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【《国際ワークショップ》報告】 Toward New Island Studies : Okinawa as an Academic Node Connecting Japan, East Asia, and the Oceania : University of the Ryukyus, Okinawa, Japan June 1st-3rd 2011

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《国際ワークショップ》報告

**Toward New Island Studies:
Okinawa as an Academic Node Connecting Japan, East Asia,
and the Oceania**

University of the Ryukyus, Okinawa, Japan June 1st – 3rd 2011

Denyse S. Dookie*

Brief Background

I am currently between my 2nd and 3rd years of the PhD Programme in Sustainable Development at Columbia University, and I am from the Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago. I do think I have a varied but rich academic and professional background, which has all brought me to this PhD programme at Columbia.

With a bachelors in Economics and Mathematics, and a postgraduate diploma in International Relations, both from the University of the West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago, I worked with the UNDP within the areas of poverty reduction, democratic governance, and energy and the environment, before doing my first Masters in development studies at the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, The Netherlands in 2003. Through the specialisation on the economics of development, I researched the potential impact of climate change on local sustainable livelihoods in Belize, by doing a rough estimation of the potential damages to the tourism and agricultural sectors – my conclusions of a decline of about 2% of national GDP should the estimates of impacts be realised, and a wider shock to the local livelihoods which depended on these climate-related industries, really made me begin to consider the potential severity of climate change within the small island developing states of the world.

Following the Masters programme, I assisted several noted development practitioners within the region, including the current Minister of Finance of Trinidad and Tobago, a former Secretary-General of the Association of Caribbean States, and the former Deputy Executive Director of UNEP. I have most recently worked with the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank in Trinidad and Tobago, working with small and medium organisations who seek funding related to the Fund's mission. I assisted

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in the design and structure of many project proposals and plans of operations, and worked directly with NGOs and other funding recipients to ensure reporting, monitoring and evaluation. Some of the areas of research I worked on related to children at risk; ongoing health, social development and housing loan operations, and also integrated water resources management and marine/terrestrial environment in Tobago.

Working in Tobago with the local NGOs, and learning more about a mass coral bleaching event which severely affected about 65% of Tobago's corals, and which took quite a toll on local fishermen, dive tour operators and tourist guides, I realised I wanted to learn more about the science of climate change, and came to the Masters programme in Climate and Society at Columbia University. Grounded in this knowledge, as well as understanding the wide gap between scientific research, and policy and practice, this has proved to be good motivation upon entering the PhD programme.

Ongoing Research and Interests

My current research revolves around general issues of adaptation to climate change and small island developing states:

- a. I should be engaging in more in-depth research to understand the potential for developing early warning systems for drought within the Caribbean. By first understanding the remote-sensing/satellite products that are available for the region, and for specific islands, we can be better informed in terms of developing models based on these products. I will be prepared to discuss this research a little within my presentation, describing some initial results for Trinidad and Tobago that I have found.
- b. I am also curious to investigate the potential for mechanisms of resilience, as it pertains to adapting to climate change. One such mechanism of interest is that of Marine Protected Areas, or some variation thereof. I will spend a little time talking about this idea, and why resilience may be so important.

I will also be interning with the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations, as well as with the UNDP's Energy and Environment Group's Climate Change Policy Team to work on issues relating to sustainable development and climate change, particularly as it relates to small island developing states.

I am also assisting a project proposal on the Caribbean Knowledge Economy, to better understand the role of science, technology and innovation in building productive sectors within the Caribbean, given the potential impact of climate change within the region.

Connecting the Caribbean and Pacific Islands: Climate Change Adaptation and Small Island States

While my current work is related to the Caribbean region, I see that there is quite a role for the connection of the Caribbean and Pacific islands in responding to the potential impacts of climate change.

This is not a novel idea, and has been recently supported by the UNDP within a project called the “South-South Cooperation between Pacific and Caribbean Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management”. The project aims to achieve strengthened safety and resilience of Pacific and Caribbean SIDS communities to a range of natural hazards. The project is funded by UNDP’s Special Unit for South-South Cooperation and by the UNDP-Japan Partnership Fund, with in-kind contributions from UNDP Pacific Centre from where it is coordinated. During the presentation of the ideas by the Caribbean delegates at the meeting last August/September, there was a video entitled “Looking South Across the Oceans: Promoting Cooperation Among Small Island Developing States”, which can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQSnuZgJp5U> (3:05 minutes). The film focuses on the vulnerability faced by island nations and tells the story of how SIDS in the Pacific and Caribbean have embarked on a journey to share knowledge and experiences to strengthen the resilience of their communities to natural disasters and climate change. It highlights that many adaptable solutions to the challenges posed by natural disasters can be found by looking South.

These implementation synergies are very important, and also needed is a more comprehensive focus on these efforts through the partnership of regional scientists, researchers as well as policy-makers towards the sharing of knowledge and best practices, as well as technical capacity and appropriate technological advances and innovation.