

Feminists demand wealthy countries #PayUp their climate debt!

From rising sea levels engulfing coastal communities to extreme weather events such as cyclones and droughts causing widespread destruction, the frequency and intensity of climate catastrophes are skyrocketing, causing devastating economic and social impacts. The need for urgent global action to address the planetary crisis is clear.

Climate change is disproportionately affecting countries in the Global South, those that are least responsible for causing the crisis. Every year Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America & the Caribbean carry the cost of escalating climate change in destroyed infrastructure, crop failure, lands disappearing beneath the sea, ruined livelihoods, and lost lives.

The thirst for economic growth from wealthiest nations in the Global North, built on fossil fuels, has enriched them while condemning the Global South to climate-induced poverty, displacement, deepening debt, and hunger.

Wealthy countries therefore not only have the obligation to cut their own outsized emissions as rapidly as possible, but also pay for the climate chaos they have caused in the Global South. The costs of climate destruction continue to push Global South countries deeper into poverty and debt. By any fair logic, the costs of climate action should not be the burden of those most harmed and least responsible.

The Global North has an incalculable climate debt owed to the Global South.

It is for this reason that under the **#PayUp** campaign banner, an array of civil society groups from trade unions, to youth and climate networks, women and gender organisations, including the [Women and Gender Constituency](#), are demanding the Global North to clear the climate debt owed to the Global South.

A new global goal on climate finance is to be set at the UN COP29 climate negotiations in Baku, Azerbaijan in November this year. With widespread recognition that developed countries' broken promises on climate action and [climate finance](#) are pushing the planet to the brink, the new climate finance goal to be agreed by governments must be considered in

the light of this climate debt, and viewed as an opportunity to reset the planet's future through a new commitment for climate ambition.

We need trillions not billions.

The current climate debt is immense and incalculable, particularly considering the exploitation based on **the largest historical subsidy: the unpaid and unrecognised care work across the world that has enabled multiple forms of work and that has been overexploited to sustain systems of extraction and destruction**; to sustain unequal exchange, particularly coming from racialized communities.

To begin addressing this climate debt, the #PayUp campaign demands that the governments of the **Global North provide at least US\$5 trillion per year to the Global South in public finance**. The said amount must be revised upwards regularly as needed, and be considered as merely an initial payment, toward the much larger total climate debt that continues to accrue.

Wealthy countries may claim that jointly providing US\$5 trillion a year in climate finance is an unreasonable expectation - yet the [G7 spends over US\\$1 trillion](#) each year funding wars and conflicts. More progressive tax measures that target the wealthiest individuals and corporations in wealthy countries could raise up to [US\\$2 trillion for climate finance](#). **The resources clearly exist - they are just being allocated based on current political will that fails to prioritise climate action and collective well-being.**

As part of a feminist movement that challenges the structural roots of systems of oppression and exploitation, we emphasise the quality of public finance framed in promoting collective human rights, gender equality, transparency and accountability, and enhanced access. Grant-based finance must be delivered to address unsustainable level of indebtedness and missing fiscal space. All these elements are vital to ensure that grassroots and Indigenous communities have access to funding and that such funding addresses and rectifies existing shortcomings especially in social support and social safety net systems - without which climate impacts will be adding to the unpaid care burden of women.

We recognize that the climate debt is part of a larger historical and continuing social, economic, and ecological debt accumulated through colonial, imperialist, patriarchal and racist plunder and exploitation owed by the Global North's governments, elites, and corporations to the people of the Global South.

It's time for wealthy countries to #PayUp.