

**SSHRC-IDRC ICURA Integrating Workshop
C-Change - Managing Adaptation to Coastal Change: Canada and the Caribbean**

MINUTES

Meeting: C-Change Research Associates Meeting
Date: Friday, November 25, 2011
Location: Room DMS 4165, Desmarais Building, UOttawa, Ottawa, Ontario
Present: Kathy Cunningham, Hooman Mostofi, Iljan Na, Kira Lise Leung, Heidi Braun

Notes:

Started the meeting at 2:15 pm. We did a round table to meet everyone and then Kira Lise started her presentation.

Introduced Guyana...90% of population is on the coast, Georgetown, which is the capital, is between 6-12 feet below sea level, 250,000 people in Georgetown
British and Dutch colonization – drainage system
Georgetown is actually reclaimed land since the 1700's
Very vulnerable to sea level rise, sea wall was built in the 1700's; most modern part is over 100 years old – very outdated

2005 – severe flooding, 6-7 feet of water

Current adaptation measures – structural versus non-structural

Structural:

Raising the yards with concrete – creates worse problems, it is actually illegal but poorly enforced
Building on stilts – housing shortage, people are enclosing the “bottom houses” and rent them out to lower income people, making them more vulnerable
Municipal drain cleaning – irregularly done
Kokers used to control water levels, let water in and out

Non-Structural:

Home owners flood insurance, building codes, site development standards, public awareness and education, flood warning systems – non officially right now, disaster preparedness plans, maintenance and inspection programmes, community involvement/NGOs, land use policies, relocation strategies, wetland restoration and creation

Methodology – IPCC General Assessment Method – unsuitable for Guyana as it assessed every ward as critical, need to allow for prioritizing projects

Relative Vulnerability Assessment – based on dimensions – social, economic, physical...etc.
Occupations had to be put into groups of approximate earnings as the people will not tell the government what they make so there is no data available

Downtown area – most vulnerable due to infrastructure – people enclosing bottom houses and renting it out
Land is given out by the government, so it's not a good measure of affluence

The Way Forward – option of staying in Georgetown and building up the infrastructure OR moving the city. Moving the city seems to be the best option, financially speaking. Building up the infrastructure is a temporary fix, who know how long it will last?

Guyana has other natural resources that can be developed inland, and this can be a draw for people to move inland. Roads need to be built to accommodate this idea and motivate people to move. The farther inland you go, the less susceptible you are to climate change and natural disasters.

Moving a city is extremely difficult, but Georgetown is in a do-or-die situation. People have sentimental ties to the capital region.

In-Situ Adaptation – government seems to have chosen this route. Costs are more than \$1 billion, more than half of Guyana's GDP.

Salt water intrusions, which happen all the time, affect agriculture which is the main industry.

Conclusion – Government hasn't consulted anyone, they just declare what they want to do. They need to start taking research into consideration. Data gaps need to be filled, a lot is missing.

A few questions...

Hooman – wants to know more about the impacts on agriculture, not just housing, as most of the study is on housing.

- rice and sugar are the main crops, and in 2005, this was the first time they had to import sugar
- fragile because of the narrow focus of agriculture – rice and sugar require flatlands
- need to look at other options for income

Heidi – attachment to the land, but isn't it miserable to live through constant flooding? There are always 2 sides to it

Guyana government – once the president and prime minister are elected, they can hire whomever they want for ministers...all they have to do to keep their jobs is stay friends with the president. They are not accountable to the people.

Presentation wrapped up at 3:10 pm.