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Susana Adamo
CIESIN
Columbia University

Why Demographic Data are not Up to the Challenge of Measuring Climate Risks, and What to do about it

This paper identifies and proposes solutions to three challenges facing national statistical agencies that wish to help measure climate impacts, vulnerability and adaptation. (1) National census units are not well-delineated in geographic space, making it very difficult to locate human populations with respect to climate risks; this is especially problematic concerning coastlines and sea-level rise risks. (2) Inter-annual change in the spatial distribution of population is almost impossible to characterize with precision, because of incommensurate administrative boundaries across censuses. (3) Intra-annual variation in population distribution is not systematically tracked, making it hard to characterize exposure to highly variable climate risks.