

COP28 Student Sustainability Forum
(23 November 2023)

Key takeaways

Discussion Table 1: Climate Justice/Loss & Damage

- Which events receive money? What will be funded? Hoping detail on this will come out in COP 28. Details not currently known. Has been brought up by at risk countries for a long time, still needs details to be fleshed out.
- How to prove link to climate change? Potentially a big issue. Seen already in adaptation funds, which don't work well. Mitigation often prioritised.
- How to access? Who is funded? What's the turnaround time? Aid needed immediately in a lot of cases.
- Failure in mitigation – adaptation more important? Very much so. EU and US push back on adaptation, want funding in mitigation. Not as helpful for many global south countries.
- Building back with resilience to deal with repeat events in the future. This helps in tying mitigation and adaptation together.
- COP 26 had a win on 50/50 adaptation/mitigation split but needs the funding there to now work.
- System change needed – can climate crisis be solved within capitalist system? Seems unlikely, system change only way.
- Seems impossible but has happened in the past – capitalism has not been around forever; these systems are not set in stone.
- Need to reprioritise what we want from life – consumption, material things or health, happiness, social connection. Hard to succeed if the former route is preferred.
- Social tipping points (25%) – civil disobedience needed. What about at COP 28? Location of COP matters. Protest needed as people take note, disappointing not to see it at this or last COP.
- Often priority from leaders is towards private businesses, may not capture some communities/people, result in top-down ideas. Whose voices are heard? And where?
- Youth voice and indigenous voices important, but not always at the table. Tokenism.
- Indigenous voices often know the issues, solutions but aren't seen/heard.
- UN often working with governments on projects. If governments aren't listening then these issues are still missed.
- If delegates are not English speaking this can also be an issue for being heard and present in discussions.
- Also access to COPs an issue – cost, accreditation.
- Corruption – obstacle to wanting to give funding, sometimes too much red tape, maybe less of an issue on immediate funding?
- But real issues around money going where it is needed.

Discussion Table 2: Climate Finance

In the climate finance panel, we talked about the imperative of just transitions. On one hand, some African countries express their concerns about the irrelevance of ESG to their development due to other short-term priorities, such as poverty and unemployment. On the other hand, developing countries should view the need for green transition as potential economic development opportunities for both local businesses and communities and see how they can benefit from green policies. The European Green New Deal and the US Inflation Reduction Act are good examples of how governments promote the growth of the green sector by creating economic opportunities for

businesses. Additionally, inclusive conversations that connect indigenous communities and corporations must be established in order to make the transitions just.

Next, we talked about the existence of greenwashing, which is when organisations spend more time and money on marketing themselves as environmentally friendly than on actually minimising their environmental impacts. Since the current paradigm market is Western and capitalist-driven, the private sector mainly follows the incentives given by the market. It's important for the government to set public policy that guides private sector investment in the right direction, such as investment in electric vehicles and renewable energy. The government also has a role to play in strategic subsidies in promoting stronger technology.

Discussion Table 3: Engaging Youth

- How to effectively engage youth and students (16-26 years) when talking about COP and climate crisis.
- It was said that having the opportunity to take a module in sustainability in UCL is a good way to engage people. However, it would be better to have a compulsory module in sustainability for everyone.
- Apathy is a big issue in students. It was discussed that we are forcing people to learn math, English, so why can't we do that with sustainability. We are pushing people to learn we believe they need to learn, and we should be thinking they also need to learn about sustainability.
- The question is how to engage people to learn about the climate crisis.
- In high schools, if sustainability was mandatory it would be something like the government wants you to know, so students might get suspicious. It is important to address how the curriculum is shaped and what kind of education for sustainable development we are promoting.
- Familiarity with COP28: students said they are feeling very distant.
- Do you feel young people have a place in cop? Youth people don't feel they have a place in these kind of events. Looking at who is hosting Cop28, they (Dubai) don't look like they really care.
- Is not even about who is holding the event, but is also about participation rate, and who is attending. The people who is going influence the decision making, and usually we can see big companies related to fossil fuels that are attending. In addition, who is going also depends on their money.
- It is necessary to not only inviting young people to these events, but also giving them the opportunity to do more, because finally young people are the ones doing strikes and trying to push forward.
- Are young people's voices heard?
- It emerged the question about how to effectively engage young people in stuffs like Cop.
- First step should be not scaring people. A student talked about that in 2007-2008 he saw a music video of Michael Jackson about a song regarding environment. With the video, he felt like there were no hope at all.
- We talked about the concept of eco anxiety, as the sensation that the world is dying. The eco anxiety is affecting very young kids and young people in general.
- We discussed the feeling of apathy present in some young people: students said that for reducing apathy is necessary to promote a positive incentive related to the climate crisis rather than a negative one.

- We also talked about that we know that we are all going to face the consequences of the climate crisis, but it's frustrating to see that we haven't caused all the same destruction. We are being told that we need to take care of the environment, but we have companies and countries that destruct our environment and don't take accountability.
- We are told that we need to change our habits, but that's a marketing response. Your individual change is not going to go that further.
- Fear related to apathy. Emotional link to climate crisis. Hope could be helpful in youth related to climate action.
- Individuals have a lot of power but the question is if the youth can promote systematical changes.
- It is important to promote engagement with climate action and societies, encourage people to get involved. In cop there are also civil society groups getting involved.
- Someone said the youth is mainly engaging with climate crisis through discussions and strikes, but when we are actually implementing the change we are looking for we need to get more involvement of youth people.
- It is necessary the idea of professionalizing young people and upscaling young people so they can have voice but also take action professionally in these issues.
- Sense of urgency.
- Students whose research or programmes are associated to climate change have also the opportunity to present them in the cop.
- Youth champion: how to engage young people.
- Advocacy in youth is related with privileged people. We need to move the fight and engage youth people from low income backgrounds who are going to be affected by this issues.

Discussion Table 4: The Future of Climate Action

Climate action comprises both international cooperation/agreements and activism outside the legal framework

Global stocktake: temperature check - are the countries living up to their promises?
5-yearly check

When we add up everything every state is doing, how will that affect the path of emissions for the next 5 years?

There are many things being done but we're nowhere near the 1.5 degree objective
NDCs determine objectives on an international scope, then the technical way of implementing the latter is done at the national (domestic) level
Workload limitations restricts the scope of each nation's engagements

The way we respond to climate change in a few years (as professionals) will be different from now (as students) = COP sometimes fails to recognize that

Policymakers put the burden on future generations through education etc. (which is beneficial but they do this to the detriment of current policy changes)

Widening gap between developing and developed countries : Developing countries not on a good path to development. G77 has different interests compared with smaller, more isolated and less

influential developing countries => also a **gap within emerging economies**^[11] For **vulnerable territories** such as the AOSIS, the **future of climate action is their future**

Could developed countries perhaps **suggest strategies** to emerging economies to advise them on how to sustain their economies? This is what L&D, climate finance is trying to do (to an extent) - but issue is that emerging economies will want to have the **right to develop in the same way** that developed countries did i.e. industrialise

We don't see many of climate finance's tangible results

The importance of wording complicates the negotiation process —> e.g. phase down vs. phase out

What should be the balance in policies for today vs. for tomorrow?

By 2030, billion people displaced on temperature

We don't have time to wait for a generation

At the local level, reshaping education etc. can be powerful, BUT in high-level governance, we need to focus on immediate changes

Many politicians often get way too comfortable with long-term goals (to secure votes etc.) = saying « we're on track » creates a **massive gap between the ambition/their promises and the reality** —> **there is no space for such a gap today**

You don't have to be young to care about climate change

You'd have to be over 40 to have had an education without the notion of climate change => may partially explain (but not justify) the awareness gap between young and older generations = therefore this shows **importance of education**

Just because you're old doesn't mean you know more (except academics of course)

Plenty of young academics experienced it more first hand than older people who **have lived very different lives = can bring different insights and perspectives in the discussions**

The youth shouldn't be disregarded solely on the argument that they haven't 'lived that long'

Climate movement is not a new thing => does feel hopeless sometimes because people have been going to the streets since the 1980s, so it takes a lot to think that NOW, we'll be able to change thing - but at least we're asking governments to **trust us**, because they clearly weren't able to address the problem

Activism (e.g. Just Stop Oil) is creating more animosity and shifting the interest towards their actions rather than the message that they were initially trying to convey

If we still have a very active aviation and oil industry, GDP-oriented economy, activism and small actions won't matter because they are not being listened to and their protests do not reflect in these industries

Activism is valuable but we're not getting the response we need from the higher level

We're all making an effort but corporations and government are not = which can be really frustrating

Animosity around activists => **protests aren't about getting the public on side**, they just want to **call out to politicians**

Politicians understand the issue of climate, they just lack political will

We've never achieved radical social change without nonviolent disruptive protest (cf. multiple historical movements)

Very few examples in history in which governments gave things benevolently, they mostly acted when demanded

—> Insulate Britain = some of them were in court but the proceeding was stopped because the room was too cold

Voters vote on issues' salience, how much do they engage with it etc.

After Extinction Rebellion disruption, people voted more on the issue (even if people don't like it, they see it and this is reflected in their votes)

Obstacles to immediate change:

Short term conditions like cost of living crisis also determines climate action

People may not afford to pay more to offset their carbon emissions for example

Lots of countries are **economically dependent on oil** so there is a large conflict of interests

A fair transition will thus take time

Transition is a key word (e.g. Russia lobbies to label gas as transitional energy)

The focus is still very much on governments, but how much power does the government really have about large corporations anymore?

e.g. case in Germany where politicians couldn't stop a large corporation from acting

How much is the world going to get from merely 'discussing' things? What is the benefit going to be, given that every country is in a different situation and faces specific challenges and issues

Shouldn't this be thought individually rather than grouping countries as continents (or G77 for instance)

—> this may encourage good practices

Especially in the **context of outsourcing emissions** - is this country (North) really neutral or is it just buying carbon emissions to South countries

Thus we still place a bit of hope in COP28

Discussion Table 5: Gender Equality

- **Commonalities Between Women and Marginalized Communities:** Explored specific parallels, such as shared challenges in accessing resources or facing environmental vulnerabilities for all vulnerable groups.
- **Women-Led Supply Chains and Solutions:** Discussed concrete examples of successful women-led supply chains or solutions, emphasizing their impact on communities. Addressed challenges faced by women in implementing these solutions.
- **Issue of Colonial and Privileged Framing:** Delved into the consequences of framing policies from colonial and privileged perspectives. One group participant brought up an example of women from Nepal who were trained in solar panel techniques, providing details on how the lack of commercial gain affected the perception of a program that helped the women.
- **Climate Change Advocacy and Representation:** Provided examples of instances where diverse representation has led to more effective climate change policies. Discuss strategies for ensuring a more inclusive and representative platform for women and practical steps to involve the most affected communities in discussions about their issues.
- **Empowerment Over Victimisation:** Provided examples of initiatives that have successfully empowered women in the face of climate challenges. Elaborated on strategies to shift the narrative from victimization to empowerment.
- **Cascading Effect of Climate Change on Gender Inequality:** Broke down the cascading effects, detailing how girls' education is impacted and the subsequent repercussions on women's roles.

- **Context-Specific Curriculum Development:** Specified elements that should be considered in context-specific curriculum development. Discussed potential challenges and solutions for implementing tailored educational programs in tribal contexts.
- **Enabling Female Leadership and Representation:** Detailed specific strategies to enable and support female leadership. Discuss potential mentorship or training programs to nurture women leaders.