SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

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MAY 19, 2015
DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Who we are
2. What we do
3. Where we work
4. Climate change impact – a personal journey
5. Mitigating climate change impact
WHO WE ARE

• Established in 1986 by Pacific health officials as a non-profit 501(c)3 chartered in the CNMI and the State of Hawaii

• Regional voice for the six US-affiliated Pacific islands (USAPIs)
  
  ❖ US Territories of American Samoa and Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)
  
  ❖ US Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republics of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and Palau

• 3 offices – Honolulu (HQ), Guam and Palau
WHO WE ARE

• Currently hosting at PIHOA Guam Office (across six USAPIs)
  - 2 CDC Immunization Public Health Advisors
  - CDC Chronic Disease Epidemiologist
  - CDC Preparedness Career Epidemiology Field Officer at PIHOA Guam Office
• Secretariat for the Regional Health Committee of the Micronesian Chief Executives (MCES)
• Recently appointed by the Pacific Heads and Ministers of Health as the third technical health agency partner to work alongside the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)
WHAT WE DO

HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING

- Ancillary and Support Services
- Health Information Management Systems (HIMS)
- Health Systems Performance Improvement
- Human Resources for Health (HRH)
- Strategic Engagement
- Planning and Policy Development
GEOGRAPHIC VULNERABILITY

- Mix of volcanic islands, low-lying islands and atolls
- Low-lying islands and atolls most at immediate risk of rising sea levels and coastal erosion
GEOGRAPHIC ISOLATION
IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE – MY HOME
KING TIDES

- Rita, Majuro
- Combination of high tides and full moon – compounded by sea-level rise
- Event becoming much more frequent and more damaging as time goes on
- Salt water intrusion into the fresh water lens
- Damage to property and crops
MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS

- Where my sister-in-law works (*top left*)
- Where my elementary school is (*bottom left*)
- The airport (*top right*)
COMPOUNDING EXISTING DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES
DETERMINANTS OF
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

• Safe Shelter – Damage to and loss of homes; urban crowding

• Health and Education – Damage to schools, clinics, hospitals, etc.

• Income and Economic Development – Damage to and loss of businesses, agricultural and aqua-culture activities

• Culture and Social Safety Nets – Climate change refugees

• Environmental Health – safe water, coastal integrity, and proper sanitation; increased vulnerability to natural disasters; coral bleaching

• Food Safety – access to local food and produce; reduction in fishing stocks
For us in the islands, climate change is not only about reducing carbon emissions, going green, or recycling our household waste – all extremely important for all the peoples of the Earth.

For us in the islands today, it is about human and environmental survival, and finding sustainable and meaningful ways to preserve our rich and diverse cultural heritage and island homes.
ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

• Prediction is that within 50-70 years if current conditions continue, sea level rise will be such that many of the islands will no longer be habitable; some island nations like Tuvalu and Kiribati have already established 40-Year Exodus Plans

• Support is needed in the islands for immediate, intermediate and long-term climate change mitigation planning and response
ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

• Need for policies, legislation and investment to strengthen social, human and environmental resiliency to enable continued human survival in the islands – innovative technologies? Alternate practices for food production? Innovative solutions to urban planning?

• Continue to lobby in the global arena to gain attention of the developed world to change current practices that compound climate change impact; support investments in reducing social and cultural impacts of climate change migration
THANK YOU VERY MUCH

KOMMOL TATA