



JUST AND EQUITABLE TRANSITIONS FOR A FEMINIST, FOSSIL FUEL FREE FUTURE

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The most common approach to a just transition would result in transitioning (predominantly) male workers in the fossil fuel industries to other jobs in renewable energy production. Changing energy sources is important, but it's not enough to stop catastrophic climate change, only a radical change in our consumption and production patterns will do that. But if we stop producing and consuming goods in our current economy, we will experience economic depression, job losses and, if the 2009 recession is a guide, women and the most marginalised will be impacted the most. Instead we need a radical change to the way our economies work and our resources distributed.

Climate change is gendered. Women in the global south disproportionately bear the brunt of the impact of climate change while having historically emitted low greenhouse gas (GHG).

In Asia, 75% of women are in informal work, especially in agriculture, domestic work and seasonal services.¹ Women's low wages have been regarded as a 'competitive advantage' for investors in Asia and women's unpaid labour used as a cushion for economic downturn and the failure of many countries to provide social protection, public health, accessible and clean public water, publicly funded renewable energies, childcare or elderly care services. So what would a just and equitable transition look like for women and the planet?

Redistribute paid and unpaid work

We rightfully challenged the 'male-breadwinner' model of wages, but without redistributing those hours of work the main beneficiary has been capital (or employers) who exploit the erroneous assumption that a household consists of two income earners. While women's participation rate in paid labour has increased in most countries, the increase in the number of employed hours in a household has

not increased household buying power over the past three decades in most cases. Much of the burden of unpaid care work has remained with women. Globally, women carry out 2.5 times more unpaid work than men. This has been estimated to subsidise the global economy to the tune of approximately \$10 trillion per year.² The answer lies both in increasing the number of jobs in public healthcare, childcare, elderly care and services as well as cutting the working week so that both women and men can work and have time for home based labour.

Economists have often predicted that the future would bring reductions in working hours (for example Keynes predicted a 15 hour working week). Yet despite huge productivity increases, the working week has not reduced since unions in some countries won the 8 hour day more than a century ago. Instead productivity gains have gone into profits, stronger political influence of corporations and even more demands for increased productivity and increased consumption.

When workforces have been unionised, workers have been able to gain increased holidays, parental leave, reduced hours and greater social protection without disaster. And so a feminist fossil fuel free future must include a unionised, redistributed workforce. Cutting unpaid work requires large increases in public care services. While certain jobs have been affected by the technological transformation, demand for healthcare workers continues to increase. Unionised, public health workforce can provide decent jobs for women.

Resource and Energy Democracy

One of the barriers to achieving a quick transition to renewable, clean and safe energies has been the privatisation and commodification of energy and water. Women in urban poor and rural areas often work long hours collecting water and fuel for cooking. A transition to renewable energies could ensure they have access, but not if it continues to be held by global energy corporations who prioritise the wealthiest neighbourhoods and high demand areas. Just and equitable transition to renewable, clean energy should ensure that the purpose, distribution and control over energy as well as land ownership is democratised.

Global Tax Body

A just and equitable transition requires substantial amounts of public spending to finance these common goods. There are many ways this could be done, including by questioning the very basis of neoliberal macroeconomic policies, but the most simple way is to make sure that emitters - transnational corporations and the wealthy - are being taxed. Transnational corporations are responsible for the majority of the world's emissions yet they amass enormous profits through tax evasion and tax havens. Not only this has contributed to obscene wealth disparity globally, but it diverts resources that could be put into public goods, renewable infrastructure and funding a just transition. The establishment of a Global Tax Body, an end to secrecy jurisdictions and a global corporate tax floor are essential for a just and equitable transition. It will also require a huge reduction in the power corporations have over societies and a change to the global rules that prevent governments regulating corporations. One of the greatest barriers to environmental regulations and to women's economic rights is the proliferation of preferential trade agreements which set neoliberal economic rules in favour of corporations.

Decrease militarisation

Militarisation and military spending are also huge barriers to both a low carbon future and a peaceful, solidarity-based economy that benefits women. Just ten percent of global military spending could cover the estimated costs of climate adaptation in developing countries and transition toward a just economy.³ In addition military emissions make up a large, although hidden, percentage of emissions, The US military, for example, is the largest buyer of crude oil in the world.

The way forward

The current economy driven by patriarchal, neoliberal globalisation caused climate change. We know that making neoliberalism more 'green' won't address the structural causes of either climate change or gender inequality. We need a new model. There are communities who are already putting in place their own sustainable practices. Women are managing collectively owned localised solar micro grids, the majority of subsistence farmers are women and already practice sustainable agriculture. Yet until we change the global economic rules, their efforts won't stop the catastrophic results of our global obsession with profit and consumption.



References: 1 http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/pdf/UNW_progressreport.pdf // 2 <https://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth> // 3 <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2016/opportunity-cost-world-military-spending>

Webtip: <http://climateactiontracker.org>

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