now with Learning and Teaching institutions and professionals is to be innovative.

"There is a call for learning and teaching strategies that will enhance knowledge and understanding of climate change and its effects while building new capacities for appropriate, relevant, climate change adaptation and resilient knowledge that can be transferred," said Professor Plange.

The Commonwealth Climate Resilience Network was established in partnership with Fiji National University (FNU), the University of the South Pacific (USP) and the University of the West Indies (UWI) with links to several other Universities directly affected by climate change.

"The purpose of this workshop was mainly to design a work plan going forward for CCRN. The inaugural CCRN meeting was held in Fiji last year, and FNU coordinated it as a member of the CCRN steering committee. At that meeting, what was discussed largely was the scope of work that the CCRN could undertake. This second meeting was then to take a step further through discussions and presentations to craft a viable work plan going forward with different characteristics and different responsibilities," he added.

FNU has been at the forefront in highlighting the impact of Climate

Change and has introduced a new Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Diploma and Masters programme in Climate Change Resilience, and Mitigation offered at its Nasinu Campus.

"At the meeting, I made the point that we have five Colleges at FNU and in each College, there is an existing course that deals with climate change as well as other courses which have mainstreamed climate change due to its immediate impacts on aspects of Fiji and other Pacific Island societies. What we tried to do was to pull these different courses together, provide a theme, and give it a coherence into a composite programme with an FNU brand."

The FNU Interdisciplinary Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience brand focuses on impacts on national development, communities and livelihood.

As a key member of the steering committee, the University also presented a concept paper on teaching and learning objectives at the global CCRN meeting.

Professor Plange said the Learning and Teaching in educational institutions must be driven by clear objectives, which include:

- Increase and sustain awareness, understanding and knowledge of the primary causes of climate change
- To provide an understanding of the broad impact of climate change on national development and livelihood of communities and families
- To create awareness of, and build capacity in, practices of adaptation and resilience that combine relevant traditional and new knowledge at national and local levels
- Increase international and regional efforts to deal with climate change
- Make climate change a whole of institution responsibility

FNU's College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF) Dean Professor Paul Iji and Manager Monitoring and Compliance Basundra Kumar also represented FNU at the high-level meeting in Jamaica, where they made presentations as well.

As part of the work ahead, FNU will collaborate with the Universities of West Indies, Durham and Cape Town to develop modules on the impact of climate change on livelihoods while working on the possibility of Summer School for students.