

EARTH DAY

CLiC: A chance at skills building in conservation

Petre Williams-Raynor
Contributing Editor

TWO YEARS ago, a group of Caribbean and United States (US) colleagues – among them Dr Leo Douglas – got together to work out a programme to enhance conservation leadership in the region.

Inspired by the US-based Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leaders training programme, the group – including Kelvin Alie, Michelle Benham, Andrea Easter-Pilcher, Heather Eves, and Nadra Nathai-Gyan – came up with CLiC, short for Conservation Leadership in the Caribbean, for which they now comprise the board of directors.

“Our interest was to create a fellowship programme that was accessible and affordable for Caribbean youth to be trained in environmental management,” Douglas told *The Gleaner*.

“We spoke about the need for more international training for Caribbean people in conservation work and about how a lot of the problems in the Caribbean were becoming more global and how we needed to address them – from the lion fish to climate change. We needed to get our people thinking globally about what it means to collaborate (for example) and pulled together the



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

2014-2016 CLiC fellows on the Campus of St George’s University participate in a Project Management Planning and Fundraising module class.

ideas of what this would look like and what we wanted to achieve,” he added.

Fast-forward two years, and they have had their first group of fellows (2014-2016) and are recruiting a second cohort.

“We would love to get more Caribbean NGOs struggling to

train their staff into the programme,” remarked Douglas.

He added that they are also keen to have younger people vie for a place in the fellowship, which is funded primarily by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and is available free of cost to participants.

St George’s University (SGU) in Grenada, through which the programme is run and with whom they are seeking to have it accredited, is also a partner. The International Fund for Animal Welfare also contributes.

The 2014-2016 group comprised 18 participants from 12 countries,



Leo Douglas

including a representative from the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust.

A look at the evaluation documents of that first group reveal some satisfied participants. Comments included:

■ “My overall experience was positive as I enjoyed every aspect of the course. I liked the video sharing and having to lead the class on different topics. This type of teaching is what actually helps increase my understanding as opposed to the one-dimensional chalk talk”; and

■ “Beyond my expectation. It was truly an eye opener towards the challenges ahead of us when it comes to protecting our natural resources and biodiversity. I am strongly feeling the urge to start a new endeavour towards involving more young professionals in conservation initiatives.”

Douglas is pleased.

“Our scholars write grants, get funding, develop social marketing campaigns. The most

exciting part is we try to do this without uprooting them from the islands. We keep them in their own institutions,” he said.

RELEVANT INFORMATION

“A lot of things they are doing online are related to their organisation, and then they spend maybe 10 days at SGU to keep them grounded in the region and keep them contributing what they are learning to on-the-ground issues and to their organisations and stakeholders,” added Douglas.

Criteria for selection to this next cohort include:

■ Being a citizen of the Wider Caribbean region;

■ Having worked in the natural resources conservation field for at least three years and planning to work at least 15 additional years (preferably in the Caribbean region);

■ Being able to commit to devoting at least 10-12 hours per month to a CLiC conservation project; and

■ Being able to fully participate in all online and in-person training courses/workshops/modules.

Applications are to be submitted – complete with a résumé, supervisor approval form, and reference letter – to conservationcaribbean@gmail.com by 5:00 pm on January 31.

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Advocates advised to maintain gender and climate change body

THE EFFORT to mainstream gender in climate change considerations while cementing the place of women in decision-making in that arena has a supporter in Dr James Fletcher, recent head of the CARICOM Task Force on Sustainable Development.

“Women are disproportionately affected by climate change, particularly in small-island developing states. Anytime here in Saint Lucia, if there is a drought, the people you see going miles to collect water are not the men, it is the women because they are the ones who, unfortunately, have the children on their hands and the household on their hands,” he noted.

“So women are always the ones who are disproportionately affected by natural disasters, and I think there must be some sensitivity in funding to the fact that there is a gender imbalance in the impacts of climate change and other natural disasters,” Fletcher added.

He was speaking with journalists at the Marrakech Climate Talks in November last year on the issue of a lack of funding to support the gender work programme that emerged from the Lima Climate Talks two years earlier.

Decisions in that work programme include:

■ To enhance the implementation of the decision to promote gender balance and improve the participation of women in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations and in the representation of parties in bodies established in line with the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol; and

■ that additional efforts be made by parties to the convention to improve the participation of women in their delegations and in all of the bodies established under the convention.

Among other things, it also invites parties to advance gender balance and promote gender sensitivity in developing and implementing climate policy and achieve gender-responsive climate policy in all relevant activities under the UNFCCC.

However, in Marrakech – as in Lima – it emerged that financing to achieve the provisions of the work programme is a challenge.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

James Fletcher

Fletcher’s advice to the women and gender constituency is to press ahead with their efforts.

“The thing with some of these discussions is it takes a while for common sense to prevail. So things you think people would get immediately, they don’t, and you must have a lot of back and forth. But I think that is the nature of the multilateral process. People come with different agendas, different perspectives,” he said.

CONTINUING THE PROCESS

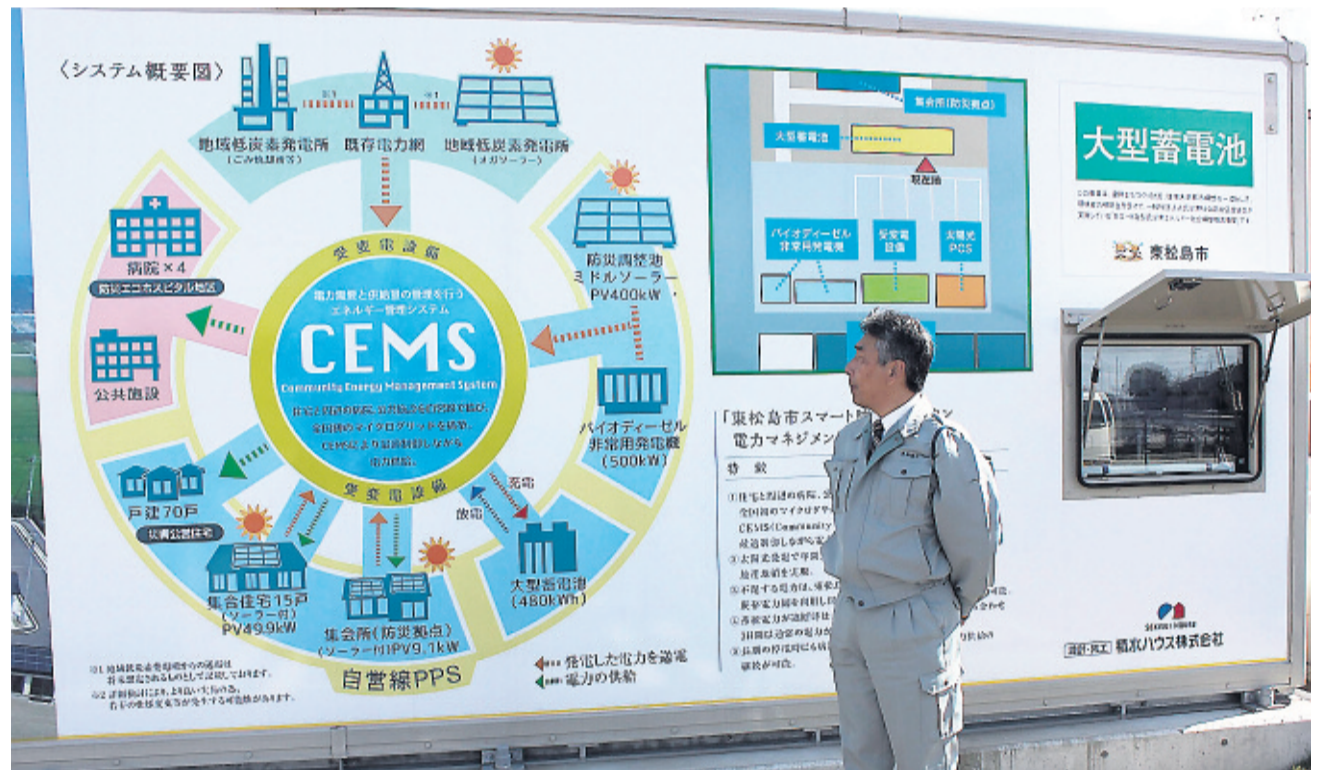
“It really speaks to the need to continue having faith in the process, to continue pressing the line, and continue developing a coalition and seeking out allies and seeing how you can get support,” added Fletcher, who is also the former sustainable development minister for Saint Lucia.

He revealed that this is what had happened in the small island developing states’ effort to have the world take up the issue of loss and damage associated with climate change.

“When we started out with loss and damage, loss and damage was quintessentially a small-island state issue, and then suddenly, other people realised ok, there is a lot of merit in this, and we started developing allies and having more people come and support our cause,” he said.

“It is unfortunate that on a gender issue you need to go in that way because you figure anybody should realise that is an issue. But I think, probably, it is one of these areas where we need to do more work and where we need to do more sensitisation and make people understand the imperative of making sure that the funding is gender sensitive,” Fletcher noted.

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PHOTOS BY AMITABH SHARMA

Shuya Takahashi, director of Revival Policy at the Revival Planning Division, Higashimatsushima City Office, explains the functions of the solar-powered community energy management system.

Tsunami shapes future of community

Amitabh Sharma
Contributor

Higashimatsushima, JAPAN:

AN UNDERPASS cuts into a mountain in Higashimatsushima, leading to a flurry of construction activities, but it’s not the usual dust-billowing, heavy-equipment-whirring-type scene.

It is more like Lego blocks going up geometrically – a sign of a landscape being developed to house a community that is sustainable, environmentally friendly, and, hopefully, more humane.

“The development of the Eco Town model was in consultation with all the stakeholders,” informed Shuya Takahashi, director of Revival Policy at the Revival Planning Division, Higashimatsushima City Office.

“We had extensive meetings with citizens – officials of the city government, local chamber of commerce, major companies,” he added.

City officials also met with schoolchildren and took note of their recommendations.

“Their inputs matter the most,” said Takahashi. “After all, we are doing all of this for them and the generations to come.”

Development of the new Higashimatsushima urban space is born out of the Japanese government Future City Initiative (FCI) of 2011, which seeks to create cities that are not only eco-friendly, but people-friendly, too.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

This translates to dealing with resource and energy constraints, global warming, and addressing the needs of an ageing society.

The goal, according to the FCI mandate, is to solve problems faced both in Japan and around the world by establishing more sustainable social and economic systems and restoring a sense of social connectedness.

“Our aim,” Takahashi said, “is to ensure no one is isolated, and there is a community that is looking out for each other and (with) facilities like hospitals, supermarkets, (and)



Kizuna Solar Park, the mega solar-powered facility that has the capacity to generate 2.1 million kwh/year electricity, which can power 600 households.

schools that are easy to reach.”

Post the 2011 tsunami in Japan, the urban landscape of Higashimatsushima has changed, with low-lying areas converted to public parks or agriculture land and dwellings now located in elevated areas. These communities have a mix of individual town houses and apartment blocks.

“This mix ensures that the bigger buildings, which are close to individual housing complexes, can be converted as shelters in the event of a natural disaster,” Takahashi said.

Renewable energy forms the backbone of these emergent communities, with solar energy used extensively as communities house battery storage units that double as emergency power supply units for hospitals and schools in the event of an outage.

“During our discussions, independent power sources were recommended, which has led to the development of a model renewable energy district,” Takahashi informed.

Kizuna Solar Park, near the Pacific Ocean sea-face, is one such initiative, with solar panels stretching over a vast expanse and having the capacity to power 600 households annually.

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