



Center for Social Development

GEORGE WARREN BROWN  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



Washington University in St. Louis



# **Create Social Responses to a Changing Environment**

Lawrence A. Palinkas, Ph.D.

**Policy Conference for the Grand Challenges for  
Social Work**

September 15, 2016

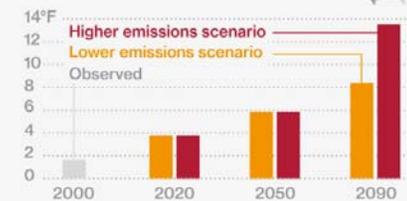


# Global Climate Change

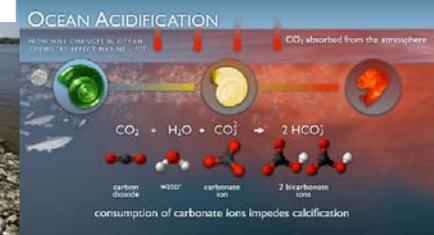


- Increase in world average temperature by 2100 from 1.5 to 5.8°C.
- Rising sea levels in the range of 0.26 to .98m thereby inundating low-lying areas and developing nations such as Tuvalu, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Maldives
- More intense and more frequent extreme precipitation events over most of the mid-latitude land masses and wet tropical regions
- Decrease in mean precipitation in many mid-latitude and subtropical dry regions, leading to drought conditions, increased risk of wildfires, and rising water insecurity.
- A significant decline in ocean ph levels and marine life as a food source.

Predicted temperature rise



Sources: U.S. Global Change Research Center, msnbc data graphics





# Urbanization and environmental risk

- The majority of the U.S. population is already urban dwelling; by 2050, 90% of Americans will live in cities (United Nations Environment Programme, 2014).
- One third of the world's urban population lives in informal settlements in environmentally marginal locations.
- Urbanization frequently has devastating environmental impacts on natural ecologies
- Deteriorating urban infrastructure can lead to exposure to lead and other household hazards like mold, mildew, and pests.

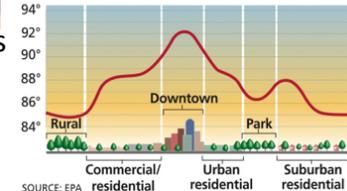


A Flint, Michigan mother boils water due to lead contamination in the city's water supply. —New York Times, 2015



## URBAN HEAT ISLANDS

Heat islands are often over dense developments but may be broken up by vegetated sections within an urban area.





# Environmental change impacts



- Economic Impacts
  - Loss of income and livelihoods
  - Disaster-related damage to housing and infrastructure
  - Increased income disparities
- Health Impacts
  - Increase in vector-borne illness (Zika)
  - Lead poisoning (Flint, MI)
  - Increased health disparities
- Population Displacement
  - 500 - 600 million people are at risk from displacement by climate change (EJF, 2009).
  - Relocation of entire communities in U.S. (Shismaref, AK; Isle de St. Jean, LA)
  - Increased residential disparities



# Social Work Grand Challenge



- Disaster preparedness and response
- Refugee resettlement and assistance
- Community-level organizing and development aimed at strengthening local and regional capacity to respond to the impacts of global environmental change, particularly in urban settings;
- Targeted policy, advocacy, and practice engagement in efforts to address underlying causes of environmental change.



# Policy Recommendations

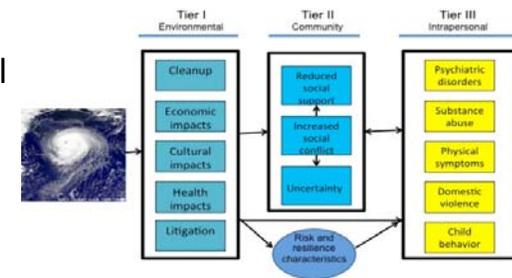


1. Adopt and implement an evidence-based approach to disaster risk reduction
2. Develop policies targeting environmentally induced migration and population displacement
3. Strengthen equity-oriented urban resilience policies and proactively engage marginalized communities in adaptation planning



# Update on Grand Challenge

- Dissemination of Grand Challenge
  - International Conference on Social Work in Health and Mental Health – Singapore
  - SSWR – Washington DC
  - CSWE – Denver CO
  - International Social Work Conference - Manila
  - 6<sup>th</sup> European Conference for Social Work Research – Lisbon
  - 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Global Health Conference-2016 – Kaoshung, Taiwan
  - People and Climate Change: Vulnerability, Adaptation Social Justice – St Louis
- Disaster Preparedness and Response
  - Trainings in South Korea and Philippines using 3-tier model
  - Modeling of health impacts of disasters on Gulf Coast
- Partnerships
  - International Rescue Committee
  - Ayala Foundation



## Seattle leads the nation in rent growth

From June 2015 to June 2016, monthly rents in Seattle soared four times faster than the national average.

TOP TEN CITIES FOR RENT GROWTH IN PAST YEAR



Source: Zillow

