

Vulnerability of Rural Communities to Climate Change; a Social Work perspective.

In the context of human induced global warming, climate change is expected to affect human and natural systems such as water, agriculture and human health (McCarthy et al., 2001). Adaptation to climate change has become a priority issue, nevertheless, there is still limited understanding of human vulnerability and adaptation to climate change. This topic is intimately related to well being and Social Work has an important role to play in order to contribute to how rural communities cope with the changes forecast. I will present data from the vulnerability assessment of the community of Taber, AB to climate change; showing the degree to which Taber is susceptible to or unable to cope with conditions that will/is affecting sustainability. The components of vulnerability are exposure and sensitivity to risk and adaptive capacity (Adger, 2003, p. 32). The data collection consisted of 30 semi-structured interviews. This work is part of a larger comparative study of rural communities in two river basins, the South Saskatchewan River Basin (SSRB) in western Canada and the Elqui River Basin (ERB) of north-central Chile which seeks to contribute to "improve the way in which institutions manage natural resources, especially water resources, in the context of new climatic conditions and reduce the vulnerability of the regional rural population" (IACC, 2006, P.1). The study will also improve our understanding of the human aspects of adaptation to climate change from a Social Work background.