

Kelman, I, J. West, L.O. Næss, and G.K. Hovelsrud. 2008. "Many Strong Voices against the climate change crisis". Disaster and Social Crisis Research Network Electronic Newsletter, no. 33 (January-March), pp. 4-5.

Full text:

As climate change continues to take a toll on communities, new and creative efforts are also continuing to determine how to deal with this long-term disaster and its spin-off effects. One project, Many Strong Voices <http://www.manystrongvoices.org> , joins communities from around the arctic and from the 51 Small Island Developing States (SIDS; <http://www.sidsnet.org> ) in recognition of the similar vulnerabilities to climate change which both regions experience.

Many Strong Voices, launched in December 2005 by the United Nations Environment Programme, brings together arctic and SIDS participants to share and enhance knowledge and expertise about, and to collaboratively devise strategic solutions to, climate change challenges. Those involved include international organisations, government agencies, nongovernmental organisations, indigenous peoples' organisations, research institutes, communities, and individuals whose livelihoods are strongly tied to sustainable management of natural resources.

The programme's aims are to:

- Assist in strengthening these regions' role in negotiations on greenhouse gases and on climate change adaptation.
- Design a comprehensive climate change vulnerability and adaptation assessment across the SIDS.
- Raise awareness about the effects of climate change on vulnerable regions.
- Increase understanding of needs and solutions.
- Motivate action on addressing and preventing climate change's adverse impacts.

The focus is catalysing local action across the arctic and the SIDS, recognising the important and complementary contributions of sound research, outreach, and lobbying. While external and top-down interventions and exchanges are useful for supporting local action, the most effective manner of reducing vulnerability and living with climate change is through community-based initiatives. Many Strong Voices provides the inspiration, impetus, and opportunity to build and maintain community-based processes related to climate change which are solidly based on sustainability principles, policies, and practices.

Throughout, one important theme has been recognising that climate change is just one challenge and opportunity amongst many others facing these regions. Other ongoing concerns include rapid rural-to-urban migration, population growth, the potential loss of languages and cultures through emigration, gender and minority inequities, manipulation by and dependence on rich governments and corporations, and degradation of natural resources.

These multiple stressors must be considered simultaneously to ensure that tackling one problem, such as climate change, does not create or exacerbate other problems emerging from the myriad of social and environmental crises that challenge these communities. Dealing with climate change should contribute to addressing these other issues and vice versa.

With such comprehensiveness, cooperation, and exchange, Many Strong Voices will be heard, leading to action locally and globally for positive change.