Advancing Climate Equity in Southeast Florida

Climate Change is a Threat Multiplier

Climate change is one of the most critical and complex challenges that humanity has ever faced. It functions as a "threat multiplier" – increasing individuals' exposure and sensitivity to extreme weather, flooding, sea level rise, and extreme heat, thus reducing their capacity to respond to future climate impacts. This multilplier effect is particularly burdensome for, and at times disproportionately borne by people of color, due to structural and institutional forms of racism, such as housing discrimination and segregation, and individuals with low wealth or limited income.

Climate change impacts are also magnified for the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, youth, and incarcerated individuals. Individuals with multiple vulnerability factors such as being a person of color, a non-English speaker, or low-income, experience cascading climate impacts more acutely.

Understanding Explicit and Implicit Bias

To create equitable climate solutions, local governments must recognize and understand how existing policies and processes are explicitly and implicitly biased to certain populations. By understanding the implications of climate threats and solutions for all members of the community, and encouraging authentic dialogue with groups made vulnerable to climate change, local governments can create effective policies that equally distribute benefits and burdens, build resilience and trust, and promote additional community-wide co-benefits. Without careful design, equity-blind climate action can result in:

- Physical and cultural displacement
- Income and wealth inequality
- Concentrated neighborhood disinvestment
- Political disenfranchisement
- Low social capital
- High rates of mortality
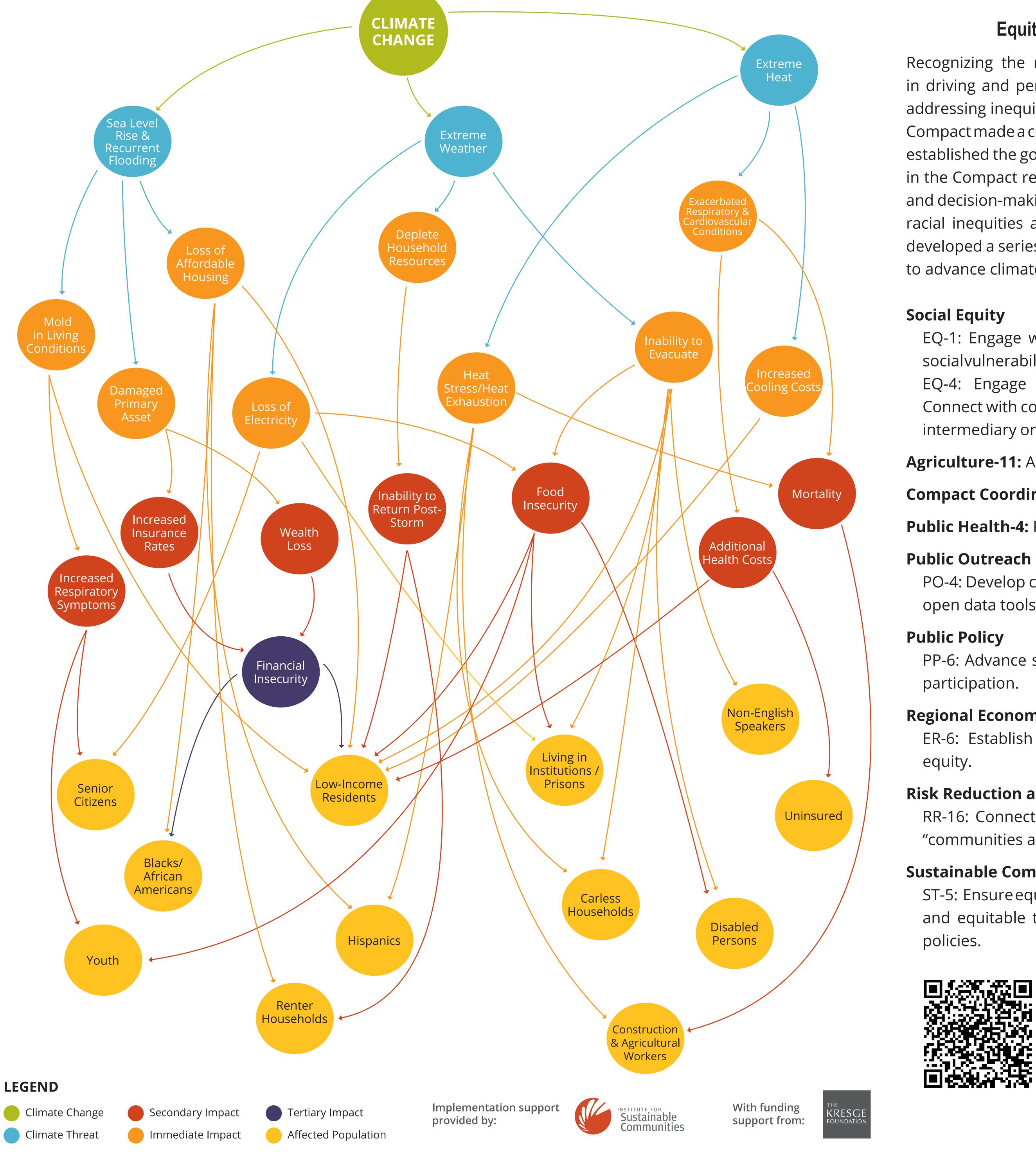- Regressive taxation

A Path to Equitable Climate Action

To guide equitable climate action, local governments should consider[1]:

- If the policy or initiative reflects the knowledge, priorities, and needs of the communities and people who are most affected by climate change.
- Who benefits and who is negatively affected by the policy or initiative.
- If the existing disparities and disproportionate impacts of climate change will be lessened or made worse by the policy or initiative.
- If the most impacted communities will be involved in the shaping of the initiative or policy solution.
- If existing social, economic and political inequalities in the community are helped or exacerbated by the policy or initiative.

1   Adapted from Our Communities, Our Power Toolkit, NAACP, 2019

Climate Impacts & Inequities

Equity Recommendations from RCAP 2.0

Recognizing the role that institutions and structural systems play in driving and perpetuating inequity, as well as in ameliorating and addressing inequities, the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact made a commitment to social equity. In RCAP 2.0, the Compact established the goal to "guide and support municipalities and counties in the Compact region to create equitable climate policies, programs, and decision-making processes that consider local socioeconomic and racial inequities and ensure all can participate and prosper." RCAP developed a series of tangible actions that local governments can take to advance climate equity.

Social Equity
EQ-1: Engage with high-vulnerability populations; EQ-2: Integrate social vulnerability data; EQ-3: Support equitable public infrastructure; EQ-4: Engage leaders in high-vulnerability populations; EQ-5: Connect with communities through local leaders; EQ-6: Partner with intermediary organizations; EQ-7: Train government staff on equity.

Agriculture-11: Assess health risk to workers.

Compact Coordination-6: Create an equity advisory group.

Public Health-4: Reduce extreme heat exposure.

Public Outreach
PO-4: Develop communications per community needs; PO-5: Create open data tools; PO-6: Co-create community responsive strategies.

Public Policy
PP-6: Advance social and economic equity; PP-8: Encourage public participation.

Regional Economic Resilience
ER-6: Establish equitable investment strategies; ER-9: Strive for equity.

Risk Reduction and Emergency Management
RR-16: Connect with high-vulnerability populations; RR-17: Define "communities at risk."

Sustainable Communities and Transportation
ST-5: Ensure equitable outcomes for policy; ST-12: Design sustainable and equitable transportation systems; ST-14: Adopt social equity policies.

Scan the QR code and let us know how you would like support in advancing social equity in your community's climate action planning.

LEGEND

- Climate Change
- Climate Threat
- Secondary Impact
- Immediate Impact
- Tertiary Impact
- Affected Population

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