Addressing Climate Change’s Impacts on the Environment-Health Nexus Through Community Collective Action in Sitka, Alaska

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Project background

- Climate change influencing the environment-health nexus
  - Changing food systems, conservation, and disaster risk reduction
- Community collective action in Sitka, Alaska
  - Often non-profit and informal
  - Classic collective action problems
Methods

• Citizen science and non-profit community-based groups
• Semi-structured qualitative interviews
• To understand groups’ activities, operations, challenges, and successes; and their views and interests regarding climate change, the environment and health
Ongoing results

Rely on hunting and fishing as food supply
- 15-20% indigenous: parallel governance structures
- Moving animals -> Need for revising governance regimes

Increase in landslides and mudslides
- More property being destroyed
- Incomplete data -> difficulties determining causes
- Ethics

Photo by Jalal Awan – part of project team
Ongoing results

Collective action successful in:
- Providing food
- Conservation of certain species
- Monitoring local environmental changes

Factors for success
- Bottom-up approach
- Strong leadership
- Community engagement:
  - Relevance of problems to community
  - Being known in the community
Ongoing results

Challenges:
• Funding
• Climate change deniers
• COVID-19
  • Higher demand for food supplies
  • Fewer volunteers
  • Exacerbated existing divisions in the community

Photo by Jalal Awan (part of project team): Sitka Trial
Interpretation

Responsibility in addressing environmental issues
- Formal institutions
- Individuals
- Climate change not considered as overly important

Culture of volunteerism

Imbalance in participation
- Few key individuals disproportionately contributing to collective action, often involved in multiple organizations
- Changing demographics

Sustainability
- Limited sustainability of collective action
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