

5. Fair funding to protect the planet and life

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Key connections between climate
justice, feminist economics, resource
justice and degrowth

5.1. Introduction

12 In *A Feminist and Decolonial Global Green New Deal: Principles, Paradigms and Systemic Transformations* (2021), Bhumika Muchhala explains: “A feminist lens rooted in political ecology entails a shift from viewing women as individuals, to gender as a system structuring power relations. Structural feminism is foundational to creating feminist alternatives for climate justice, [...] and] advances a feminist economics framing that centers the care economy.”

13 Sanam Amin (2024): *System Change for People and Planet: Decolonial Feminist Proposals on Climate, Debt and Care*, WEDO.

14 Emilia Reyes (2024): “Directions of Degrowth: The Global North, harmful sectors and concentration of wealth.” *Degrowth for Global Justice Primer Series*, #2, WEDO.

15 This “cursed correlation” is further explored in [Chapter 4](#) of this report.

16 Feminist Action Nexus for Economic and Climate Justice (2024): *Towards Economic and Climate Justice: A Feminist Analysis of Critical Trends*, WEDO.

Feminist structural analysis¹², grounded in decades of Global South thought leadership and advocacy, understands the climate crisis as a direct outcome of the current neoliberal economic system¹³. Neoliberalism, heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, and colonialism are **structures and systemic drivers of women’s oppression**, simultaneously exploiting nature and the labor of women, girls and gender-diverse people. **Working towards feminist climate finance**, within a broader multilateral response to the climate crisis, therefore necessitates transforming the extractive economic system that structures our world.

Rich Global North countries have contributed to **92% of the overshoot of the safe fair share of emissions** and 74% of the overshoot of material resource use in the world—almost half of it extracted in the Global South for Global North consumption and use¹⁴. The Global North therefore bears a disproportionate historical and ongoing responsibility for the ecological crisis, while most of the countries on the frontlines of climate crisis are in the Global South¹⁵. Rather than taking responsibility for radical climate action—mitigation, adaptation, and addressing loss and damage—in the Global South, these countries continue to prioritize the expansion of military spending, which further fuels the climate emergency and diverts funds away from climate action and public services¹⁶. This is the exact opposite of what is actually needed to meet the obligations of the Paris Agreement and other recent multilateral commitments: **a reshaping of the international financial, trade and investment systems to ensure adequate fiscal space and economic sovereignty in countries of the Global South.**

17 WEDO (2024): *Five Dimensions of Feminist Climate Finance*.

A feminist vision of climate and economic justice seeks a holistic overhaul of the rules that govern our macroeconomy, including systems of production and consumption, to move from a system centered on extraction and unlimited growth to one that prioritizes care and social protection¹⁷. This structural transformation encompasses a **gender-just transition**, including and beyond a vision for an equitable energy transition away from fossil fuels, alongside a transformative **resource justice and degrowth agenda, demilitarization, reparations** for ecological debt as well as colonialism and enslavement, **debt cancellation**, and **tax justice**.

This paper briefly outlines the rationale and highlights current feminist thinking around each of these dimensions, primarily drawing from the work of Global South feminists at WEDO and allied organizations. Positioning this comprehensive agenda as fundamental to advancing policy coherence worldwide, the paper concludes with a brief overview of what feminist climate finance looks like, as one piece of this vision for structural transformation.

5.2. A gender-just transition – of the whole of our macroeconomy

18 WEDO (2023): *Gender Just Transition: A Path to System Change*.

Grounded in the historical and ongoing analysis and activism of the labour movement, a gender-just transition to renewable energy and sustainable societies must shift power and achieve redistributive justice—rather than simply reallocating economic control from the fossil fuel industry to another hegemonic cluster of corporations. A true just transition must upend and redress capitalist and colonial structures, and recenter communities and countries— and the women, girls, and gender-diverse people within them— particularly in the Global South¹⁸.

19 Ibid

The supply chain of critical minerals is one area demanding a just approach. The growing demand for clean energy and electric vehicles, positioned as part of a transition to renewable energy sources and the batteries required for storage, has led to a “strategic mineral rush” to extract the minerals required to sustain this transition, such as lithium, cobalt, and nickel¹⁹. By 2050, **the demand for key transition minerals is projected to increase by around 500%**, with alarming implications, especially for

communities surrounding proposed extraction sites. **Over 80% of lithium projects are located in Indigenous territories, and often result in displacement and dispossession**, without meaningful benefits in terms of local access to energy²⁰.

20 Feminist Action Nexus for Economic and Climate Justice (2024): *Towards Economic and Climate Justice: A Feminist Analysis of Critical Trends*, WEDO.

Alongside the guarantee of the protection of workers' rights, a just transition entails ensuring environmental and human rights protections are applied to industries with real accountability. Investments in training, education, and mentorship as industries shift and develop must be resourced through the **fair and consistent** taxation of profits, thereby shifting power away from corporate interests. This must go hand-in-hand with the guarantee of health, education, sanitation, and other public services required to fulfill the rights of all, especially women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

5.3. Degrowth and resource justice

21 Emilia Reyes (2024), "Degrowth for Multilateral Activism." *Degrowth for Global Justice Primer Series, #3*, WEDO.

22 Emilia Reyes (2024), "Directions of Degrowth: The Global North, harmful sectors and concentration of wealth." *Degrowth for Global Justice Primer Series, #2*, WEDO.

23 Diyana Yahaya (2021): *A Feminist Agenda for People and Planet: Principles and Recommendations for a Global Feminist Economic Justice Agenda* [Feminist Blueprint for Action], WEDO.

24 Emilia Reyes (2024), "What is Degrowth?" *Degrowth for Global Justice Primer Series, #1*, WEDO.

Rather than replacing one type of extractivism with another, a vision of just transition and broader environmental and economic justice calls for divestment in certain sectors to invest in others, allowing for the preservation of planetary boundaries and the dismantling of colonial patterns²¹. This concept, referred to as **resource justice**, is closely related to **proposals for degrowth**: the radical reorganization of society to equitably downscale production and consumption to reduce societies' extraction of energy and natural resources, as well as their carbon emissions and pollution. **Divesting from fossil fuel industries** is at the center of degrowth proposals, acknowledging the historic and ongoing responsibilities of Global North countries²². Feminist proposals around degrowth call for the restructuring of society, both away from the hegemony of growth and towards the equitable redistribution and prioritization of care work²³. A structural feminist analysis emphasizes the role of the state in shifting both macro-level capitalist and imperialist dynamics as well as reorienting time use and rebalance the sexual/gendered and international division of labour²⁴.

This framing helps explain why conventional systems of ranking countries, especially HDI and GDP, fail to account for the true measures of their global impact both ecologically and economically. Redefining our metrics to incorporate external impact is essential, as evidenced by **the example of Luxembourg in the Coherence Index (INDICO)**. Although

Luxembourg scores highest in the ecological transition (based on its commitment to international environmental treaties, protected areas, and electricity generation from renewable sources), it simultaneously ranks second highest in terms of planetary pressure, due to its high material footprint and CO₂ emissions per capita and consumption. The ironies of our current macroeconomic systems are therefore laid bare—**no matter how well countries are doing at home, global rankings must account for impact on global ecological destruction, climate change, and global economic inequalities arising by their growth trajectories.**

5.4. Demilitarization

Another arena in which the global impact of countries' national policies must be incorporated into a collective understanding of the need for wholesale transformation is militarization. This encompasses both the incredibly unequal allocation of national budgets (particularly but not exclusively in the Global North) and the encroachment of military bases (primarily those of the United States) on the lands and territories of the Global South. The annual carbon footprint of the US military equals 205 million tons of CO₂, and France's approximately 8 million tons, according to data from three years ago²⁵. Since then, the escalation of the occupation and genocide in Palestine and the turn by European governments to increased military spending rather than foreign aid have only worsened these effects.

Demilitarization is therefore a key component in both addressing the climate crisis and enabling communities to care for themselves and for the land. Divestment from militarism, in addition to being in line with feminist visions of degrowth and redistributive justice, would enable investment in the care sector and in climate action, while significantly reducing emissions²⁶.

25 Daniela Philipson Garcia (2023): *Feminist Interventions: Resisting the Militarization of the Climate Crisis*, WEDO & CFFP.

26 Ibid

5.5. Reparations

27 Priya Lukka, Sophie Efange and Jessica Woodroffe (2023): *Reparations as a pathway to decolonization*, Gender and Development Network (GADN).

28 Feminist Action Nexus for Economic and Climate Justice (2024): *Towards Economic and Climate Justice: A Feminist Analysis of Critical Trends*, WEDO.

29 Ibid

Structural reform must also encompass reparations for the harms wrought by colonialism and enslavement, encompassing remedy and redress, including through the replacement of our current global system, which only reinforces and sustains the legacies of slavery and colonialism, with alternative paradigms²⁷. **Calls for reparations** have reverberated across the formerly colonized countries of the Global South for decades, and have only grown as a result of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the escalating debt crisis²⁸.

Reparations encompass both financial compensation and democratization of the unjust global structures that have allowed the persistence of colonial legacies²⁹, alongside strengthening the protection and safety of environmental and human rights defenders. The holistic reparations movement seeks to advance recognition, atonement and compensation, as well as the guarantee of non-repetition of human rights violations. As Priya Lukka states, **this guarantee of non-repetition requires the complete transformation of the global financial architecture in order to halt the reproduction of structural inequalities.**

5.6. Debt cancellation

Many of the calls for reparations are made in the context of demands for debt cancellation, as a

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“reparation and a right for the people who have been wounded and sacrificed on the altar of repaying odious and illegitimate debts, and who bear the brunt of the climate crisis,”

30 CATDM & WOMIN (2020): “Call to the African Union, African Heads of State, International Financial Institutions, Chinese Lending Bodies and Private Creditors for a total and unconditional cancellation of African debt!” [Sign-on statement].

as outlined in a 2020 statement orchestrated by WOMIN and CADTM Afrique³⁰. In a piece that forms part of the conceptual framework of the *Feminist Action Nexus for Economic and Climate Justice*, Bhumika Muchhala outlines a reparations approach to guide thinking on both climate justice —especially loss and damage—, and debt justice. Bhumika explains that “chronic debt crises in developing countries stem from a historical legacy of power inequalities among nations, resulting in thwarted productive capacities and domestic revenue potential in developing countries which fuels external borrowing.” Cancellation of debt, alongside other forms of economic and climate justice including adequate and equitable climate finance (as outlined below), therefore offers “an opportunity to move away from development models that have prioritized growth, industrialisation, trade and the interests of development finance providers,” in Sanam Amin’s analysis.

31 Bhumika Muchhala (2021): *A Feminist and Decolonial Global Green New Deal: Principles, Paradigms and Systemic Transformations*, WEDO.

The landmark proposal to begin to achieve this rebalance has been, for decades, a multilateral debt workout mechanism under the auspices of the United Nations, to create a pathway for cancellation and/or restructuring of *all debts held by all creditors*³¹. Current proposals by the civil society mechanism on Financing for Development, spearheaded by Eurodad and its sister “DAD” networks in other regions, call for a **UN Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt**. Bringing debt negotiations firmly under the umbrella of the UN would ensure that these deliberations are carried out in a democratic arena, guided by the principle of one-country, one-vote, rather than in colonial-era holdovers like the Bretton Woods Institutions or illegitimate new groupings such as the G20.

This is especially important because in 2024, **debt service payments for climate-vulnerable countries approached all-time highs**, the worst in at least three decades. Climate-

vulnerable countries continue to be some of the most critically indebted in the world; as a result, **debt servicing is crowding out climate spending**, despite the fact that these countries need it the most to adapt to the impacts of climate change. In 2024, the 50 most climate-vulnerable countries averaged external debt payments worth at least 15.5% of their government revenue —four times more than in 2010³². Simultaneously, **mounting debt pressures governments to finance this debt by expanding the extractive industries** that escalate the causes and consequences of biodiversity loss and the climate crisis.

32 Debt Justice (2024): “Debt payments for climate vulnerable countries hit highest level since at least 1990”.

5.7. Tax justice

33 ActionAid International (2025): *Who Owes Who? External debts, climate debts and reparations in the Jubilee year*.

34 Tax Justice Network (2024): *The State of Tax Justice 2024*.

35 UNCTAD (2020): *Tackling Illicit Financial Flows for Sustainable Development in Africa: Economic Development in Africa Report*.

36 Bhumika Muchhala (2021): *A Feminist and Decolonial Global Green New Deal: Principles, Paradigms and Systemic Transformations*, WEDO.

37 Ibid.

38 Kate Donald (2020): *A Rights-Based Economy: Putting people and planet first*, Christian Aid and Center for Economic and Social Rights.

Both compounding and causing the increasing debt crisis—and despite trillions of dollars actually owed to the Global South based on ecological destruction, enslavement and colonialism perpetuated by the Global North³³—**tax injustices constitute a net transfer of wealth from South to North**. Because of illicit financial flows (IFFs) including tax evasion, avoidance and abuse, and the hoarding of wealth in tax havens, the revenue available for public expenditure by Global South countries continues to shrink. For example, \$347.6 billion is lost each year to multinational corporations shifting profit offshore to avoid paying tax —two thirds of the total of US\$492 billion lost to global tax abuse each year³⁴. Africa alone loses an estimated USD \$89 billion per year in IFFs, most of which stem from commercial sources including tax abuses³⁵.

Tax justice is therefore crucial to the collective effort of building feminist and decolonial rights-based economies that support the wellbeing of both people and planet, to ensure that tax revenues stay within the countries in which economic activity takes place, with penalties imposed on corporate actors for their infractions³⁶. Framed by Bhumika Muchhala as “decolonial reclamation,”³⁷ tax justice is a key aspect of a rights-based economy —one that “guarantee[s] the material, social, and environmental conditions necessary for all people to live with dignity on a flourishing planet,” as defined by the Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) and Christian Aid³⁸.

39 Arimbi Wahono (2025): *Rights-based tax justice: A framework for a progressive, feminist, ecologically just, and decolonial approach to taxation*, WEDO, Financial Transparency Coalition, Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR), and Shared Planet.

40 Markus Trilling (2024): *Make polluters pay: How to tax excessive ecological footprints*, Eurodad.

41 Jessica Dempsey et al. (2022) *“Biodiversity targets will not be met without debt and tax justice,”* Nature Ecology & Evolution 6.

42 Arimbi Wahono (2025): *Rights-based tax justice: A framework for a progressive, feminist, ecologically just, and decolonial approach to taxation*, WEDO, Financial Transparency Coalition, Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR), and Shared Planet.

5.8. Feminist climate finance

43 Feminist Action Nexus for Economic and Climate Justice (2024): *Towards Economic and Climate Justice: A Feminist Analysis of Critical Trends*, WEDO.

44 WEDO (2024): *Five Dimensions of Feminist Climate Finance*.

A **rights-based tax framework** must work towards equity, access, and redistribution in a way that no principle is achieved at the expense of another —so that, for example, efforts to tax polluters or GHG emitters do not fall on the shoulders of lower-income people who need fuel to work and to survive. Revenue from taxes or subsidy removals should be channeled towards universal social protection, supporting a just transition that aligns with the principles of decoloniality, feminism, progressiveness and ecological justice³⁹.

Understanding tax as a structural intervention with the potential to transform how economies function is aligned with INDICO’s highlighting of policy coherence, as **current tax systems everywhere fail to internalize the socio-ecological costs of extraction to society**, enabling continued environmental devastation. Illicit financial flows and financial secrecy undergird the carbon emissions of both natural resource extraction (which accounts for around half of all greenhouse gas emissions driving climate change and over 90% of biodiversity loss and water stress impacts⁴⁰) as well as illicit commercial activities including illegal deforestation, fishing, wildlife trade, and mining) that cause biodiversity loss⁴¹. Measures to **address the root economic drivers of climate and environmental destruction** are essential to rebalance the global environment for tax policy and to free up resources for countries to advance national priorities to guarantee human rights and environmental protection⁴².

Finally, in the context of the undemocratic global economic structures that perpetuate the climate crisis as well as multiple dimensions of inequality the world over, climate finance is an essential obligation of Global North countries, and a legally binding one under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change⁴³. Climate finance —the funding required for mitigation, adaptation, and responding to loss and damage from climate impacts—is imperative, but must center human rights and gender equality in its design and delivery or it will fail to address the magnitude of the crisis⁴⁴.

WEDO has outlined the five dimensions necessary to understand and implement feminist climate finance that contributes to achieving gender equality and addresses the root causes of climate change and climate impacts. In this framing, feminist climate finance is:

- 1. Ambitious, adequate and appropriate:** significantly upscaled from current flows, adequate to the scale and depth of the gender-differentiated climate needs, and appropriate to deliver transformative climate action within an appreciation of global and national mechanisms and systems and their limitations.
- 2. Accessible** to and delivered directly to grassroots groups, community-led organizations and Indigenous Peoples working at the intersection of gender and climate justice, through a range of avenues including direct access.
- 3. Gender-transformative**, by effectively and sustainably addressing the root causes of climate change, attaining the highest standards of gender analysis, actions and targets, and promoting gender equality within a human rights framework.
- 4. Accountable:** flows tracked and understandable particularly to rights-holders through transparent processes, and accompanied by mechanisms for addressing harm; and
- 5. System-changing:** addressing extractive capitalism, imperialism and neo-colonialism, militarism, and patriarchy as the root causes of the climate crisis, while ignoring false solutions that distract from real solutions, rely on unproven technologies, and/or violate the right of Indigenous Peoples to free, prior and informed consent⁴⁵.

45 Ibid.

Final thoughts

A holistic understanding is required to address global crises —of climate and environmental destruction, but also worsening authoritarianism that insists and relies on the subjugation of women, gender-diverse people, and those facing other types of structural marginalization. Grounded in feminist structural analysis and supported by new types of measurement including the Coherence Index (INDICO), this systemic approach can undergird bold action on feminist economic and climate justice. Only by centering people's movements and rights defenders everywhere in their work to build economies of solidarity and reciprocity, and protect their land and their rights from austerity, extractivism, and militarism, can we envision a collective future where economic, ecological and gender justice prevail.