

Mainstreaming Indigenous and local knowledge into Health-related Climate Adaptation and SDG 3 Planning in the Pacific Islands: Challenges and Opportunities

Public Seminar

10.30 -11.30am, Wednesday, 14 June 2017

UNU International Institute for Global Health

Venue: UNU-IIGH Building, UKM Medical Centre, Jalan Yaacob Latiff, Bandar Tun Razak, Cheras, 56000 Kuala Lumpur

Website: www.iigh.unu.edu

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Abstract

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Pacific are particularly vulnerable to the projected impacts of climate change due to their special characteristics such as physical size, proneness to natural disasters, the extreme openness of their economies and low adaptive capacity. Most of the populations in SIDS live in coastal urban settlements comprising high population densities, which are threatened by expected impacts of climate change and variability such as increased flooding and salinisation of groundwater resources. Given their particular vulnerabilities, climate adaptation investments are being made through both national and international efforts to build the capacity of various sectors and communities to reduce climate risks and associated disasters. The recent Lancet Commission report on Health and Climate Change stresses the need for transformational change if we are to build adaptive capacity of the most vulnerable communities. This will require radical changes, new orientations and ways of understanding and knowing, whilst challenging inequitable structures and processes that deny opportunities for the most vulnerable. However, within the nexus of human health and climate change adaptation, there has been limited consideration and understanding of the role of Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) in reducing the vulnerability of communities. This presentation will argue for the need to look beyond a single intellectual stream and acknowledge the value of multicultural knowledge streams if we are to address the challenges of climate change and meet the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through various case studies, the presentation will explore some of the challenges and opportunities for mainstreaming ILK into health-related climate adaptation and SDG planning efforts in the Pacific Islands.

Dr Natasha Kuruppu is a post-doctoral fellow at UNU-IIGH with a particular research interest in the role of Indigenous and local knowledge for understanding environmental change processes such as climate change and rapid urbanisation. She is a climate change adaptation specialist with a focus on Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Her doctoral thesis, which was completed at the Environmental Change Institute at the University of Oxford, England, examined the interactions between climate change and water management systems in both urban and rural settings in the Micronesian atoll nation of Kiribati. Since then, Natasha has continued to lead climate adaptation research projects in Australia which have focused on adaptation related to local government, small business (SME) sector, health systems in the Pacific and community adaptation in Sydney, Australia. Natasha is also a current International Social Science Council Fellow in Urbanization; focusing on the interactions between urbanisation and climate adaptation in Pacific Islands. She recently completed a project for the International Geosphere Biosphere Program (Future Earth) looking at the needs of SIDS classified as Least Developed Countries under global environmental change. Natasha is an Associate at the Institute for Sustainable Futures – University of Technology Sydney, Australia



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