

A global responsibility to help vulnerable communities adapt

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For one international community - the 165,000 strong Inuit community dispersed across the Arctic coastline in small, remote coastal settlements in Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Siberia - it is already too late to prevent some of the negative effects of climate change.

James D. Ford from McGill University in Montreal, Canada, is today, Thursday, 28 May, presenting a paper published in IOP Publishing's *Environmental Research Letters*, "Dangerous [climate change](#) and the importance of adaptation for the Arctic's Inuit population," at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences annual conference.

Policy makers and scientists at 'Congress 2009 — Capital Connections: nation, terroir, territoire', will be listening to Ford's research which details why we must all act now to help the Inuit and other vulnerable communities adapt.

Increasing sea levels, coastal erosion, changing sea ice conditions, and permafrost thaw threatens municipal infrastructure, such as transport links, the survival of Inuit subsistence hunting and fishing activities, and the fabric of Inuit culture and society. With many scientists agreeing that we are near to or beyond the "tipping point" for climate change, there is still a need to reduce [Greenhouse Gas emissions](#), but we must now focus on how we can help those who are going to be hit hard by climate changes already well under way.

Ford's paper provides a summary of the latest work in adaptation science

and concludes with the need to set up a vulnerable people's adaptation fund. He states that it can only work if support is provided by the largest state actors. Short term investment now can help vulnerable peoples prevent risk but also increase preparedness to reduce susceptibility.

As one of the first regions to experience climate change, the international community's response to the Arctic communities' crisis will set an important global precedent, especially as Inuit communities share many characteristics with developing nations around the world, many of which are also at risk, such as limited access to health services, high unemployment and concerns regarding basic services like the quality of drinking water.

As Ford writes, "For the Arctic's Inuit population, adaptation offers a tangible way in which dangerous climate change can be potentially avoided and livelihoods protected. Realistically, it offers the only means of achieving these goals given the absence of political will globally to stabilize emissions at a level that will prevent significant change in the Arctic climate system, or even the possibility of preventing such change."

More information: stacks.iop.org/ERL/4/024006

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