

## WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

Climate change refers to the long-term shifts in temperature and weather patterns that cause intense global environmental changes including droughts, flooding, extreme weather, rising temperatures, wildfires, and declining biodiversity. These natural changes have human and social consequences.

## HOW DOES CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT SOCIAL ISSUES IN URBAN AREAS?

### Poverty and Marginalized Identities

Marginalized, BIPOC and low-income communities are currently suffering disproportionately from the effects of climate change, and these inequities will continue to grow. The cost of living is expected to increase as resource availability declines and global supply chains are disrupted. Low-income neighbourhoods are less likely to be climate resilient because they are often geographically situated on floodplains and areas with less green infrastructure. Canadians experiencing homelessness will face challenges due to their exposure to extreme weather and increasingly unaffordable resources.

### Environmental Pollution

Climate change will worsen exposure to environmental pollution as climate disruptions shift the movement of contaminants in the natural environment. Unsheltered and vulnerable communities are more likely to be exposed to these contaminants, with subsequent adverse health effects. Social purpose organizations meeting the needs of these populations should anticipate an increase in health-related issues, and community health organizations should anticipate an increase in clients.

### Mental Health

The escalating impacts of climate change pose a threat to the psychosocial well-being of individuals. Fear of environmental cataclysm can cause adverse mental distress, and extreme weather events and disasters lead to higher incidences of psychological trauma, anxiety, depression, PTSD, and increased suicide rates. Social purpose organizations responding to extreme weather events should consider the psychosocial impacts these events may have on individuals.

### Access to Food

Food access in Canada is expected to decline due to climate change. Globally, extreme weather and worsening growing conditions will affect the availability and affordability of food, particularly in urban areas. Social purpose organizations addressing food insecurity should expect increased demand for their services and an associated increase in operating costs.

### Climate Migrants

Canada is expected to experience a rise in migration to urban areas by people who have left their countries of origin due to sudden or gradual climate-related disasters. Upon arrival to Canada, immigrants may experience higher rates of poverty. Accordingly, social purpose organizations meeting the needs of new immigrants should anticipate an increase in the size and diversity of their client base.

## LINK TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are a framework through which to understand the intersectionality of climate change and social issues. At their core, the SDGs recognize that planetary and human well-being are inextricably linked. Multiple Sustainable Development Goals are addressed by recognizing the intersection between climate change and social issues. Accomplishing Goals 1 (No poverty), 2 (Zero hunger), 3 (Good health and well-being), 5 (Gender equality), 6 (Clean water and sanitation), and 10 (Reduce inequalities) will require actions toward Goals 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) and 13 (Climate action).

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL PURPOSE ORGANIZATIONS

- 1** Embed climate change considerations into core strategies by analyzing how practices and clients will be affected, creating a green team, and publicly sharing plans and targets
- 2** Predict an increase in operating costs and seek additional capital sources from environmental funding programs or corporations looking to meet ESG targets
- 3** Develop a climate change mitigation framework to lower own carbon footprint, engage in green procurement of goods and services, and educate the community members
- 4** Implement climate change adaptation strategies, including a CCA plan, green infrastructure, and extreme weather plans
- 5** Collaborate with local interdisciplinary actors (such as environmental networks or schools) to mutually benefit from the community's funds, resources, and knowledge
- 6** Investigate utilizing food rescue programs and community food gardens, and prioritize seasonal crops and meatless meals
- 7** Subsidize public transit, provide bike and electric vehicle infrastructure, facilitate ride-share programs, and promote active transportation
- 8** Prioritize leadership and education for BIPOC community members while increasing community mental health services
- 9** Advocate for environmental policies that bring social benefits to the client base of the organization

