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I am a Youth of a Small Island

Have you ever been caught in heavy rain, strong winds that turned into a cyclone within seconds without you knowing it's a cyclone as it is your very first experience of what a cyclone is? You always hear about the various cyclones on the tv news, radio, various media about climate change and its effect on our daily lives, but you never came to dream of ever been affected by it.

Talofa I am a Youth of a Small Island named Samoa which is just a small dot on the globe, yet climate change and its different patterns plays a major role in my life as well as that of my family. I was 11 when Cyclone Evan struck our Small Island in 2012, I didn't even know what a cyclone was, all I know was watching the wind blowing against my dad's beloved garden, and seeing our frangipani tree who is much older than any of my siblings and I fell , the sound of the wind and rain which was exciting to me, as I ran from one window to the other taking videos on my mom's mobile phone, we heard voices in the rain that sounded like children playing in the rain, but no it was our neighbor shouting to us to get out of our house, as they watched in horror the water rushing straight to our house. Luckily my father was outside and he saw the water coming onto our land and he screamed to my mother to get us into our car and go out of our front yard, luck was in our hands as my brother carried our grandmother into the car, while my mother turns our car on, which was already moving as the water started to sweep it away from our garage. My mom managed to get us safely out of the sweeping water and then we drove away leaving our entire household behind. We watched with horror the madness of Mother Nature as we drove past other houses on our search for a place for the night that was fast approaching due to the rain and wind.

And just like that, all our family memories and our parent's years of hard work swept away in a matter of minutes, leaving us no choice but to thank God for saving us from this disaster and to look at how we can rebuild our home and start all over again. I felt sorry for my mother, as she stood there crying when we managed to go back to our house and see what was left of it, her words kept ringing in my ears, 'Oh no, all our year's of hard working gone', just like that!

So where does the above experience take me as a Youth of a Small Island? There are lots of things that comes to mind as I reflect on the damages Cyclone Evan did to our family and the struggle I am watching my parents go through as they try to cope with the many family commitment, church, financial commitment which they have been struck with as a result of climate change, and myself as a Youth that has lost her early childhood playground to the fierceness of Cyclone Evan.

But despite the sadness of losing our family home and my early childhood memory, it has given me an interest to take up Environmental studies and be the voice of our Small Island to raise awareness of the importance of addressing the issue about climate change which comes in all sorts of forms, cyclone, tsunami, flooding, rising sea level, earthquake, and of course through our own human actions.

Environmental awareness is the advocacy of the delicateness of protecting the natural environment and learning how to conserve and help improving its state. It is important to spread environmental awareness in my small island of Samoa as one needs to be alert about the important issues that can play

a significant role in damaging the world both now and in the future. In order for our small island to be living in a sustainable environment we should start practicing the protection of our environment by starting from within our homes, village, church and society as a whole. From our homes we can start by conserving rain water in water tanks, turning off that light where you can use sunlight from the sun.

We can start planting trees in a reclaimed area within our village or a botanical garden to surround our church, and most especially to go plastic free for my small Island of Samoa.

Samoa is a very small Island that is vulnerable to natural disasters, but if we start addressing the impacts of climate change to our Island today, we can enjoy living in a much cleaner and safer environment for tomorrow. I maybe a Youth today, but I can start visioning myself as an adult for tomorrow, and with the smallest action I can put in today to address the effects of climate change in Samoa, I will enjoy my journey to the future knowing I will be living in a safer environment and knowing that I am a Youth of a Small Island who will one day become an Adult of tomorrow of the same Small Island of Samoa.