Many Strong Voices background note prepared for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs by CICERO in connection with UNFCCC COP 13 meetings in Bali.

Small island states are arguably some of the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Reasons for high vulnerability include, among others:

- High population densities on small land masses in areas
- Frequent extreme weather events
- Often poorly developed infrastructure
- High dependency on marine resources sensitive to climate change
- High exposure to economic and demographic changes such as economic liberalization and migration.1

Stresses from climate change can be critical for communities dependent on natural resources: "*Climate change has an impact on almost every aspect of our lives. Most of our rural communities are still very dependent on natural resources such as fisheries, agriculture, or forestry to earn a living, but because of climate change, these resources are becoming scarcer*." Taito Nakalevu, South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

Grenada illustrates the vulnerability of small islands:

In less than 8 hours in 2004 hurricane Ivan destroyed more than 80% of the island's nutmeg trees - a major source of income. Further: 90% of the hotel guest rooms were destroyed, equivalent to 29% of GDP. It is estimated that this hurricane alone, lasting less than 8 hours, has set the country back at least 10 years in development.[1]

The MSV programme focuses on shared concerns of Arctic peoples and people living in SIDS.
Important here is social, poltical, cultural and economic aspects – encompassing a way of life:
"*What is at stake here is not just the extinction of animals but the extinction of Inuit as a hunting culture. Climate change in the Arctic is a human issue, a family issue, a community issue, and an issue of cultural survival. The joining of circumpolar peoples with Pacific Island and Caribbean States is surely part of the answer in addressing these issues. Many small voices can make a loud noise.…"* Sheila Watt-Cloutier, Past President, Inuit Circumpolar Conference

[1] Mimura, N., L. Nurse, R.F. McLean, J. Agard, L. Briguglio, P. Lefale, R. Payet and G. Sem, 2007: Small islands. *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, M.L. Parry, O.F. Canziani, J.P. Palutikof, P.J. van der Linden and C.E. Hanson, Eds., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 687-716.

It must not be forgotten that people everywhere have immense local knowledge and capacities: they are not helpless victims.

The island Niue in the Pacific, one of the smallest countries in the world, was hit by cyclone Heta in 2006, with wind speeds up to 296 km/hour and waves of more than 50 metres in height.
The cyclone caused great economic and non-economic damage, and left many people traumatized. Much international aid was provided, but research has shown that most of the work to help people was done by the islanders themselves, using their own formal and informal structures.
It also showed that people of Niue are determined to stay and rebuild their lives on the island, contrary to what many thought would mean complete abandonment of the island.[2]

- Climate change is happening
- It is felt more severely at the local level
- Adaptation happens at the local level
- It is happening in the context of other social, economic, political and environmental changes
- Policy relevant interdisciplinary research, like the MSV, is necessary
- Focus on both adaptation and mitigation in important
- Consider opportunities as well as challenges

Climate change in the northern regions has a number of consequences such as:

- More fish and new fish species
- Possibilities for agricultural expansion
- Increased shipping through the Northern Sea Route and the Northwest Passage
- Fisheries and oil and gas production in new areas

All of these factors raise a number of issues regarding access, environmental concerns, livelihood, and international security issues.

Indigenous knowledge and observations provide an important source of information about climate change. This knowledge, consistent with scientific research, indicates that substantial changes have already occurred

Many indigenous peoples depend on hunting polar bear, walrus, seals, and caribou, herding reindeer, fishing, and gathering, not only for food and to support the local economy, but also as the basis for cultural and social identity.

"Nowadays the winters are much warmer than they used to be, snows melt earlier in the springtime. Lakes, rivers, and bogs freeze much later in the autumn. Occasionally during winter time it rains. We never expected this; we could not be ready for this. It is very strange… The cycle of the yearly calendar

[2] Barnett, J. and H. Ellemor, 2007. Niue after Cyclone Heta. *The Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 22 (1), 3-4.

has been disturbed greatly and this affects the reindeer herding negatively for sure…" (Sitat fra russisk reindriftssame)

Changes in species' ranges, availability, and access; a perceived reduction in weather predictability, and travel safety in changing ice and weather conditions present serious challenges to human health, food security and cultural identity.

Summary:

The Many Strong Voices programme bridges the farthest reaches of the world to bring together the peoples of the *Arctic* and *Small Island Developing States* (SIDS)

- These peoples face some of the most potentially devastating impacts of climate change, from loss of livelihoods and cultures to loss of land. The two regions have been singled out by the IPCC IV reports this year as being particularly vulnerable to climate change effects.

Challenges shared by partner communities include:

- relocation of communities away from coastal areas due to rising seas and frequent storm surges
- the human and economic impacts of changes to the marine and freshwater resources upon which Arctic and SIDS communities depend
- threats to cultural survival and ways of life