

# **Collaborating for Resilience: Reaching the Most Vulnerable Populations**

Local Solutions:  
Northeast Climate Preparedness Conference  
Manchester, NH May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014

# My Background

- Master's Research- "Race Vulnerability and Differential Impacts: Prioritizing Social Justice in Climate Change Adaptation"
- ISC- Resilient Vermont
- Center for Whole Communities- "building individual and organizational capacity to work across differences to solve social and environmental problems"

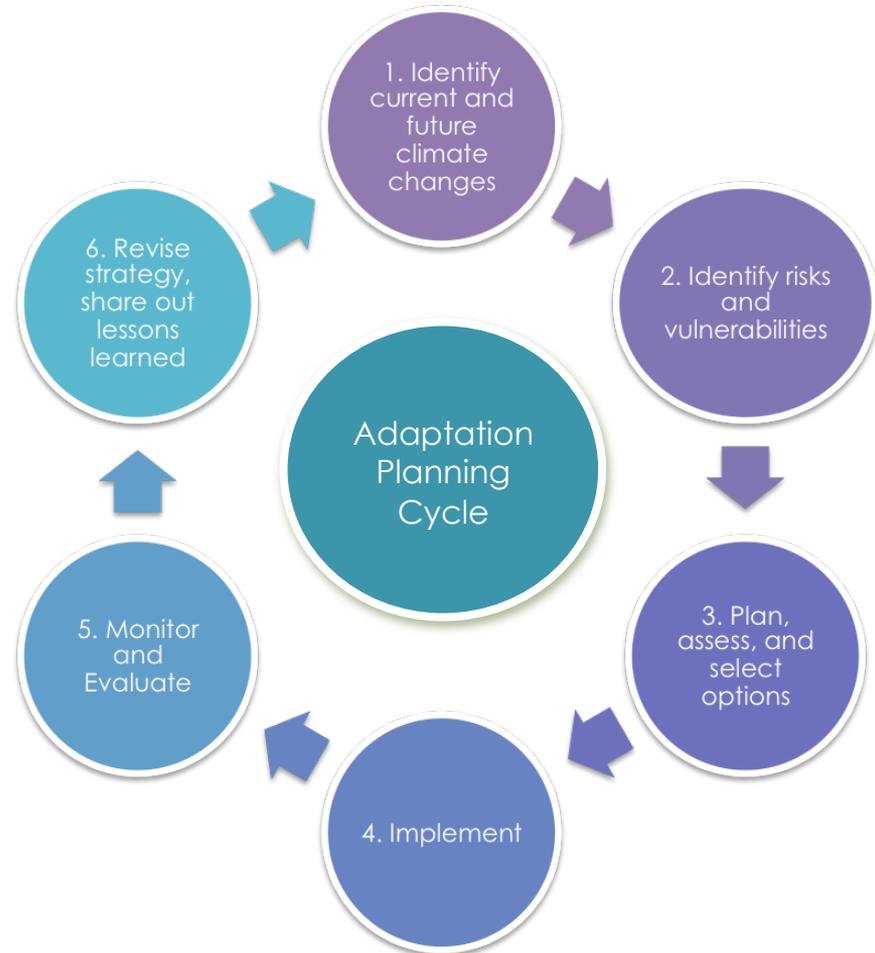


# Adaptation Cycle

Step 2 addresses exposure to risks

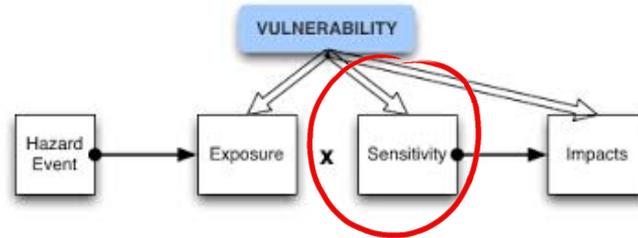
i.e. living in a flood zone

But it doesn't mean that we've addressed the needs of socially vulnerable communities



# Social Vulnerability

A higher sensitivity and lower relative capacity to absorb stresses due to social factors



Because of their lower adaptive capacity, socially vulnerable populations experience **disproportionate impacts**

# Factors Affecting Climate Vulnerability

- ✧ Access to air conditioning
- ✧ Education level
- ✧ Place of birth
- ✧ Impervious areas
- ✧ Residents in institutions
- ✧ Limited English households
- ✧ Vehicle free households
- ✧ Race/Ethnicity
- ✧ Poverty
- ✧ Renter-occupied housing
- ✧ Age (Over 65 and living alone)
- ✧ Tree canopy cover
- ✧ Under age 18
- ✧ Unemployment
- ✧ Outdoor employment
- ✧ Pregnancy
- ✧ Food Access
- ✧ Youth fitness levels

# Why prioritize the needs of vulnerable populations?

- Lower resilience to climate impacts
- Ethical imperative
- Address historic patterns of marginalization
- Many are people of color, who will be the majority of the population by 2043

If we *don't* focus on vulnerable populations, adaptation efforts could exacerbate inequalities...

# Why is Race Such a Big Factor?

Disproportionate outcomes are due to many factors:

- **Health factors:** (i.e. health care access, pollution exposure, discrimination in health care delivery)
- **Socioeconomic factors-** poverty, rate of car ownership (ability to evacuate/ get to a cooling center), insurance coverage (ability to bounce back)
- **Spatial factors-** living in the inner-city, lack of tree cover

**In L.A. African Americans are twice as likely to die during a heat wave than the L.A. average**

(Morello-Frosch et al. "The Climate Gap: Inequalities in How Climate Change Hurts Americans and How to Close the Gap." 2009, 11.)

# Institutional Racism



“the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their color, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen in processes, attitudes and behavior which amount to discrimination ... and which disadvantage minority people” (MacPherson, 1999)

“Discrimination against minority groups, both in disaster planning and in society can multiply the effects of an actual disaster on minority groups”  
(World Disaster Report on Discrimination: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2007, 18)

# Barriers to Addressing Equity in Climate Change Adaptation Work

- Complexity of adaption work
- Limited capacity (time, skills, funding)
- Cultural differences, privilege, implicit bias



# **3 Strategies for Prioritizing the Needs of Vulnerable Populations in Climate Change Adaptation**

# 1. Develop Inclusive, Participatory Adaptation Processes

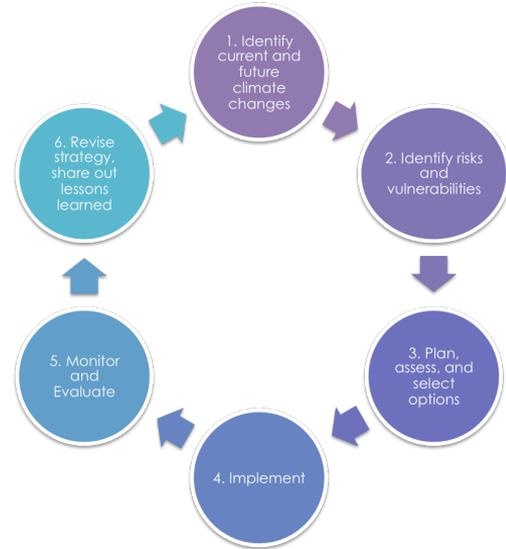
## Involve affected communities in the adaptation process

- Emphasize local decision-making, foster authentic public participation

- Integrate local knowledge

example: Pacific Institute Oakland project checked with community experts and a revised their information to include the “reality on the ground”

- Partner with community-based groups



## 2. Undergo thorough Anti-Racism, Diversity & Inclusion Training

All individuals and organizations working on adaptation including: government and municipal agencies, disaster management and response groups, nonprofits, and private organizations.



- Individual: confront implicit bias, develop cultural competency
- Organizational: develop organizational cultures that are diverse and inclusive

Example: City of Seattle RSJI has trained 8,000 municipal employees

# 3. “Mainstream” Equity as a Central Measure of Success

- Utilize a social vulnerability analysis
  - quantitatively measuring vulnerability factors can support decision-making and prioritization
- Create oversight and accountability
  - A working group or advisory board with power that is looking out for the “justice bottom-line”
- Develop social justice performance targets and criteria
  - Whole Measures for Just Adaptation



# Thank you and keep in touch!

For more information and citation info please see the resource sheet

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