



GOJ/EU/UNEP CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION & DISASTER RISK REDUCTION PROJECT



Bluefields Bay Fisherman’s Friendly Society Strengthening Climate Change Resilience for Years to Come

Written by NEPA Public Education and Corporate Communication Branch

Faces beamed with anticipation and excitement recently, as plans moved one step closer to bringing a most welcomed facelift and structural improvement to the home of the Bluefields Bay Fishermen’s Friendly Society (BBFFS) in Westmoreland.

Nestled by the heavenly shade of overflowing mangroves, moist marshlands, and breathtaking crystal clear waters, the Society is home to what many say is the cleanest fishing village in the country boasting close to sixty members. Now it will be the proud recipient of a brand new pier, and a renovated boardwalk at its Belmont Fishing Beach location.



Fishermen tending to their trade.

The National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) is proud to support the initiatives of the Society and recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with them through support from the European Union/United Nation Environment Programme/and the Government Of Jamaica National Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction Project. The objective of NEPA’s component of the national project is to increase the resilience of coastal ecosystems, such as mangroves, coral reefs and seagrass beds, to climate change.



Members of the Team walking along the Boardwalk.

The MOU with the BBFFS is aimed at facilitating the development and management of a Grants program to promote Alternative Livelihood initiatives especially for stakeholders who would be displaced by the designation of fish sanctuaries within the area, and the impending threats of climate change events. The activities will also enhance the Agency’s initiatives towards preservation of the mangrove forests within the area.

President of the Bluefields Bay Fisherman’s Friendly Society, Mr. Wolde Kristos could not contain his excitement at the impending implementation of the activities under the MOU. As he took



Project Coordinator for the NEPA Adaptation to Climate Change, Nichelle Oxford speaking with BBFFS President, Mr. Wolde Kristo

members of the NEPA Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction Project on a tour of the grounds, he noted the many challenges he has had in maintaining the property due to the lack of substantial funding.

Receiving a cheque for US thirty-eight thousand dollars (\$ US38,000.00), Mr. Kristos was elated at the acquisition. “This partnership will really enhance the economic development of regular community persons in Bluefields. We will be using the money to

do income generating projects. All the funding will be used for alternative livelihoods with focus on hospitality and eco tourism."

The Society presently uses its picturesque asset as an Eco and Heritage tourism attraction, facilitating school tours, business meetings, bird watching, nature walks, hiking, and weddings to name a few. "We will also be doing turtle monitoring and snorkeling tours within the Bluefields Bay Fish Sanctuary...Our long term goal is to build an under water Reggae Park with reef manicured to the likeness of our reggae icons", Kristos explained.



NEPA's Nichelle Oxford handing over cheque to Treasurer of the BBFFS, Barbara Blight, and President, Wolde Kristo.



Current boardwalk at the Belmont Fishing Beach

The group, and by extension the community will also benefit from Alternative Livelihood workshops to be conducted by NEPA. They will introduce the fisherfolk to available options as a means of adapting to the impacts of climate change. As Kristos explained, the community is no stranger to the effects of climate change, having been directly hit by the high winds and heavy rains associated with Hurricane Ivan in 2004. It has been described as one of the most intense hurricanes in Jamaica's recorded history " Ivan affected us greatly, the Society was born out of that storm. Fishers lost a lot of their traps, canoes were destroyed, areas were badly eroded, and seafront properties were damaged. "

Registered as a Friendly Society in February 2006 under the Friendly Society Act of 1966, the Bluefields Bay Fishermen's Friendly Society aims at educating its members in sustainable fishing practices and developing employment alternatives that will enhance the quality of life and preserve the natural environment of Bluefields, Westmoreland.



Rustic view of the home of the Bluefields Bay Friendly Fisherman Society headquarters