ICARP

INTEGRATED CLIMATE ADAPTATION & RESILIENCY PROGRAM

Technical Advisory Council

Item 5: Vulnerable Communities Platform (VCP) Update
November 17, 2023

Background

Reducing risks from climate change requires increasing the resilience of communities and people to withstand and recover from climate-related disruptions, and to learn and adapt in the face of this change. However, some communities are better positioned to respond, recover, and adjust as these changes occur, while others – particularly low-income Black, Brown, and Tribal communities – are more vulnerable and experience disproportionate impacts.

Factors beyond climate risk exposure itself that contribute to vulnerability include existing inequities caused by institutionalized racism and exclusion, environmental pollution, underinvestment and lack of access to services or opportunities, substandard living conditions, and chronic health or mental illnesses. These factors contribute not only to a person or community's heightened vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, but also their ability to adapt.

In 2018, the TAC adopted a definition of climate vulnerability to guide actions to advance equity. ICARP staff developed a resource guide, with guidance from the TAC, on publicly-available tools and resources that may be used to define vulnerable communities in an adaptation context.

Currently, no tools holistically display all the information needed to understand who is most vulnerable to climate change in California. Most tools do not include detailed future climate impacts, focus on a very limited number of factors specific to one topic (such as health or environmental issues), or lack comprehensive data coverage across the state.

Vulnerable Communities Platform (VCP)

Guided by the ICARP TAC definition and feedback from environmental justice and equity organizations, OPR is actively developing a Vulnerable Communities Platform (VCP) to assist community practitioners, government staff, and others in understanding and visualizing the underlying factors that drive climate vulnerability and to make informed adaptation planning, policy, and investment decisions. The Vulnerable Communities Platform will serve as an aggregator, integrating existing climate vulnerability related tools and datasets in a single interface that is easy-to-use and avoids duplication. The team also recognizes the value of the perspectives and insights that vulnerable communities can

provide in how they are identified and represented. The information on the platform will be grounded in community lived experiences through a collaborative and stakeholder-informed development process,

A central use of the VCP will be providing value to applicants seeking funding from ICARP, SGC, and other state grant programs that currently prioritize climate vulnerable communities as well as to additional agencies that seek to incorporate climate vulnerability based prioritization in their programs. The VCP will also connect with the other tools and resources maintained by the Climate Services team (e.g., Adaptation Clearinghouse and Cal-Adapt), in addition to the technical assistance services offered, to support the goal of providing comprehensive and holistic climate data and information in planning, policy, and investments.

Update on VCP Activities in 2023

Building on initial scoping work undertaken in 2021, VCP development got fully underway in early 2023. In the past few months, the VCP team has:

- Developed a demo version of the VCP to guide conversations with stakeholders;
- Regularly met with nonprofit and community based organization representatives of the Community Resilience Working Group to solicit input on platform design and the framework for community engagement;
- Gathered feedback on the VCP framework and demo from regional and community based groups (ex. Southern California Climate Resilience Leadership Group, Los Angeles Regional Climate Collaborative (LARC), Inland Southern California Climate Collaborative (ISC3));
- Engaged with academic, local government, and community representatives during feedback sessions at the Fifth Assessment Regional Workshops;
- Ongoing coordination with ICARP and SGC climate-related grant programs to ensure the VCP will meet the data needs of future grant applicants; and
- Partnered with ESRI to provide technical assistance for the development of the first version of the VCP.

Implementation Plan for 2023 into 2024

Staff have identified four main planned features for the VCP based on the needs expressed by representatives of community based organizations, local governments, agencies, and academics.

The team will work with ESRI to build the first version of the tool for release in early 2024, which will include the following four features:

1. **Hazard and Sensitivity Maps:** Displays climate hazard data (extreme temperature, SLR/flood, and wildfire) and the full suite of intersecting physical (built and environmental), social, political, and/ or economic factors that exacerbate climate

vulnerability. Allows users to tailor their search to isolate the factors that determine "where" and "why" a community is vulnerable to climate. Users will be connected to CalAdapt for more technical climate data.

2. **Community Climate Resilience Assessments:** Conducted in partnership with local community organizations in communities with specific vulnerabilities that are not captured well in the quantitative data. Will display on-the-ground community experiences with climate change and assets that have helped them cope and adapt.

3. **Tool Compilation:** Houses a collection of existing topic-specific tools related to climate vulnerability (ex. Healthy Places Index, EJScreen, CalEnviroScreen, CEJST/CMRA, etc.). Provides guidance on the use of each tool and allows users to compare these tools for their communities of interest to identify which ones provide the best supporting information to tell their stories and helps align vulnerability mapping efforts across the spectrum of state and federal funding opportunities and adaptation priorities.

4. **Resource Springboard:** Curated selection of climate vulnerability related resources. Examples include overviews of major policy requirements, links to state and local planning documents, directories of community based organizations and regional collaboratives working in the field of climate vulnerability, etc. Users will be connected to the Adaptation Clearinghouse for additional resources.

Discussion Questions

- What current or anticipated events or engagement – especially with community based organizations and local governments – would be good opportunities for the VCP's continuing engagement with stakeholders?
- Are there any topics or sectors we should prioritize as we look to integrate tools and data into the VCP?