

## EXPLORING SOCIAL VULNERABILITY IN A CHANGING CLIMATE: LESSONS LEARNED FROM BUILDING RESILIENCE IN LOS ANGELES

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Southern Californian communities are facing two unprecedented challenges simultaneously – preparing for a wide range of hazards that are exacerbated by climate change, and significant population growth. Southern California will lead the state's growth, growing by 8 million to a total population over 31 million by 2050, with almost 12 million projected to reside in Los Angeles (L.A.) County alone. A growing population puts enormous pressure on public infrastructure, resources and services; pressure that is compounded during extreme events.

Those responsible for emergency preparedness and response, climate change adaptation, or long-term resilience and sustainability must consider one common factor – people. As past events have shown, natural disasters do not affect each of us in the same ways. As the IPCC's Fifth Assessment pointed out, some populations, particularly those that experience social inequities, are less able to prepare, respond to and recover from extreme events.

In California, a number of studies focus on better understanding social vulnerability in the context of a changing climate. In 2011, USC Sea Grant and Susanne Moser Research & Consulting teamed up to examine vulnerabilities to sea level rise in the City of Los Angeles, a project known as AdaptLA. The social vulnerability assessment, led by Susanne Moser and Julia Ekstrom, found that there are coastal communities in L.A. that average some of the lowest income levels in L.A. County. The assessment provided recommendations to the City to begin to identify adaptation and communication strategies that target and engage these populations to build community resilience. The team collaborated again in 2015 with L.A. City's Emergency Management Department to conduct a training for community leaders to explore key dimensions of social vulnerability, and how to use social vulnerability assessments in emergency management, climate preparedness, and adaptation planning. The City of L.A.'s Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is scheduled for an update in 2016, per federal requirements. The L.A. Emergency Management Department has engaged USC Sea Grant to ensure climate change considerations are integrated in the assessment of hazards, development of mitigation priorities and strategies, and stakeholder and public engagement process.

The purpose of this training session is to explore strategies for addressing social vulnerability concerns in community planning and public outreach and engagement. Examining community strengths and weaknesses through the lens of social vulnerability can become an empowering and creative way to engage the public and build cohesion. In this session, we will share lessons learned from working with the City of L.A. and other regional stakeholders to examine social vulnerability in the context of a changing climate and engage session participants in exploring opportunities for doing something similar in their own locales.