

THE MARY ROBINSON FOUNDATION CLIMATE JUSTICE 2010-2019 **A LEGACY**



**Mary Robinson
Foundation**
■ Climate Justice

During World War 1, and again during World War II, the world learned how brutal life can be. We vowed never again. We created the United Nations, we adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and we agreed on the common values that bind the people of the world together and that can ensure mutual respect and bring peace.

We need to call on those shared values now in the face of climate change, aware as we are of our interdependence as global citizens, and use our shared values to shape a safer, fairer, more diverse and respectful world for present generations and those to come.

Climate justice reflects this intergenerational approach. It is based on hope, on respect for human rights and on the belief that by working together we can create a better future for present and future generations.

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Introduction

CLIMATE CHANGE IS UNDERMINING HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE PEOPLE ON THE FRONTLINE OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS HAVE CONTRIBUTED LEAST TO THE CAUSES OF CLIMATE CHANGE. THIS INJUSTICE WAS THE MAIN DRIVER BEHIND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FOUNDATION IN 2010.

Since then the Foundation has successfully met its expected outcomes as set out in its successive business plans, most notably;

- Increasing space for and understanding of Climate Justice at international level
- Securing recognition of the Foundation as a credible, trustworthy and effective actor on the international stage
- Successfully influencing policy development at the international level.

The world's leaders committed under the Paris Agreement 2015 to hold the increase in global average temperatures to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. The Foundation was cognisant that there are considerable risks associated with even a 2°C or 1.5°C warmer world. These risks threaten progress to date on poverty reduction and mean that adaptation continues to be the priority area of climate action for many of the most climate vulnerable countries. Even if warming is contained to below 2°C, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDs) will have high adaptation needs. A failure to address these needs urgently will have a disproportionate and devastating impact. These costs will be human costs in addition to economic costs and in the worst situations will lead to displacement and loss of life.

At the same time, globally 1.2 billion people are still living in extreme poverty and 70% of people live in countries where economic inequality has increased in the last 30 years. These are basic drivers behind why the Foundation was established and the Principles of Climate Justice developed. During its

lifetime the Foundation has worked to ensure that people and social justice have been placed at the centre of climate policy decision-making – with significant success.

In 2017, given the significant achievements of the Foundation to date, the changing landscape of climate policy and the shift in focus from international negotiations to multi-stakeholder coalitions for climate action and national implementation, the Board considered its future.

In January 2018 the Trustees announced their decision to scale back activities at the end of 2018 and undertake a planned closedown of operations, to be completed by March 2019.

The Foundation is grateful to all the people who have supported its work to advance climate justice. The funders have been both brave and patient as the Foundation conceived a framework for climate justice. Other partners, who included grassroots activists particularly women on the frontlines of climate action, think tanks, academics, professional organisations, business, governments, civil society mobilisers and journalists, have been generous with their own resources and the Foundation is grateful to them for sharing their ambition to embed climate justice in international climate and development policies.

Without this broad coalition of people and organisations the Foundation would not have been able to play a key part in realising ten binding decisions or resolutions at the United Nations level that reflect principles of climate justice nor would it have been able to contribute to a reframing of the climate change narrative which has helped put issues of social justice at the centre of climate policy decision-making.

The way of working

The full breath of the Foundation's work is captured in the News section of www.mrfcj.org

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING ESTABLISHMENT IN 2010 THE FOUNDATION DEVELOPED AND DISSEMINATED THE PRINCIPLES OF CLIMATE JUSTICE (SEE ANNEX); SUBSEQUENTLY ALL FOUNDATION ACTIVITIES WERE GUIDED BY THESE PRINCIPLES.

Building on this bedrock, on core competencies of the Foundation team and adopting a 'leave no one behind' approach to climate change and development policies, proven ways of working were developed encompassing Thought Leadership, Bridging and Convening.

The Foundation stressed the moral imperative to protect those people who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change while working to maximise the benefits and opportunities of a pro-poor transition to a low carbon, climate resilient future for all.

The Foundation used its unique position amongst civil society and policy makers to bring together multidisciplinary stakeholders, in order to promote a climate justice approach that is people-centered, informed by human rights and which helps create the conditions necessary for a transition to a more equitable future.



Thought Leadership

Thought leaders are the informed opinion leaders and the go-to people in their field of expertise. They are trusted sources who move and inspire people with innovative ideas. They turn ideas into reality. The Foundation established itself as a thought leader on climate justice. As a generator of ideas, a creator of linkages and a pioneer of people-centred approaches with a focus on women and gender equality, the Foundation provided thought leadership in the fields of international climate change, sustainable development and human rights policy.

Graża Machel, a member of The Elders, echoed key messages from the Leaders' Forum on Women Leading the Way: Raising Ambition for Climate Action co-hosted by the Foundation and UN Women in her closing remarks at the UN Secretary General's Climate Summit. New York, September 2014.



Bridging

Bridging implies linking or bringing together unconnected things. The Foundation built bridges between people and disciplines. It connected grass-roots people, with a focus on women, with policy makers and world leaders, directly through convenings and by amplifying the voices of the vulnerable. Bridging disciplines brings together fields of expertise and processes that the experts within those disciplines and processes feel are separate – thus avoiding what is often called a siloed approach.

Examples include linking human rights and climate change as disciplines as well as linking the processes and communities associated with them; or providing social protection and access to sustainable energy so as to improve access for the poorest and most vulnerable people.

HE Michael D Higgins, President of Ireland and Eamon Gilmore TD, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade greet Dolsie Lorna Kalmatak, a trainer with the Solar Dryer Project in Vanuatu and Etrida Luhanga, a grassroots representative from Malawi, at the start of Hunger – Nutrition – Climate Justice Conference. Dublin, April 2013.



Convening

The Foundation identified its President's convening power as a key asset. Through experience this convening power was leveraged to bring a powerful and unusual mix of actors together, always emphasising gender balance and pioneering innovative approaches to convening that maximised dialogue based on listening and learning. The Foundation developed both the credibility and the capacity to convene in the margins of major events or in stand-alone flagship events, with UN and with government, business, philanthropy and civil society partners.

As part of the Foundation's engagement at COP23 it co-hosted, with COP President Fiji, a Talanoa which focused on enabling grassroots and indigenous women's participation in gender responsive climate action. Over 40 guests gathered as the sun rose on Gender Day to listen to and learn from each other's lived experience of engaging in climate action. Mailes Zulu Muke from SEPA Zambia discussed the barriers faced by her community in accessing climate finance with Colin O'Hehir, Department of Communications Climate Action and Environment, Ireland. In 2018 Irish Aid provided SEPA with a vehicle to support their work in rural northern Zambia.

Vision and its realisation

In 2010 the Foundation formulated
a vision to guide its work:

BY 2020 GLOBAL
JUSTICE AND EQUITY
WILL UNDERPIN A
PEOPLE-CENTERED
DEVELOPMENTAL
APPROACH TO ADVANCING
CLIMATE JUSTICE AND
MORE EFFECTIVELY
ADDRESSING THE IMPACTS
OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

The Foundation realised its Vision through the use of four distinct but inter-linked approaches.

THE FOUNDATION PROMOTED PEOPLE-CENTERED APPROACHES TO CLIMATE AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

The Foundation worked on human rights and climate change as a cornerstone of climate justice, in line with the Principle of Climate Justice *'Protect and respect human rights'*.

The integration of human rights considerations into climate policies is central to achieving climate action that is good for people as well as for the planet. This is recognised in the preamble of the Paris Agreement.

The Foundation bridged the climate change and human rights communities and championed rights-based approaches to climate action. It published several pieces of research on the issue including **Incorporating Human Rights into Climate Action** which found that:

- i) few countries are acting on the commitment made in the Cancun agreements to respect human rights in all climate actions
- ii) the rapid climate action needed to phase out carbon emissions by 2050 must be grounded in human rights if it is to be fair and to maximise the positive benefits for everyone.

To assist policy makers in designing climate change related actions that fully respect human rights the Foundation published **Rights For Action** which included five case studies on the right to a healthy environment; the right to food; the right to access to information; the right to education and the right to participation. **Zero Carbon, Zero Poverty the Climate Justice Way** was a cornerstone of the Foundation's work in this area as it explored the possibility of phasing out carbon emissions while protecting human rights.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The Foundation

- Enabled meaningful collaboration with individual countries and the climate change and human rights communities to increase the understanding of how human rights obligations inform better climate action
- Made the case for the integration of human rights into climate actions to maximise effectiveness and fairness
- Encouraged more coherent reporting on human rights and climate change to the UNFCCC and the Human Rights Council
- Worked with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UNFCCC secretariat, non-governmental actors and States to create the mandate, inputs and convening space necessary to realise human rights informed climate policies
- Worked with development practitioners on access to sustainable energy for the poorest people so as to illustrate and communicate the value of rights based and people-centered approaches.

IMPACT

There are 10 resolutions or binding decisions through the United Nations and European Parliament which are directly informed by climate justice including;

- Human Rights Council Resolution 26/27, Human Rights and climate change
- Human Rights Council Resolution 29/15, Human Rights and climate change
- Human Rights Council Resolution 35/20, Human rights and climate change approaches.

The space for academic study of climate justice has also developed including:

- The introduction of M.Sc. and Ph.D. programmes in Climate Justice, Glasgow Caledonian University
- The establishment of the Reading Centre for Climate and Justice, University of Reading.

Between 2017 and 2018 there were 66 national reports to the Universal Periodic Review and 38 of them linked human rights and climate change. This is a 132% increase over the baseline figure compiled by the Foundation in 2011 (see Measuring Impact page 18 of this document.) In the same period 57 of 94 countries reporting to the UNFCCC linked climate change and human rights which is a 68% increase over the baseline figure.

REALISING THE VISION 2020

Climate and development policies are informed by human rights and respond to the needs of the poorest people.



Josephine Castillo is a grassroots community leader and organiser with DAMPA in The Philippines, a country that is extremely vulnerable to climate change. She has worked extensively on a number of key urban poor issues, including reversing forced eviction and involuntary relocations, ensuring land and housing security for poor communities and advocacy for the provision of basic services in urban poor communities. With the support of the Foundation, Josephine has participated in a number of high level climate events to represent the voices of the most vulnerable people. Photo: Josephine during an interview with the Weather Channel for a documentary on influential voices on climate change. New York, September 2015.

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THE FOUNDATION PROMOTED RIGHTS PROTECTIONS FOR PEOPLE IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMAN MOBILITY ASSOCIATED WITH CLIMATE CHANGE

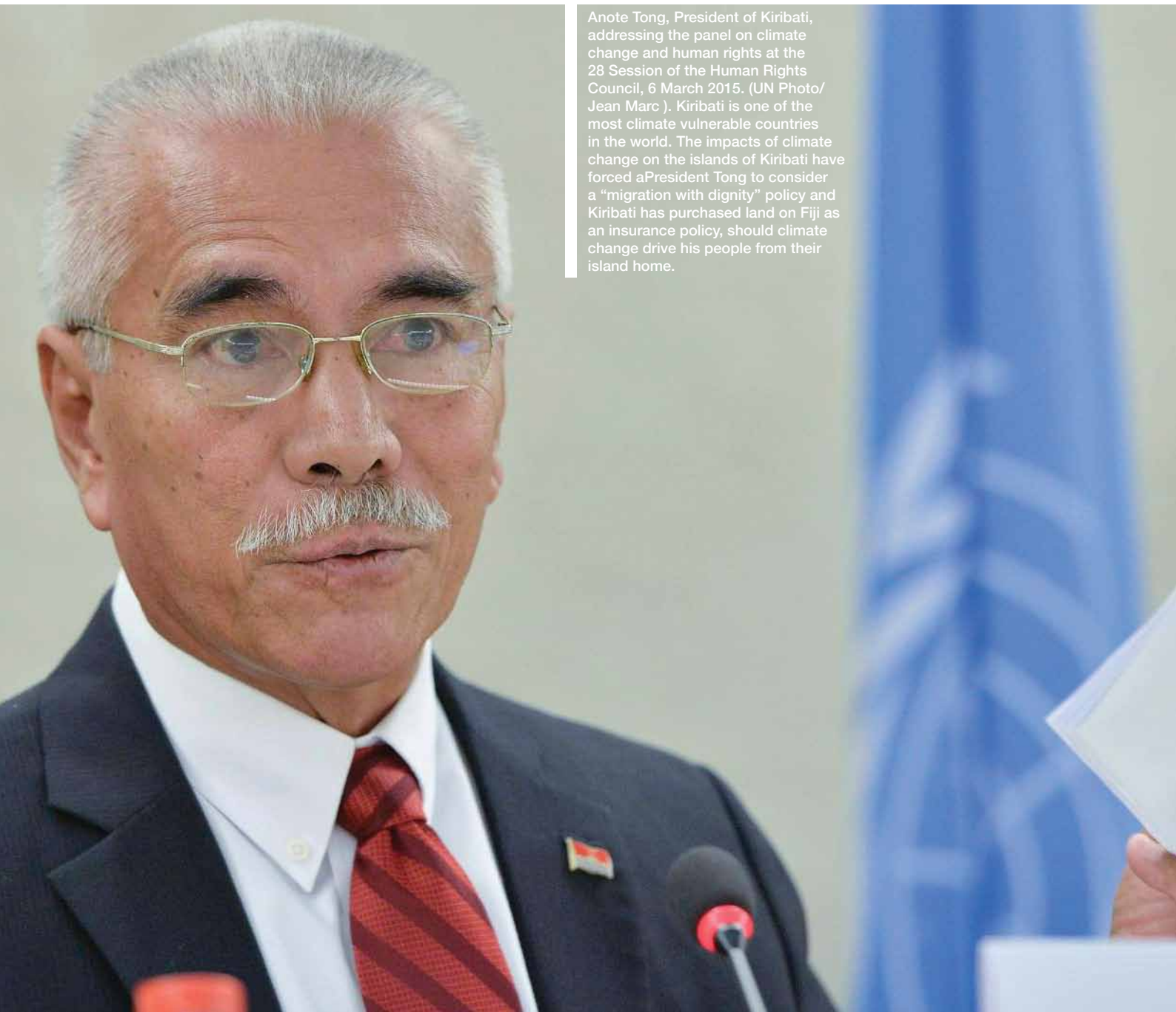
Informed by the Principle of Climate Justice '*Protect and respect human rights*' the Foundation worked with actors in the fields of international migration law and of human rights to identify and promote measures to protect the rights of climate displaced people.

The impact of catastrophic sudden and slow onset events associated with climate change means that some communities will inevitably be forced to move from their homes and their countries.

In the majority of cases these people will be amongst the most vulnerable and the least responsible for the causes of climate change. Often compounded by other economic and political challenges, they experience climate injustice and their rights are undermined.

Climate displaced people are not well protected under law at present which further exacerbates the injustice they experience. They are not recognised under current provisions for refugee status and may not have their rights protected once they leave their own country.

The UNFCCC recognises migration as an adaptation challenge and the Paris Agreement 2015 established a task force on climate-related displacement, but it does not propose measures to ensure the protection of the human rights of displaced people. The Foundation published **Protecting the Rights of Climate Displaced People**, a position paper which states that it is critical that comprehensive, coordinated and targeted solutions are found to address climate displacement as the impacts of climate change will be more keenly felt in the decades to come.



Anote Tong, President of Kiribati, addressing the panel on climate change and human rights at the 28 Session of the Human Rights Council, 6 March 2015. (UN Photo/ Jean Marc). Kiribati is one of the most climate vulnerable countries in the world. The impacts of climate change on the islands of Kiribati have forced aPresident Tong to consider a “migration with dignity” policy and Kiribati has purchased land on Fiji as an insurance policy, should climate change drive his people from their island home.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The Foundation

- Established an informal working group on climate induced displacement to identify legal and policy measures to increase human rights protections for those affected
- Identified and promoted measures to protect the rights of climate displaced people
- Raised awareness of the plight of climate displaced people
- Effectively identified and promoted stronger human rights protections.

IMPACT

There is now formal recognition by the UN of the urgent need to address the issue of climate displaced people;

- Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration 2018 expressly notes the impacts of climate change as a driver of migration and calls for special consideration for those displaced by climate change
- Human Rights Council Resolution 35/20 on 'Human rights, climate change, migrants and persons displaced across international borders' has been adopted
- UNFCCC Taskforce on Displacement adopted its final report under its 2018 Mandate. The report centered human rights and the principles of climate justice in addressing development.

REALISING THE VISION 2020

The protection of the rights of climate displaced people has been prioritised by the relevant international bodies.

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THE FOUNDATION PROMOTED THE PARTICIPATION OF GRASS-ROOTS WOMEN IN CLIMATE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Principles of Climate Justice, *‘Ensure gender equality and equity’* and *‘Ensure that decisions on climate change are participatory, transparent and accountable’* have informed the approach taken by the Foundation to convening and bridging grass-roots practitioners with political leaders and policy makers. Participation is a human right and enabling participation by those who are most vulnerable, in particular women, has defined the Foundation’s approach to its work since 2010. The Foundation strove to establish grass-roots women’s participation as a cornerstone of a gender responsive climate policy.

The Foundation conducted several pieces of research on this topic. For example **Women’s Participation - An Enabler of Climate Justice** is a policy brief published by the Foundation which demonstrates the positive impacts of women’s participation on the design, planning and implementation of climate policy and in doing so highlights the benefits of supporting women’s participation in the development of gender-responsive climate action.

The Full View Second Edition: Ensuring a comprehensive approach to achieve the goal of gender balance in the UNFCCC process, co produced with UN Women highlighted best practices and lessons learned from various sectors to promote women’s voice and agency and proposed a set of recommendations on ways to advance the goal of gender balance by Parties and observers to the UNFCCC.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The Foundation

- Raised awareness of the need for gender responsive climate policy
- Documented and promoted good practices in enabling the participation of grass-roots women in decision making to inform international fora
- Promoted the meaningful participation of grass-roots women in international fora such as:
 - The Lima Work Programme on Gender under the UNFCCC
 - The work stream on education, training and public awareness under the UNFCCC which includes public participation (Article 6)
 - The implementation of the Climate Change Sustainable Development Goal 13 (SDG) to combat climate change and its impacts and its target 13b to 'Promote mechanisms for raising capacities for effective climate change related planning and management, in LDCs, including focusing on women, youth, local and marginalized communities.'
- Brought together grass-roots women and policy makers to highlight the contribution grass-roots women can make to gender responsive climate policy.

IMPACT

- Achieving gender balance under the UNFCCC and delivering gender responsive climate action was enshrined in the Gender Action Plan UNFCCC (2017). Decision 3/CP.23
- UNFCCC (2012) Promoting gender balance and improving the participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol. Decision 23/CP.18
- COP24 reported that more than half of UN bodies have 38% or more representation of women. Three UNFCCC bodies have achieved gender parity
- Human Rights Council Resolution 38/4 makes an explicit reference to the role of women, particularly grass-roots women, in climate action
- European Parliament Resolution, Women, Gender Equality, Climate Justice 2017/2086 (INI).

REALISING THE VISION 2020

Climate actions are more responsive to the needs of grass-roots women.



The Troika+ of Women Leaders on Gender and Climate Change is a network of women leaders and supportive men committed to working together on gender and climate change, consisting of more than 55 high profile women leaders including women Ministers, deputy Ministers and senior women leaders from various international organisations. The Foundation founded the Troika+ in 2010 and provided the Secretariat for it. The members of the Troika+ championed gender equality, women's empowerment and women's participation in climate action. On 20 September 2017 the Foundation convened its final meeting of the Troika+ with the support of the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations. The meeting of government representatives, UN agencies and academic institutions brought together women leaders to share information on meetings and initiatives to inform the Gender Action Plan under the UNFCCC and to ensure that women at all levels are enabled to participate in the decisions taken on climate action, be it mitigation, adaptation or resilience, which is essential to climate justice.



THE FOUNDATION PURSUED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OFFICE, COMMISSION, OR EQUIVALENT, ON FUTURE GENERATIONS, AT UN LEVEL TO BALANCE THE NEEDS OF CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Principle of Climate Justice '*Support the right to development*' emphasises the interdependence of all people and the earth and the need for a development first approach to climate action particularly in developing countries. This interdependence applies not only within generations but also between generations. Balancing the needs of people living in poverty now with the needs of future generations is critical for climate justice and sustainable development.

The Foundation's **Climate Justice: An Intergenerational Approach** outlined the moral imperative to ambitiously tackle the crisis of climate change now, for the sake of future generations and suggested some of the concrete measures global leaders can implement to preserve and protect the rights of future generations. This group requires representation if their needs are to be given consideration in today's decision-making. One way of ensuring that the commitments made to intergenerational equity in international agreements and that UN resolutions are applied in practice is to provide representation of future generations under the United Nations.

Global Guardians: A Voice for Future Generations was produced by the Foundation in consultation with the Group of Friends of Future Generations. The Group, comprising of several Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, was established following a series of meetings organised by the Foundation during 2017.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The Foundation

- Sought the establishment of a working group within the UN system to promote the creation of an Office, Commission or equivalent, on Future Generations
- Promoted a Commission, or equivalent, rather than a Commissioner, to allow for broad geographical representation to ensure balanced reflection of the priorities of countries at different stages of development
- Developed proposals on the role an Office, Commission, or equivalent, could play in overseeing the implementation of the SDGs and the new climate agreement
- Raised awareness of the principle of intergenerational equity
- Leveraged the Foundation's leadership networks to bring renewed impetus to the work of the actors already active in this field.

IMPACT

The Office of the UN Deputy Secretary General hosted a meeting on Guardians of Future Generations at which four parallel tracks were identified:

- The Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on Climate Change, Secretary General's Youth Envoy, UNDP and relevant partners to work on integrating intergenerational justice into the planning of the Climate Summit
- Co-Chairs to convene the Group of Friends to identify ways of achieving further engagement including through intergovernmental processes during UNGA 73
- EOSG to reflect on how best to ensure a focal point at the UN on intergenerational equity
- UNDP will reflect on how the concept could be operationalised at the country level.

At UNGA 2018 a resolution on Protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind was adopted. A/RES/72/219. In March 2019, as the Foundation closes, the President of the General Assembly María Fernanda Espinosa is over-seeing the high-level meeting addressing intergenerational equity invited by A/RES/72/219.

REALISING THE VISION 2020

A proposal to establish an Office, Commission, or equivalent, on Future Generations is under active consideration at UN level.

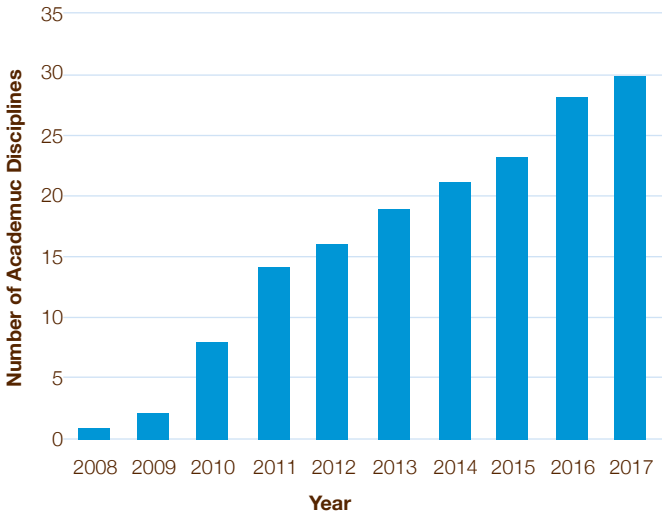
Measuring Impact

Some of the key findings are summarised here

CLIMATE JUSTICE BASELINE REVIEW

In 2011, the Foundation undertook a baseline study to gauge the status of climate justice in discourse around climate change and policy making. In 2015 and 2018 this process was repeated to help understand and measure the impact of the work of the Foundation. The findings indicate a significant increase in the actors using climate justice narratives in calling for a global response to climate change.

Increase in the number of academic disciplines adopting climate justice



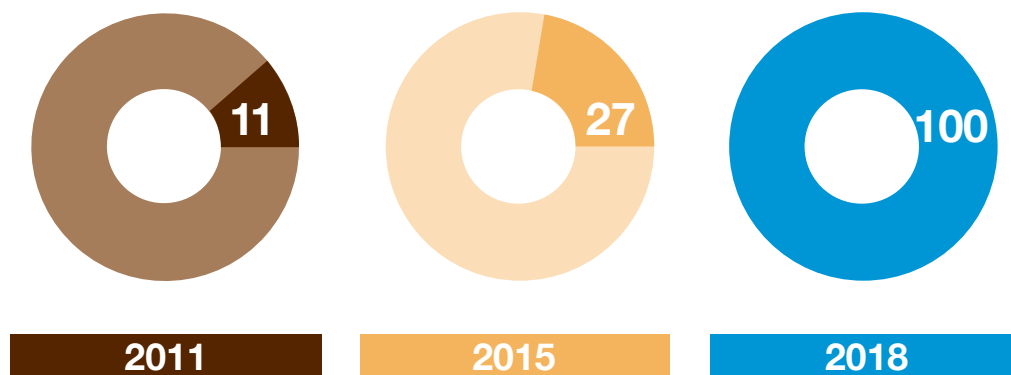
CIVIL SOCIETY

Climate justice and the use of the climate justice narrative continues to be used by a wide range of civil society actors including grass-roots activists/campaigning groups, international development and environment NGOs, trade/labour unions, pop culture and media, faith, education/academia, women/gender, human rights, law and youth groups.



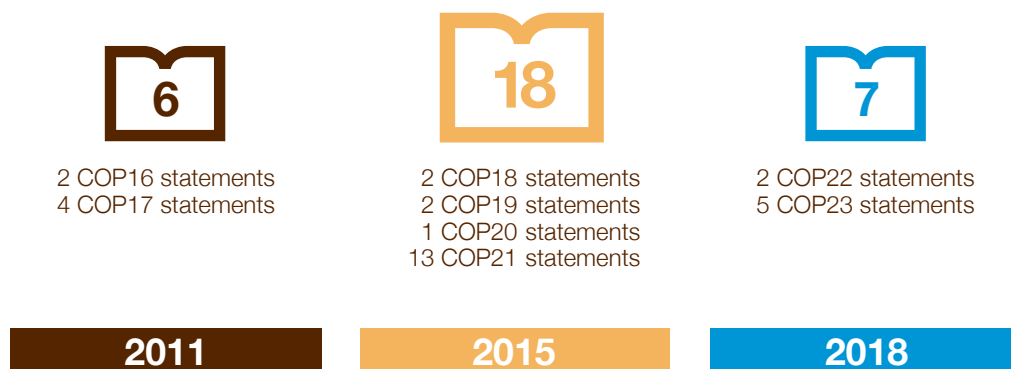
NATIONAL ACTORS

Climate justice narratives are now ubiquitous with leaders and diplomats regularly referring to human rights, gender equality, intergenerational equity in relation to climate change.



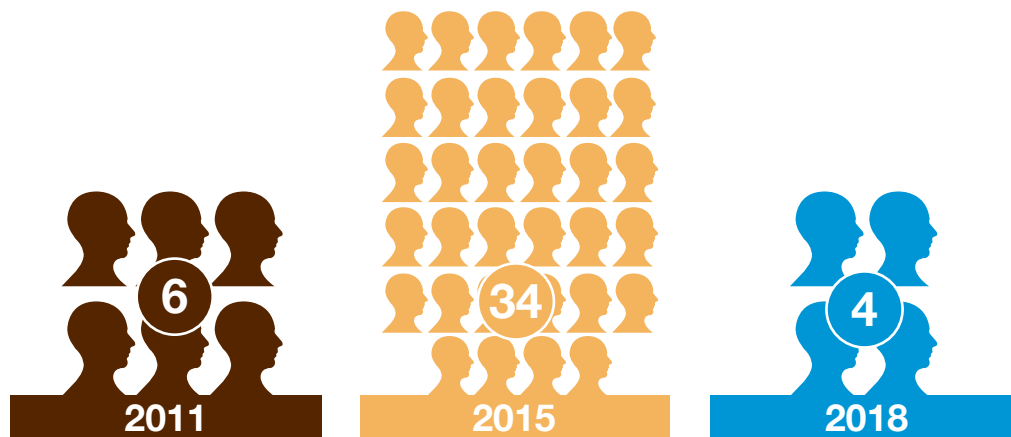
UNFCCC

This indicates a decline in 2018 relative to the use of the narrative in 2015 at COP21, when climate justice provided a unifying theme for the French Presidency. However, COP22 and 23 have more references to climate justice than the average for the period 2010 (COP16) to 2014 (COP20).



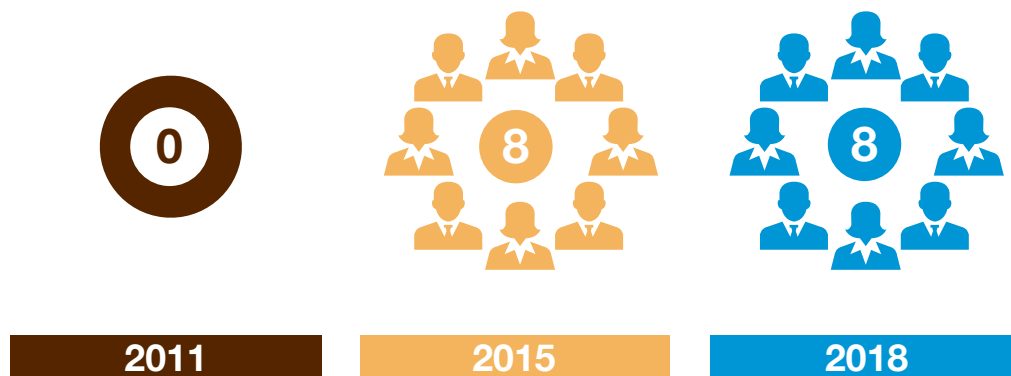
WORLD LEADERS

It is worth noting that figure of 34 in 2015 was heavily influenced by the very large presence of Heads of State and government at COP21 and there were fewer opportunities for Heads of State and government to speak about climate at international fora in 2016-2017.



PRIVATE SECTOR

In the 2018 study a similar number and range of private sector actors explicitly using climate justice as in the 2015 study. Rapidly increasing focus on social and environmental responsibilities at board room level is a positive development for climate justice.





In 2015 people were preparing for COP21 which ultimately delivered the Paris Agreement.

The Foundation strove to raise awareness of the need for human rights informed climate action. Mary Robinson delivered a TED talk explaining why climate change is not only a threat to our environment, but also a threat to the human rights of many poor and marginalised people around the world.

Declarations

AMONG THE DECLARATIONS
ADOPTED AND ISSUED BY
MAJOR INTERNATIONAL
ORGANISATIONS AS
A DIRECT RESULT OF
THE FOUNDATION'S
ENGAGEMENT AND
ACTIVITIES AND USING THE
LANGUAGE OF CLIMATE
JUSTICE ARE:

The Global Network for the Study of Human Rights and the Environment is a global network of thinkers, researchers, policy-makers, opinion-formers and community activists working at the interface between human rights and the environment. The Network adopted a significant Declaration on Human Rights and Climate Change in 2015.

[\(https://gnhre.org/declaration-human-rights-climate-change/\)](https://gnhre.org/declaration-human-rights-climate-change/)

Greenpeace states its goal is to “ensure the ability of the Earth to nurture life in all its diversity” and focuses its campaigning on worldwide issues such as climate change and deforestation. Greenpeace developed a **People’s Declaration for Climate Justice** - and people from the Philippines and Pacific Island countries, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands, signed on to demonstrate their willingness to use national, regional and international mechanisms to hold the big carbon polluters responsible for breaching their responsibility to protect human rights.

[\(www.greenpeace.org/seasia/ph/What-we-do/Demand-Climate-Justice/\)](http://www.greenpeace.org/seasia/ph/What-we-do/Demand-Climate-Justice/)

The Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions has unanimously adopted the **St. Julian’s Declaration on Climate Justice**; 45 of the 100 countries classified globally as most vulnerable to climate change are in the Commonwealth, 31 of which are small states and 27 of those 31 are Small Island Developing States.

http://cfnhri.org/uploads/general/St_Julian_Declaration_FINAL.pdf

Civicus is a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world. Each year it co-ordinates representatives of civil society gathered at an International Civil Society Week. In 2017 it adopted the **Declaration on Climate Induced Displacement** calling on States and International Organisations to recognise climate change as a key driver of migration in the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, with affected populations needing long-term solutions including expanded migration channels.

<http://www.civicus.org/icsw/documents/Declaration-on-Climate-Induced-Displacement.pdf>

Thank you to our Partners

As mentioned in the Introduction our partners were a broad coalition of people and organisations – and they were from all continents and are too numerous to mention. Their ongoing commitment and support made our work feasible and we owe them an enormous debt of gratitude.

One sub-group of partners was our funding partners who provided core support for the operation of the Foundation in support of its strategic plan and/or programmes. Without them there would have been no achievements and the Foundation is grateful to them for their support.

Funding Partners 2010-2019

- AJWS
- Blum Family Foundation
- Children's Investment Fund Foundation
- Humanity United
- Hunt Alternatives
- Ireland Funds
- Irish Aid
- Mitchell Kapor Foundation
- Nduna Foundation
- NTR Foundation
- Oak Foundation
- One Foundation
- Packard Foundation
- PwC
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- Rockefeller Foundation
- Schmidt Family Foundation
- Silatech/Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser
- The Tides Foundation
- Virgin Unite
- Wallace Global Fund
- Wellspring Advisors

Conclusion

As a direct result of the Foundation's activities since 2010 climate justice has gone from being effectively a taboo topic to being an approach to climate decision-making and action that is people-centered, rights-informed and fair. It is supported as a concept by a growing academic literature and in practice by new funding streams from governments and philanthropy. It is now a concept and language that different actors in the world of development, climate change and human rights coalesce around to find commonalities rather than differences.

Since 2018 a growing number of school children worldwide have begun to strike and protest that their future is not being protected because of climate change. Their use of the term climate justice has helped mainstream an awareness of the seriousness of intergenerational injustice.

The countries and governments of the world still have a lot of work to do to ensure that global warming does not exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels – but the bedrock for proper development has been laid through the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals and Human Rights and General Assembly Resolutions for climate action inspired by our common humanity and the need for solidarity between people and between generations.

We are proud to have contributed.

Mary Robinson
President MRFCJ

David Went
Chair Board of Trustees MRFCJ

Principles of Climate Justice

Climate Justice links human rights and development to achieve a human-centred approach, safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable and sharing the burdens and benefits of climate change and its resolution equitably and fairly. Climate justice is informed by science, responds to science and acknowledges the need for equitable stewardship of the world's resources. In seeking through its mission to realise its vision of a world engaged in the delivery of climate justice, the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice dedicates itself to action which will be informed by the following core principles which it has elaborated.

Respect and Protect Human Rights

The international rights framework provides a reservoir for the supply of legal imperatives with which to frame morally appropriate responses to climate change, rooted in equality and justice.

The idea of human rights point societies towards internationally agreed values around which common action can be negotiated and then acted upon. Human rights yardsticks deliver valuable minimal thresholds, legally defined, about which there is widespread consensus. The guarantee of basic rights rooted in respect for the dignity of the person which is at the core of this approach makes it an indispensable foundation for action on climate justice.

Support the Right to Development

The vast gulf in resources between rich and poor, evident in the gap between countries in the North and South and also within many countries (both North and South) is the deepest injustice of our age. This failure of resource-fairness makes it impossible for billions of humans to lead decent lives, the sort of life-opportunities that a commitment to true equality should make an absolute essential.

Climate change both highlights and exacerbates this gulf in equality. It also provides the world with an opportunity. Climate change highlights our true interdependence and must lead to a new and respectful paradigm of sustainable development, based on the urgent need to scale up and transfer green technologies and to support low carbon climate resilient strategies for the poorest so that they become part of the combined effort in mitigation and adaptation.

Share Benefits and Burdens Equitably

The benefits and burdens associated with climate change and its resolution must be fairly allocated. This involves acceptance of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in relation to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Those who have most responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions and most capacity to act must cut emissions first. In addition, those who have benefited and still benefit from emissions in the form of on-going economic development and increased wealth, mainly in industrialised countries, have an ethical obligation to share benefits with those who are today suffering from the effects of these emissions, mainly vulnerable people in developing countries. People in low income countries

must have access to opportunities to adapt to the impacts of climate change and embrace local carbon development to avoid future environmental damage.

Ensure that Decisions on Climate Change are Participatory, Transparent and Accountable

The opportunity to participate in decision-making processes which are fair, accountable, open and corruption-free is essential to the growth of a culture of climate justice. The voices of the most vulnerable to climate change must be heard and acted upon. A basic of good international practice is the requirement for transparency in decision-making and accountability for decisions that are made. It must be possible to ensure that policy developments and policy implementation in this field are seen to be informed by an understanding of the needs of low income countries in relation to climate justice and that these needs are adequately understood and addressed.

Decisions on policies with regard to climate change taken in a range of fora from the UNFCCC to trade, human rights, business, investment and development must be implemented in a way that is transparent and accountable: poverty can never be an alibi for government failure in this sphere.

Highlight Gender Equality and Equity

The gender dimension of climate change and in turn climate justice, must be highlighted. The impacts of climate changes are different for women and men, with women likely to bear the greater burden in situations of poverty.

Women's voices must be heard and their priorities supported as part of climate justice. In many countries and cultures, women are at the forefront of living with the reality of the injustices caused by climate change. They are critically aware of the importance of climate justice in contributing to the right to development being recognised and can play a vital role as agents of change within their communities.

Harness the Transformative Power of Education for Climate Stewardship

The transformative power of education under-pins other principles, making their successful adoption more likely and inculcating into cultures a deeper awareness of human rights and climate justice than is presently to be found. To achieve climate stabilisation will necessitate radical changes in lifestyle

and behaviour and education has the power to equip future generations with the skills and knowledge they will need to thrive and survive.

As well as being a fundamental human right which is already well developed in the international framework of rights referred to above, education is indispensable to the just society. It draws those in receipt of it towards a fuller understanding of the world about them, deepening their awareness both of themselves and of those around them. Done well, it invites reflection on ethics and justice that make the well-educated also good citizens, both of their home state and (in these global times) of the world as well.

Delivered in an effective multi-disciplinary school, college or university environmental education can increase consciousness of climate change, producing new insights not only at the scientific but also at the sociological and political level. Education is also achievable outside the formal system, through public and, increasingly, virtual (i.e. web-based) activity. The learning required to see climate change in justice terms cannot be done at the schools and university alone: it is a life-long responsibility and therefore a commitment.

Use Effective Partnerships to Secure Climate Justice

The principle of partnership points in the direction of solutions to climate change that are integrated both within states and across state boundaries.

Climate justice requires effective action on a global scale which in turn requires a pooling of resources and a sharing of skills across the world. The nation state may remain the basic building block of the international system but without openness to coalitions of states and corporate interests and elements within civil society as well, the risk is that the whole house produced by these blocks will be rendered uninhabitable. Openness to partnership is a vital aspect of any coherent approach to climate change and in the name of climate justice, this must also involve partnership with those most affected by climate change and least able adequately to deal with it – the poor and under-resourced.

These principles are rooted in the frameworks of international and regional human rights law and do not require the breaking of any new ground on the part of those who ought, in the name of climate justice, to be willing to take them on.

Around the world, our histories, our cultures and even our languages bear evidence of the role that solidarity has played in shaping our societies.

There is an old tradition of cooperation in Ireland where farmers turn to each other at times of harvest to lighten each other's load. This system is known as a *Meitheal*. In Kenya, the national motto *Harambee*, translated as “all pull together” from Swahili, has similar origins in community collaboration. Nelson Mandela described the southern African philosophy of *Ubuntu* as “the profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others” and this sentiment is echoed in the Sanskrit phrase *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* which translates as “the world is one family”. Faced with the existential threat of climate change, we must draw on this essential core of human unity and come to understand that it will only be through working together that we will overcome.

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