



Many Strong Voices for Tackling Climate Change — As climate change continues to take a toll on the world, especially less affluent countries and with the worst impacts affecting island 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 www.manystrongvoices.org, joins coastal communities from around the Arctic with those from the 51 Small Island, Developing States Project (SIDS; www.sidsnet.org).



Many Strong Voices was launched in December 2005 by the **United Nations Environment Programme** to join Arctic and SIDS communities for sharing and enhancing knowledge of and action on climate change challenges, within wider disaster, environment, and sustainability contexts. Parties involved include international organisations, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, indigenous peoples' organisations, research institutes, communities and individuals.

The project's aims are to:

1. Develop capacity to strengthen the role of these regions in negotiations on reducing greenhouse gases and on climate change adaptation.
2. Raise awareness about the effects and vulnerabilities of climate change in these regions.
3. Increase understanding of needs and solutions, including through research.
4. Motivate action on addressing and preventing climate change's adverse impacts.

The focus is catalyzing local action through the complementary contributions of research, education, and outreach. 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 and community-decided initiatives. Many Strong Voices provides the inspiration, impetus, and opportunity to build and maintain these processes for climate change but 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 the world. Other social and environmental concerns include rapid population migration (especially urbanisation), biodiversity and eco-diversity losses, the potential loss of languages and cultures, gender and minority inequities, erosion of local knowledge and experiences, manipulation by and dependence on rich governments and corporations, unsustainable natural resource extraction, and many forms of environmental pollution.

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 challenges in today's world. 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 positive action for positive change.

By the Many Strong Voices Team

Ilan Kelman (islandvulnerability@yahoo.com)

Oslo, Norway

The Case of Guyana and its Sea Defences



Guyana's main sea defence are the sea walls, large boulders and the mangrove trees which grow along the sea shores.

Hope Beach is situated approximately 10 miles from the capital city of Georgetown on the East Coast Corridor. It is a popular area especially on holidays where several families will visit for picnics. The main sea defence on this beach is the mangroves.

Empirical studies have shown that mangroves once destroyed would not grow back unless they have been replanted and they usually grow towards the land in swampy areas. However, observations have shown the opposite at Hope Beach, the mangroves are now growing more out towards in the sea instead of inwardly. One logical conclusion that could be drawn is that Hope Beach is slowly drying up and causing the mangroves to grow where the right moisture conditions are present.

During the 1980's-1990's, a village known as Plastic City blossomed on the East Bank of the Essequibo River in a swampy area. Plastic City received its name since the houses in that area were initially built from plastic as a form of defence from the rising tide. However, to date there are no longer any plastic houses in that area since as the villagers put it "we moving with de times", all these homes have since been replaced by wooden houses with louver windows. Because of their actions and lack of awareness, they are now caused to change the wood on their homes on a yearly basis since the salty water causes it to rot.

The only form of sea defence in Plastic City are the mangroves and the residents through a lack of knowledge of the importance of the trees as a defence mechanism are cutting down the trees (mangroves) close to their homes on the assumption that they harbour mosquitoes. The removal of the mangroves in this area is making Plastic City more vulnerable and this move is a recipe for disaster since the only form of sea defence has been removed and the first to be affected will be the very people who have chosen to destroy the mangroves.

Guyanese have been removing the first line of sea defence, mangroves, to build resorts and entertainment spots. In the capital City Georgetown, some of the mangroves have been destroyed to build a Resort leading out to the Atlantic Ocean. Others have cut down mangroves because they increase the influx of mosquitoes.

The Government of Guyana are working in collaboration with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) to develop appropriate education programmes to sensitize people about the importance of the mangroves in preserving our sea defences as well as Climate Change and its impact on the global economy and more particularly how it can affect their own lives.

Ladies and gentlemen, participants all, Climate Change is real, we all have to embrace it and the time is now before it is too late.

Other activities like conserving freshwater and turning out the lights, using renewable energy, driving less and walking more, sharing information with our communities, will help our planet, one step at a time. Let us work within the framework of our **Sandwatch groups**, schools, organizations, communities and countries, will make a difference and to begin now to adapt to Climate Change.

Ms. Paula Tulloch (UNESCO), Ms. Allande Johnson, Environmental Teacher, Alana Mann, Saeed Hamid representing St. Roses' High School