Climate Justice Calls for Gender Justice: Putting Principles into Action

A Concept Note for Funders and Activists

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Top: Mary Wangui, Indigenous woman in Kenya, attends a MADRE training.
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Middle: Ester Tomas, Indigenous Miskita woman in Nicaragua, with her harvest.
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Bottom: Miskita leader Rose Cunningham speaks at a forum of Indigenous women in Nicaragua. ©MADRE

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Executive Summary

When drought came to her village in Kenya, a young Indigenous girl named Mercy saw the worry on her parents’ faces. The water was drying up, the cattle were dying, and her family wondered how they would survive. Her parents grasped at what they thought was their family’s only chance at salvation: their daughter. First, they took her out of school, so that she could help search for and haul dwindling water supplies. Then they found an older man, willing to pay a dowry in exchange for marriage to Mercy. Her rights to education, to health and to so much more were traded away in the face of the relentless drought. Mercy became another victim of climate change.¹

It is now widely recognized that the poor are being hit first and worst by the food shortages, droughts, floods and disease associated with climate change. However, fewer acknowledge that women and girls make up six out of ten of the poorest people worldwide.² When asked why increasing numbers of girls in drought-stricken parts of Kenya are being removed from school and dying giving birth, few people make the connection between climate change and forced early marriage, so apparent in Mercy’s story.

While poor, rural and Indigenous women are made especially vulnerable to climate change, they are more than victims: they are sources of solutions. Unconstrained by the silos that too often hamper policymakers, women are leveraging their roles as stewards of natural resources to devise innovative, locally-rooted responses to climate change.

Bringing an integrated understanding of gender into our work on climate change illuminates the expertise of rural and Indigenous women and highlights those responses that best protect people and ecosystems. Perhaps most critically, a gender analysis is needed to equitably transition our economies and societies to meet the twin challenges of environmental and social justice.

Yet, as was emphasized at the 2014 Summit on Women and Climate, the voices of women, particularly rural women, are seen as peripheral and routinely excluded from policymaking—despite the visionary solutions they offer.³ The result is climate programs and policies that further marginalize women, undermine human rights generally and reinforce assumptions that created the climate crisis in the first place. Confronting climate change is among the most pressing crises faced by humanity, and our windows of opportunity to act are closing. Environmental activists have rightly called for urgent action to curb dangerous carbon emissions and to protect against existing climate change impacts.

To do this in ways that can address the root causes of the crisis and support those who are most threatened, we need solutions that uphold women’s rights. We also need a realignment between the climate justice movement, mainstream environmental NGOs and the global women’s and human rights movements. Funders have a critical role to play in supporting this realignment and in facilitating the inter-movement efforts needed to create mechanisms for participation, consultation and feedback between grassroots women activists, with vital local expertise, and policymakers. Such collaborations not only infuse international policymaking with the benefit of local knowledge; they offer a starting point for developing the kinds of rights-based solutions that are needed for a peaceful, democratic transition to a post-carbon world.
Gender and Climate Change
The specific threats that women face from climate change have begun to be recognized by prominent actors, such as Mary Robinson, the new UN Special Envoy on Climate Change, who has said, “We need to continue to support women to be innovative, creative and resilient in a climate-constrained world as we strive to ensure equitable solutions to the climate problem.”

But too often, discussions among NGOs, funders and policymakers treat women as a monolithic, abstract category. This approach fails to account for the multiplicity of identities that shape the experience of being a woman, including the experience of climate change. The recent proliferation of “women and climate change” programming can be greatly strengthened by shifting our focus on “women” to a focus on gender, which is mediated by other intersecting identities, including race, class, sexuality and more.

Consider Mercy, from our opening story. Indigenous pastoralist families in Kenya are exchanging their daughters for dowries at progressively younger ages as protracted drought depletes the cattle stocks on which their survival depends. These early marriages end the chance at an education for most girls and increase their risks of dying giving birth and being battered and raped by their husbands.

Like all forms of violence against women, the practice of early marriage denies women resources, skills and decision-making power needed to adapt their families and communities to climate change. Yet, too few environmentalists recognize gender-based violence as a barrier to climate change adaptation, identify climate change as a risk factor for gender-based violence, or grapple with the intersection of Indigenous identity, gender and poverty.

Furthermore, gender is always racialized, so that its impacts are compounded by those of racism and ethnic discrimination. For instance, after Hurricane Katrina decimated communities of color in New Orleans, it was women who bore the greatest responsibility to care for children and other vulnerable people, all while being demonized as “welfare queens” and causes of overpopulation and poverty by the mainstream media and many service providers.

And in situations of disaster, poor lesbians and transgender women are triply disadvantaged. For example, a study found that, following the 2010 earthquake and cholera epidemic in Haiti, lesbians and trans women were not only shunted into camps and exposed to sexual violence, but also excluded from sex-segregated bathrooms, health services and emergency food distribution.

The practice of gathering relevant data disaggregated by gender and other identities helps to illuminate these differential impacts of climate change. Thus, we now know that proportionately greater numbers of women than men are killed in flooding and that most “climate refugees” fleeing drought and famine are women and the children in their care. Such disaggregated data allows policymakers, aid workers, service providers and other stakeholders to measure and respond to climate change’s differential impacts.
Now we need to move beyond simply counting women to understanding how violations of women’s rights make them vulnerable to climate change. For example, in flood-prone parts of Pakistan, women are forbidden to leave home without permission from a male relative, making them less likely to escape to safety. Data is important, but to transform a narrowly technocratic approach in favor of one that can support resiliency, we must recognize the ways that gender discrimination interacts with climate change to structure vulnerability and link that understanding to the broader framework of climate change response.

Despite some recent progress, gender remains largely tacked on to discussions within mainstream environmental organizations and within the international policymaking arena (gender inequality was not even discussed specifically in the UN climate change negotiations until 2009). That is because most mainstream environmental NGOs view climate change as a scientific rather than a social problem. The same is true of most governments and corporations, for whom a technical fix such as carbon trading is invariably preferable to an analysis that calls for social change.

This focus on technocratic strategies and disregard of a broader gender analysis has significant harmful effects. For instance, the mainstream environmental movement is still saddled by its history of scapegoating women of color globally for environmental degradation and “overpopulation.” For decades, the movement’s narrow, single-issue organizing reproduced racist and sexist offenses and lost the benefit of collaboration with grassroots women of color. We have a chance to correct this failure, by linking gender justice throughout the spectrum of environmental activism on climate.

Recommendation for Funders:
Ensure that data is disaggregated and reflects the ways that gender discrimination interacts with climate change.

Speaking of Gender
Simply put, gender is the system that creates two binary categories—“women” and “men”—and treats them as both irrevocable and opposites. It subordinates women to men and assigns men and women distinct social roles, as well as treating both women and men as normatively heterosexual. It also suppresses the reality that many people, often called transgender, experience themselves as different from the gender they were assigned at birth, or even as neither “masculine” nor “feminine” in the conventional sense. This identity is distinguished from those whose self-identity and assigned gender align, also known as cisgender.

These multiple facets of gender mean that women, transgender people, and some lesbians, gay men, and other gender non-conforming people often experience climate change impacts differently and disproportionately from heteronormative, cisgender men.
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Grassroots Women’s Solutions

In nearly every society, women are responsible for securing food, water, and - particularly in the Global South - household fuel and medicinal plants. These resources depend on the stability of the climate, placing women at the heart of the economy and the environment the world over. As stewards of traditional environmental, technical and cultural knowledge, grassroots women are creating sustainable climate change adaptation practices in communities around the world. They are also spearheading mitigation strategies: Indigenous women have made themselves the first line of defense of their resource-rich territories, leading civil disobedience campaigns to block carbon-polluting extractive industries. And yet, all these women’s expertise is squandered by programming that treats women in communities as aid recipients or project targets rather than leaders and innovators.

Prioritizing grassroots women’s leadership in climate policymaking is about more than “having women at the table.” In fact, this limited strategy has allowed policymakers at the national and international level to restrict their understanding of the links between gender and climate change to the presence of a handful of female colleagues granted access to those elite spaces. Rather, policymaking needs to reflect a holistic understanding of how gender, race, class, colonial histories, Indigenous status, sexual orientation and other identities interact to shape experiences of climate change and produce knowledge that can inform solutions.

In fact, the types of solutions that grassroots women develop—from constructing wind-resistant housing in Bangladesh to unionizing to pool their knowledge as subsistence farmers in Sudan—offer a blueprint for policymaking. When Indigenous women in Nicaragua set up a seed bank, conserving local biodiversity and protecting seed stores from worsening hurricanes associated with climate change, they model the potential of a small-scale intervention with outsized impact. This impact lies not just in promoting women’s livelihoods, local food security and alternatives to carbon-intensive industrialized agriculture. It also models the kind of climate change response we need: one that is community-controlled, democratic and grounded in a symbiotic relationship between local ecosystems and cultural systems.

As a large-scale problem, it is easy to assume that climate change demands large-scale solutions. Yet while we need a coherent global response, sustainable practices—in agriculture, industry, energy, community design and even government—occur in specific places. It is at this local level that the majority of people can exercise the agency and decision-making power needed to build resiliency to climate change. The answer is not to romanticize every small-scale solution, but to address the urgency and scale of climate change in part through adapting, replicating, institutionalizing and—where appropriate—scaling up the kinds of local solutions that grassroots women have developed.
To do this, policymakers, environmental advocates and other stakeholders need to consult with grassroots women as experts, not victims. They must also support women’s demands for an end to the multiple forms of discrimination that prevent them from becoming leaders.

**Recommendation for Funders:**

Integrate human rights and gender into the conception and execution of environmental grant-making.

**Climate Justice Movement Demands**

- Decrease consumption
- Repay the “climate debt” owed by industrialized countries to the Global South
- Replace fossil fuels with renewable energy sources
- Promote rights-based conservation and Indigenous land rights
- Invest in sustainable farming, fishing and food sovereignty

*For more information, visit: [http://www.climate-justice-now.org/principles/](http://www.climate-justice-now.org/principles/)*

**Integrating Gender Justice into Climate Justice**

As carbon pollution rises and policymaking stalls, efforts to control climate change are at a dangerous impasse. At the global level, the United Nations framework for international climate change negotiations has failed to craft an adequate or equitable solution.\(^{18}\) The heart of the problem is that the US and other industrialized countries that caused the crisis refuse to dramatically cut their consumption of fossil fuels. They also reject the Kyoto Protocol principle of “common but differentiated responsibility,” that would have the biggest carbon polluters contribute most to solving the problem.\(^{19}\) Instead, a constellation of wealthy governments, corporations and large, mainstream environmental groups favor alternatives such as carbon trading and geo-engineering. These initiatives embody the magical thinking that we can control climate change without rapidly phasing out fossil fuel use. Instead, these market-based responses seek to adjust the terms of unfettered energy consumption in the Global North without giving the Global South the means for sustainable development. The fundamental inequity has deadlocked negotiations.

In response, growing numbers of social justice activists and civil society groups have condemned the global policymaking space as a site of elitist manipulation.\(^{20}\) In recent years, many of these groups have retreated from the international arena and refocused their work nationally and locally. As this movement has matured, coming together under the rubric of climate justice, it has developed important new strategies. We have seen a shift in focus from addressing the consumption of fossil fuels and shrinking our individual “carbon footprints,” to confronting the production of fossil fuels, with targets like the Keystone XL Pipeline in the US\(^{21}\) and Shell operations in Nigeria.\(^{22}\) And we have witnessed the emergence of a palpable mass movement, particularly of young people, using nonviolent protest and civil disobedience in communities worldwide.\(^{23}\)

The climate justice movement’s greatest potential lies in its commitment to developing solutions that can address multiple problems at once, ensuring that environmental
solutions reinforce a broader Progressive agenda. To realize this potential, climate justice advocates must recognize that the environmentally destructive economic model they seek to transform rests fundamentally on gendered imbalances of power.

For instance, around the world, women’s unpaid care work has enabled the illusion of infinite economic growth on a physically finite planet, putting the global economy on a collision course with reality. Conventional economic growth depends on women providing free childcare, healthcare, and eldercare, as well as food, water, household fuel and other vital services required to reproduce the labor force and tend to those who are too young, old, sick or disabled to work. As women equip workers, consumers, soldiers and taxpayers to play their respective roles in the global economy, they subsidize profits to the tune of $11 trillion annually.24

The connection for climate justice activists is that this gendered division of labor treats women’s work as it treats natural resources, namely, as a free, limitless input to profit-making. The solution is not to further commodify women’s care work. Rather, just as the climate justice movement has resisted and reimagined the commodification of carbon, forests, water and other natural resources, it must make common cause with women’s rights activists who insist that unpaid household work, like ecosystem services, be valued in its own right.

But the promise of the climate justice movement is undercut by its retreat from the international policymaking arena. Ceding this critical terrain to governments and big environmental groups that are both unduly influenced by corporate interests will not resolve the crisis. Nor will it yield the gender-sensitive policies we need to address climate change effectively. Global climate policymaking has become dominated by the commodification of carbon. This approach reflects the very economic model that produced climate change, and climate justice activists must be present and empowered within the international arena to confront this agenda.

For this to happen, climate justice activists need support from funders and government allies to contest the shrinking space available for civil society within the UN system, the key site of global policymaking. Reclaiming this space would allow for the gridlock of global climate policies to be re-envisioned—not as a cause for retreat, but as a strategic opening to press for better, rights-based policies.

Recommendations for Funders:

*Dismantle silos between human rights and environmental policymakers, funders and activists by supporting collaboration and strategic exchanges.*

*Confront the shrinking space for civil society within the UN system by speaking out and investing in strategies for civil society participation.*

A New Way Forward: Effective Participation of Grassroots Women

Ensuring that environmental policies are imbued with a gender justice perspective is critical for three reasons:

1. The impacts of climate change are gender-specific. Climate change responses that recognize gender are better able to protect the majority of the world’s people, particularly the most vulnerable—infants,
children, the sick, disabled and elderly—who are under the direct care of women. In this way, we avoid practices like food aid distribution programs for climate change refugees that treat men as heads of households and leave women without the resources to ensure people's survival.25

2. Gender-neutral programming exacerbates the life-threatening impacts of gender discrimination. Think of climate disaster early warning mechanisms that only operate in public places where women are denied access or that depend on literacy in communities where women are disproportionately and systematically denied the right to education.26

3. Without a gender analysis, climate change programming misses the critical opportunity embedded within the threat that we face: namely, to reimagine our economies and societies in keeping with the balance of nature and in support of human rights. The imperative to transform the economic system that created climate change is arguably the only hopeful aspect of the crisis. Seizing this opportunity requires action that is visionary, holistic, equitable and bold.

With these principles in mind, we can pursue three interrelated strategies.

1. Develop a Multiplicity of Approaches
International policymakers and locally-rooted climate justice activism do not produce an either/or proposition; we need a multiplicity of strategies all rooted in an intersectional gender analysis. In fact, our most robust strategies already require a combination of mass mobilization and engagement with policymaking. Chief among these strategies are shaming producers of carbon fuels; divesting from their companies; and making carbon pollution unaffordable, for example, through taxation. The first two are the clear purview of social movements. The latter strategy, which is arguably most important to controlling climate change, depends on government action. But the critical point for both the climate justice movement and mainstream environmental NGOs is that meaningful government action itself rests on the ability of social movements to demand it.

Rather than cultivate a landscape in which climate justice activists are only acting locally through direct action and social movement-building and Big Green groups are only engaging with governments and the UN through litigation and policy strategies, we need work in these arenas to be mutually reinforcing. Cultivating that landscape requires the climate justice movement to re-engage with policymaking. It also requires the Big Green groups to pivot from their corporate funders, moving away from those ethically questionable and compromising relationships, and realign themselves in partnership with climate justice activists.27

Private funders have a critical role to play in supporting such a realignment, not only in providing the resources to offset the dependency of environmental NGOs on corporate sponsors, but also in creating the space for inter-movement dialogues and coalition efforts to sustain joint work, bridge differences, and pursue new ideas and strategies.

One promising model for such a “movement merger” can be found at the intersection of the environmental justice and reproductive justice movements. Advocates for women's health have repeatedly established the link between environmental pollution and adverse impacts on women's reproductive health. Internationally, activists from the US and Iraqi anti-war, environmental and women's movements are working in coalition with Iraqi mothers to demand accountability and provide healthcare to victims of toxic dumping committed by the US military over years of occupation.28 In the US, a constellation of activists led by women's
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rights organizers and Indigenous groups have spearheaded the move away from single-issue organizing to expose the dangers of radioactive dumping in Indigenous lands. These collaborations meet the needs of marginalized people who fall through the gaps in existing organizing models.

Recommendation for Funders:

Provide resources to offset the dependency of environmental NGOs on corporate sponsors.

2. Build Cohesion between Local, National and Global Programs and Policies

Grassroots activists have a deep understanding of the ways that local conditions are impacted by decisions made far away from the people and places they seek to protect. In a globalized world, community-based activism can be a limited and ultimately Sisyphean task. No issue better illustrates this dynamic than climate change. While impacts such as floods and food shortages are local, their cause transcends national boundaries. Without a global policy response, the advances of place-based activists in any one location are always at risk of being undermined by ongoing carbon pollution elsewhere. With the exception of resistance at the site of fossil fuel extraction, most activism that is exclusively local addresses symptoms of climate change, but not root causes.

While that sounds ambitious, it is not unprecedented. Recall the 2008 Doha Round of World Trade Organization negotiations. It was concerted coordination and cooperation between global civil society (including locally-based groups) and governments of the Global South that brought the talks to a standstill. Some of that cooperation was explicit, with NGOs supplying Global South delegates with position papers and data they needed to hold their ground at the negotiating table. Some of it was less tangible, with Southern delegates reporting afterwards that it was the mass protests in the streets that buoyed them to withstand the threats and pressure tactics of the US and other industrialized countries. Eventually, this joint government-civil society effort succeeded in derailing a trade agreement that would have been detrimental to economies, communities and ecosystems the world over.

Right now, the needed architecture for creating that level of cohesion in climate advocacy is woefully under-developed. This is where our focus should be: on building the “scaffolding” needed for effective cooperation among potential allies in government, industry, philanthropy and civil society groups locally, nationally and globally, as well as between climate justice activists and mainstream environmental groups. We have partial models to build on, such as the dialogues between women activists and policymakers hosted by the Mary Robinson Foundation. MADRE’s model of consultation and convenings also extends beyond the UN system to bridge the gap between advances at the global level and conditions at the local and national levels.

3. Leverage the Human Rights Framework

The international human rights framework, an interlocking system of treaties and adjudicating institutions, already provides a
blueprint for building the “scaffolding” needed to create policy coherence at the global, national and local levels. Human rights instruments—which in many countries have the force of law superseding national policies—have clear applications to advance a climate justice agenda. For instance, the major documents of the human rights framework codify rights to life, food, water, health, development and self-determination. Governments are obligated to respect, protect and fulfill these rights, a responsibility which now requires controlling climate change. Moreover, human rights demand that climate change be addressed in ways that uphold people’s equitable access to life-sustaining resources and ensure their meaningful voice in policymaking.

Another strength of the human rights framework is that rights are understood to be indivisible, universal and inalienable. That means that no single right can be fully experienced without guarantees of the others and that human rights belong to every person, regardless of nationality, gender, race or any other identity. These fundamental concepts support the intersectional view that this paper advocates as necessary to address climate change.

Perhaps the greatest value of human rights instruments is that they spell out commitments that governments have already made. As we race the clock to prevent the worst impacts of runaway climate change, this pre-existing policy architecture is a critical asset. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, as US environmental advocates attempted to do during the first Obama Administration in pressing for comprehensive new climate legislation rather than relying on the already proven Clean Air Act of 1970. Similarly, decades of established international human rights policy and practice outline commitments that governments are obligated to fulfill and that can guide the creation of policies rooted in climate justice.

Furthermore, the established processes of the international human rights framework have created key spaces for the types of civil society and government exchanges MADRE advocates. The United Nations and other international institutions regularly convene human rights committees and conferences that allow for debates that further advance and refine our expression of human rights, while allowing advocates to spotlight violations and hold governments accountable to their obligations. Bringing the climate justice agenda to these arenas is a strategy both for leveraging pre-existing rights in support of just climate solutions and for winning recognition of climate stability itself as a legally binding human right. Tactically, human rights bodies offer an arena that is far less subject to the corporate influence that we see in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other parts of the UN climate regime.

Recommendation for Funders:
Fund the travel, training and technical support needed for climate justice groups to create a feedback loop between local demands, global policymaking and implementation of climate policies to improve local conditions and uphold human rights.
Making Climate Change Policy Accountable to Grassroots Women: The MADRE Model

- The MADRE model starts with listening to grassroots women who are on the frontlines of climate change and whose perspectives and priorities are largely absent from policymaking.

- By providing humanitarian aid and direct services, this model ensures that local women can meet immediate needs for themselves and their families so that they can focus on longer-term goals such as environmental sustainability.

- It includes training so that those activists are capacitated to represent their issues to policymakers and demand accountability. It also entails consultations between local women activists and other stakeholders, including government, funders, UN agencies and larger NGOs.

- It facilitates conversations not only between community-based women and policymakers at all levels, but also between women activists in diverse contexts. By linking grassroots women around the world to one another in knowledge-exchanges and larger conferences, they are able to share strategies, learn from each other’s best practices and coordinate agendas.

- It requires addressing barriers borne of discrimination on the basis of gender, class, race and Indigenous identity. To do this, MADRE provides childcare, stipends, translation, popular versions of legal instruments, including for non-literate women, as well as advocacy to demand access to decision-making.

- Also critical is institution-building at the local level, so that community-based women’s organizations can support activists’ participation, despite social norms that deny women a public voice or the opportunity for autonomous organizing.

- Finally, MADRE ensures that advances at the international level are “brought home,” by the activists who helped realize them. This critical stage is too often neglected by a siloed approach that focuses efforts and secures wins at the international level only: we must ensure that activists can win implementation of promising policies and actually improve conditions on the ground.
Learning from Our Allies
The global women’s human rights movement has pioneered the use of UN human rights spaces to advance rights protections for women. From the negotiation and ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to the growing recognition of domestic violence as a grave violation, local and global women’s activists have successfully maneuvered “insider” and “outsider” strategies to achieve our aims, bringing together grassroots organizers, mainstream NGOs, and government representatives at key moments to realize new advances.36

The international Indigenous movement offers another successful model for expanding the conventional understanding and application of human rights. Indigenous lands contain some of the world’s last untapped fossil fuel and carbon sink reserves. As Indigenous Peoples have struggled to defend their right to self-determination, they have acted as stewards of ecosystems, advancing the sustainable practices we all need. In so doing, they have also engaged with the international human rights system, advancing a vision of their collective rights that challenges and augments the liberal conception of individual human rights.37 In particular, Indigenous women have foregrounded the intersection of their identities as Indigenous and as women in their advocacy for their human rights as individuals and as a collective. For instance, they have denounced toxic dumping on Indigenous lands as not just a violation of the individual right to health but also as an assault on the collectively-owned territories of Indigenous Peoples. 38

Through these efforts, the global women’s and Indigenous movements have enacted significant shifts within the contested space of the human rights framework. Women’s advocacy overcame the barrier that relegated violence against women to the private sphere, making this violation a matter for public discussion and government action. Indigenous organizing opened the space for a more complex understanding of human rights that recognizes collective identities. The lesson is that human rights can be expanded to address demands emerging from social movements, but only if governments can be held accountable.

While the global women’s and Indigenous movements have worked for decades to secure new human rights norms, we need much more rapid progress to avoid the worst consequences of climate change. The international LGBT movement offers a strong model of enforcement of human rights standards at the urgent pace that climate change demands. In the US, the call for same-sex marriage has made dizzying gains in recent years, moving from a non-starter in the political realm to a priority issue for politicians.39 At the United Nations, landmark resolutions have passed, thanks to pressure generated by activists, endorsing the human rights of LGBT people and creating mechanisms to document violations.40 These successes are the result of concerted strategies that the climate justice movement can borrow from to demand and enforce swift policy change. Thankfully, this exchange has already begun, through the creation of initiatives such as Queers for the Climate.41

The women’s rights, Indigenous and LGBT movements achieved their victories by correcting the primary deficiency of the human rights framework: namely, that it has no enforcement mechanism. Governments, while obligated under international law to uphold ratified human rights agreements, are rarely held accountable and typically encounter few consequences for their failures.

The lesson of successful social movements is that an empowered civil society is itself the
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enforcement mechanism of human rights. It is this realization that transforms the human rights system from a legalistic framework into a powerful tool for social change. The climate justice movement is well positioned to make use of this tool as it develops models for effective cooperation between local activists, NGOs, and governments and re-engages with global policymaking.

Recommendations for Funders:

Create the space for inter-movement strategizing to explore and sustain joint work, find common ground, and pursue new ideas and approaches. In this way, climate justice activists can mobilize enforcement of government commitments gained through the use of human rights.

Fund work to link international advocacy to national and local policies and programs. Recognize that human rights advocacy must win advances at the international and local levels.

Conclusion

These three strategies to confront the climate crisis—developing a multiplicity of approaches; building cohesion between local, national and global programs and policies; and leveraging human rights—require a gender analysis. More specifically, the theory and practice of intersectionality, pioneered by women of color within the global women's movement, highlights connections between issues in ways that can support the gender justice approach needed in climate activism.

Global women's rights organizing also offers principles and strategies for bringing the perspectives of grassroots women, who are most threatened by climate change, into programs and policies at all levels of governance. And finally, successes of the global women's movement in utilizing human rights as a tool for social change offer strong models for replication.

Clearly, the world has reached a tipping point in its ability to absorb the harmful impacts of unsustainable resource use, fueled by economic greed. This planet-wide crisis is the defining issue of our time, threatening the survival of humanity and life on the planet as we know it. But we are also on the verge of another tipping point, as hopeful as the threat is grave. More and more people are realizing that we cannot continue to live outside the balance of nature and that we have the capability to reinvent our economies and societies on a sustainable basis and in ways that safeguard human rights.

Our challenge is to create urgent solutions that are at once concrete and visionary, both local and systemic. Women in communities are at the heart of such solutions. Those responding to climate change, whether as funders, activists or policymakers, now have a window of opportunity to infuse climate justice with gender justice and join forces to create sustainable, rights-based alternatives to the climate crisis.