

Urban poor populations to be hardest hit by flooding due to climate change

Worldbank.org

Washington, May 4, 2011 – Andrew Steer, Special Envoy for Climate Change, World Bank Group today issued the following statement on the new report by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program, the scientific arm of the eight-nation Arctic Council.

“The findings in the new report from the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP) are a cause for great concern.

The finding by scientists that sea level rise is now expected to be much higher than previously thought (between 0.9 and 1.6 meters by the end of this century) will affect hundreds of millions of people around the world in both rich and poor countries, but it is the poor who will be particularly badly affected. They tend to live in the lowest lying land, and have the fewest resources to adapt.

In urban areas alone, more than 360 million people, most in developing countries, live in low elevation coastal zones that are threatened by rising sea levels and storm surges.

A recent World Bank report (Climate Risks and Adaptation in Asian Coastal Megacities, October 2010) examined the impact of climate change on Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, and Manila, under a range of different scenarios through to 2050. It concluded that the costs from major flooding events on infrastructure and the economy can be expected to run into the billions of dollars, with urban poor populations the hardest hit.

It is clear that we're not on track in the battle against climate change. Despite ongoing efforts to cut back greenhouse gases, we are still on a path for a temperature rise much greater than the 2C maximum that nations set for themselves in Cancun last year.

Climate change through all of its impacts -- sea level rise, rising temperatures, more extreme weather events, and disruptions to the hydrological cycle -- poses a major and growing threat, undermining the good progress in reducing poverty over recent years.”