

## “Catching up to climate change”



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I always look forward to scanning Jamaica’s lush green terrain while occupying a ‘window seat’ of an airplane, to and from Jamaica. However, on my return to my island- state on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September I was forced to witness, from my beloved ‘window- seat’, the frightening changes that my country underwent due to widespread drought that has been squeezing it dry. Sure enough, during my car ride from the Norman Manley International airport I was afforded a more thorough inspection of my beloved country. I came face to face with the widespread wilting and decaying agricultural crops, malnourished farm and domestic animals, disappearing rivers and streams, and acres of parched land boasting miles of dried grass.

On seeing this unappealing transformation of the environment on my way home, I cringed inwardly as I imagined what laid in store for me in my agrarian community in South Manchester. As the car I was travelling in approached a neighboring

community, I saw scores of individuals with numerous large water bottles, lining the dusty road, scavenging for water at a nearby 'stand- pipe' that leisurely dripped water. With a heavy heart and crossed fingers I entered the dirt- clad road leading into my community, Resource. Tall, fruitless trees swayed mockingly in the wind and there was no sign of blossoming vegetation which once covered my community. Buildings were enveloped tightly in dust and dirt and streets once filled with bubbling youths were left bare as a result of the scorching temperature.

When I arrived home I stood in disbelief at the sight of my once green, flourishing yam vines and promising banana trees; which stood wilted and lifelessly behind my house. Neighborhood dogs that usually patrolled my streets noisily, were now merely 'skin and bones' and sat meekly in the shade. Surrounding household - tanks, including a large neighborhood tank "Parish tank", which serviced the entire community, were all void of water. With no sign of government funded water trucks, economically depressed farmers cheated out of their jobs, and unwelcome weather predictions about the unlikelihood of rainfall, we are heading step closer to starvation and turmoil courtesy of climate change.

In light of this unfortunate extensive drought that has been pushing Jamaica towards a social and economic meltdown it is of great importance that Jamaican policymakers who have focused their attention on achieving the climate change related goals outlined within the Vision 2030 Jamaica: National Development Plan to set their sights on also achieving short- term climate change goals. It is quite obvious that waiting to put a meaningful dent in climate change fifteen years (15 years) from now is not a prudent option, as climate change has been increasingly posing a serious threat to Jamaica's survival. Possible short term goals that Jamaica, which is desperately in need of 'short-term action to catch up to climate change', should consider engineering are; effective education campaigns geared towards making the Jamaican populace more aware of the effects of climate change and educating local farmers about adaptive measures that they can employ in limiting the impacts of natural disasters, such as, drought, on their agricultural production, meaningful climate- related policies and programs that are aimed towards limiting climate change, and effective strategies designed to significantly boost investments in renewable energy initiatives.

Climate change will not sit around and wait until Jamaica sums up its courage to wage a meaningful fight against it. Therefore, Jamaica needs to act now before it's too late.