



Exclusion in Global Climate Talks:

Feminist, Indigenous, and Majority World Voices at COP26 and Beyond

Working Paper

Society of Gender Professionals
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Executive Summary

As COP27 fast approaches and climate talks become a necessary, urgent, and constant presence within the global political sphere, the question of why so little progress is being made in light of the urgent need for radical and just transitions becomes pertinent. The failures of previous COP's allude to the fact that without feminist, [Indigenous](#), Black, [racialised](#), and [Majority World](#) voices meaningfully included in climate politics and present at the global table of policy-making, the path leading us to climate catastrophe will fast approach. Climate change disproportionately affects these groups, whilst simultaneously, important knowledges, needs, and solutions are disproportionately under-represented in these spaces. By seeking to understand this dynamic of systemic and persistent exclusion, this research explores the multi-layered and intersecting barriers facing civil society within the space of climate talks. This working paper takes a qualitative research structure, analysing the comments and material of civil society groups in response to COP26 (2021). By exploring the political, social, normative, and physical barriers which prohibit meaningful inclusion, this paper seeks to amplify the voices of those of us most directly impacted. Further, we propose policy recommendations to work toward greater inclusion and thus greater meaningful change in the future. As we sit at the precipice of another COP, the calls for radical change are more urgent than ever. Driving **meaningful inclusion** in these spaces is not only the *right* political manoeuvre but the best (and potentially only) mechanism we have to redirect away from our current tragic global trajectory.

What is the Problem?

An Introduction

The problem of exclusion has been a constant threat to the environmental justice agenda of feminist, [Indigenous](#), Black, [racialised](#), and [Majority World](#) groups. Despite global climate talks becoming more frequent and prominent, problems persist. The 2021 Conference of the Parties (COP26)¹ was critiqued as being the most evidently white, elite, and exclusionary summit to date.² By compiling and analysing civil society analyses of the COP26 process, as well as responses from COP organisers themselves, this paper seeks to better understand what policies, processes, and institutions must change to ensure feminist and Indigenous voices take a central place in formulating climate adaptation and resilience policies.

The role of the Society of Gender Professionals (SGP)³ and civil society groups in understanding and actively countering this systematic exclusion is important to avoid perpetuating the overt and covert acts of exclusion, as well as repeating mistakes from the past. Furthermore, the role of civil society groups is to apply pressure on decision-makers to commit to the difficult work required to equitably respond to the need for climate adaptation and shift our collective course toward genuine climate justice and Earth rights. Given that political and civil society actors alike quickly moved on from COP26 and its shortcomings, and despite many considering the event a crossroad moment in the need for deep-seated change, we choose to engage with an analysis that keeps it in public consciousness to maintain accountability for its failures. Our analysis can serve to inform future international policy-making fora, as well as other policy-making spheres more broadly. As we approach another COP, we hope that the lessons learned from COP26 are heeded.

Despite the potential the conference promises, the physical inaccessibility of the COP26 process was seen as symptomatic of larger and long-held processes of exclusion. The lack of organisation, often insurmountable travel restrictions and visa requirements, exclusion of people with disabilities, and lack of in-person representation by Majority World voices at conference talks and negotiations (exacerbated by distancing and space restrictions within the official COP process, the issue of ‘vaccine apartheid’ compounding other barriers to traveling to Glasgow, etc.) were particularly jarring in COP26. These enecessary lessons to be learned as COP27 approaches by those who will participate and have the potential to enact change.

¹ ‘The parties’ references 197 nations who agreed to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992.

² Meredith, Sam. *COP26 sharply criticized as the ‘most exclusionary’ climate summit ever*. Nov. 5 2021 [<https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/05/cop26-sharply-criticized-as-the-most-exclusionary-climate-summit-ever.html>]

³ SGP is a collective of women and gender diverse people from around the globe. Our voices are frequently some of the most negatively impacted by the exclusions outlined in this paper. We do not speak from one subject-position, but from a multitude.

While we cannot quantify the number of civil society representatives who tried but were barred from attending COP26, it is clear that their exclusion has had significant implications for the negotiations that took place.⁴

A few patterns emerge from the critiques of COP26, grouped primarily in the **political** (the document itself), **social** (intersecting barriers of gender, age, and ethnicity) **normative** (discourse and mainstream narratives), and **physical** barriers (erected in particular in response to COVID-19). Through a feminist lens, this paper seeks to understand the implications as well as the varying degrees and intersecting points of the systemic exclusion of certain groups from COP26 negotiations.

We begin by firstly looking into the Glasgow Climate Pact itself as it relates to key concerns for feminists and Indigenous groups, then secondly, analysing key pieces of language within the conference, including sustainability and regeneration. Third and finally, this paper seeks to help understand this exclusion as it also intersects with gender and age. We researched the barriers to inclusion and how they played out at COP26 using online platforms, activists' websites, and social media sites. Compiling texts from these organisations and analysing their responses first-hand enabled us to magnify and centre these voices, experiences, and concerns. This paper intentionally highlights activists' voices, contextualised and supported by wider academic research to highlight minoritised voices and climate justice activists' concerns.

The Importance of Inclusion

Inclusion of feminist, Indigenous, and racialised voices is imperative, as firstly, decisions made in global climate negotiations directly affect many Indigenous and racialised communities first.⁵ As such, it is a right for movements representing Indigenous, racialised and Majority World voices to participate in decision-making processes that affect all our collective futures. Secondly, the inclusion of the most negatively affected communities and diversity within negotiations means better climate-related outcomes for all.⁶ Indigenous peoples steward 80% of the world's biodiversity, protecting life for future generations globally.⁷ Since Indigenous knowledge about effective stewardship successfully supported millennia of thriving human communities, incorporating such knowledge is critical to informing 'modern science' and adapting to climate protection, preservation, and justice.

⁴ Taylor, Matthew. Oct. 30 2021. "COP26 will be whitest and most privileged ever, warn campaigners" [<https://bit.ly/3LcU81C>]

⁵ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs UN DESA [<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/climate-change.html>]

⁶ Elms, Emma. 8 Nov. 2021 "WHY INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT DELEGATES AT COP26" [<https://de.togetherband.org/blogs/news/indigenous-peoples-cop26>]

⁷ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Jan. 17-19 2007. "INTERNATIONAL EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY'S INTERNATIONAL REGIME ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' HUMAN RIGHTS" [<https://bit.ly/3xGHkqg>]

Furthermore, research from UNFCCC has made it clear that gender is a central concern in climate justice, and any regenerative strategy to fight climate change must take gender hierarchies into account.⁸ Women⁹ and gender-diverse people, especially from Indigenous and Majority World communities, are often the first to experience the effects of climate change due to circumstances relating to livelihoods, economic status, and (lack of) mobility. Furthermore, women are most affected by climate-related disasters, seen through increasing rates of forced marriage, gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, trafficking and abuse, and the disruption of girls' education due to climate change.¹⁰ Since women and gender-marginalised people often have more knowledge of and contact with the land, these groups are frequently best positioned to provide an expansive knowledge and understanding of what is needed to address the climate crisis.

Inclusion and support for women and Indigenous groups are not optional but imperative (since many still see this as superfluous or not necessary), as the discourses emerging from other sources are short-sighted and ineffective. As echoed by a [FEMNET](#) response to the COP26 outcomes, scientific or civil society groups focused on climate justice and grassroots Indigenous representatives who manage to reach COP present sustainable solutions year after year. These proposals and critiques and warnings are ignored or diluted due to the influence of corporate interests and “business as usual approaches that amount to nothing but hot air.”¹¹ These sentiments are echoed in response to the COP26 draft resolution by groups such as [Indigenous Climate Action](#) (ICA), [Grassroots Global Justice Alliance](#), [Women and Gender Constituency](#), [COP26 Coalition](#), and [NDN Collective](#), which we analyse in the following pages.

Political Barriers

Indigenous Groups and Article 6

Indigenous groups were particularly concerned with the continued usage of [Article 6](#) of the Paris Agreement at COP26, where two out of the three operational clauses refer to carbon

⁸UNFCCC. “Introduction to Gender and Climate Change” [<https://unfccc.int/gender>]

⁹ The term “woman” used in this paper is used in an expansive way. While we strive to include all women and gender-diverse people, the data collected does not always include these same diversities. Where “woman” is used alone, the data was difficult to find - though we include gender-diverse people as inherently part of our gender analysis.

¹⁰ IUCN, *Gender and Climate Change*. Nov 2015

[<https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/gender-and-climate-change>]

¹¹ Women and Gender Constituency. Nov. 13 2021. “Press Release. *The Power is With Us: COP26 Fails People & Planet*” [<https://womensgenderclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/WGC-Closing-Press-Release-.pdf>]

markets and emissions trading schemes.¹² Since its initiation in the Paris Climate Accord, Article 6 has been both contentious and complex. The article outlines carbon trading rules at regional and international levels, and promises to either help navigate away from climate catastrophe, or allow states to remain unaccountable when it comes to curbing dangerous greenhouse gas emissions.¹³ Critics of Article 6 fear the latter is more likely, concerned that governments and corporations will continue to abuse land and Indigenous rights leaving local communities to deal with the resulting pollution and environmental effects.¹⁴

Whilst Indigenous groups were successful at incorporating the language of Indigenous peoples and human rights into Article 6 at the closing of COP26, these commitments are *not legally binding*. Responses by [Indigenous Climate Action](#) (ICA) and [NDN Collective](#) critique the inadequacy of this move, which further normalises “offsetting” mechanisms as a solution to climate change. Keeping Article 6 in its current operational status with few legal repercussions for those who overstep or abuse these “offsetting” mechanisms constitutes a market-based logic (or [patriarchal capitalism](#)) which directly contradicts both feminist and Indigenous perspectives on environmental justice.¹⁵ NDN Collective recommends that for Article 6 to be successfully accepted by civil society actors, it must include the recognition of Indigenous knowledge through consultation with Indigenous peoples in decision-making processes and independent grievance mechanisms to ensure accountability. The outcome of Article 6 thus represents the overall disappointment of environmental justice advocates toward COP26 commitments.

Other problem areas of the COP26 final commitments include the goal of ending deforestation and cutting methane emissions by 2030 (which is considered far too late), the framing of [net-zero targets](#) (which are deemed insufficient compared to achieving *zero emissions* with *real solutions*), and calls to merely *phase-down* fossil fuels (as opposed to the complete *phase-out* that is required).¹⁶ [Grassroots Global Justice Alliance](#) seconds these critiques and emphasises the imperative of protecting the self-determination of Indigenous communities who steward the land. Their analysis asserts that the outcomes of COP26 themselves are evidence of this exclusion of key voices, priorities, and perspectives. It is clear that a strong, meaningful presence of civil societies groups and Indigenous-led ones in particular at COP26 negotiations would have resulted in much more ambitious targets, instead of an agreement carefully weighing market interests and profit.

¹² Women and Gender Constituency. “Article 6 of the Paris Agreement: Market Mechanisms” [https://womensgenderclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/WGC_IssueBrief_Article6_EN.pdf]

¹³ Kizzier, Kelley; Levin, Kelly & Rambharos, Mandy. Dec 2 2019. “What You Need to Know About Article 6 of the Paris Agreement”. [<https://www.wri.org/insights/what-you-need-know-about-article-6-paris-agreement>]

¹⁴ Lavelle, Marianne. Dec. 6 2019. *A Key Climate Justice Question at COP25: What Role Should Carbon Markets Play in Meeting Paris Goals*. [<https://bit.ly/3uXtbJK>]

¹⁵ For specifically indigenous perspectives see [<https://www.resilience.org/stories/2021-10-13/an-indigenous-peoples-approach-to-climate-justice/>]

For specifically Feminist perspectives see [<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/what-climate-feminism>]

¹⁶ Women and Gender Constituency. “Issue Brief: False Solutions”. [https://womensgenderclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/wgc_issuebrief_falsesolutions_en.pdf]

Normative Barriers

Sustainability versus regeneration and climate justice

Many Indigenous activists have pointed out the turn to *false solutions* as well as the use of vague and complicated but relatively empty language at COP26.¹⁷ As [greenwashing](#) tactics evolve with new terms (such as [‘nature-based solutions’](#) or ‘net-zero’ or euphemistic ‘loss and damages’ language)¹⁸ and as large multinational companies with track records of causing the worst damage engage more and more heavily in climate talks, the word “sustainability” has been watered down and rendered meaningless. Importantly, even in its wording - ‘sustain’ meaning to keep as is, is not what we should strive for given that on our current course, we are facing a world that will inevitably enter a period of hotter temperatures, greater environmental destruction, continuing mass extractivism, and violence toward Indigenous people, specifically women. Because the term ‘sustainability’, regardless of how good the intentions were behind it, has become vague and no longer a desirable or concrete goal, it is time we look beyond it to find a way to hold climate actors accountable at a deeper level.

Many have focused on the idea of regeneration rather than sustainability, which is important to consider as it emphasises restoration. Rather than focusing on returning to an ideal mythological past, it is about treating land and people in such a way that all life can thrive. There is no static ‘past’ to return to, but we must strive to revitalise the world so that it is liveable for future generations. Many Indigenous groups have been saying this since time immemorial by focusing on the well-being of future generations.

Even more important than the concept of regeneration is Indigenous knowledge *from* Indigenous groups. ICA, as well as other presenters and Indigenous peoples at the People’s Summit, continuously emphasised the importance of Indigenous voices and leadership at COP26 and beyond. Rather than simply engaging with traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) on a surface level, or on a level that continues to uphold and support whiteness, patriarchy, and hegemony of the Global North, Indigenous people must be at the forefront. Importantly, we must also ensure that solving the climate crisis does not fall solely on the shoulders of Indigenous people. Rather, uplifting the voices of Indigenous peoples and engaging in

¹⁷ ICA. Oct. 14 2021.. “*Indigenous Rights & False Solutions at COP26*”

[<https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com/entries/indigenous-rights-amp-false-solutions-at-cop26>]

¹⁸ Baker, Michelle. Nov. 9 2021. “*Indigenous Groups Suspicious of ‘Natural Solutions’ Proposed at UN Climate Conference*” [<https://bit.ly/3K2Thzg>]

actionable redistribution of wealth and resources is necessary. Importantly, pan-Indigeneity¹⁹ and stereotyping needs to be checked and monitored within climate movements. This can be avoided if diverse opinions from many different Indigenous groups and peoples are included, as Indigenous people and groups are not a monolith.

The focus here is not necessarily on the importance of switching the term ‘sustainability’ for ‘regeneration’, as terms change as language evolves. For example, the term and meaning behind ‘regeneration’ are also becoming contentious as emphasised by the piece “Whitewashed Hope” published by Cultural Survival because it is being divorced from its Indigenous origins.²⁰ Focusing on a new word or term is never going to help us escape climate crisis. The message here is that Indigenous voices need to be raised in climate discussions and within climate policy. Indigenous leadership, and not just partial or superficial application of Indigenous knowledges by those without lived experiences and lifeways, is necessary to ensure the continuation of life on Earth.

Social Barriers

Feminist Voices and Issues

The absence of women and gender-diverse people from key negotiations became painfully visible at COP26. Rather, women, girls, and gender non-conforming people were largely present outside the formal conference. This juxtaposition highlights the glaring inequalities which not only persist within the status quo, but the role women are increasingly playing to expose structures of exclusion, which seems more and more deliberate.

States and non-state actors did make noteworthy pledges at the *Advancing Gender Equality in Climate Action* day at COP26.²¹ These initiatives range from state policies for gender-conscious approaches toward international climate and biodiversity cooperation to corporate initiatives funding climate investments that work to close the gender gap. Side events included a Gender and Energy Compact aimed at making gender considerations central to Sustainable Development Goal 7: access to sustainable, affordable, and modern energy for all.²²

¹⁹ Pan-indigeneity is a term that emphasises how Indigenous cultures are made into a conglomerate rather than seen and respected as unique individual nations with unique experiences

²⁰Cultural Survival, Nov 24 2020. “*Whitewashed Hope: A Message from 10+ Indigenous Leaders and Organizations*” [<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/whitewashed-hope-message-10-indigenous-leaders-and-organizations>]

²¹ UN WOMEN, Nov. 10 2021. “*Bold, New Commitments from around the world to put gender equality at the forefront of climate action at COP26*” [<https://bit.ly/3Oouqcy>]

²²Energia. Nov. 11 2021. “*COP26: More than 45 organizations join forces to ensure a just and gender-equal energy transition*” [<https://www.energia.org/cop26-more-than-45-organizations-join-forces-to-ensure-a-just-and-gender-equal-energy-transition/>]

Whilst this rhetoric is encouraging, UN Women representatives present at the conference note that it must now be backed up by political will and action. Further, civil society groups such as Centre on Gender Equality and Health (GEH)²³ clarified that in order for gender considerations to be taken seriously and be effectively actionable, a gender mainstreaming approach throughout the *entire* conference is necessary. One-day or side events “barely even scratch the surface,”²⁴; rather an intersectional gender lens throughout all of COP is needed, from seats at the table and national mainstreaming efforts, to sex-disaggregated data.

One of the main groups tackling these issues is **The Women and Gender Constituency**, one of the nine stakeholders of the UNFCCC and an umbrella of 33 women’s and environmental civil society groups. The Constituency’s COP26 response statement focused on exclusion and missing voices of COP26.²⁵ For example, they highlighted those who could not be present in Glasgow, those who were murdered or killed in service and activism for climate justice, and those who reached the conference couldn’t access spaces of influence.

Furthermore, the link between violence against women and violence against the Earth is a key observation that has been made by Indigenous youth in particular. Ta’kaiya Blaney, a prominent Tla’amin community member and activist, along with other Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people, emphasised this both within the COP26 proceedings as well as at side events dedicated to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S).²⁶ Sii-am Hamilton, a Sto:lo and Nuučaan̓ut land defender and traditional knowledge holder stated: “This year alone I’ve watched so much violence, toward specifically young Indigenous women and girls, at the hands of the police... Remember it’s not if, it’s when you will go missing, if you are involved in land rights.”²⁷

In Canada, Indigenous women and girls are targeted by violence more than any other group and are 12 times more likely to go missing or be murdered.²⁸ In the US, the justice department found that Native American women faced murder rates more than 10 times the national average. These two examples are not in isolation, and Indigenous women and gender-diverse people globally are severely impacted by gendered violence and climate change. Indigenous women are impacted more gravely through extractivist policies and actions, and yet, as discussed above, their voices are still often intentionally excluded or co-opted. The presence of

²³ Ravi, Anshika. Oct. 30 2021. “CoP26: Women need more space at the climate table” [<https://bit.ly/3jU1f35>]

²⁴ Ravi, Anshika. Oct. 30 2021. “CoP26: Women need more space at the climate table” [<https://bit.ly/3jU1f35>]

²⁵ Women and Gender Constituency. Nov. 11 2021. “WGC Closing Press Release” [<https://womensgenderclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/WGC-Closing-Press-Release-.pdf>]

²⁶ Brooks, Libby. Nov. 10 2021. “Indigenous women speak out at Cop26 rally: ‘Femicide is linked to ecocide’” [<https://bit.ly/3OioYYK>]

²⁷ Brooks, Libby. Nov. 10 2021. “Indigenous women speak out at Cop26 rally: ‘Femicide is linked to ecocide’” [<https://bit.ly/3OioYYK>]

²⁸ Brooks, Libby. Nov. 10, 2021. “Indigenous women speak out at Cop26 rally: ‘Femicide is linked to ecocide’” [<https://bit.ly/3OioYYK>]

these Indigenous youth inside COP26 provided important counter-messages to the watered-down greenwashing prevalent in the conference.

Youth

Ageism is a problem within environmental discussions and beyond, and COP26 was not an exception. Compounding that with sexism, racism, ableism, and other forms of discrimination, youth face many barriers to being heard. Examples of exclusion were prominent before COP26, however, they continued despite a growing youth presence within and outside major zones and official processes. One prime example was an image of Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, beside Ugandan climate justice activist Vanessa Nakate, and Swedish Fridays for Future founder Greta Thunberg. Sky News denied having cropped Vanessa out of the frame to focus on Greta and Nicola by removing the one young Black woman advocate from the Majority World. The symbolism was not lost on climate justice movements, and the response online was swift and clear, with many advocates and organisations re-sharing the original image of the three women in protest.²⁹

Vanessa Nakate, a climate justice activist, pointed out the extreme imbalances and injustices. She points out how Africans are responsible for only 3% of emissions, and yet are among the most gravely affected by climate crisis, alluding to continuing colonialism that severely impacts racialised and Global Minority women and youth. Additionally, Nakate's physical exclusion, as well as her emphasis on the disproportionate effects of climate change on African people, highlights not only the exclusion of youth but also the exclusion of Global Majority youth and women.³⁰

Whilst youth are increasingly visible within the climate change debate, this is yet to translate into effective and meaningful engagement in policy setting and decision-making. Youth, some who were present at (and critical of) COP26, have co-signed an open letter, including Dominika Lasota from Poland, Mitzi Tan from the Philippines, and Greta Thunberg from Sweden, calling on governments to take concrete, actionable steps toward equitable and effective climate adaptation.³¹ Some actions the letter calls for are: keeping the global target temperature rise below 1.5°C, ending all fossil fuel investment, delivering \$100 billion USD to the communities most seriously impacted by the effects of climate change, and protecting workers through enacting climate policies.

²⁹ Metro News Reporter. Nov. 3 2021 [Sky News deny cropping Ugandan activist out of Greta Thunberg coverage](#)

³⁰ African Business. Nov. 6 2021. "[Vanessa Nakate takes an African voice to Cop26](https://african.business/2021/11/energy-resources/cop26-ugandas-vanessa-nakate-brings-an-african-voice-to-the-climate-crisis/)". <https://african.business/2021/11/energy-resources/cop26-ugandas-vanessa-nakate-brings-an-african-voice-to-the-climate-crisis/>

³¹ [Avaaz - Sign the emergency appeal for climate action!](#)

Despite vocal activist work, which has become mainstream talking points in numerous countries, youth and their concerns continue to be excluded from climate talks. Greta Thunberg is also frequently targeted in the media in different ways, from ableist and neuro-normative discussions around her social skills, her age and ‘inexperience’, as well as sexist rhetoric. The barriers to even speak in climate discussions and be heard are numerous.

This systemic exclusion from deciding and bettering their own futures has led youth to become incredibly disenchanted by the current state of leadership and climate action globally. According to United Nations statistics, 73% of surveyed youth said they currently feel climate change’s effects, and only 9% are confident that the world will act quickly enough to address climate change.³² However, 89% of youth respondents said young people can make a difference on climate change.³³ Youth represent the majority of the population in many countries, especially Majority World countries, and while the future may look bleak, dismantling barriers for them to make change is key to ensuring they have a viable future on this planet. As Vanessa Nakate says: “I am here to say: Prove us wrong... We desperately need you to prove us wrong. Please prove us wrong. God help us all if you fail to prove us wrong.”³⁴

Key Players in the Problem of Exclusion

Activist groups are concerned about the grave dangers posed by the ongoing exclusion of feminist and Indigenous groups from climate talks. Critiques of COP26 are focused upon the political processes which manifest and perpetuate these cycles of patriarchy and colonialism through seemingly new, but rather recycled forms of inequality and lack of accountability. These structures of power and persistent hierarchies (race, gender, class) appear to be well embedded in what can be seen as the actual outcomes of COP26 (as discussed above), despite offering a widening spectrum of discourse toward alternative considerations and solutions.

The exclusion of those most affected by climate change from policymaking is built upon two primary issues and followed by subsequent recommendations. Firstly, it is the corporate and political players, as well as COP itself, that pose significant problems. In response to the above-mentioned critiques of exclusion, COP26 representatives blamed safety concerns due to COVID-19 and cited the solutions it put in place in the form of bureaucratised funding mechanisms, i.e., organisational pathways to travel and lodging, visa, and vaccine help.³⁵ These

³² UNEP, 2008, *GlobeScan Survey* [<http://bit.ly/1CtR3zZ>]

³³ UNEP, 2008, *GlobeScan Survey* [<http://bit.ly/1CtR3zZ>]

³⁴ UK COP26. “An Inclusive COP26”. [<https://ukcop26.org/the-conference/an-inclusive-cop26/>]

³⁵ Taylor, Matthew. Oct. 30 2021. “Cop26 will be whitest and most privileged ever, warn campaigners” [<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/oct/30/cop26-will-be-whitest-and-most-privileged-ever-warn-campaigners>]

mechanisms, however, as rebutted by civil society actors, were insufficient to address the insurmountable barriers to participation erected by the UK government and a global pandemic.³⁶ The statements provided by COP26 also fail to address the deep structural and ideological limitations embedded within global climate talks, which do not and cannot prioritise feminist and BIPOC representation, and in essence, their contribution to the global climate debate. What is needed according to Coalition COP26 is a greater effort toward providing full and equitable access, especially for marginalised groups and Majority World countries, as well as the prioritisation of more meaningful diversity at all levels of representation and decision-making.

Civil society groups are the second group of stakeholders, who are not only being excluded but ultimately tasked with creating and taking up their own spaces. As such, what has become largely apparent and encouraging in COP26 is how activists have taken ownership of the narrative. Coalition COP26 notes that the flipside of widespread disappointment in the final commitments, COP26 has forged greater solidarity, momentum, and platforms for collaboration.³⁷ This growing collective action has, in their view, consolidated the climate justice movement from the fringes of political activism to inhabiting central space as it is “more powerful, educated and connected than ever before.”³⁸

The emphasis by civil society actors to go from *fighting climate change* to working toward *climate justice* was an idea that gained traction, becoming the ninth most tweeted hashtag concerning COP26. Furthermore, evident in COP26 has been the replacement of the shallow or appropriative consumption of Indigenous knowledge with a more visceral sense of Indigenous peoples’ owning the discourse. The Women and Gender Constituency in particular provided a social media toolkit for activists and organised pre-COP26 events for Feminist mobilisation.³⁹ Analysis of tweets from COP26 also demonstrates how climate activists were demonstrably more “correlated, interactive, and reciprocated” in their social media usage than politicians, corporations, or celebrity engagements.⁴⁰ Social media thus provides the potential for hope, enabling greater solidarity amongst activist groups. This hope must be tempered with, and remain attentive to, the converse potential of social media to create further polarity and deepen the fault lines between climate sceptics (i.e. camp #CostOfNetZero) and activists.⁴¹ However, social media as a tool for activists provides a platform for constant dissemination of not only knowledge but inspiration, encouragement, and mobilisation.

³⁶ Craft, Brianna. July 5. 2021. “*Delivering an inclusive Cop26 in the age of Covid-19 requires more than vaccines*” [<https://www.climatechangenews.com/2021/07/05/delivering-inclusive-cop26-age-covid-19-requires-vaccines/>]

³⁷ COP26 Coalition. “*COP26 Reflection*”. [<https://cop26coalition.org/cop26-summary/>]

³⁸ COP26 Coalition. “*COP26 Reflection*”. [<https://cop26coalition.org/cop26-summary/>]

³⁹ Women, Gender, Climate. 2019. “*Outreach Plan COP25*”

[<https://womensgenderclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Outreach-plan-COP25.docx.pdf>]

⁴⁰ G510. Dec. 10 2021. “*Unravelling the Ongoing Discord on Climate Change – Social Media Analytics on #COP26*” [<https://g510.org/unravelling-the-ongoing-discord-on-climate-change-social-media-analytics-on-cop26/>]

⁴¹ Massia, Alessandra. Dec. 2021. “*Social Media and Misinformation at COP26*”

[<https://www.climateforesight.eu/global-policy/social-media-and-misinformation-at-cop26/>]

Summary/Recommendations

This paper seeks to highlight the failures of COP26 as a means to apply this critique to climate inaction broadly. Because other oppressions such as racism, sexism, colonialism, ableism, and ageism are inextricably linked to climate disaster as well as the disproportionate effects and causes of climate change, leaving them out of climate discussions is not only ineffective but ultimately perpetuates oppression and inequality at a systemic level within climate change policy and discussions. Through highlighting the need for not only inclusion but also full leadership of and solidarity with those who are actively oppressed in our society at COP26 and beyond, we hope to provide some concrete means of challenging hierarchies of power within climate change arenas. Through analysing response statements to COP26, all criticism regarding exclusion seems to melt into the larger pot of global histories of white colonial domination and patriarchy. The specifics of targets that need to be addressed and dismantled with greater urgency and the absolute refusal of false solutions are items that feminist and Indigenous actors will continue to pursue moving forward. However, built into all these responses and the success of climate talks moving forward is the ability to overcome the problem of exclusion.

Following this analysis, some recommendations and solutions by civil society stakeholders can be summarised in a few concise points:

Prioritising discourse of intersectional climate, gender, and Indigenous rights

- This includes clear pathways toward gender-conscious policies from analysis to impact assessments, and educational pathways for women, girls, and gender-diverse people.⁴² It means full participation of representatives from feminist and BIPOC groups in offering solutions, being present in negotiations and decision-making processes, and adequate accountability mechanisms for bad actors. For more pragmatic solutions, the problems that have arisen in COP26 regarding travel, visas, accommodation, disability access, and COVID-19 safety efforts can provide important lessons for the future. Understanding the breadth and scope of barriers preventing Majority World countries, Indigenous and grassroots groups from accessing future COPs is an essential step to avoid further perpetuating structures of inequality and repeating the mistakes of COP26. Listening to affected parties as well as raising awareness of the barriers (and actively working to dismantle them) that community members face in accessing climate talks is a role SGP

⁴²UN Girls Education Initiative. Sept. 21 2021. "Our Call for Gender Transformative Education to Advance Climate Justice". [<https://www.ungei.org/news/our-call-gender-transformative-education-climate-justice>]

can play to promote inclusion through engaging its membership and amplifying voices that are actively excluded.

Solidarity between activist groups

- COP26 has been the conference for activist groups to come together in solidarity, owning the narrative, creating household names, and mainstreaming a counter-discourse. The 3.5% rule provides hope:⁴³ where 3.5% of the population is actively committed to nonviolent protest, change is inevitable. As such, this cause for optimism is tempered with the hard work that is still required by civil society groups to mobilise in the face of disappointment. Organisations like SGP offer a unique platform to magnify BIPOC and feminist voices in this collective movement toward climate justice. SGP works to help facilitate the goals of activists through ongoing conversations, one that the organisation welcomes especially in light of upcoming and future climate talks.

Challenging the hegemonic narrative of patriarchal capitalism.

- COP26 will be remembered as a disappointment for most - in particular, the last-minute renegeing on promises to phase out fossil fuels, and general sway toward corporate interests. These actions and the continued reliance on false solutions are symptomatic of a deeper undercurrent of patriarchal and green colonialism. Challenging the hegemonic discourse of consumption, ownership, mastership, unlimited growth and competition are ecofeminist imperatives. Transforming the mechanistic and reductionist to a way of life more holistic and relational requires the constant and vocal scrutiny of activist groups to make plain the alternative possibilities going forward.

Commit to the redistribution of funds and resources to Indigenous communities and communities of the global majority

- State actors and governments should be actively budgeting to provide relief to Indigenous, racialised, and Majority World communities most affected by climate change, as well as consulting communities at national and regional levels, to determine needs locally and authentically. This is especially important to consider through the history of colonisation and the fact that most emissions come from a few countries, yet the most severely impacted by climate disaster are Global Majority communities. Furthermore, full divestment from harmful activities (extractivism, for example) should be emphasised. Non-governmental organisations focused on climate change should work to provide funding and support to those who work in climate justice.
- SGP, while ultimately a volunteer-run organisation, still works to amplify the works of those on the frontlines of climate change activism so that they can access the resources

⁴³ For more on the 3.5% rule, please refer to the researcher's TED talk at [Erica Chenoweth - TEDxBoulder](#)

that they need to continue their work. Providing tool kits, sharing and amplifying funding opportunities, as well as connecting individuals and groups to a community of others can help create support where it is needed.

Conclusion

It is clear from report after report by the UNFCCC that climate change is reaching alarming and irreversible levels. To exclude key actors and Majority World, feminist and Indigenous concerns that lie outside of an economically-expedient model and mindset is short-sighted and results in a lose-lose situation for all. Purposeful, conscientious, and sometimes messy practices of full inclusion and representation are key to ensuring that the world has a chance in the fight against climate change and that we end up with just climate outcomes for all. As international climate talks continue year after year in hopes that concrete and actionable changes will occur, it is important to take a step back and actively learn these lessons from previous conferences. We must continue to acknowledge the small steps of progress and growing solidarity whilst remaining aware of the gaping chasms that exist between promises and actual outcomes for climate justice.

As we approach another COP, these lessons are especially pertinent. Critiques outlined above can help inform the future of climate justice through lending an ideological approach to critiquing further exclusions that are bound to happen. Furthermore, they can help with understanding the use of language that seems inclusive or progressive but ultimately is not. Finally, they can help empower women and gender-diverse people, Indigenous groups, and others from Majority World as well as those allied to their causes to put pressure on those who do continue to perpetuate erasure and harm.

Glossary: Terms

Article 6

Article 6 has caused contention since its inception in Paris negotiations, as it developed and diverted in Katowice, in 2018, Madrid in 2019, and now its newly refined version in Glasgow in 2021.⁴⁴ Article 6 covers carbon trading primarily, specifically, it contains multilateral mechanisms for trading, relating to both the private and public sector interactions, as well as voluntary reductions and carbon removal.⁴⁵

Article 6 builds upon trading systems like the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) which eventually coalesced into the creation of a global carbon market. Despite a relatively ineffective track record of carbon trading and greenhouse gas reductions, CDMs have paved the way in Glasgow to clarify and guide further national, regional, and international plans for carbon emission trade.

Article 6 is considered an integral part of the Climate Accord as it serves as a guide for how states can generate cheaper, and thus more meaningful greenhouse gas reductions. The article employs 'Nationally Determined Contributions' (NDCs) which direct a nation's climate action plan, and, optimistically, lead to more ambitious climate goals. This is in part due to cross-border coordination by way of carbon trading. Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs) describe this transfer of one country's greenhouse gas inventory to another. This can be made possible from one state or government to another, as well as private and multinational corporations.

One contention that NGO and activist groups are concerned about is the *reduction vs. removal* balance. Whilst carbon removal is still deemed a future technology, many argue that for targets to be met, carbon removal needs greater incorporation within carbon trading schemes.

Countries that contribute the least to greenhouse emissions have expressed their lack of interest in the carbon trading scheme. Arguing instead that trading with more industrialised nations to offset their respective NDCs enables rich countries to sidestep their responsibilities of adequately dealing with the harmful effects of their economic success.

A final major contention of Article 6 lies in its narrow quantification of carbon credit measurement, with little respect for a wider definition of environmental integrity. Activists and Indigenous groups scrutinise carbon market regulation mechanisms, which they argue cannot take into account ESG (wider environmental, social, and governance) considerations and

⁴⁴ <https://www.ecosystemmarketplace.com/articles/article-6-and-its-glasgow-rulebook-the-basics/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.iisd.org/articles/paris-agreement-article-6-rules>

human and Indigenous rights that are threatened by market-based mechanisms. Furthermore, the market approach, critiqued by low-emission countries and NGOs, provides a perverse incentive for host parties to keep their NDC ambitions low by creating an artificially high baseline, whilst simultaneously offering richer nations an opportunity to continue business as usual.

Climate Justice

Climate justice is both a term and a movement.⁴⁶ It acknowledges the reality that whilst climate change is happening everywhere across the globe, its effects are impacting people and communities differently. Historically marginalised and underserved communities are bearing the disproportionate brunt of climate change effects whilst often contributing the least to it. From sea-level rise to more extreme weather, social, economic, and health concerns and consequences are being unequally felt.

Research suggests that climate change serves to exacerbate existing social inequalities. These intersectional lines of inequality, which include factors of race, gender, and class, play a role in how people are affected by climate-related disasters, as well as their ability to adapt to or mitigate the effects of climate change.

Climate justice furthermore informs policy responses to climate change. Responses must take into consideration pre-existing inequalities in the transition to a zero-carbon and clean energy future for everyone to have equal access to development possibilities.⁴⁷ Human rights considerations within the transition to clean energy ensure that the most vulnerable communities aren't further marginalised. Examples of people displaced for hydroelectric facilities and growing food insecurity due to reliance on monoculture and the repurposing of food crops for ethanol are a few examples of climate action without justice considerations leading to disastrous consequences. As such, climate justice seeks to be a part of both naming and contextualising the climate crisis, as well as guiding just strategies in climate action.

Global Majority/Global Minority

This paper uses the term Global Majority and Global Minority in order to disrupt the conversation around 'whiteness' and 'Westernness' as the norm. Terms such as 'developing/developed countries' often attach value judgements to geopolitical spaces and diverse cultures and peoples, and are not all-encompassing. 'Western', while denoting a location, also leaves out countries located in the 'West' that are predominantly non-white or wealthy, as do 'Global South' and 'Global North'. Global Majority shifts the language to

⁴⁶ <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2020/07/what-is-climate-justice/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/08/what-is-climate-justice/>

emphasise that the majority of the world's population are racialised and *forcibly made* 'marginal' by oppression from the Global Minority.

According to Rosemary Campbell-Stephens, "Global Majority is a collective term that first and foremost speaks to and encourages those so-called to think of themselves as belonging to the global majority. It refers to people who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, Indigenous to the global south, and or have been racialised as 'ethnic minorities'. Globally, these groups currently represents approximately eighty per cent (80%) of the world's population making them the global majority now, and with current growth rates, notwithstanding Covid-19 and its emerging variants, the global majority is set to remain so for the foreseeable future. Understanding that singular truth may shift the dial, it certainly should permanently disrupt and relocate the conversation."⁴⁸

Greenwashing

Greenwashing is the term used to describe corporations that advertise or offer a service or product under the pretence of being environmentally beneficial, often covering up contradictory practices and environmentally destructive track records. Companies often greenwash to appeal to the increasingly environmentally-conscious consumer whilst maintaining business-as-usual practices behind the facade of advertising. It has enabled companies to appear as if they are responding to the growing climate crisis whilst failing to change worrisome environmental practices.

Indigenous

According to the United Nations "Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live."⁴⁹

Given many Indigenous peoples have been displaced through colonisation, it is difficult to simply use the UN definition. Indigenous is socio-political and different for every individual group. To avoid pan-Indigeneity, we avoid using the term as all-encompassing of all Indigenous experiences, but rather as a political term.

⁴⁸ Campbell-Stephens, Rosemary. 2020. "Global Majority; Decolonising the language and Reframing the Conversation about Race."

[<https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/-/media/files/schools/school-of-education/final-leeds-beckett-1102-global-majority.pdf>]

⁴⁹ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us.html>

Nature-Based Solutions

Nature-based solutions of NBS is the term given to a wide range of solutions to curb climate change and absorb carbon dioxide. These can range from efforts of reforestation, restoring wetlands and grasslands, protecting oceans, and providing funding for Indigenous-led conservation and guardian programmes. Whilst these solutions show promise, some have been critical of how NBS have been employed and misused to offset fossil fuel usage and business as usual practices. For more information see: [Indigenous Climate Action](#) and [Kairos](#).

Net-Zero Targets

Net-zero refers to the overall balance between greenhouse gas emissions being produced in relation to the emissions being absorbed or taken out of the atmosphere. Achieving net-zero by 2050 is a task that most states have signed up for to create a pathway toward combating the effects of climate change.⁵⁰ In an ideal world, this equates to stepping away from the use of fossil fuels and with the remaining production of greenhouse gas emissions, providing carbon removal options. Net-zero targets within this century are the steps states, companies, and individuals are taking to keep warming to 1.5 degrees celsius.

Indigenous and environmentalist groups harshly criticise the *net* in *net-zero*, arguing that it is once again a pretence for business-as-usual. The net aspect of this action plan fails to take responsibility for past, present, and future GHG emissions. As various reports and statements have made evident, net-zero schemes rely on multiple myths, for example, the assumption that offsetting mechanisms, bioenergy, and unproven carbon capture technologies will take emissions out of the atmosphere after polluters have already done their damage.⁵¹ The premise of net-zero relies on cancelling emissions within the atmosphere rather than eliminating the sources of these emissions; in short, a government can commit to net-zero without having to cut emissions, so long as they can offset that year's pollution. A strategy that in no way deals with keeping temperature rise under 1.5 degrees, or tackles growing issues like sustainable food systems, front-line/fenceline communities at risk, and deeper structural inequality brought about by climate change.

Offsetting

Offsetting is the process of reducing or removing emissions in the atmosphere to compensate for emissions continuing to be emitted elsewhere. The process usually involves companies unable/(unwilling) to cut present emissions, and as such, meet their emissions target through financial means of buying *carbon credit*.⁵² Carbon credits are sold after offsetting projects have

⁵⁰ <https://www.wri.org/insights/net-zero-ghg-emissions-questions-answered>

⁵¹ <https://www.realsolutions-not-netzero.org/>

⁵² <https://chapterzero.org.uk/carbon-offsetting-explained/>

been reviewed by a third party and quantified into measurable volumes of emissions reductions. These offsetting projects generally include either mitigation- reducing future emissions, or removal- soaking carbon dioxide from the air. Whilst, in theory, offsetting has been offered as an interim solution whilst the world and the private sector transition to meet net-zero targets, some fear offsetting allows companies to 'greenwash' harmful environmental practices. Where most buyers are based in wealthier nations, and projects in the Majority World, offsetting faces not only harsh ethical scrutiny, but also runs the risk of allowing high carbon emitters to avoid taking direct action.⁵³

Patriarchal Capitalism

Patriarchal Capitalism explains how capitalism and patriarchy are entwined in numerous interlocking ways, each system feeding off the other for its existence and continuation. The idea looks at how gender and class relate to informing structures of inequality, from the expected unpaid work of women, and gendered division of labour, to socio-normative beliefs about men and women (i.e. men are suited to leadership positions, women are natural carers). Capitalism saw the institutionalisation of the devaluation of women and their work and relies upon this inequality for its ability to thrive. Some liberal feminists believe that capitalism can be separated from patriarchy, claiming that women have benefitted from the capitalist system. However, a large proportion of critical feminists disagree, arguing instead that capitalism inherently relies upon exploitation, domination, and alienation. Thus the complex social relations within capitalism rely on aspects of gender, amongst other systems of inequality and oppression.⁵⁴

Racialised / racialisation

Race is a social construct used to oppress others by hierarising groups of people that has historically shifted through time. Those who are racialised are placed into racial categories that are 'other than' white, which is the basis for racism. Merriam-Webster describes racialisation as: "the process of categorising, marginalising, or regarding according to race."⁵⁵

Importantly, this paper recognises that ethnicity does not automatically mean someone will be racialised. Racialisation is where someone's appearance is assigned to a racial category and hierarchised and marginalised by the dominant society (whiteness). Ethnicity is where someone comes from, including cultural identity and geopolitical location. They can and do frequently intersect.

⁵³ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/06/what-is-carbon-offsetting/>

⁵⁴ Vanden Daelen, Christine & Bruneau, Camille. July 7, 2020. "*Capitalism and Patriarchy: Two Systems that Feed off Each Other*".

[<https://www.cadtm.org/Capitalism-and-Patriarchy-Two-Systems-that-Feed-off-Each-Other>]

⁵⁵ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racialization>

Glossary: Organisations

This is a non-exhaustive list of organisations related to climate justice, specifically those that we included in this paper for further information.

Coalition 26

Coalition 26 is a UK-based coalition of civil society groups, activists, NGOs, trade unions, individuals, faith groups, youth groups, racial and migrant justice networks, all with a focus to amplify indigenous, frontline, and Global South community voices at COP26.⁵⁶ The coalition aims for deeper systemic change through the power of collective civil society action. There has been a visible lack of action from the powerful to make any sort of necessary change, which has prompted the belief in local grassroots movements, combined with international level solidarity to make climate justice a priority.

FEMNET

FEMNET is otherwise known as the African Women's Development and Communication Network, a pan-African feminist and membership-based network of individuals and organisations. The organisation prides itself on magnifying African women's voices in policy dialogue, by providing facilitation, coordination, capacity-building, and advocacy at regional and international levels.⁵⁷

Grassroots Global Justice Alliance

Grassroots Global Justice Alliance was founded after the widespread mobilisation around the economic struggles against NAFTA and the WTO. The aim was to bring together grassroots organisations with other social and racial justice groups outside the U.S. In their bid to promote grassroots internationalism, the Alliance seeks to support and strategically connect leaders in a reciprocity model to help support causes abroad and learn new tactics for activism at home..⁵⁸

Indigenous Climate Action

Indigenous Climate Action (ICA) was founded in 2015 to organise and guide a diverse range of indigenous knowledge keepers, water protectors, and land defenders.⁵⁹ Since its inception, it has worked to connect and support indigenous communities to lead and drive forward solutions based on climate justice.

⁵⁶ COP25 Coalition [<https://cop26coalition.org/about/the-coalition/>] > 26 or 25?

⁵⁷ FEMNET [<https://femnet.org/our-herstory/>]

⁵⁸ Grassroots Global Justice Alliance [<https://ggjalliance.org/about/our-story/>]

⁵⁹ Indigenous Climate Action [<https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com/our-story/>]

NDN Collective

NDN Collective is an organisation dedicated to building indigenous power. The organisation provides philanthropy, training, funding mechanisms, narrative change, and capacity-building to bolster Indigenous self-determination and sustainable solutions for all people and the planet.⁶⁰

The Women and Gender Constituency

The Women and Gender constituency is a broad collection of civil society groups focused on issues of women and gender, contributing to, and sharing information with the UNFCCC. The constituency works to ensure that women and gender-based activist groups have representation and participate at meetings, conferences, and workshops regarding the work of UNFCCC.

UN DESA

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs is guided by the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, home of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). UNDESA acts as a guide to help countries with information on how best to action and implement sustainable development and supports international deliberations at the UN General Assembly, and other significant forums and bodies.

⁶⁰ NDN Collective [<https://ndncollective.org/our-work/>]