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Feminist Climate Justice Report: Summary

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 **feminist communities**
for climate justice



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Summary

This document summarises a baseline review report of Irish environmental and climate policy for the National Women’s Council (NWC) and Community Work Ireland (CWI) Feminist Communities for Climate Justice project (FCCJ) from the perspective of intersectional feminist climate justice.

Baseline review aims and questions

Baseline reviews are designed to establish the current position, in this case with respect to Irish environmental and climate policy, from a particular vantage point and to identify gaps therein. This report identifies the gaps in knowledge, understanding and policy action, in relation to climate change and its impact on women and marginalised communities in Ireland. It does this with reference to intersectional feminist climate justice. The report is guided by three research aims as set out by the NWC and CWI:

- Examine Irish climate and environment policy from the perspective of women and marginalised communities, detailing
 - » how climate change impacts differently on women and marginalised communities and
 - » highlighting where these impacts have been a consideration and identifying where they have not.
- Identify key areas and strategies for improving the gender proofing of policy from this perspective.
- Reference relevant case studies, internationally and or nationally where this analysis does exist or where policy is reflective, as applicable.

These aims are addressed by three question sets. The first one adds a conceptual overview to the aims. The second set analyses policy. The third set seeks out examples of initiatives and policy developments that advance intersectional feminist climate justice policy proofing and in so doing improve climate policy making for women and marginalised communities.

Question Set 1: What does an understanding of the key concepts of climate justice, feminist climate justice, and intersectional feminist climate justice entail? What are the relationships between these concepts and the forms of holistic, transformative eco-social policy possibilities they anticipate? How can we construct a feminist intersectional climate justice conceptual framework of analysis to inform the reviewing and research process?

Question Set 2: What is the impact of Irish environmental and climate policy on women and marginalised communities across the six policy pillars of Just Transition; Energy Poverty and Housing; Care; Transport; Food, Land Use, Agriculture and Biodiversity; and Health?

Question Set 3: How can we identify key areas and strategies for improving the proofing of policy from the perspective of women and marginalised communities? What case studies, policies, approaches, and examples of good practice, international and/or national, can help us to identify effective and impactful ways of policy proofing for these groups?

Key areas analysed

The full baseline review report builds on an existing literature review carried out by the NWC/CWI project team and completed in August 2023 (NWC, 2023a). That review identified five key areas of investigation, namely:

- Just transition
- Care
- Energy Poverty and Housing
- Transport
- Food, Land Use, Agriculture and Biodiversity

For the purposes of this review, Health was added as a sixth area.

Methodology

The methodological approach adopted is a rapid review as a form of condensed systematic review. In addition to reviewing the *Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP 2023)* as the current centre piece of Ireland's response to the climate crisis, current national policies across the six areas listed above were also included. Policy critiques, research findings and other relevant information sourced from governmental, non-governmental and academic sources at local, national and international levels were also included in the review. Utilising a select number of academic databases our core keyword search terms were 'Climate Justice', 'Feminist Climate Justice' and 'Intersectionality and Climate Policy'. In the case of each area, additional keywords were added, corresponding to the area in question, that is, 'Just transition', 'Care' and so on. The analysis presented here is based almost entirely on desk-based research. However, it is complemented by reference to excerpts from a series of workshops and exercises about climate justice which the FCCJ project team held with numerous individuals and community groups across Ireland in 2023. These excerpts are referred to as 'Voices from FCCJ' in the report.

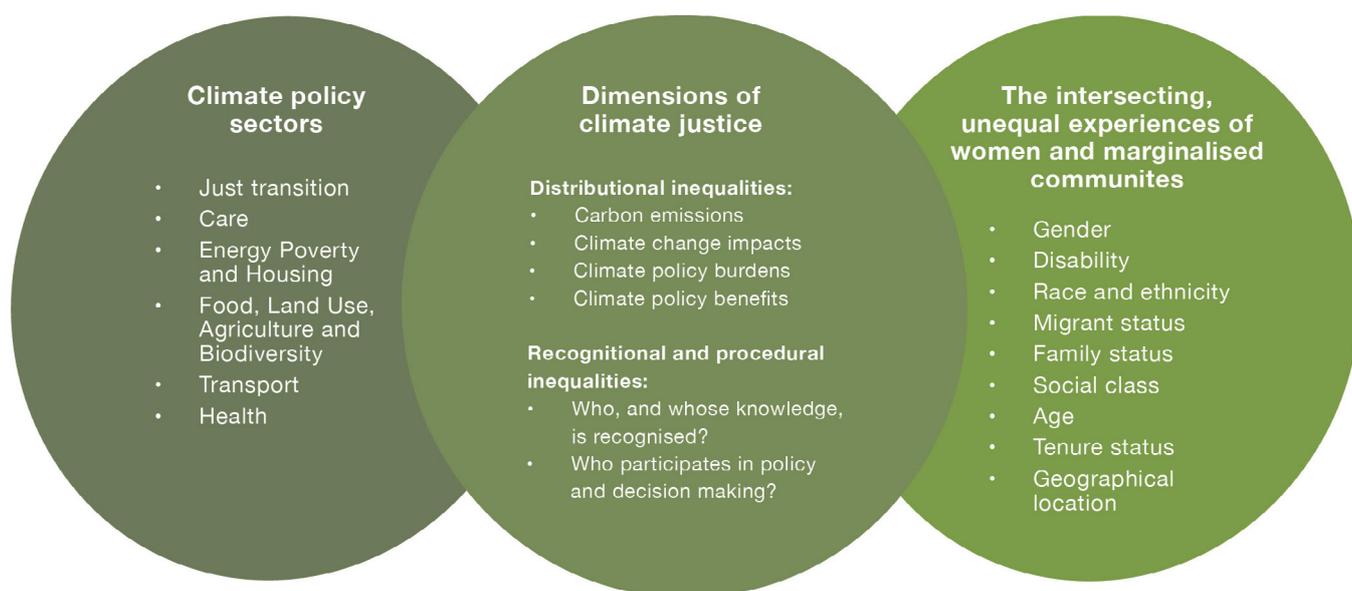
Key findings

Conceptual review

The conceptual review explores what is meant by climate justice, how it is gendered, and what an intersectional feminist climate justice as a concept, and as an analytical lens, entails. It sets out the fact that climate justice has both academic and activist lineages. It is a concept that holds diverse meanings and, in terms of justice work, needs to be considered as a ‘work in progress’ (Walker, 2012: 221). At its core is the idea that climate injustice is a compound form of injustice. It adds another layer to the injustices already experienced by people who may be economically, socially and politically marginalised, thus perpetuating and exacerbating existing inequalities and marginalisation. The section identifies at least five dimensions to climate justice which refer to distributional, recognitional and procedural aspects. There is a gendered dimension to each of them, however research here too is a ‘work in progress’ with data gaps abounding. In addition, the lack of recognition of diverse

forms of knowledge and experiences of climate injustice amongst women and marginalised communities is a complicating factor. The ways in which these issues are addressed in feminist literature on climate justice is reviewed with reference to how feminist analyses are increasingly adopting an intersectional approach. This enriches our understanding of the interdependency and indivisibility of inequalities associated with climate change and the impact of climate policies in terms of how both climate change and climate policies are experienced by women and marginalised communities. Such an approach also points to the importance of developing climate policies that are transformative. These require full and fair inclusion of women and marginalised communities in climate policy decision making, and the undoing of the underlying intersectional inequalities that climate change and limited versions of adaptation and mitigation climate policy frameworks compound. **Figure 0.1** below summarises the key points and areas discussed in this section and how they relate to the six areas that the report proceeds to analyse from an intersectional feminist climate justice perspective.

Figure 0.1: Connecting climate policy, climate justice and intersectionality



Source: authors.

Just transition

The section on just transition explores how just transition policy has developed in Ireland using an intersectional feminist climate justice perspective. It discusses the existing definitions and understandings of just transition, finding that Ireland's approach to just transition policy is narrow in scope and does not adequately consider dimensions of climate justice. This section identifies the ways in which just transition policy both nationally and, in some cases, internationally, is gender-blind and not attuned to the inequalities and injustices women and marginalised communities face. Ireland's approach to just transition focuses heavily on how transitioning from a carbon intensive economy to a carbon neutral economy impacts male-dominated industries, without acknowledgment of existing gender-related inequalities within such industries. This section highlights the importance of funded projects that are locally led and catered to meet the varying needs of individuals and communities, ensuring a just transition for all.

Care

The section on Care establishes core connections between care and climate change. It highlights the connections between the care crisis and the climate crisis and the fact that care for people and for the planet are also inter-related. It finds that care is invisibilised in Irish climate policy. This is, in turn, underpinned by the siloed nature of Irish climate policy and care policy, with neither recognising the connections between care and climate. Despite this lacuna in the Irish context, this section also identifies a growing body of policy critique and policy proposals from an intersectional feminist perspective in the international context. These situate care and the idea of a care economy at the core of climate policy. The care economy means recognising that care is the foundation upon which societies and economies are

built. Care is understood in holistic terms as care for humans and care for all aspects of the natural world. In policy terms it entails an acknowledgement that care work is green work and requires a major investment in our social infrastructure, in providing decent jobs in care in all its forms and adequately valuing unpaid care.

Energy Poverty and Housing

The Energy Poverty and Housing section addresses energy poverty and the related issue of housing as it relates to climate and environmental policy. It reviews the approaches to tackling energy poverty incorporated in Irish climate policy agenda and strategies from an intersectional feminist perspective. It highlights the inaccuracy and inadequacy of Ireland's expenditure-based method of measuring energy poverty. Additionally, this section points to the lack of disaggregated data to represent in detail the disproportionate impact of energy poverty experienced by marginalised communities in Ireland. This section then examines energy policy in the context of climate justice, analysing energy justice based on three tenets: distributional, procedural, and recognitional justice. The final section analyses Irish energy and housing policy measures against this backdrop, drawing attention to social groups who are particularly vulnerable to energy poverty including lone parent families, the Traveller community and people living in direct provision.

Transport

The section on Transport reviews Irish transport and climate policy in relation to climate and gender justice. Deploying an intersectional feminist approach, this section reviews policy documents such as the CAP 2023 and the National Sustainable Mobility Plan 2022, in relation to the transport needs and experiences of women and marginalised communities in Ireland. This section identifies a need

for more representation of women and marginalised communities in transport policy and planning. The steps towards gender mainstreaming in transport will help ensure that sustainable transport systems are developed with the central objectives of safety, accessibility, and affordability for all.

Food, Land Use, Agriculture and Biodiversity

The section on Food, Land Use, Agriculture and Biodiversity explores the diverse but inter-related areas of food, land use, agriculture and biodiversity. All of these areas are addressed in Ireland's CAP 2023 and in discrete policy papers and all were specifically investigated for policy and literature on gender, intersectionality and marginalised communities. Gender, intersectionality and community are significant elements of each of these areas; for example, women and marginalised communities play significant roles in food production and agriculture in Ireland and these groups have an important role to play in climate action. However, despite some recent promising initiatives at both Irish and EU levels, policy on each of these areas lacks a clear and comprehensive focus. More work needs to be done to ensure joined-up policy that connects these four areas and places them at the centre of policy discussion and policy making in ways that benefit women and marginalised communities.

Health

The section on Health details the interconnection between the impacts of climate change on health as they pertain to women and marginalised communities. It explores how climate and health policy fall short of recognising how climate change exacerbates existing health inequalities, particularly failing to acknowledge the correlation between climate justice and reproductive justice. This section details the origins of the relationship between climate and reproductive justice, followed

by an analysis of reproductive justice in relation to climate-related impacts in the Irish context. Additionally, the health implications of climate change are discussed in relation to mental and physical wellbeing as well as Gender-Based Violence (GBV). This section establishes that there is a stark lack of reproductive health mentioned in Irish policy related to the negative mental and physical health outcomes that can result from the impacts of climate change in Ireland.

Intersectional Feminist Climate Justice and Policy Proofing

The section on Intersectional Feminist Climate Justice and Policy Proofing builds upon the conceptual discussion of intersectional feminist climate justice and the analysis of the six key areas of Irish climate and environmental policy from an intersectional feminist climate justice perspective. Addressing the third question set mentioned earlier, it considers what may be done to proof policy to progress intersectional feminist climate justice for women and marginal communities. The section identifies several key policies and strategies that offer key recommendations on gender mainstreaming economies and society. It is noted that while these recommendations speak more specifically to women than to marginalised communities, they could arguably be extended to include a focus on marginalised communities, particularly through specifying an intersectional perspective. The recommendations analysed are drawn from United Nations (UN) organisation for gender equality, UN Women; the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM), an inter-governmental body for countries in the Nordic region; and European Union (EU) sources. At the level of climate justice principles and related climate justice actions, the UN Women's 2023 report offers core principles - redistribution, recognition and representation - that speak to the distributional, recognitional and procedural

dimensions of feminist climate justice and the policy domains and types of actions that can be addressed to work towards realising feminist climate justice. Particularly notable in this document is the importance attached to recognising diverse forms of knowledge to fairly include women and marginalised groups in responding to climate justice and in climate policy decision making. At European level, the work of the NCM offers an example of an explicit commitment to feminist climate justice action. Again, the importance of participation based on diversity and inclusion, and the production of knowledge to inform and progress gender proofing and gender mainstreaming are crucial policy actions. Finally, the European Commission's Advisory Committee on Equality Opportunities for Women and Men offers a more detailed set of recommendations and actions on the gender equality dimensions of climate change. These offer a holistic suite of actions which, with some adaptations and additions, could significantly progress intersectional feminist climate justice in Ireland from its current almost absent baseline as identified in this summary and the full report.





