

What would a Feminist Green New Deal look like?

Briefing from the UK Women's Budget Group and WEN (Women's Environmental Network)

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The Covid-19 outbreak has accelerated calls for a 'new deal' for the British economy. It has highlighted the neglect of public services, lack of resilience and deep-seated socio-economic inequalities, propelling the case for a 'just transition to a green economy' or, a Green New Deal (GND.)

Though popular, Green New Deal frameworks do not typically foreground inequalities of gender, race and class. A new paper from the UK Women's Budget Group and the WEN (Women's Environmental Network) seeks to begin filling this gap by asking, what would a *Feminist* Green New Deal look like?

What does it mean to pay attention to inequalities of gender, race and class when we think about transitioning to a green economy? This briefing sets out recommendations for a Green New Deal which puts intersectional gender equality front and centre.

Green New Deal aims typically include:

- ✓ Decarbonising the economy
- ✓ Democratising the economy
- ✓ Creating fair green jobs
- ✓ Preserving the natural environment
- ✓ Reform of finance and banking systems
- ✓ Community organising and ownership
- ✓ International responsibilities to repay debts and inequalities

Gender-equality priorities include:

- ✓ Redressing economic and social disadvantages faced by women
- ✓ Changing social norms of gender at home and at work to share and value care
- ✓ Increasing women's representation in all arenas of public life
- ✓ Ending violence against women and girls

How can we mutually achieve these aims?

INVESTMENT IN (SOCIAL) INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure investment will be needed to change the way we live so that it protects the planet.

This includes investment in transport, housing and agriculture. It also includes investment in social infrastructure like jobs and training for carers and educators.

- Women's Budget Group research¹ finds that a 2% GDP investment in care (e.g. social care, childcare, parental leave and care level) creates double the number of jobs for women and almost as many for men than the same investment in construction. Investment in free universal childcare especially, returns almost all of its initial investment.
- Eurostat data suggests that the care industry is 30% less polluting (in terms of GHG emissions) than the construction industry and, the education industry is 62% less polluting than the construction industry². Investment in social infrastructure is economically, environmentally and equality sound.
- All physical infrastructure ought to be collectively designed at the local level with the participation of women taken into account. E.g. do community organising spaces provide a creche? Are they at family-accessible times of day and locations?
- Transport plans should take account of how women use transport differently to juggle caring responsibilities. Women are significantly more likely to rely on public transport, especially buses, which allow them to 'trip-chain' (i.e. make multiple short distances at either end of their working day) affordably.
- Design new housing and residential developments to enable greater sharing and coordination (e.g., as in co-housing and community land trusts) in order to reduce the amount of care and domestic

¹ WBG (2020) Submission to HM Treasury <https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/consultation-responses/submission-to-hm-treasury-budget-representation-2020/>

² WBG calculations from Eurostat data <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

work required in private households at the same time as reducing resource consumption and environmental impacts.

GREEN JOBS

Support women's enrolment in green technologies

A gender equal Green New Deal should also be wary of reproducing occupational segregation and take steps to enrol women in STEM jobs crucial to a green economy including:

- Providing subsidies or other incentives (including paid education leave) to support women, low-income and BAME people to access training and development programmes and give more people access to high-skilled work in the new green economy is key.
- Provide subsidies or other incentives to support those whose jobs are at a high risk of being replaced by automation in order to future proof employment also matter.
- Encourage women and girls into male-dominated green sectors promoted by the GND, as well as encouraging boys and men into the already green caring sectors

SHARING CARE

Recognise that paid care jobs are low carbon jobs and that they redress gender inequality

Women's disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work sees them own less and earn less over a lifetime as they have less time for paid work.

- Investing in care therefore has the dual benefit of creating jobs – and tax revenue - that are mostly done by women therefore increasing their labour market participation and, enabling other women to achieve labour market equality. Children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, also benefit from high quality childcare and education.
- The narrow definition of 'green jobs' as those in construction and technology often obscures the fact that care, as an already low carbon, high recompense sector, is increasingly neglected in the UK. All green jobs ought to be paid at real living wages, securely contracted and unionised.

Invest in policies that promote redistribution of unpaid care

Encouraging men to take on more unpaid care work is also essential:

- Implementing a 30-hour paid work week in recognition of unavoidable unpaid work.
- Actively incentivise and normalise care leave for men by, for example, implementing 'use it or lose it' parental leave and increasing length and pay of paternity leave.
- Consider forms of Universal Basic Income or Universal Basic Services to guarantee everyone

minimum living standards and recognise and remunerate care as work.

Consider gender in rethinking food production and consumption

The way we source food is contributing to climate change via food miles and fossil fuel emissions. It is also predominantly the responsibility of women in heterosexual households. Reconfiguring food means taking account of the extent to which women take responsibility for the procurement and preparation of food by:

- Balancing recommendations for greater food self-reliance with recognition of the gendered, unpaid and low-paid labour involved in producing and providing food.
- Supporting and developing sustainable small businesses that save time and reduce domestic work through mass preparation and distribution of locally grown food.

DEMOCRACY AND OWNERSHIP

Key to restructuring our society is changing how governance works so that it involves communities. Women, especially BAME and disabled women, are still underrepresented in all areas of political life and rectifying this is crucial to democratising the economy.

Inclusive participation is central to localising power and resources by:

- Promoting economic, ecological and carbon education in schools as well as through the media, to best engage all children.
- Require all consultation on environmental policies to have proportional representation of gender and race and engage civil society.
- Experiment with different models of consultation like citizens' assemblies.
- Support new forms of ownership such as cooperatives and community-owned enterprises and ensure that women are enrolled in these processes.

Gender equality should be a GND goal

- Make socio-economic equality (of gender, race, disability etc.) a key goal of any green new deal framework and enrol feminist thinkers in co-creation of planning and policy.
- Work to abolish violence against women and girls as it continues to exist in the UK and around the world as well as supporting victims/survivors with sustainably funded services including those by and for BAME women.
- Promote a culture shift towards valuing care as foundational to the environment and economy.

(INTER)NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Key to a Feminist Green New Deal is reducing and redressing international inequalities by:

- Ending the hostile environment in the UK including rethinking the new Immigration Bill, abolishing the No Recourse to Public Funds condition and ending information exchange between public bodies and the Home Office.
- Promoting fair tax policies which close tax loopholes, redistribute wealth between women and men and, hold transnational corporations to account for practices that exploit people and planet. This could include: a fossil fuels tax for corporations, a financial transaction tax and reform of progressive taxation like income and corporation tax.
- Protecting human rights including sexual and reproductive rights in the UK and globally.
- Promoting trade justice within all global supply chains including those dominated by women
- Transforming food supply chains to enable socially just and environmentally sustainable food production, distribution and consumption.

Together, recommendations promote a new settlement for people and planet which has equality for all women at its centre.

This briefing is a summary of a paper authored by Sherilyn MacGregor and Maeve Cohen for the UK Women's Budget Group's Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy. The full paper is available to read online. The Women's Budget Group and the Women's Environmental Network are planning more detailed

work in this area. For more information contact
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