

Wading Upstream: The Case for Ecofeminism as a Solution-Oriented, Critical Theory Approach

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## Preface

This thesis is an analytical piece meant to explore the methods of transnational corporations engaging in aid relating to gendered environmental sustainability efforts. The piece will not be very poetic in nature and—though there are a few case studies—will not be rooted in storytelling. However, stories are a key part to my journey of arriving at this thesis topic. There is one tale that I believe is crucial to share so as to better contextualize my mindset and positionality when researching and writing this thesis.

The story is a parable that was introduced to me through the Community Based-Learning Office (CBL), a part of Goucher that I have been involved with since my first semester. CBL aims to take typical “community-service” and make a more intentional and reflective experience so as to better benefit both the individual and the community. This parable is used to explain the importance of upstream thinking and holistic solutions, a cornerstone to my thesis.

*Once upon a time, there was a small village on the edge of a river. The people there were good, and life in the village was good. One day a villager noticed a baby floating down the river. The villager quickly swam out to save the baby from drowning. The next day this same villager noticed two babies in the river. He called for help, and both babies were rescued from the swift waters. And the following day four babies were seen caught in the turbulent current. And then eight, then more, and then still more! The villagers organized themselves quickly, setting up watchtowers and training teams of swimmers who could resist the swift waters and rescue babies. Rescue squads were soon working twenty-four hours a day. And each day the number of helpless babies floating down the river increased. The villagers organized themselves efficiently. The rescue squads were now snatching many children each day. Though not all the babies, now very numerous, could be saved, the villagers felt they were doing well to save as many as they could each day. Indeed, the village priest blessed them in their good work. And life in the village continued on that basis.<sup>1</sup>*

Dealing with a problem as it arrives is important, and I do not intend to make light of the amazing work being done around the world to combat gendered environmental injustice retroactively. As this story indicates, it is crucial to address the babies (the challenge) immediately.

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<sup>1</sup> Ian Rowe, "The Parable of the River: Bedtime Reading for the Education Reform Community," Public Prep, February 21, 2018, <https://www.publicprep.org/blog/irowe/parableoftherivericprep.org/blog/irowe/parableoftheriver>

Though it also leaves the reader wondering: why were the babies floating down the river in the first place, and why didn't the villagers simply go upstream and tell the next village over to quit throwing babies in the river? Why do some people experience the harsh, cold winter without a coat, while others pay thousands of dollars for designer outerwear? Why are there people dying from starvation while restaurants and grocery stores throw away perfectly good food to keep prices competitive? Why do some understand climate change as extreme weather that inconveniences their commute, while others are dying as a result of the wealthiest countries' and largest corporations' refusal to change.

Understanding the systemic, institutional reasons for inequity is key to combating injustice. To undo systems of oppression we can't ignore the connections between race, gender, socio-economic status, sexuality, nationality, etc. We have to look upstream and understand *why* a problem is happening. There are factors that have led to children not having coats, and we as a society have a duty to identify them and work towards a holistic and sustainable solution. In the meantime, however, we must also continue our coat drives and fundraisers, for we will not solve systemic poverty and homelessness before winter falls.

## Introduction

Women's empowerment is key to combating climate change. Throughout this thesis, it will become obvious why simply acknowledging the existence of women is not enough to actually enact feminist change. To empower women means to allow them to "gain control over their lives, bodies, and sexuality in relation to men, and social institutions."<sup>2</sup> Women must access freedom of choice, "greater self-reliance," and the ability to "confront domination in any form."<sup>3</sup> More often than not, women and girls experience the impact of climate change immediately and most directly. Their disproportionate impact is related to a number of varying factors. In many communities, women are expected to fetch water for cooking and drinking. If a water source is polluted, women may have to walk significantly farther or ration drastically to accommodate. Similarly, as food access becomes more stark due to climate change's effects on farming, access to land and seed rights are becoming more difficult to obtain for women who act as subsistence farmers. There are countless examples of women being disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation, and these effects have a direct correlation with women's ability to create radical and holistic solutions to climate change, as they are addressing their immediate survival needs.

Historically, women have utilized indigenous knowledge systems in farming as an adaptation process in the face of unpredictable climatic conditions long before climate change was even conceptualized. Women are often the most in touch with their community's needs and understand problems before they surface. Including women in the conversation on climate change solutions is not only the most moral approach, it will also yield the best, most sustainable solutions.

Institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations have projects in place that target both gender inequity and climate change simultaneously.

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<sup>2</sup> Jytte Nhanenge, *Ecofeminism: Towards Integrating the Concerns of Women, Poor People, and Nature Into Development* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2011), 395.

<sup>3</sup> Nhanenge, *Ecofeminism: Towards Integrating the Concerns of Women, Poor People, and Nature Into Development*, 395.

These initiatives span multiple continents, with countries varying in socio-economic statuses, social norms, physical geography, and the immediate impacts of climate change. However, with a critical view, one may notice that these initiatives are not necessarily aiding those they claim to be. In fact, “over a third of World Bank’s projects completed in 1991 were judged failures by its own staff,” with even more of the Bank’s undertakings being seen as unsuccessful by the country or community they were working in.<sup>4</sup> When governments and community leaders were asked about how the Bank engaged in their country, many felt they “took a negotiating position, not a consulting position—they know what they want from the outset and aren’t open to hearing what the country has to say.”<sup>5</sup> Clearly, something is not working.

The global population is rising at a rapid rate, many predictions estimate there will be 10 billion people on earth by the year 2050.<sup>6</sup> Issues of land ownership and access to potable water, food, and urbanization are not only becoming more prevalent, but also have disproportionate, negative impacts on women and girls. Global institutions, such as the World Bank and the IMF, perpetuate neoliberal political and economic processes throughout the Global South, upholding the remnants of colonialism by providing solutions that target individual issues, rather than the larger systems that have created these racialized and gendered problems. It is the role of the international relations field to help demonstrate how we have arrived here, and where to go next.

This thesis will use ecofeminism as an analytical lens to articulate the flaws in international environmental initiatives and provide alternative solutions. Ecofeminism focuses on the empowerment of marginalized peoples who are most impacted by climate change. Often, women are acknowledged as those disproportionately affected by environmental degradation which I will

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<sup>4</sup> Cameron Duncan, “Internal Report Card Looks Bad for Structural Adjustments,” in *50 Years is Enough*, ed. Kevin Danaher (Boston: South End Press, 1994), 136.

<sup>5</sup> Pratap Chatterjee, “World Bank Failures Soar to 37.5% of Completed Projects in 1991,” in *50 Years is Enough*, ed. Kevin Danaher (Boston: South End Press, 1994), 138.

<sup>6</sup> Patricia Espinosa, “Empowering Women to Power up the Paris Climate Change Agreement,” in *Why Women Will Save the Planet* (London: Zed Books, 2015), 12.

examine extensively. This thesis will also look at disenfranchised communities more broadly, including low-income neighborhoods with high levels of pollution and subsistence farmers whose livelihoods are at risk due to unsustainable, industrial farming practices.

### *Framework*

Now more than ever, no one's individual identities can exist in a vacuum. Race, gender, nationality, socio-economic status, profession, and every other aspect of one's life is inevitably intertwined with themselves and the world around them. In a post-colonial, globalized society, this intersection has never been more stark. As scientists, politicians, and activists from around the world are articulating the immediate concern of climate change, it is crucial to remember that gender inequity is rooted in both the problems *and* solutions of environmental injustice.

There is no shortage of sources proving the connection between gender inequality and climate change. The two are seen as “interrelated concerns,” that cannot be treated individually.<sup>7</sup> These—and all—forms of oppression are connected, and such “structures of oppression must be addressed in their totality.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore, when attempting to understand climate change in the context of international relations, we must internalize the importance of women's knowledge and empowerment.

This thesis aims to interrogate questions revolving around these issues of international aid and the political economy of aid, imperialist structures, and the intersection between climate change and gender inequality. Moreover, I aim to demonstrate how the field of international relations can utilize an ecofeminist lens to act as a critical theory that can provide tangible, immediate solutions, as well as long term, systemic changes. This thesis aims to answer the question: *how can an ecofeminist*

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<sup>7</sup> Maureen G. Reed, Bruce Mitchell, “Gendering Environmental Geography,” *The Canadian Geographer* 47, no. 3 (2003): 319.

<sup>8</sup> Kofi Johnson, R. Babatunde Oyinade, “Ecofeminist: Lessons from Nigeria,” *Gender and Behaviour*, 7 (2009): 2383.

*lens provide guidance to international relations scholars when combating the threat of climate change?*

Three questions will guide my research and act as the organizational structure for this thesis. The first chapter will explore answers to the following question: *how do projects proposed and organized by global institutions hold up when analyzed with an ecofeminist lens?* I will utilize an ecofeminist lens to examine a World Bank program specifically aimed at aiding women impacted by climate change. An ecofeminist lens will demonstrate what is centered, what is left out, what goals the program is actually targeting, and the long term impacts of the program.

Chapter two will assess *what ecofeminism looks like in action*. I will utilize a case study of a small non-profit organization that operates with ecofeminist values at its heart. This chapter will demonstrate the ways in which ecofeminism can be utilized on a small scale; what this looks like, how it works, and what we can learn from small organizations.

The final chapter will ask: *How should the field of international relations should move forward and support women's solutions to climate change problems?* In this chapter, I will provide recommendations based on the previous two chapters, as well as supplemental research. I aim to demonstrate the ways in which ecofeminism provides critical analysis of our global structures, and in turn offers suggestions as to how it should be changed, but also the ways in which ecofeminism proposes an opportunity for immediate solutions through holistic analysis.

### *Methods*

This thesis will explore two case studies in depth. There are ample case studies relevant to this topic, spanning numerous countries with different climate factors. From water pollution in Morocco and the Mondwa village of Malawi, to drought throughout rural Kenya and Mozambique, to increased tropical storms in Fiji, to air pollution and rapid urbanization in Damascus, Syria, to land and seed ownership inequity in Delhi, India. Narrowing down which cases would act as my core

examples was difficult because there are so many instances of environmental justice efforts the world could benefit to learn from.

The first case study in this thesis will be the *National Rural Livelihoods Project*, a World Bank project aiming to “establish efficient and effective institutional platforms of the rural poor that enables them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial and selected public services.”<sup>9</sup> The project is estimated to cost a projected \$1171.00 million USD. India is the country with the most World Bank programs relating to Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry. Currently, there are 27 projects and over \$3 billion USD spent in over 350 locations throughout the country.<sup>10</sup> The National Rural Livelihoods Project is the most far-reaching and expensive project in the country, therefore ample research and information is available. I chose this case study because of the World Bank’s widespread programming throughout India and because of the extensive information available about the program on the Bank’s website. Furthermore, I felt it was important to find a Bank program that has attempted a holistic approach to women’s empowerment and climate change aid because it would theoretically be more difficult to find inconsistencies or the isolation of one issue. With this thesis, I aim to demonstrate that even the best intentions of the Bank are largely flawed because of their positionality, therefore it seemed most appropriate to examine a program with a seemingly all-encompassing approach.

The second case study will be the *South Durban Community Environmental Alliance*, a non-profit organization based in Wentworth, an industrial neighborhood in Durban, South Africa. I had the privilege of interning at the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) for three months and was able to acquire a lot of knowledge and information about their founding, programs, and internal affairs. I chose this organization because I was able to see firsthand the impact

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<sup>9</sup> National Rural Livelihoods Project," *The World Bank* online, 2020, <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P104164#abstract>.

<sup>10</sup> Maps, *The World Bank* online, 2020, <http://maps.worldbank.org/>.

they have throughout the city and the country. Though my affiliation does present a bias, I believe it puts me in a better position to examine them. I have seen the inside of the machine and am able to vouch for their intentions, accomplishments, and their reputation within the community. SDCEA is the ideal organization to demonstrate the possibilities of a small, grassroots organization. They are located in the heart of industrial pollution and staffed completely by people from the South Durban area. SDCEA self-identifies as an environmental justice organization.

Most of the sources throughout this paper are primary documents. My first case study, NRLP, is a World Bank program with little accessible, reliable data outside of the Bank's own archives. Most information I found from outside sources were not available in English, an unfortunate flaw I should have predicted before choosing the case study. The bulk of the information I gathered was from the Bank's internal reviews. The Bank has over 120 documents about the NRLP, dating back to 2010. For my second case study, SCDEA, I struggled to find many peer-reviewed, scholarly sources, though in this case it is because the organization is so small, few academics are focusing on their work. Luckily, I was able to find many local news stories about SDCEA, as well as utilize their internal documents and the staff's published works.

With both sets of primary sources, I mined the documents for relevant case studies that would help paint a picture of each given program. I utilized the word-search feature to find articles that had significant data and told stories explicitly relating to environmental impacts and programming's effects on individuals. Terms I searched include "culturally relevant", "individual", "health", "power", "in charge", "pollution", "toxins", "grassroots", "barriers", "community", "engagement", "outreach", and "women". This method proved useful not only in helping me find relevant documents, but also exhibited what was not being discussed. For example, there was very little information in SDCEA's documents about the gender division within the work being done. Most hits on the word "women" were in regards to the inequitable impacts of pollution and climate change on women, not the disproportionate number of women involved in climate change action.

Questions of how to properly aid previously colonized countries are not new. There are infinite theories on what approaches are most ethical, plausible, and what will look the best from the outside. I argue that contextualizing this quandary in gendered climate change solutions will be useful in presenting a more tangible understanding of these complex concepts. Climate change has not been addressed nearly enough within the international relations field. Climate change is a rapidly evolving problem that will forever impact the international arena. Production, trade, human rights, and power will not be able to sustain if action is not taken immediately. To create radical solutions to climate change, international actors have to break out of the neoliberal agenda that consistently perpetuates colonialism. This thesis will take such grandiose ideas and attempt to speak less theoretically about them and, instead, deconstruct real life scenarios to find tangible resolutions.

## Chapter 1: Literature Review

### *Introduction*

The field of international relations has been slow to address climate change. Despite the clear implications environmental injustices have for the international arena, minimal mainstream work has directly addressed its impacts or articulated the roles transnational actors play in combating climate change. This chapter will begin by unraveling the theories the field of international relations has predominantly leaned on and their relationship to climate change. The chapter will continue on so as to explore works that have covered topics of ecofeminism, the history of global institutions' engagement with climate activism, and a broader examination of the failures of international aid.

### *Problem-Solving versus Critical Theory in International Relations Scholarship*

Within the international relations scholarship, there are two predominant schools of thought: problem-solving theory and critical theory. Both examine the global arena, though with very different assumptions and goals.

Robert Cox was integral in laying out the exact differences between these two types of theory. He demonstrated what each entails, what purpose they serve, and where their flaws lie. Much of the work in and around this topic is directly from his initial article, or in response to him.

Cox identifies problem-solving theory as essentially mainstream IR theory, for example realism and liberalism. He defines the basis of problem-solving theory as taking “the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institution into which they are organized, as the given framework for action.”<sup>11</sup> Essentially, problem-solving theory takes the world for granted, assuming international structures, relationships, and actions are natural. Cox claims that its general goal is “to make these relationships and institutions work smoothly by dealing effectively

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<sup>11</sup> Robert W. Cox, “Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory,” *Millennium* 10, no. 2 (1981): 129.

with particular sources of trouble.”<sup>12</sup> In layman's terms, problem-solving theory looks at individual problems and irregularities in a vacuum and attempts to “fix” the issue and restore the world to its previous state.

On the other hand, critical theory does not assume the international system is natural, let alone a good basis for peace and justice. Critical theory, according to Cox, “stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about.”<sup>13</sup> The goal of critical theory is not to simply revert back after a problem has occurred, but to look at the international arena more holistically and understand how the actions of states and non-state actors have led to a given situation. They seek to understand the origins of institutions, as well as social and power relations, rather than taking them for granted.

Critical theory also values the idea of change, and believes that the world system is ever-evolving. Its goal, as articulated in writing at least, is to act as “a guide to strategic action for bringing about an alternative order.”<sup>14</sup> the roots of critical theory and the ways in which it “challenges” traditional understandings of IR. Critical theorists have specifically explored the concept of knowledge—who is given knowledge, and who gets to decide what knowledge is. International relations is in desperate need of self-reflection in order “to counter the privileging of sophisticated forms of technical rationality and instrumental reason which effectively detach knowledge from other human interests—namely intercommunity understanding and emancipation.”<sup>15</sup> If mainstream IR aims to maintain the status quo, then its goals inherently include the continued oppression of marginalized countries, communities, and individuals.

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<sup>12</sup> Cox, “Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory,” 129.

<sup>13</sup> Cox, “Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory,” 129.

<sup>14</sup> Cox, “Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory,” 130.

<sup>15</sup> Jim George and David Cambell, “Patterns of Dissent and the Celebration of Difference: Critical Social Theory and International Relations,” *International Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1990): 283.

Furthermore “as a preliminary step towards a more adequate understanding of global life... scholars must reject the notion that the value of theoretical inquiry is limited to the pragmatist criterion of instrumental usefulness, a theme central to the ‘technical realism’ of influential figures such as Waltz,” meaning that mainstream theory, such as realism, believes that “theoretical inquiry” has to have an immediate and obvious use for such knowledge.<sup>16</sup> In other words, problem-solving theories are simply taking the international arena for granted and aiming to “solve” the problem right in front of them, as Cox illustrated. There is no room for curiosity or inquiry; no potential for a complete re-imagination of systems, for they are understood as a fact; as natural.

However, critical theory provides a structure for such re-imagination. For example, Marx and Hegel’s historical perspective proposes that history would end after the process of becoming is over and we’ve reached our ultimate potential. They argued that feudalism destroyed the system of master and slave, and capitalism brought down the structure of lords and serfs, capitalism will inevitably fall apart due to the divide between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.<sup>17</sup>

In sum, critical theory is necessary, for it “does reflect upon the process of theorizing and, in reconnecting theoretical knowledge to human socio-political interest, it opens up the otherwise foreclosed debate on the construction of reality.”<sup>18</sup> In short, critical theory is essential to understand how society has arrived at this particular construction of reality. This assertion of critical theory is crucial, but that is still only a part of the puzzle. We need to understand how we got here, but also where to go next. We must learn how to learn from history, but also accept that history has happened and we are living in the present, therefore we must act now to aid those most negatively impacted by our flawed history. A large part of this work is learning from the past, understanding how systems

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<sup>16</sup> George and Campbell. “Patterns of Dissent and the Celebration of Difference: Critical Social Theory and International Relations,” 283.

<sup>17</sup> Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Worldly Philosophers: The Lives, Times, and Ideas of the Great Economic Thinkers* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2011), 142.

<sup>18</sup> George and Campbell. “Patterns of Dissent and the Celebration of Difference: Critical Social Theory and International Relations,” 282.

have been built in an imperfect way and predict and theorize about how we can do better. This method is often referred to as upstream thinking. It is the work of understanding how every law, World Bank project, and colonial map drawing is directly related to disproportionate access to god-given rights; to human rights.

Feminist theory is a key critical theory that has paved the way for ecofeminism to become integrated with the field of IR. Cox's juxtaposition of the theories has been explicitly addressed within feminist IR theory through the explanation and justification of feminist theory. Feminist theory understands these two categories of theory as one of critic and questioning, and one that is a "conventional theory... a type of conversation [associated] with men."<sup>19</sup> Like gender, these two schools of thought have been understood as binaries: you can either be a boy or a girl; you can either be critical or problem-solving. Feminist theory further asserts the need for theory to be critical with a goal of productive development. It argues that "the goal of feminist approaches is similar to that of critical theory as defined by Cox," and specifically demonstrates the ways in which knowledge has been gendered.<sup>20</sup> Feminist scholars have also articulated that their goals are tangible, as they are "committed to progressive or emancipatory goals, particularly the goal of achieving equality for women through the elimination of unequal gender relations."<sup>21</sup> Though this goal is quite broad and obviously takes many different forms, there is a specific and tangible aim within this theory. Feminist theory is using the critical lens to both demonstrate flaws *and* produce solutions to gender inequality.

Furthermore, feminist theory's critique is foundational in this thesis because it directly addresses ecofeminism in relation to IR. One scholar asserts that "the inattention to environmental problems and the silencing of women in international relations may be more than coincidental," due

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<sup>19</sup> J. Anne Tickner, "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminists and IR Theorists," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (1997): 619.

<sup>20</sup> J. Anne Tickner, "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminists and IR Theorists," 619.

<sup>21</sup> J. Anne Tickner, "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminists and IR Theorists," 618.

to the gendered way environmentalism is talked about.<sup>22</sup> Here, the relationship between power and the absence of urgent conversations about climate change in the IR field is explicitly exposed, for “natural resources and geographical spaces have been viewed as resources for increasing state power and wealth,” since the seventeenth-century, therefore climate change will not be centered because actions to combat it will not directly nor immediately further the power or wealth of a given nation.<sup>23</sup>

Another key insight within feminist international relations theory is the acknowledgement of the lack of gender conscious conversations in mainstream international political economy. Feminist scholars have long critiqued mainstream approaches to the field, stating that they do not address the significance of “activity that takes place in the household or private domain,” disproportionately excluding women who perform much of the world’s unpaid labor.<sup>24</sup> Such analysis of economics is crucial in discussing the gendered impacts of environmental aid because it demonstrates the danger of isolating economics without acknowledging its potential impacts on the most marginalized communities and individuals.

This line of thinking also provides a gendered analysis of structural adjustment. Feminist scholars have utilized this understanding to articulate that the World Bank’s method of aid leads to many women being exponentially burdened because their “labor is assumed to be ‘infinitely elastic’, expected to ‘stretch’, to work harder and for longer hours, in order to compensate for cuts in public services.”<sup>25</sup> Feminist IR theory demonstrates the ways in which structural adjustment impacts not only women’s work in the formal and informal economy, but also the ways in which they must compensate in the home. For example, because structural adjustment recommends agriculture to be singled out for increased exports, there are often domestic food shortages, leading women to handle

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<sup>22</sup> J. Anne Tickner, “You Just Don’t Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminists and IR Theorists,” 97.

<sup>23</sup> J. Anne Tickner, “You Just Don’t Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminists and IR Theorists,” 98.

<sup>24</sup> Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations: Issues, Debates and Future Directions*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2006): 78.

<sup>25</sup> Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations: Issues, Debates and Future Directions*, 90.

their family's food access and ensure everyone is fed.<sup>26</sup> Feminist scholarship provides a useful comparison of transnational organizations' strategy to uplift the Global South and the actual (often negative) impacts these efforts have.

The final critical international perspective this thesis is building on is the human security framework. Human security "describes a condition of existence in which basic material needs are met, and in which human dignity, including meaningful participation in the life of the community can be realized."<sup>27</sup> This security is meant to be indivisible, meaning it cannot be pursued at the expense of another group's wellbeing. Furthermore, human security understands that material sufficiency is not enough for one to be secure. Human security theory focuses on the importance of human dignity and the ways in which international actors are obligated to contribute to such dignity.

The human security approach was officially introduced in the 1994 Human Development Report. Human security has four essential characteristics that must be considered: universality, interdependence, prevention, and people-centric.<sup>28</sup> Essentially, the human security approach prioritizes making "freedom from fear and freedom from want," accessible to everyone by understanding the international arena through individuals and their community.<sup>29</sup> Empowering and protecting individuals suffering most must be prioritized over protecting those with the most power. Human security acknowledges that problems must be understood holistically on an individual basis. There are some issues that are isolated effects of larger situations. Meanwhile, some issues act as *threat multipliers*, exacerbating already difficult and trying situations. Climate change is the number one threat to human security because it acts as a threat multiplier, effecting people both directly and indirectly.

Caroline Thomas is a crucial scholar in understanding human security. Most relevantly, she

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<sup>26</sup> Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations: Issues, Debates and Future Directions*, 90.

<sup>27</sup> Caroline Thomas, "Global Governance, Development and Human Security," (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 6.

<sup>28</sup> United Nations Development Program, "Human Development Report," (Oxford Press: New York, 1994), 22.

<sup>29</sup> United Nations Development Program, "Human Development Report," (Oxford Press: New York, 1994), 24.

investigates the impact on individual human security across the globe due to development efforts. Thomas articulates the importance of centering individuals and communities in regards to globalization. She inspects instances of trade, general finance, and investment, specifically identifying the importance of community and individual voices.

Jon Barnett and W. Neil Adger co-wrote a key piece in identifying climate change as a security threat, contextualizing the issue in the human security narrative. They identify environmental changes such as “coastal erosion, declining precipitation and soil moisture, increased storm intensity, and species migration,” as proof that climate change poses a risk to human security.<sup>30</sup> They put climate change in the context of states, demonstrating its direct relationship to IR. Barnett and Adger articulate that “climate change challenges states, including their capacity to protect livelihoods and maintain peace,” therefore it is crucial that climate change is not only addressed as an immediate threat, but undertook holistically with a human-centered approach.<sup>31</sup>

The goal of this paper is to demonstrate the ways in which critical theory can contribute to a more holistic explanation of climate change and understand the flaws in the global system that have led to a given problem, while simultaneously using that information to provide immediate and long term solutions that will not only help those currently impacted, but ensure that structures are altered to ensure such problems do not occur again. I will be utilizing the knowledge laid out in this section to further the understanding of critical and problem-solving theories.

### *Ecofeminism*

The term “ecofeminism” was first used by French feminist Françoise d’Eaubonne in her 1974 piece *Le féminisme ou la mort* (Feminism or Death). The word sparked a movement, as the theory’s introduction aligned with a number of environmental disasters in the late 70s and early 80s. After the

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<sup>30</sup> J. Barnett, W.N. Adger, “Climate change, human security and violent conflict,” *Political Geography* 26, no. 6, (2007): 640.

<sup>31</sup> J. Barnett, W.N. Adger, “Climate change, human security and violent conflict,” 652.

meltdown at Three Mile Island in 1979, the “Women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the Eighties” conference was held in Amherst, Massachusetts as the first of many ecofeminist conferences, propagating the movement. Since then, there has been a plethora of works developed on the basis of the intersection of gender and climate.

There are a wide variety of definitions and sub-fields of ecofeminism. Many scholars link the field to ecology, specifically the concept of “interdependence [and] a social analysis of the domination of women that is also linked with racism and classism.”<sup>32</sup> Others see ecofeminism as a key lens to breakdown human-constructed borders and deconstruct the homogenizing ways society has understood other cultures.<sup>33</sup> Still, many activists understand ecofeminism as more than an academic lens, but a “movement that sees critical connections between the domination of nature and the exploitation of women.”<sup>34</sup> Some ecofeminists such as Deborah Slicer and Carol J. Adams focus on animal rights, a subject with which this paper will not engage. Regardless of the details or specificities of an individual ecofeminist perspective, all ecofeminism acknowledges that there are links between “the domination of women (and other human subordinates) and the domination of nature *and* that a failure to recognize these connections results in adequate feminisms, environmentalism, and environmental philosophy.”<sup>35</sup> Therefore, to engage fully in the field of feminism, environmentalism, or environmental philosophy, the connection between women and nature must be acknowledged

In her book *Ecological Feminist Philosophies*, Karen Warren breaks ecofeminism down into sub-categories through which ecological feminists have drawn connections between feminism and the environment. These categories are useful for understanding the angle at which the author is

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<sup>32</sup> Stephanie Lahar, “Ecofeminist theory and grassroots politics,” *Hypatia* 6, no. 1 (1991): 32.

<sup>33</sup> Victoria Davion, “When Lives Become Logic Problems: Nuclear Deterrence, an Ecological Feminist Critique,” in *Ecological Feminist Philosophies*, ed. Karen J. Warren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996): 181.

<sup>34</sup> Lois Ann Lorentzen, University of San Francisco, and Heather Eaton, Saint Paul University (2002).

<sup>35</sup> Karen Warren, *Ecological Feminist Philosophies: An Overview of the Issues* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), x.

discussing ecofeminism. This thesis is rooted in only a few of these sub-categories whose titles and definitions are articulated below to explain the relation between both the relevant articles and this paper.

Most ecofeminism is somehow rooted in the *historical and causal* connection, which examines the historical research being done in this field and attempts to “characterize ecofeminism in terms of just such historical and causal claims.”<sup>36</sup> Scholars who utilize this sub-category are proposing that “the current global environmental crisis is a predictable outcome of the patriarchal culture,” of society’s past.<sup>37</sup> Essentially, these authors are using historical examples to prove the connection between patriarchy and climate change. Many authors in this sub-category examine the patriarchal mechanisms of colonialism and the current impacts of climate change. Historical and causal ecofeminism has produced a rich theory that demonstrates the impacts of government decisions, systemic oppression, and the ways in which previous events have led to the current state of environmental injustice.

Another key sub-category of ecofeminism is the *conceptual* field. Scholars in this discipline parallel the ways in which nature and women have been conceptualized, particularly in the western intellectual tradition. This method of ecofeminism builds on the history and causality, examining the ways in which colonialism has perpetuated patriarchy and environmental degradation. They aim to “overcome metaphors and models which feminize nature and naturalize women to the mutual detriment of both nature and women.”<sup>38</sup> Conceptual frameworks examine a “set of basic beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions which shape and reflect how one views oneself and one’s

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<sup>36</sup> Karen Warren, *Ecological Feminist Philosophies: An Overview of the Issues* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), xi.

<sup>37</sup> Ariel Kay Salleh, “Epistemology and the metaphors of production: An eco-feminist reading of critical theory,” *Studies in the Humanities* 5 no. 2 (1988): 138.

<sup>38</sup> Karen Warren, *Ecological Feminist Philosophies: An Overview of the Issues* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), xiii.

world.”<sup>39</sup> Effectively, it is the socially constructed norms and status quos that inevitably have real economic and social consequences. For example, though she addresses the “symbolic patterns of patriarchal consciousness,” related to the control of both women and nature, ecofeminist Rosemary Radford Ruether identifies that rapid industrialization has exploited women and natural resources because they are seen as incidental, disposable instruments.<sup>40</sup> Many conceptual ecofeminist thinkers have identified the dominating foundation of our society, attributing such norms to patriarchy, environmental degradation, and colonialism. The understanding of the conceptual ecofeminist lens and how it impacts reality is integral to this thesis, which argues that the World Bank is an extremely patriarchal and colonial organization, therefore understanding these grandiose concepts and how they manifest in reality and effect individual people is crucial to examining their work with a critical view.

The original concept for this thesis came out of the *empirical and experiential* and *epistemological* connections. These sub-fields focus heavily on data, scientific facts, and knowledge. The *empirical and experiential* looks at empirical evidence linking women and the environment. Some utilize hard science, examining the “various factors such as health and risk factors caused by the presence of low-level radiation, pesticides, toxics, and other pollutants and borne disproportionately by women and children.”<sup>41</sup> These studies with a very western-scientific lens have expanded to be more inclusive to examine the cultural ways in which specifically indigenous peoples “celebrate important cultural and spiritual ties of women... to the earth.”<sup>42</sup> These writings have done critical work in framing the connections of women and nature as a reality. Directly related is the *epistemological*, which argues that because women have such a deep connection to nature, their voices must be centered in the knowledge collected around climate change. There are a number of

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<sup>39</sup> Karen Warren, “The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism,” *Environmental Ethics*, 12, no. 2 (1990): 127.

<sup>40</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Women, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 196.

<sup>41</sup> Karen Warren, *Ecological Feminist Philosophies: An Overview of the Issues*, xiii.

<sup>42</sup> Karen Warren, *Ecological Feminist Philosophies: An Overview of the Issues*, xiv.

ecofeminists that find the romanticizing of women's relationship with nature violent and a central cause of the disproportionately negative impacts of climate change women face. For example, Janet Biehl claims that ecofeminism focuses too much on "vague parochial notions focused overwhelmingly on women's allegedly special quasi-biological traits and a mystical relationship that they presumably have with nature," and not enough on the actual conditions of women.<sup>43</sup> Understanding this nuanced relationship between women and nature is important to ethically combating climate change.

In the same vein is the connection of *ethics*. Ethical ecofeminists claim that "the interconnections among the conceptualization and treatment of women, animals, and nonhuman nature require a feminist ethical analysis and response."<sup>44</sup> The idea of centering women so as to create policies that are more holistic and productive is key to ecofeminism.

In the past twenty years, ecofeminism has become explicitly political. Building on the works of previous feminist scholars, clear connections between sexism, climate change, and politics have been made. Barbara Omolade addresses the masculinity of war and the negative impacts weapons of mass destruction have on the environment and marginalized communities, specifically indigenous peoples.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Adrienne Elizabeth Christiansen articulates the impacts on women and the environment of the violence in the Persian Gulf.<sup>46</sup> Countless scholars have articulated the connections between environmental degradation and racism as a modern colonialization. Roger J. H. King writes about ecofeminism as a form of radical political resistance.<sup>47</sup> The previously addressed connections have led to the opportunity for ecofeminist scholars to apply this theory to current

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<sup>43</sup> Janet Biehl, *Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1991), 8.

<sup>44</sup> Karen Warren, *Ecological Feminist Philosophies: An Overview of the Issues*, xv.

<sup>45</sup> Barbara Omolade, "We Speak for the Planet" in *Rocking the Ship of State*, ed. Adrienne Harris, Ynestra King (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 167.

<sup>46</sup> Adrienne Elizabeth Christiansen, "Rhetoric, Rape, and Ecowarefare in the Persian Gulf," in *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, ed. Karen J. Warren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 242.

<sup>47</sup> Roger J.H. King, "Caring about Nature: Feminist Ethics and the Environment," *Hypatia* 6, no.1 (1991): 89.

political situations. Utilizing an ecofeminist worldview is necessary to understand gendered environmental efforts.

Currently, there are a number of well-known ecofeminist activists performing research and fighting to have the ecofeminist approach centered in efforts to combat climate change. Vandana Shiva is the author of over twenty books advocating for food sovereignty and against globalization. Shiva has normalized the concept that because women are the “most adversely affected by environmental problems,” they are “better qualified as experts on such conditions,” and should be given a “privileged position to aid in creating new practical and intellectual ecological paradigms.”<sup>48</sup> Throughout her writings, Shiva keeps a stern yet hopeful tone. She emphasizes the reality that “the violence to nature, which seems intrinsic to the dominant development model, is also associated with violence to women,” and that holistic solutions must be implemented now.<sup>49</sup> However, Shiva has a goal of empowering people to take action and mobilize, therefore she encourages her readers by expressing that “ecological destruction and the marginalization of women are not inevitable, economically or scientifically,” but that change must be rapid and ethical.<sup>50</sup>

Shiva—arguably the most popular current ecofeminist—focuses heavily on the danger of western ideals impacting climate action in the Global South. Based in India, much of her research and reasoning stems from national agriculture trends. In her pivotal book *The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology, and Politics*, Shiva articulates the danger of implementing initiatives to combat climate change impacts without consulting with those who best know the land through the case study of The Punjab crisis. To briefly recap, farmers in the state of Punjab were encouraged to implement modernized agriculture practices by utilizing “intensive

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<sup>48</sup> Lois Ann Lorentzen and Heather Eaton, "Ecofeminism: an overview," In *The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale*, 2002.

<sup>49</sup> Vandana Shiva, *The Vandana Shiva Reader* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 11.

<sup>50</sup> Vandana Shiva, *The Vandana Shiva Reader* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 13.

chemicals and intensive irrigation”.<sup>51</sup> These efforts proved fraught when it became clear that they “created land degradation and hence land scarcity [and] an addition to pesticides, fertilizers, and intensive water use.”<sup>52</sup> The project was spearheaded by Norman Borlaug, an American agronomist, and funded by the Ford Foundation.<sup>53</sup> It is not a coincidence that an attempt to curb India’s famine crisis, suggested and implemented by non-India people, failed. Shiva points out that putting an emphasis on traditional knowledge to cultivate an agrarianism-driven world is “our most promising alternative to the unsustainable and destructive ways of current global, industrial, and consumer culture.”<sup>54</sup>

Ecofeminism has developed immensely since its first appearance in 1974. Over the past four decades, scholars and activists have pushed the standards in environmental efforts and insisted the inclusion of a women’s perspectives. Ecofeminism has been utilized to prove the importance of indigenous voices, localized innovations, and an end to “one-size fits all” solutions to climate change issues. This thesis will attempt to build on the works of these ecofeminists and others to articulate the need for transnational organizations—such as the World Bank—to think more critically about their support and funding of environmental initiatives.

### *Aid and The World Bank*

To better understand the role of the World Bank in opposing climate change, one must explore the ways in which Bank supporters and critics alike have understood their involvement in the Global South. The Bank has a long history of funding projects to combat global poverty and improve

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<sup>51</sup>Vandana Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology, and Politics* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2016), 12.

<sup>52</sup> Vandana Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology, and Politics*, 121.

<sup>53</sup> "India Girds for Famine Linked with Flowering of Bamboo". [News.nationalgeographic.com](http://news.nationalgeographic.com). Archived from the original on 5 August 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Vandana Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology, and Politics* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2016), 265.

rates of development. This section will demonstrate the ways in which the World Bank projects have been analyzed previously.

A critical work in uncovering the flaws of transnational organizations' aid is *50 Years is Enough: The Case Against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund*, a series of essays, excerpts, and studies that demonstrate the ways in which aid fails. This book, edited by Kevin Danaher, provides numerous perspectives such as examinations of raw data, investigations of qualitative data and interviews with those involved with World Bank and IMF programs, and articles that utilize a human-centered approach to understand the impacts of non-localized aid. The argument against the World Bank and the IMF is made clear in the book's introduction and is validated by the thirty-six case studies that follow.

Danaher's introduction lays out the most general failures of the World Bank and the IMF. He articulates that these organizations continue to insist that "their 'free market' policies will eventually foster development [through] structural adjustment reforms."<sup>55</sup> Some examples of what that looks like in reality include: privatizing government functions to make the state more efficient; reduced regulation of the private sector to increase production and international trade; devaluing local currencies to make exports more competitive in foreign markets; dismantling free social services such as health care and education and implementing payment options; and raising the producer prices for agricultural goods to encourage farmers to grow and sell more food. After laying out the scheme of the World Bank, Danaher explains that it simply does not work. Debts in Africa, Latin America, and Asia have all grown. Danaher explains that analyses have come almost entirely out of the top two percent of the world's "income pyramid," which is why he centers voice of the "Third World... explaining the many damaging effects of the neoliberal economic strategy imposed on them by

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<sup>55</sup> Kevin Danaher, *50 Years is Enough*, (Boston: South End Press, 1994), 3.

‘experts’ from Washington.”<sup>56</sup> This book is one of the first to contradict the mainstream narrative that neoliberal aid works, making it an integral piece this paper will build on.

Neoliberalism is one of the defining, mainstream IR theories to date. Neoliberalism focuses predominately on the role of international institutions and the roles they play in “obtaining international collective outcomes.”<sup>57</sup> In their analysis, neoliberal thinkers see states and international institutions as the primary actors in the international arena, subscribing to “a state-centric perspective, which... considers states to be unitary, rational, utility-maximizing actors who dominate global affairs.”<sup>58</sup> Neoliberalism assumes that states act in the best interest of themselves “according to a strategic<sup>59</sup> cost-to-benefit analysis of possible choices, reactions, and outcomes.” Neoliberalism is controversial because it perpetuates the idea that international relations is a zero-sum game. Furthermore, neoliberalism perpetuates the notion that our current order is natural, rather than socially constructed. People are not given the autonomy to act selflessly, and such actions are seen as weak, for they present a chance for other states to steal power and wealth, rather than an opportunity for the global community to improve their combined livelihoods together.

A specific issue within the international aid catastrophes is the problem of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) undemocratically running projects meant to solve environmental problems. The GEF was created as a response to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and is operated out of the offices of the World Bank in collaboration with the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The goal of the GEF is to provide “grants and technical assistance to Southern countries to help them implement environmental protection measures that the industrial countries failed to implement during their own

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<sup>56</sup> Kevin Danaher, *50 Years is Enough*, 4.

<sup>57</sup> Kevin Danaher, *50 Years is Enough*, 4.

<sup>58</sup> Kevin Danaher, *50 Years is Enough*, 4.

<sup>59</sup> Kevin Danaher, *50 Years is Enough*, 4.

development.”<sup>60</sup> Essentially, they aimed to implement green technologies in the Global South to combat the most severe climate change impacts. However, Cameron Duncan, the Multilateral Development Bank campaigner for Greenpeace International, argues the GEF is making matters worse.

Duncan articulates that, first and foremost, GEF and the World Bank have the same issues of hierarchy, secrecy, and a lack of inclusion. Locally impacted peoples and NGOs working in the area are left out of decision making and left to pick up the pieces when projects inevitably fail due to a lack of contextual information. Furthermore, the program is not providing any radical or revolutionary services. Over half of the GEF projects are “tacked onto existing or proposed Bank loans, which may be used to mitigate the environmental damage of the original project rather than contribute significantly to solving environmental problems.”<sup>61</sup> Therefore, not only is the GEF going into communities without the permission or approval of those who are from there, but they are also throwing money into projects meant to fix problems created by previous projects. Rather than take a new approach that centers those most familiar with the area, the GEF (with the help of the World Bank) are applying million-dollar band aids that will inevitably fail as those before them have.

There have been recommendations suggested that would help to right the wrongs caused by the GEF and provide actually useful aid to the countries that have been most impacted. The most impactful reconciliation would be for the World Bank and the GEF to offer debt relief to “all heavily indebted countries, with no conditions that impose orthodox structural adjustment policies on debtor countries.”<sup>62</sup> The countries funding the UNDP should convert half of their military budgets to environmental, economic, and human security budgets. These would be reallocated and given civilian control so individual communities could decide how best to manage the environmental

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<sup>60</sup> Kevin Danaher, *50 Years is Enough*, 178.

<sup>61</sup> Kevin Danaher, *50 Years is Enough*, 179.

<sup>62</sup> Kevin Danaher, *50 Years is Enough*, 181.

problems they face. Finally, private corporations must to be held accountable. A “tax on the use of fossil fuels and electricity in industrialized countries,” could “generate a fund of approximately \$30 billion a year.”<sup>63</sup> More avenues relating to ecological taxes should be explored. The power of decision making must be put in the hands of those being effected. The Global South will not have its problems solved by the intrusion of the Global North.

Since its publication, numerous authors have demonstrated a similar narrative and provided updated research consistent with Danaher’s work. One of the most scandalizing is Michael Goldman’s *Imperial Nature: The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in the Age of Globalization*, a tell-all book from 2005 demonstrating the ways in which the World Bank works from within the “belly of the so-called beast.”<sup>64</sup> Goldman researched the ways in which the Bank functions, why its programs so often fail, by their own standards, and why there has been little to no change thus far. He articulates that in response to the protests of the 1990s was not what Danaher and other academics and activists suggested, but rather a reinvention and expansion of the Bank’s “neoliberal economic agenda to include new social and environmental dimensions, helping it to intervene into more geographical territories,” essentially growing its efforts to perpetuate the status quo, though now through issues of environmentalism.<sup>65</sup> Goldman provides a parallel work to Danaher, demonstrating the ways in which the World Bank has changed everything but their programs’ structure, which have consistently led to the preservation of the oppression and exploitation of the Global South.

*Dead Aid* by Dambisa Moyo was my first introduction to the negative impacts of aid. Moyo is a Zambian economist who worked at the World Bank as a consultant for two years. In her book, Moyo discusses the many flaws in global aid, specifically the ways in which aid keeps poor countries

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<sup>63</sup> Kevin Danaher, *50 Years is Enough*, 181.

<sup>64</sup> Michael Goldman, *Imperial Nature: The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in the Age of Globalization* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2005), xiii.

<sup>65</sup> Michael Goldman, *Imperial Nature*, 7.

under the thumb of the West. She addresses aid's links to corruption, unsustainable development, and neoliberal control. This book is critical for understanding the consequences of irresponsible aid in a way that centers the voices of the Global South.

Moyo provides a brief origin story of the World Bank's shift to focusing on the Global South in the 1980s. She articulates their initial strategy which they deemed necessary to "develop Africa: stabilization and structural adjustment."<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, during the 1980s, there was a "rise of the neoliberal thinking which argued that governments should liberalize their economies in favor of the laissez-faire paradigm, which encompassed," and prioritized the private market.<sup>67</sup> Moyo explains the underlining goals of the World Bank and how they utilize their genuine sounding mission to keep African countries under their thumb. Moyo's analysis of the Bank's origin is a crucial development to build on.

Moyo also addresses the ways in which the World Bank's funding perpetuates corruption within the continent of Africa. She argues that when rich countries or organizations throw money at developing countries they are paying puppets to keep the country under the thumb of the west. Moyo articulates that the funding is "unfettered money (the prospect of sizeable ill-gotten gains) is exceptionally corrosive, and misallocates talent," and that inevitably, those who are "principled" begin to work abroad and government positions become taken by uneducated people who are more susceptible to manipulation.<sup>68</sup> Moyo's breakdown of this complicated and confusing topic provides an even deeper understanding of how the Bank keeps African countries in a cycle of dependency and poverty.

Moyo articulates the nuances of aid and the breaks down the myth that money alone can solve problems of poverty and increase growth. She demonstrates the ways in which aid has created a

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<sup>66</sup> Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How There is a Better Way for Africa* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 21.

<sup>67</sup> Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid*, 20

<sup>68</sup> Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid*, 50.

cyclical problem of aid dependency, corruption, market distortion, and further poverty. This book provides important foundational information on the flaws of aid generally, with specific references to the World Bank's problematic, neoliberal worldview. Much of this thesis will be building on Moyo's work applying her broader concepts to specific case studies.

A piece with a more context specific lens is Philip McMichael's *Development and Social Change*. Though this book covers a wide variety of topics relating to globalization and development, he spends a fair amount of time addressing the World Bank's environmental initiatives, specifically the aforementioned GEF and the Green Revolution. McMichael examines the flaws in a "market-based" economy that seeks to "generate substantial financial resources to address climate change."<sup>69</sup> Because the book is so recent, McMichael is able to make claims similar to those that were mere predictions about the World Bank and the GEF, while also providing legitimate proof that these hypotheses are accurate and have yet to be addressed. McMichael provides useful language and data that aligns with the theories proposed in this thesis.

Joseph Stiglitz was chief economist at the World Bank until January 2000. He has since written numerous critical analyses of the Bank and their projects. Stiglitz will be a key scholar to utilize throughout this thesis, because he has an insider perspective and understands the ways in which the Bank can and should be doing better. Throughout his critics, Stiglitz uses both a macro and micro lens to analyze the Bank. He provides insight on leadership, for example exploring why James Wolfensohn, a former president of the Bank, could have been revolutionary in changing the way the Bank functions, and why he no longer works there. Stiglitz continues to contextualize his arguments in relevant issues, address the growing indebtedness of developing countries, and provide realistic reforms for global institutions such as the UN, the IMF, and of course, the World Bank.

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<sup>69</sup> Philip McMichael, *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2017), 254.

Finally, one cannot analyze an institution without seeing how ways in which they present themselves. The World Bank and its allies have written countless analyses of their aid showing them in a positive light. Accessible on their website, the Bank provides a variety of graphs demonstrating the effectiveness of their aid. Many of the countries do not have data after 2010-2015. These graphs tell a story, but they certainly do not include the full picture. It is hard for the naked eye to understand the nuances of this data. There is no qualitative portion, no space to look more critically. It is known from internal reports released by ex-employees that even those who work for the Bank do not see most of their projects as productive or effective.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, the Bank does not address the intersection of climate change and gender *at all* in their description of projects. Gender equality and environmental issues are under completely separate umbrellas, making any critical scholar wonder how holistic their programs can possibly be.

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<sup>70</sup> Kevin Danaher, *50 Years is Enough*, 13.

## Chapter 2: The World Bank Program

### *Introduction*

The National Rural Livelihoods Project (NRLP; though sometimes referred to as the National Rural Livelihoods Mission, NRLM) is a World Bank initiative aimed at empowering women financially so as to uplift those experiencing extreme poverty. This section will provide a brief history and overview of the World Bank program, as well as give an ecofeminist analysis of the concept, structure, and implementation of the program.

### *Origins and Program Overview.*

NRLP was approved to be implemented on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011, with a closing date of June 30, 2023, meaning the project would be supervised and funded by the World Bank for about twelve years.<sup>71</sup> The Ministry of Rural Development of the Government of India announced the launch of the project that same year, stating that its aim was to “reach 350 million rural poor in 13 states in India.”<sup>72</sup> From its origin, the goal of the NRLP has been to “establish efficient and effective institutional platforms of the rural poor that enables them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial and selected public services.”<sup>73</sup> The project is broken down by the Bank as being represented in five of their funding sectors: Public Administration—Agriculture, Fishing, and Forestry; Other Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry; Agricultural markets, commercialization and agri-business; Banking Institutions; and Social Protection.

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<sup>71</sup> "National Rural Livelihoods Project," *The World Bank* online, 2020, <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P104164#abstract>.

<sup>72</sup> Shareen Joshi and Vijayendra Rao, "Who Should Be at the Top of Bottom-Up Development? A Case Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission in Rajasthan, India." *The World Bank Policy Research* (2017): 4.

<sup>73</sup> "National Rural Livelihoods Project," *The World Bank* online, 2020, <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P104164#abstract>.

The Indian Government, in collaboration with the World Bank, identified the mission of the program as aiming “to reduce poverty by enabling the poor households to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities resulting in appreciable improvement in their livelihoods on a sustainable basis, through building strong and sustainable grassroots institutions of the poor.”<sup>74</sup> The project is focused on promoting self-employment and organization of people in poor, rural areas. The basic idea behind this program is to organize communities into Self Help Groups (SHG) and make them capable for self-employment. SHGs are member based organizations where “members provide each other with mutual support while attempting to achieve collective objectives through community action.”<sup>75</sup> Though the program’s purpose does not explicitly address climate change, it has clear connections to both aiding those impacted by climate change and curbing future environmental degradation. The main connection: farming.

NRLP’s “intended beneficiaries” are people that have been identified as being poor, lacking education and literacy skills, active capacities, and support networks, having predominately subsistence work, and are often indebted, a group that is made up largely of female, subsistence farmers.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, the Ministry of Government identified other key stakeholders as “producer organizations,” which include “farmers’ groups, fishing cooperatives, dairy co-ops, etc.” who “help producers achieve ‘backward and forward linkages’ including adequate supplies, services, finances, and markets.”<sup>77</sup> Other key stakeholders include “agriculture department, animal husbandry department, and forestry department,” all of which provide services, trainings, and development

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<sup>74</sup> <http://www.aajeevika.gov.in/nrlm/NRLM-Mission-Document.pdf.%20Retrieved%20from%20Aajeevika>

<sup>75</sup> Shareen Joshi and Vijayendra Rao, "Who Should Be at the Top of Bottom-Up Development? A Case Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission in Rajasthan, India." *The World Bank Policy Research* (2017): 4.

<sup>76</sup> Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, “National Rural Livelihood Project, Social Assessment Report,” (2011): 21.

<sup>77</sup> Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, “National Rural Livelihood Project, Social Assessment Report,” (2011): 22.

programs to SHGs.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, the skills and markets that are being emphasized in the program are related to farming, agriculture, and animal care, all of which are impacted by climate change.

Agriculture has a long history of providing financial stability, food security, and biodiversity to the Global South, however it has also been manipulated by the rich and powerful, used as a tool of oppression, and contributed heavily to climate change. Firstly, the production of food is extremely disproportionate, with “the vast majority of the world's people—70 percent—earn their livelihoods by producing food,” while in industrialized countries, “only 2 percent of the population are farmers.”<sup>79</sup> The majority of the world's farmers are women.<sup>80</sup> Looking specifically at India, it is crucial to note that “75 percent of the Indian population derives its livelihood from agriculture, and every fourth farmer in the world is an Indian, [therefore] the impact of globalization on Indian agriculture is of global significance”<sup>81</sup> Attempting to articulate the consequences of globalization on Indian agriculture in just one paper would be irresponsible. There are infinite examples of the ways in which the land and its cultivators have been manipulated, taken advantage of, and appropriated.

One phenomenon that has been detrimental to indigenous farmers throughout the world is that of large corporations patenting seeds cultivated by those in the Global South and claiming it as their own, providing opportunities for the corporations to take any plant grown from the seed that they have patented. Calgene, a company owned by Monsanto, “owns patents on mustard, a crop of Indian origin,” that has historically been used not only as food, but as “an important medicine in the indigenous Ayurvedic system of healthcare,” for therapeutic massages, muscular and joint problems, and mosquito repellent.<sup>82</sup> The patent resulted in the criminalization of “the small-scale oil processor.

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<sup>78</sup> Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, “National Rural Livelihood Project, Social Assessment Report,” (2011): 23

<sup>79</sup> Vandana Shiva, “Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply,” 7.

<sup>80</sup> Vandana Shiva, “Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply,” 7.

<sup>81</sup> Vandana Shiva, “Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply,” 6.

<sup>82</sup> Vandana Shiva, “Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply,” 9. EI Staff, “Monsanto and the Mustard Seed,” *Earth Island Journal*, Winter 2020, [https://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/magazine/entry/monsanto\\_and\\_the\\_mustard\\_seed](https://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/magazine/entry/monsanto_and_the_mustard_seed).

It has criminalized the small trader. And it has destroyed the local market for farmers.”<sup>83</sup> The country has had to completely eradicate their mustard supply, and if they wished to reintroduce the crop in the future, they would be completely “dependent on Monsanto for [genetically modified], patented seeds,” which would impact the biodiversity of the soil, not to mention the cost to the individual farmers.<sup>84</sup> This is just *one* plant; only a single patent resulted in the loss of a native crop, as well as a great economic devastation to India. It is daunting to imagine the global impact of thousands of seeds being patented by corporations such as Monsanto.

Furthermore, the industrialization of farming has contributed significantly more to climate change than ending world hunger. The past century has seen a drastic shift to a “monocultural concentration on a few main crops such as soybeans and corn,” resulting in large, industrialized, corporate farms.<sup>85</sup> Industrialized farming contributes to climate change in a plethora of ways. Industrial farms result in a large amount of “nonpoint source water pollution from animal waste, chemical fertilizers, antibiotics, and pesticides [which] threatens water quality in the developing and developed world.”<sup>86</sup> Similarly, intensive agriculture often produces “excessive amounts of greenhouse gases such as methane and carbon dioxide,” which adds to the global climate crisis.<sup>87</sup> Monoculture and abuse of land has led to “accompanying soil compaction and erosion,” an issue that will result in unfertile land as well as an absence of proper water filtration, leading to increased pollution and sedimentation in streams and rivers.<sup>88</sup> Farming has been appropriated and overhauled by large corporations. Seed sovereignty, land rights, and sustainable farming are all issues relating to ecofeminism, climate change, and international relations. The National Rural Livelihoods Project

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<sup>83</sup> Vandana Shiva, “Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply,” 25.

<sup>84</sup> Vandana Shiva, “Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply,” 26.

<sup>85</sup> Glen Filson, *Intensive Agriculture and Sustainability: A Farming Systems Analysis* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004): 4.

<sup>86</sup> Glen Filson, *Intensive Agriculture and Sustainability: A Farming Systems Analysis*, 5.

<sup>87</sup> Glen Filson, *Intensive Agriculture and Sustainability: A Farming Systems Analysis*, 5.

<sup>88</sup> Glen Filson, *Intensive Agriculture and Sustainability: A Farming Systems Analysis* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004): 5.

aims to support subsistence, female farmers, which, as demonstrated above, could be revolutionary in the fights against gender inequality and climate change.

### *Flaws of an “Add Women and Stir” Approach*

Global institutions have certainly identified that gender inequality is a pervasive and continuous problem that could benefit from international intervention. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations all have campaigns focused on women’s empowerment. Despite these good intentions, so many programs—including the NRLP—fail because they adopt the “add women and stir” approach.

The “add women and stir” approach is just what it sounds like: an initiative that aims to breakdown structures rooted in a long history of patriarchy by simply providing avenues for women to become involved in those existing systems. This often looks like putting women in positions of power, providing funding for women to obtain jobs, or insisting on equal education of the genders. While these actions are a great first step, they are not providing concrete improvement to the systems of oppression within society. Ecofeminism insists on a holistic solution to women’s marginalization. Ecofeminism argues that development must include research specifically analyzing gender relations so as to “contextualize cultural specifics and illuminate power inequalities within gender relationships,” that are unique to every community.<sup>89</sup> The approach is a downstream solution, “reproduc[ing] the understanding of gender as a binary between men and women and does not allow to contextualize or paint the full picture of intersecting factors that produce inequalities.”<sup>90</sup> To enact real change, there must be an investment in an understanding of “gender identities, power and processes at all levels are socially and historically constructed,” and efforts to reimagine our society, “in order

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<sup>89</sup> Jytte Nhanenge, *Ecofeminism: Towards Integrating the Concerns of Women, Poor People, and Nature Into Development* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2011), 395.

<sup>90</sup> Simone Datzberger and Marielle L.J. Le Mat, “Just add women and stir? Education, gender and peacebuilding in Uganda,” *International Journal of Education Development* 59 (2018): 68.

to transform social contexts and processes of exclusion.”<sup>91</sup> Unfortunately, the NRLP perpetuate this problem.

Throughout the NRLP, women are not centered sufficiently to create effective and appropriate empowerment tools. The system is clearly meant to prioritize women, from the definition of the “intended beneficiaries” to the explicit indication that SHGs should consist of “seven to twelve poor women from similar socio-economic backgrounds.”<sup>92</sup> However, the Bank’s own internal analysis demonstrated that “87 per cent of PRPs (Professional Resource Persons) are men,” and indicated that “there is a need for gender sensitization training in advance of [the PRP’s] field work.”<sup>93</sup> A large portion of the training, structure, and agenda of the SHGs is organized by the PRPs, therefore *they* are shaping the agenda and the women are not. Simply providing a space for women to collaborate is not productive. Women need to be involved at every level of the project so as to ensure that it is relevant and informative for the intended audience. A patriarchal government cannot implement a feminist program without the voices of women in every crevice of decision making. In addition to providing gender sensitivity training to the male PRPs, an ecofeminist perspective would incentivize creating feasible avenues for more women to become PRPs. Ecofeminism acknowledges that women’s constant subordination to men perpetuates patriarchal structures, and that empowerment is amplified when women are able to directly “confront domination in any form.”<sup>94</sup> Therefore, more than simply training men to take women’s distinct experiences into consideration, the program could directly provide a way for women to confront such domination by providing further opportunities for women’s leadership.

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<sup>91</sup> Simone Datzberger and Marielle L.J. Le Mat, “Just add women and stir? Education, gender and peacebuilding in Uganda,” 68.

<sup>92</sup> Shareen Joshi and Vijayendra Rao, “Who Should Be at the Top of Bottom-Up Development? A Case Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission in Rajasthan, India.” *The World Bank Policy Research* (2017): 4.

<sup>93</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy” (The World Bank, Documentation and Reports, 2014), 47.

<sup>94</sup> Jytte Nhanenge, *Ecofeminism: Towards Integrating the Concerns of Women, Poor People, and Nature Into Development* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2011), 395.

Similarly, the NRLP needs to improve its ability to adapt to relevant community norms and cultures. Multiple reports found the program “leaves little scope for cultural adaptability,” and prioritizes the “forging of robust governments and non-governmental partnerships.”<sup>95</sup> The most common example of inaccessibility and a failure to adapt is in the area of language. India’s 2011 census indicated that there are thirteen languages spoken throughout the country, eleven of which are known by less than ten percent of citizens.<sup>96</sup> This is problematic when sending people from across the country to teach in rural communities. Even within a certain state, “the dialects vary by tribal groups, who do not necessarily speak Marathi, leave alone Hindi,” hindering the efforts of the Community Resource Persons attempting to implement SHGs in new areas.

The ability to communicate with the people you are trying to help is crucial. The World Bank analyses demonstrated a multitude of ways in which there were unsatisfactory results in regards to what knowledge was internalized by the women in the SHGs. The SHG training is designed to take place over fifteen days so as to accelerate the process and ensure it is accessible to as many women as possible. Unfortunately, the rapid pace of the training has its limitations. The Bank found the period was “not always responsive to specific geographies, terrains and, spatial and cultural map of community housing.”<sup>97</sup> Information about the SHG’s operations and the government guidelines were frequently lost in translation, having very real impacts, for example “fifty percent of the SHGs interacted with... are unable to maintain their records properly.”<sup>98</sup>

As demonstrated previously, women are uniquely impacted by any situation due to their particular experience and positionality in the world. Though the NRLP provides a useful service, it

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<sup>95</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 32.

<sup>96</sup> Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, “Data on Language and Mother Tongue”, 2011, [http://censusindia.gov.in/2011Census/Language\\_MTs.html](http://censusindia.gov.in/2011Census/Language_MTs.html).

<sup>97</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 37.

<sup>98</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 28.

has failed to adapt to the needs of the people it aims to serve. The program is extremely dependent on the women volunteering. No community positions within the SHGs are paid directly, therefore, “these individuals – mostly women - are expected to work on a voluntary basis. Volunteerism is, however, not a sustainable practice in the absence of any remuneration.”<sup>99</sup> Women are recruited to the NRLP due to their extreme poverty and marginalization. They are quickly learning and implementing advanced skills such as bookkeeping and loan management, but are not compensated. Though the program aims to lift women out of poverty, it expects them to do immense amounts of work without payment.

Similarly, none of the World Bank documents I reviewed discussed any form of childcare for those participating in SHGs. SHGs require weekly meetings, which are held in the participants’ free time, as they must still provide food and clothes for their families through full time occupations like subsistence farming. This is a subtle but clear demonstration of the ways in which programs aimed at empowering women must be designed with their specific needs in mind. Women are too often tasked with raising children, maintaining the home, providing food, and accessing money to support their family. The numerous roles they are expected to fill mean that empowerment programs must accommodate them by providing conditional resources to lift their other burdens, such as childcare, meal assistance, or adequate income.

The NRLP’s goal of empowering women is noble, and in many ways it provides valuable and useful resources to accomplish its goal. However, this section has demonstrated that the individual inclusion of women alone will not provide avenues for long-term change. Dismantling the patriarchy must take on a more holistic approach to change, for “a country’s public institutions and social services... cannot be detached from how rigid gender roles and persistent power dynamics are

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<sup>99</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 8.

culturally, socially, politically and economically perpetuated and reproduced.”<sup>100</sup> Efforts in areas such as changing laws so as to be more equitable, educating the public to improve social norms, and providing genuinely effective empowerment programs to vulnerable women and girls should be prioritized in the demolition of the pervasive patriarchal systems currently in place.

### *Examining the Facilitators of the Self Help Groups*

A key function of the NRLP is the sustainability the SHGs can provide to a community. Each SHG is provided a paid facilitator so there can be accountability and consistency. The facilitators assist in mobilizing the village women, establishing SHGs, training the women, following up with the group, maintaining records, and providing advice and guidance as the SHG becomes more independent.<sup>101</sup> The facilitators are assigned and paid through the Indian government via the Ministry of Rural Development. There are two types of facilitators: those from within the village the SHG is in—internal facilitators—and those from another area—external facilitators. External facilitators are recruited by the Ministry of Rural Development to aid the program in villages where the government has determined there is not a good candidate. On the surface, this system seems appropriate: where there are local women capable of taking on the facilitator position, internal facilitators will be appointed, otherwise the government will recruit outside assistance. However, an ecofeminist lens demonstrates the more nuanced flaws and manipulation tactics in this approach.

According to the Bank’s report, external facilitators are held to a higher standard in regards to experience and lifestyle. They are supposed to be younger and more educated than internal facilitators. External facilitators are less likely to own land, less reliant on agriculture as a source of income, and have fewer children. The external facilitators are expected to speak up to three

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<sup>100</sup> Simone Datzberger and Marielle L.J. Le Mat, “Just add women and stir? Education, gender and peacebuilding in Uganda,” *International Journal of Education Development* 59 (2018): 61.

<sup>101</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 37.

languages—Hindi, Telugu, and English—and are able to talk freely and unprompted about their own personal path out of poverty.<sup>102</sup> Due to the assumption that external facilitators have more experience, and that they are “leaving their homes and communities to come and work in another state,” they are paid substantially higher salaries than internal facilitators.<sup>103</sup> External facilitators were paid approximately \$3,000 USD a year, while internal facilitators were paid approximately \$1,130 USD a year for the same job with the same responsibilities.

Furthermore, an internal analysis demonstrated that there was no distinctive “‘experience gap’: both external and internal facilitators seemed to have similar number of years of experience.”<sup>104</sup> Examining this phenomenon in a holistic light, we can observe that those from within the communities deemed necessary for assistance are valued lower than those from other communities *despite* the similar experience history. Since it is more expensive to use an external facilitator, it can only be assumed that there are differences in outcomes of SHGs run by internal versus external facilitators.

In fact, there are stark differences between the SHGs facilitated by community members and those facilitated by outsiders, though they do not demonstrate that external facilitators are entirely more effective. Women who are in SHGs with external facilitators are four times more likely to follow exact NRLP rules and protocols, but achieve approximately 500 rupees less in savings than those in SHGs with internal facilitators.<sup>105</sup> Those women in externally facilitated SHGs attended an average of two more Gram Sabha (a village group meeting associated with other poverty alleviation programs) than their counterparts, though the same study identified that women with local facilitators

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<sup>102</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 11.

<sup>103</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 11.

<sup>104</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 11.

<sup>105</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 17.

are eighteen percent more likely to participate in, or send an SHG representative to, local community meetings, particularly on issues of livelihoods and economic issues.<sup>106</sup>

Similarly, those with outside facilitators “are able to effectively access some very basic opportunities offered by the state,” none of which the Bank’s report specifically identified.<sup>107</sup> Any indication as to *why* the state opportunities were less accessible to those with internal facilitators was omitted from the World Bank reports, though it could be assumed that the external facilitators leverage their status as outsiders and their strong backing from the state to insist upon new opportunities for women. Again, there is an appearance of the state favoring those from outside of the communities they are aiming to support.

The Bank’s reports did not definitively state whether an external or internal facilitator provided better results. However, they did articulate that “SHG women who are led by local facilitators are much more likely to report an awareness of their own entitlements.”<sup>108</sup> Local facilitators provide numerous benefits to SHGs. They help lower the number of issues relating to cultural relevancy, provide more accountability to the SHG, and, as articulated above, produce better results in a variety of categories. So why are internal facilitators poorly paid and underutilized by the program?

The type of facilitator used within the SHGs directly relates to whether the entire NRLP is implemented by the government in a centralized or decentralized manner. External facilitators help uphold the centralized implementation by giving the government greater control over management and information systems of the program.<sup>109</sup> Federal—and even state—government struggle to

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<sup>106</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 18.

<sup>107</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 17.

<sup>108</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 18.

<sup>109</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 18.

collaborate with the local facilitators because they do not have previous experience working so closely with the government. The reports have demonstrated that decentralized implementation of the program is more likely to utilize internal facilitators because the government is “most proximate to local conditions,” resulting in the minimizing of “information asymmetries.”<sup>110</sup> Therefore, there is a direct link to the use of external facilitators and a centralized application of the NRLP and vice versa.

The Bank’s reports did not claim that either a centralized or decentralized application of the program was necessarily better or more effective. Though, the reports did articulate that both applications have their benefits. The pros of a centralized implementation include allowing for greater control over management and information systems, providing more avenues for “experienced facilitators from one part of the country to transfer knowledge and capacity to another, less experience part of the country,” and being more effective at “creating disruptive social change by transmitting ideas from part of the country to another.”<sup>111</sup> On the other hand, decentralization results in better monitoring of SHGs and general program implementation, holding the facilitators more accountable for their actions, and does a much better job at shifting the work to fit cultural norms. From an outside perspective, it is easy to imagine how the government and the World Bank could justify choosing a centralized application of the NRLP.

But the reason for the state and the Bank’s continued support of outside facilitators becomes quite obvious when examining their internal reports. Groups with outside facilitators are “less likely to engage in collective action on issues related to public service delivery, less likely to actually engage with local politics and less likely to be connected to other civil society organizations.”<sup>112</sup> Women involved with SHGs with external facilitators are less likely to practice civil disobedience.

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<sup>110</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 18.

<sup>111</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 19.

<sup>112</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 19.

They have a better opinion of the state and the norms that allow them to be exploited. Therefore, it makes sense that the state supports a more expensive, objectively less effective application of the NRLP. They favor a centralized approach to the program because it provides the government with more security and stability.

An ecofeminist analysis of the NRLP facilitators demonstrates that the state and the Bank prioritize the status quo in their program. The blatant favoring of external facilitators and centralized implementation demonstrated above shows that the program exists to empower women, but only within the confines of the current government; only within a patriarchal, classist structure.

*Program Analysis: What is being measured, and by whom?*

The World Bank has numerous mechanisms with which to evaluate how programs are being implemented. From the start of a program until after its closing date, the Bank performs numerous qualitative and quantitative evaluations and impact assessments of their programs. Though these measures appear to be thorough, a closer look displays clear biases and loop holes through which the Bank can avoid accusations of failure.

The most accessible assessment the Bank has available to the public are their program ratings. On their website, the Bank has all of their current and past programs listed with individualized links. Each link leads to a signature page for the program including the program summary, project details (such as where it is being implemented, when it was approved, who the leader is, the total project cost, and the borrowing agent), finance information, what sectors and themes the project falls under, and, most importantly, ratings and results. The results are laid out in a neat chart, with a column of the project indicators, the baseline percentage of the given indicator, the current percentage, and the target percentage. Here, anyone is able to see how the program has progressed by the numbers.

The NRLP's results demonstrate a number of positive outcomes. For example, 236,000 farmers—all of which are female— have adopted improved agricultural technology as a result of the program, which is almost half of the Bank's goal of impacting 500,000 farmers by June 2023. The data also demonstrates that the program has been completely implemented, with thirteen states participating and five out of fifteen innovative initiatives having been funded and implemented.<sup>113</sup> However, there are also a number of statistics that are rather shocking.

Firstly, the chart attempts to demonstrate a growth in households that have accessed digital financial services and allied services through the program. While there is a clear demonstration of growth, the data indicates that 178,000 have accessed these services, though 142,000 households had already had access to such services, therefore the program only provided 36,000 *new* households with such services, which is nowhere near their goal of aiding 500,000 households. Similarly, the Bank had a goal of training and placing 100,000 youth from SHG households in the workforce by December of 2017, though only 30,000 had been placed by August of 2019.<sup>114</sup>

Though, maybe the most disturbing result is the "percent of SHG households with at least one additional source of income." The baseline data, dated July 18th, 2011, is obviously at zero percent so as to indicate a neutral starting point. The targeted percentage is forty percent, meaning that forty percent of those households who participate in an SHG would have at least one additional source of income. The current percentage, as of August 23, 2019 is at zero percent that would indicate that no households, not a single one, has gained an additional source of income since joining a SHG. Unfortunately, this data is not contextualized effectively by the Bank, so if one wanted more information, they would have to do a bit of digging.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> "National Rural Livelihoods Project," *The World Bank* online, 2020, <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P104164#abstract>.

<sup>114</sup> "National Rural Livelihoods Project, Results," *The World Bank* online, 2020, <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P104164#abstract>.

<sup>115</sup> "National Rural Livelihoods Project, Results," *The World Bank* online, 2020, <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P104164#abstract>.

The less accessible but more detailed way the Bank indicates their progress is through internal reviews of their programs. The same page which has access to the basic information and ratings and results of a given program also has a section with downloadable pdfs of project documents. The NRLP's page has over 120 documents dating back to 2010. Most of the documents are auditing documents, though there are also implementation status and results reports, environmental assessments, policy research working papers, procurement plans, and loan agreements. All documents are available in English and a limited number are available in Hindi. These documents obtain a much greater deal of information.

The “implementation status and results reports” provide a more detailed and robust account of the information the results chart discusses. The data appears to be completely quantitative and does not provide much further explanations about what specific jargon implies, but it does offer more charts and graphs that visualize much of the overly cumbersome data.

The “audit reports,” are also fairly straightforward. Each year those states participating in the program provide a report with a plethora of information about finances including salaries, travel allowances, medical expenses, office rent, printing and stationery, vehicle hiring, advertisement, bank charges, and telephone costs for all areas of the program implementation. This information is essential, as it holds but the state and federal governments of India accountable for the World Bank, but it also holds the Bank accountable to its member states. These audits are crucial in demonstrating that the money the World Bank loans out is being utilized as it is supposed to. The audits also show exactly what implementing these programs cost. The reports are astounding the untrained eye—over 3 *million* dollars for non-contract workers’ salaries in one state for one year. It is important that the concept of billions of dollars does not get misinterpreted. These audit reports keep the government and the Bank honest, but they also provide context to average people who have never come close to knowing a million dollars, let alone several billions.

Finally, the type of evaluation with the most qualitative data is the “internal reviews” of programs. These documents are also available on the World Bank’s website, though they are not on the program page, but must be searched specifically through the Bank’s public documents page. These reports generally focus on one specific area within the program such as demonstrating the strengths and weaknesses of a resource block strategy implementation or the difference in outcomes when internal versus external facilitators are utilized (both these reports have been cited previously in this chapter). Often, these reports are written by people who work outside of the World Bank, such as professors of government or economics, or fellows at research groups. It also appears that much of the data utilized in these reports is collected by people on the ground and they are ultimately not the ones who write the reports.

These reviews are very useful. They articulate specifics about the programs that cannot be found on the Bank’s website, and they also provide recommendations. These recommendations reveal what is not working in a clear way. Earlier in this chapter, the issue of a reliance on volunteerism from members of SHGs was addressed. The Bank’s analysis provided a recommendation based on this problem stating that “Volunteerism of Community Animators and bookkeepers has also emerged as unviable. It is recommended that a system be adopted for the interim until SHG members are able to sustain the costs.”<sup>116</sup> It is positive that the report acknowledged the problem and recommended it be addressed, however an ecofeminist lens provides the view that this recommendation is not efficient. Firstly, there is no clear advice as to what the system adaption is until SHGs can afford to pay its members. It simply indicates that those from the village that would be able to gain useful and marketable skills would potentially have their job revoked in lieu of payment. This recommendation does not provide an empowering solution, but rather a Band-Aid.

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<sup>116</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 46.

Furthermore, many reports utilize a “three key lenses,” for internal reviews: “design/ conceptualization, infrastructural architecture, and on-ground implementation”<sup>117</sup> These areas, while insightful and useful, do not examine the individual burdens the program may create; they do not acknowledge the unexpected impacts these programs have on the very women they aim to help. This is because, despite on the ground investigating and research, the reports themselves contain little, if any, quotes from participants. There are few anecdotal stories to explain the benefits of bookkeeping, or the confusion when the person providing your training has a different dialect than you, or the perils of having to choose between donating time to an important investment in your future and putting food in your child’s belly. These reports are important and helpful but an ecofeminist lens exposes their fatal flaw: they do not provide a voice for those they are claiming to support.

The Bank may hear this case and argue that there is, in fact, an avenue for those in the program to have their voices heard, unvarnished internal personnel concerned with public perception or power grabs. In 1993, the Bank implemented a neutral panel to act as an “independent complaints mechanism for people and communities who believe that they have been, or are likely to be, adversely affected by a World Bank-funded project.”<sup>118</sup> The Independent Panel exists to “provide a way for communities to improve and influence the course of these projects.”<sup>119</sup> The Independent Panel indicates that most problems brought to their attention are relating to “complex and diverse social and environmental issues... as a result of resettlement, projects impacting indigenous peoples, and lack of consultation and participation.”<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Radha Khan, Ruchika Negi, and Ritwik Sarkar, “A Case-Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s Resource Block Strategy,” 24.

<sup>118</sup> “The Inspection Panel,” The World Bank Inspection Panel, 2020, <https://www.inspectionpanel.org/index.php/>.

<sup>119</sup> The World Bank Inspection Panel, *What is the World Bank Inspection Panel?*, (April 18, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9dOQW6gccM>, 00:11.

<sup>120</sup> The World Bank Inspection Panel, *What is the World Bank Inspection Panel?*, (April 18, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9dOQW6gccM>, 00:40.

Currently, there are six ongoing investigation of World Bank programs in India alone. Since the Panel's inception in 1993, no year has seen more than nine cases, until 2020. Already there are 12 cases underway.<sup>121</sup> On one hand, it is good that there are more cases than ever, that indicates that the Panel has become more accessible to those impacted by the Bank's programs. As internet access becomes more readily available, filing a complaint has become more straightforward. Complaints can be filed on the Inspection Panel's website, via email, over the phone, or by mail. Those impacted must have already brought their concerns to the attention of Bank Management and feel continued dissatisfaction with the outcome.

The Panel's website provides a very detailed template and guidelines for those wishing to file a complaint, though it is only available in English. Complaints can be made by "two or more individuals, community groups, or representative organizations based in the country where the World Bank project is located."<sup>122</sup> Complaints must include a description of harm, a description of the project, and what steps have already been taken to bring issues to the attention of the Bank's staff and why the Bank's response was inadequate.<sup>123</sup> This process is thorough, but also extensive and complex. As noted previously, those who may be negatively impacted do not necessarily have ample free time to write up formal complaints, jump through multiple hoops, and wait for the panel process to proceed. The Panel is a good step in holding the Bank accountable, but *still* we see a disadvantage for those the program claims to be supporting.

Despite the numerous avenues through which the Bank's projects are aimed to be held accountable, there is much work to be done. Those who are most vulnerable to being negatively impacted by the Bank are the people who have the least access to file complaints; who are not

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<sup>121</sup> "Maps," The World Bank Inspection Panel, 2020, <https://www.inspectionpanel.org/panel-cases/map>.

<sup>122</sup> The World Bank Inspection Panel, *How Does the World Bank Inspection Panel Work?*, April 18, 2016, <youtube.com/watch?v=UGxu-UtUCEU>, 1:02.

<sup>123</sup> The World Bank Inspection Panel, *How Does the World Bank Inspection Panel Work?*, April 18, 2016, <youtube.com/watch?v=UGxu-UtUCEU>, 1:29.

represented in the reviews and reports. The numbers are useful and the qualitative data certainly paints a picture, but it is still unclear what the exact impacts of the NRLP are on the women they claim to be serving.

### *Conclusion*

As articulated above, the basis of the NRLP is to provide extremely impoverished communities with Self Help Groups (SHGs) to facilitate the mobilization of poor women and provide them access to financial and selected public services. This chapter presented the project's history and overview and the broader flaws with the project's concept, specifically the use of an "add women and stir" approach. Then, I discussed a more specific example of the ways in which an ecofeminist lens may reveal more nuanced inequities and flaws in the NRLP programming with the case of internal versus external facilitators for SHGs. Finally, I explored the ways in which the World Bank holds itself and its programs accountable, identifying the tools for analysis and reporting flaws.

The goal of this chapter was not to simply argue that the NRLP should be thrown in the garbage. Rather, I aimed to demonstrate the flaws that the program has, specifically because of its connection with the World Bank, a famously neoliberal institution. Problem-solving international relations theories would observe this program to be successful, as it is working to help empower those that seem to be members of society's most marginalized community. A critical lens may see this program as deeply flawed, as it is working within the system that oppresses those marginalized and does not acknowledge the systemic reasons for their disenfranchisement. Though, neither provide any holistic structure for real solutions. Ecofeminism is useful to examine programs like the NRLP because it simultaneously acknowledges the need for immediate action and the long-term goals of dismantling oppressive systems. By centering women's voices, we are given the opportunity to create long-term, holistic solutions in a way that work for those in need of help. Ecofeminism provides a context for using critical—upstream—thinking for long-term planning, but problem-

solving—downstream—thinking for immediate action. The next chapter will demonstrate what this two-pronged approach looks like in action.

### Chapter 3: The South Durban Community Environmental Alliance

#### *Introduction*

The previous chapter studied an internationally funded, top-down program aimed at uplifting women impacted by climate change. This chapter will use an ecofeminist lens to examine a small, environmental justice organization in South Africa. The goal of this case study is to demonstrate the ways in which an organization can apply ecofeminist values in a practical way. I will prove that the dual upstream and downstream solutions ecofeminism sees as crucial can be implemented through a small, community-based organization.

#### *History of Land Rights and Environmental Injustice in South Africa*

Like much of the world, colonialism and imperialism have forever stained the landscape of South Africa. During apartheid, areas throughout the country were segregated by race so as to keep people of color—Black Africans, Coloured (mixed race peoples), and Indian peoples—apart from both each other and the white minority. Though apartheid ended over 25 years ago, the remnants of this segregation is prominent even today. The housing areas of apartheid were not set up randomly, prioritizing elevated land, scenic views, and access to the city for white people, while displacing people of color.

Durban was not exempt from these community disturbances. The process began with The Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909, which launch the initial state intervention for township boards in the name of health, primarily in response to tuberculosis and influenza outbreaks.<sup>124</sup> In 1950, “The Group Areas Act [introduced] spatial engineering... on a grand scale,” initiating the infamous apartheid segregation.<sup>125</sup> The Group Areas Act “imposed uniform controls upon all sales of

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<sup>124</sup> Sharad Chari, “State Racism and Biopolitical Struggle: The Evasive Commons in Twentieth-Century Durban, South Africa,” *Radical History Review* 108, (2010): 74.

<sup>125</sup> Daniel Petrus Smit, “The political economy of urban and regional planning in South Africa, 1900 to 1988: towards theory to guide progressive practice,” *University of KwaZulu-Natal* PhD Diss, 102.

land between races,” giving the apartheid government total control over who lived where.<sup>126</sup> This action forced more than half the population of Durban to move so as to accommodate its provisions.<sup>127</sup>

The Group Areas Act was not only about housing, but also industry and economics. Caveats were included so “industrial and commercial areas were thought of as ‘common’ areas in which people met on unequal and impersonal terms,” so the white minority could continue to exploit people of color for their labor.<sup>128</sup> The Apartheid planning “deliberately sited black residential areas near dirty industries in order to facilitate easy access to cheap labor.”<sup>129</sup> South Durban—the home of my case study—was seen as an adequate location for industrialized zoning.

Currently, South Durban is a continuously developing industrial hub, with one of the two biggest oil refineries in South Africa, the largest concentration of petrochemical industries in the country, waste water treatment works, numerous toxic waste landfill sites, a paper manufacturing plant, and a multitude of chemical process industries.<sup>130</sup> Despite the plethora of industrial complexes, South Durban is still a legally residential area, therefore thousands of people live across the road and downwind from air pollution caused by life threatening chemicals, such as benzene.

Pollution is a huge concern for people living in South Durban. Pollution has a multitude of health implications, which inevitably affects those communities living nearest to its source most severely. The most concentrated chemical from the oil refineries in South Durban is benzene, whose levels were “up to fifteen times higher than the World Health Organization guidelines and several

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<sup>126</sup> Smit, “The political economy of urban and regional planning in South Africa, 1900 to 1988: towards theory to guide progressive practice,” 102.

<sup>127</sup> Smit, “The political economy of urban and regional planning in South Africa, 1900 to 1988: towards theory to guide progressive practice,” 103.

<sup>128</sup> Sharad Chari, “State Racism and Biopolitical Struggle: The Evasive Commons in Twentieth-Century Durban, South Africa,” 84.

<sup>129</sup> Desmond D’Sa, “South African Environmental Justice struggles against “toxic” petrochemical industries in South Durban: The Engen Refinery Case,” *University of Michigan*, (2015).

<sup>130</sup> Desmond D’Sa, “South African Environmental Justice struggles against “toxic” petrochemical industries in South Durban: The Engen Refinery Case,” *University of Michigan*, (2015).

times higher than recommended levels in the United States,” as of 2015.<sup>131</sup> High levels of benzene in the air can cause health problems such as asthma, skin irritations, eye problems, birth defects, leukemia, and cancer.<sup>132</sup> Eskom is the company responsible for all of South Africa’s public electricity. Their coal-fired power stations cause approximately 1110 deaths from coronary heart disease, 719 deaths from strokes, 180 deaths from lower respiratory infection, 157 deaths from lung cancer, and 73 deaths from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease annually.<sup>133</sup> These problems are perpetuated by poverty, a lack of local clinics, and the inability to escape the smog triggering such horrendous side effects.

Children and pensioners are at the highest risk for these health problems because they rarely leave the area. Fairvale Secondary School is a public school located about forty yards away from an Engen oil refinery. This proximity is disturbing, especially when looking at previous research that demonstrates “children at a school situated next to a refinery suffer between 30%-40% more respiratory problems than children living more than [6 miles] away.”<sup>134</sup> Similarly, a study by the University of Natal Medical School found that children in South Durban are four times as likely to suffer from chest complaints than children from other areas in the city.<sup>135</sup> In November of 2000, Settlers Primary School, located in Merebank, had “more than 100 children suffering [from] temporary respiratory problems [because] the school is located between two colossal refineries.”<sup>136</sup> The element of class is key in this equation, for in a system where families may pay higher school fees so their children may attend a more securely situated school, poor families are left with few resources, stranded in a cycle of sickness and poverty.

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<sup>131</sup> Desmond D’Sa, “South African Environmental Justice struggles against "toxic" petrochemical industries in South Durban: The Engen Refinery Case,” *University of Michigan*, (2015).

<sup>132</sup> Bobby Peak, “Just Transition: The Only Way Forward,” *Groundwork*. (2018): 2.

<sup>133</sup> Dr. Mike Holland, Health impacts of coal fired power plants in South Africa 2017, pg. 11

<sup>134</sup> Bobby Peak, “Just Transition: The Only Way Forward,” *Groundwork*. (2018): 2.

<sup>135</sup> Desmond D’Sa, “South African Environmental Justice struggles against "toxic" petrochemical industries in South Durban: The Engen Refinery Case,” *University of Michigan*, (2015).

<sup>136</sup> Desmond D’Sa, “South African Environmental Justice struggles against "toxic" petrochemical industries in South Durban: The Engen Refinery Case,” *University of Michigan*, (2015).

The localization of health problems to poor communities of color is unacceptable. Despite Article 24 of the South African Constitution, which guarantees every person the right “to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being,” there is clear evidence of disproportionate burdens on marginalized communities. The literature demonstrates that “contemporary communities [of color] continue to bear both the environmental and public health costs of repressive systems,” therefore presenting an urgent matter of life and death.

The current government of South Africa is not acting aggressively to protect communities at risk. Rather, they are upholding policies from the apartheid era that protect the fossil fuel industry. Though this initiative originated from the national government, it is upheld by all those in power, including local government and police.

The protection of the oil industry takes form through land protection, which is allocated by the National Key Points Act, implemented in 1980. The National Key Points Act “provides for the declaration and protection of sites of national strategic importance against sabotage.”<sup>137</sup> These sites are chosen by the Minister of Police and include places such as the Engen and Total depots, multiple industrial oil processors, the South African Petroleum Refinery, and several pumping stations. Many areas more closely linked to national security such as the Waterkloof Air Force Base are not protected under the National Key Points, which has raised some suspicion as to what true goal of this act is. Much of the literature on the National Key Points Act speculates that it was “designed during apartheid to secretly arrange protection primarily for privately owned strategic sites,” and to protect the economic interests of the white ruling class.<sup>138</sup> The economic vitality of South Africa was fleeting during the 1980’s as protests against apartheid stunted the country’s economic growth. Much of the resources to resuscitate South Africa’s economy were thrown into the oil and gas industry. These

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<sup>137</sup> Rebecca Davis, “What’s the point of the National Keys Points?,” *The Daily Maverick*, 24 May 2013.

<sup>138</sup> Rebecca Davis, “What’s the point of the National Keys Points?,” *The Daily Maverick*, 24 May 2013.

policies are not uplifting communities most impacted by economic downfalls. Rather, they protect big industry and prevent active community engagement.

The communities in South Durban have been organizing against the oil refineries and pollution for a long time, primarily through the Community Awareness and Emergency Response Committee and the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA).<sup>139</sup> These groups have been stunted due to the National Key Points Act. Local NGOs have been “denied permission in the past to organize protests around the Engen and Shell refineries... on the basis that they are National Key Points,” community members have been told by Metro Police that they “cannot picket on the fence of these refineries,” and even attempts to take schoolchildren on tours with the intention of environmental education has resulted in threats of arrest from the police.<sup>140141</sup>

The government’s protection of oil and gas industries has infringed too heavily on the rights of South African citizens to live healthy lives unimpeded by toxins. Communities must be centralized in decision making regarding protections of the state. The clear health risks of the fossil fuel industry identified in the previous section must be seen as a national threat and taken seriously.

### *Ecofeminism and Community-Based Solution*

Ecofeminism has a long history of supporting grassroots organizations in their efforts to combat climate change. Ecofeminist scholars articulate that grassroots, community-oriented organizations are distinctive because they put women and children “at the center of concern, and work out strategies that simultaneously empower women and protect nature.”<sup>142</sup> Many of ecofeminism’s central arguments point to community-based organizations as a viable and principled

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<sup>139</sup> Desmond D’Sa, “South African Environmental Justice struggles against “toxic” petrochemical industries in South Durban: The Engen Refinery Case,” *University of Michigan*, (2015).

<sup>140</sup> Rebecca Davis, “What’s the point of the National Keys Points?,” *The Daily Maverick*, 24 May 2013.

<sup>141</sup> Rebecca Davis, “What’s the point of the National Keys Points?,” *The Daily Maverick*, 24 May 2013.

<sup>142</sup> Maria Mies, Vandana Shiva, and Ariel Salleh, *Ecofeminism* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2004), 88.

solution. For example, the consistent disconnect between action in areas most impacted by climate change and the work of large, international organizations; a lack of representation in the climate justice movement; and an emphasis on centering individual needs to create solutions tailored a given community's specific needs.

Historically, ecofeminists have consulted local activists and grassroots organization to ensure their own work is holistic and accurate. Their work aims to “explore the mundane, taken-for-granted activity of everyday life in homes, neighborhoods, and communities as a means to explain how global processes and relations of power structure daily life and the social relations of intimacy.”<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, ecofeminists such as Vandana Shiva and Wangari Maathai began their work by participating in localized action to combat climate change.

The disconnect between action on the ground and programs that are funded at the international level is a central concern in ecofeminism. Many scholars and activists have pointed out that “while there is vibrant women’s involved in grassroots environmental justice and healthy campaigning... [there is] underfunding in the charitable sector exclusively focused on women,” and the environment.<sup>144</sup> Ecofeminist scholars argue that this disconnect is most tangible when examining leadership. As women continuously take leadership positions in community-based, grassroots organizations, they are consistently, “underrepresented in national or international environmental NGOs, which now operate much like large businesses, with masculinist attributes and hierarchical working practices that tend to marginalize women.”<sup>145</sup> Therefore, an international emphasis on localized, community-based programs would align with the ecofeminist goals of centering those who are most marginalized.

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<sup>143</sup> Beth A. Bee, Jennifer Rice, and Amy Trauger, "A feminist Approach to Climate Change Governance: Everyday and Intimate Politics," *Geography Compass* (2015): 5.

<sup>144</sup> Susan Buckingham and Rakibe Kulcur, "Gendered Geographies of Environmental Injustice," *Antipode* 41, no. 4 (2009): 677.

<sup>145</sup> Muareen G. Reed and Bruce Mitchell, "Gendering Environmental Geography," *The Canadian Geographer* 47, no. 3 (2003): 324.

Clearly, ecofeminist firmly believe that to be most representative, movements must start on the ground. Central to ecofeminism is the belief that environmental action must be rooted in the needs of the most disenfranchised peoples who are impacted by climate change. Therefore, it is within the guidelines of ecofeminism to utilize a bottom-up system to combat climate change. By starting “at the grassroots to popularize the movement,” efforts are more sure to center the voices that have previously been ignored.<sup>146</sup>

*SDCEA Programming: Working Towards Both Long and Short Term Solutions*

The South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) is a non-profit organization based in the heart of Wentworth, Durban. SDCEA was founded in 1995 with the goal of being “a vocal and vigilant group active in lobbying, reporting and researching industrial incidents and accidents...” as well as being a leader in the struggle “for clean air, water and soil and for the alleviation of environmental racism and poverty.”<sup>147</sup> SDCEA is independent from the government, receiving almost all of its funding from outside of South Africa. The organization utilizes educational outreach, peaceful organizing, town hall meetings, commenting on environmental impact assessments, bringing legal cases to court regarding environmental and health rights, and performing research to keep updated statistics as the means through which they can achieve their goals.

Ecofeminists have long articulated that issues of climate injustices cannot be dealt with in a vacuum. Quick fixes and Band-Aid solutions will not target the larger issue of global climate change; however, these immediate solutions are necessary. SDCEA has a long track record of working to change laws and structures to end climate injustice through actions such as strategic community mobilization and negotiating with government officials. SDCEA understands these changes will not

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<sup>146</sup> Kofi Johnson, R. Babatunde Oyinade, “Ecofeminist: Lessons from Nigeria,” *Gender and Behaviour*, 7 (2009): 2391.

<sup>147</sup> “About,” South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, 2017.

happen overnight, and in the meantime they provide more “downstream” solutions that help deliver direct attention to those who need it most.

Any time there is an oil spill, gas leak, chemical fire, or dangerous gas and oil exploration in the Durban metropolitan area, SDCEA acts quickly to make the issue known and hold necessary parties accountable for their actions. Specifically, SDCEA has an incredibly holistic approach to supporting those whose health is negatively impacted by pollutants in the area, such as regularly surveying the community to provide an accurate account of the number of cancer and asthma cases in the area. Staff members write informative pieces about the impacts of pollution on people's health within the South Durban community. SDCEA's website has extensive information on how to log air pollution complaints so citizens can take immediate action if they feel their health is in danger. SDCEA staff write comments on any proposed development within the area that could further endanger citizens of South Durban. The organization also holds town halls informing citizens on particularly high rates of toxins in the air and provide tips so people can best protect themselves from breathing polluted air.<sup>148</sup> SDCEA's work in regards to these health implications within South Durban demonstrate a clear example of their success at providing both “upstream” and “downstream” solutions concurrently. Their work is a two-pronged approach.

On the one hand, laws implemented during apartheid have been upheld, disproportionately impacting low-income communities of color in regards to environmental regulations and air quality control. Large corporations and the government profit off of the exploitation of South Durban. This is a systemic issue that needs a complete deconstruction and re-imagination of the law to be repaired. SDCEA does that work by regularly protesting the oil refinery in an attempt to hold them accountable for their actions. They interact with the government in numerous ways, predominately by making comments on proposed laws about air quality or an approval of a new industrial complex

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<sup>148</sup> "Pollution and Health Campaign," South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, 2017, <http://sdcea.co.za/category/pollution-health/>.

in South Durban. They meet with government representatives to ensure that South Durban's voice is represented in any conversation about the development of the community. SDCEA regularly provides memorandums and other forms of written recommendations to the local government in an attempt to enact total, top down change. They keep the media in the loop about any and all oil spills, fires, or dramatic health implications so as to put continued pressure on the government to take action.<sup>149</sup> These actions represent ecofeminist ideals that emphasize an acknowledgement at a systems level, for SDCEA is working to change the very structures that have led to South Durban's oppression. At the same time, they also engage in the everyday work of protecting people from environmental pollution.

SDCEA recognizes that the work of changing the system is crucial to protecting those in South Durban, however laws can take a long time to be passed and even longer to be implemented. Because of this, SDCEA also works to aid those already suffering from the environmental impacts of the oil refineries in the area. SDCEA attempts to keep an updated database of cancer and asthma statistics for those people living within the proximity around the oil refineries. Their goal is to produce enough evidence to advocate for the municipality to fund a free clinic to assist those suffering from cancer, leukemia, asthma, and other health issues relating to the oil refinery. They host regular town hall events so as to provide a platform for those who may otherwise not be able to tell their story. SDCEA and their allies work on the ground in a community-based fashion to achieve their mission through both engaging in systemic change, as well as the everyday work of protecting lives and livelihoods. Here, SDCEA demonstrates the other side of the ecofeminist coin: they are working hard to protect people already bearing the brunt of climate change. SDCEA is able to connect the grand, systemic issues to those in immediate need and provide aid.

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<sup>149</sup> "Pollution and Health Campaign," South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, 2017, <http://sdcea.co.za/category/pollution-health/>.

*Standing Up to Polluters: SDCEA versus the Safripol Fibers Plant*

A specific case study that demonstrates the simultaneous action of SDCEA occurred just last August. As previously noted, South Durban is ripe with industrial corporations creating extremely polluted air. SDCEA has attempted time and again to work with these corporations to make South Durban safer for all those that live and work among the smog. In 2016, a “Good Neighbor Agreement” agreement was signed with SDCEA and the Safripol Fibers plant, where polyethylene terephthalate resin and polyester fiber are manufactured.<sup>150</sup><sup>151</sup> The agreement’s goal was to provide the community with a tangible method with which they could hold the company accountable to keeping the community as clean and informing residents of any danger that may present itself as a result of the factory. Infuriatingly, the company has yet to demonstrate any indication of upholding their end of the deal.

In May of 2018 the plant had a gas leak that permeated the Umbilo Secondary school, resulting in early school dismissal. On Friday, August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019, a chemical fire broke out at the Safripol plant resulting in “six cubic meters of ‘Dowtherm’, (diphenyl oxide, biphenyl; diphenyl),” being spread throughout South Durban by wind. Dowtherm is known to cause respiratory health problems and skin irritations.<sup>152</sup> Reports indicated that over 600 residents experienced “burning eyes and mouths, nausea, bleeding noses, difficulty breathing, skin irritation and rashes, vomiting, headaches, and dizziness.”<sup>153</sup> The neighborhood agreement that Safripol signed indicates that they must inform neighbors to evacuate if there is any chance their factory could be omitting unhealthy

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<sup>150</sup> Desmond D'Sa, "Good Neighbour Agreement is a Bad Agreement as Residents Are Poisoned," South Durban Community Environmental Voices, January-July 2019, 6.

<sup>151</sup> Desiree Erasmus, "WATCH: Irate residents won't allow Durban chemical plant to reopen after leak," News24, August 17, 2019, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/kwazulu-natal/watch-irate-residents-wont-allow-durban-chemical-plant-to-reopen-after-leak-30899970>

<sup>152</sup> Desmond D'Sa, "Good Neighbour Agreement is a Bad Agreement as Residents Are Poisoned," South Durban Community Environmental Voices, January-July 2019, 6.

<sup>153</sup> Desmond D'Sa, "Good Neighbour Agreement is a Bad Agreement as Residents Are Poisoned," South Durban Community Environmental Voices, January-July 2019, 6.

pollutants at particularly high rates. Safripol failed to inform the neighborhood, but did manage to evacuate their own staff.<sup>154</sup>

SDCEA responded to this situation by ensuring both immediate action was taken *and* by encouraging the state and the company to act more responsibly so as to create long term, systemic changes. SDCEA workers did not hesitate to attempt to interject in the situation as quickly as possible. Immediately after smelling the chemical fumes, SDCEA staff attempted to call the municipality air pollution offices to file a report and receive aid, though their calls were ignored. SDCEA also used their connections with city officials to amplify the situation's importance.

Furthermore, SDCEA used their power in the community to organize citizens to stand up and protest the action, ensuring that Safripol was held accountable. Desmond D'Sa, the founder and office coordinator of SDCEA, negotiated with the general manager of the plant in front of a large crowd of South Durban residents. He emphasized the importance of an emergency evacuation plan, and stated that "the quicker [Safripol] comes back to us with something in writing," in response to the demands, "the quicker we will meet and decide that the plant can open," demonstrating the power and importance of community.<sup>155</sup> After the incident, the Safripol senior management took twelve hours to attend to the community. SDCEA helped the community put pressure on Safripol to take responsibility for their actions, which they were initially avoiding. Safripol agreed to provide an occupational clinic with a medical doctor and nurse, as well as two ambulances in South Durban so as to accommodate those peoples that were impacted but unable to receive immediate medical attention.<sup>156</sup> Throughout the process, SDCEA assisted in getting the word out to citizens, informing

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<sup>154</sup> Desmond D'Sa, "Good Neighbour Agreement is a Bad Agreement as Residents Are Poisoned," South Durban Community Environmental Voices, January-July 2019, 6.

<sup>155</sup> Desiree Erasmus, "WATCH: Irate residents won't allow Durban chemical plant to reopen after leak," News24, August 17, 2019, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/kwazulu-natal/watch-irate-residents-wont-allow-durban-chemical-plant-to-reopen-after-leak-30899970>

<sup>156</sup> Desiree Erasmus, "WATCH: Irate residents won't allow Durban chemical plant to reopen after leak," News24, August 17, 2019, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/kwazulu-natal/watch-irate-residents-wont-allow-durban-chemical-plant-to-reopen-after-leak-30899970>

them where the toxins had come from and what resources were available to the people, and what was being done to ensure this never happened again.

Obviously, this incident is not the sole instance of unacceptable chemical leaks in South Durban, and SDCEA understands that this repetition is no coincidence. They continue to do work to advocate for the safety of citizens and enact legally binding regulations to hold polluters accountable. Long before this disaster happened, SDCEA has had a track record of “warning city officials that an emergency plan is urgently recruited in South Durban.”<sup>157</sup> SDCEA advocated for health officials to use their mandate to encourage a safer community, to take air samples and keep records of the pollution in the area. SDCEA regularly updates their medical information on the community to demonstrate the immediate need for a more local clinic. SDCEA performs air quality tests throughout South Durban to provide non-bias, regular, and accurate results about the toxins in the air. The results of these test are posted on their website for anyone to see. SDCEA’s education of the community, efforts to build a clinic in South Durban, and their continued negotiations with both corporate and state demonstrates the long term goals of the organization. Their work aims to create laws and systemic practices that will prevent further instances of environmental racism and health concerns.

SDCEA works to protect the absolute rights of those living in South Durban. Their efforts include analyzing energy and climate change, acting as a watchdog while infrastructure and development continue to negatively impact residents, track pollutants and their impacts on residents’ health, and search for alternatives to oil and gas exploration in South Africa. Energy in South Africa is an extremely sensitive area.

### *Fighting for Energy Equity: SDCEA’s fight for a Just Transition*

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<sup>157</sup> Desiree Erasmus, "WATCH: Irate residents won't allow Durban chemical plant to reopen after leak," News24, August 17, 2019, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/kwazulu-natal/watch-irate-residents-wont-allow-durban-chemical-plant-to-reopen-after-leak-30899970>

South Africa regularly experiences “load shedding,” or load reduction, which is a planned and advertised shutdown of electricity grids throughout the country. Eskom, the major energy supplier in South Africa, articulates that load shedding “is done countrywide as a controlled option to respond to unplanned events to protect the electricity power system from a total blackout.”<sup>158</sup> Despite the continuous drilling and mining for oil and gas throughout the country, Eskom claims to be experiencing “the challenge of a constrained power system that will affect us until substantial new power capacity is available.”<sup>159</sup>

Predictions as of February 2019 believed Eskom would not be able to provide energy through May 2019.<sup>160</sup> 2019 saw historic load shedding in regards to the severity and length of the blackouts, taking 20% of Eskom’s energy off the grid per day.<sup>161</sup> The source of this came from twelve generating units being out of service due to a lack of funding to perform “offline refurbishment,” as well as an additional six units breaking due to excessive use.<sup>162</sup> The minister of private enterprise, Mr. Pravin Gordhan, made a promise last year that there would be no load shedding during the Christmas period, forcing Eskom to exhaust all their reserves. Due to the “cumulative effect of years of mismanagement and corruption,” the company had no funding to buy surplus diesel after using their excess stocks, eventually leading to the tremendous load shedding.<sup>163</sup> Diesel has become more expensive in recent years, as it is imported and an increasingly rare commodity. It is predicted that the current problem cannot be solved for at least five years due to “the coal shortages and the way that [Eskom] has been doing the procurement of coal.”<sup>164</sup> The energy crisis in South Africa is directly

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<sup>158</sup> Eskom, <http://loadshedding.eskom.co.za/LoadShedding/Description>.

<sup>159</sup> Eskom, <http://loadshedding.eskom.co.za/LoadShedding/Description>.

<sup>160</sup> Lameez Omarjee, “Eskom 'Technically Insolvent', Won't Last Beyond April 2019 - Committee Hears,” Fin24, 13 February 2019.

<sup>161</sup> Lameez Omarjee, “Eskom 'Technically Insolvent', Won't Last Beyond April 2019 - Committee Hears,” Fin24, 13 February 2019.

<sup>162</sup> Lameez Omarjee, “Eskom 'Technically Insolvent', Won't Last Beyond April 2019 - Committee Hears,” Fin24, 13 February 2019.

<sup>163</sup> Pieter du Toit, “1912 - 2019: The Rise and Fall of Eskom,” Fin24, 13 Feb 2019.

<sup>164</sup> Ted Blom, “Eskom's Load Shedding Explained,” 11 Feb 2019, SABC News.

linked to the oil and gas industries that are negatively impacting poor communities of color such as South Durban. A change needs to be made immediately to protect all citizens from a future with limited energy

SDCEA understands the value of implementing a “just transition,” as do ecofeminist scholars. The conversion from dirty, coal-based energy to clean energy must happen fast, but it must also happen justly. Jobs and training must be ensured in manufacturing, construction, and operations for those who will lose their livelihood due to the departure from coal. Mining regions must be rehabilitated, restored, and detoxified. Constant data must be kept on the ways in which climate change is impacting communities and already existing effects such as broken roads, damaged water and sewage pipes, and looming health concerns must all be identified and seen to by the government.

SDCEA has worked in collaboration with other environmental organizations in South Africa to promote a just transition. They have emphasized the point that “workers in the coal industries must receive retraining, guaranteed employment, and benefits,” so those most marginalized by dirty energy will not be left behind in the transition.

Furthermore, SDCEA isn’t simply talking about a just transition, they are taking legitimate steps to attempt to influence policy. In January of 2019, the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) held hearings to debate whether Eskom should be granted permission to further tax individual household consumption of energy. Eskom was seeking approval to tax individuals already burdened with high energy costs, regular load shedding, and pollutants from Eskom’s coal-fired power plants so as to supplement their high cost of dirty energy. SDCEA attended these hearings and, alongside other community organizations, presented arguments that Eskom must “focus on introducing renewable energy, and gradually shift people off the grid by providing safe, clean, and secure energy.”<sup>165</sup> While the hearings were happening, SDCEA organized the South Durban

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<sup>165</sup> Sherelee Odayar, "The Energy Crisis in South Africa," South Durban Community Environmental Voices, January-July 2019, 17.

community to “picket outside and show their support and solidarity,” for a just transition to clean energy.<sup>166</sup>

SDCEA’s emphasis on a just transition and their constant action in educating the public, advocating for the most marginalized communities, and taking real steps to ensure a shift away from coal, oil, and gas are awe inspiring. SDCEA is a role model in demonstrating the ways in which organizations can navigate the overwhelmingly intersectional and multifaceted issues of climate injustice. They apply ecofeminist values such as centering the voices of the disenfranchised and insisting on solutions that will work for *everyone*, not just the rich and powerful.

Though their mission, goals, nor objectives identify ecofeminism as a central point of their work, SDCEA portrays an extremely ecofeminist organization. There are multiple points within their mission that SDCEA identifies the importance of helping “the people it represents.”<sup>167</sup> As articulated previously, ecofeminism especially emphasizes the significance of representation and giving a voice to the voiceless. SDCEA makes it a point to be inclusive to the most marginalized within their community, especially women. The organization has only seven full time employees, four of whom are women. Having women in positions of power within an organization helps center the needs of women. Furthermore, these women are from South Durban. Those that work at SDCEA are not coming from another part of the city to “fix” the area; they are all residents, experiencing the environmental impacts of industrialization first hand.

### *Knowledge is Power: SDCEA and Education*

A key function of ecofeminism, much like critical IR theory, is its ability to pay attention to the ways in which the “everyday routine and often mundane activities provide different opportunities for ‘seeing’ how social relations are shaped by power, and how responsibility and action are placed

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<sup>166</sup> Sherelee Odayar, "The Energy Crisis in South Africa," South Durban Community Environmental Voices, January-July 2019, 17.

<sup>167</sup> “About,” South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, 2017.

on differently and unequally situated bodies.”<sup>168</sup> Essentially, a problem cannot be understood without an examination of who has access to power and who is impacted disproportionately by decision they had no say in. SDCEA tries to make power structures visible to everyone, as well as help decentralize that power. Creating an equal playing field between the large corporations creating pollutants and the citizens impacted by toxic air is essential in grassroots, environmental justice efforts. SDCEA’s focus on educating the public on the ways in which South Durban is disproportionately impacted by climate change due to infrastructure, a lack of government regulation, and the exploitation of the community begins to provide more equal access to knowledge.

SDCEA's community empowerment campaign involves predominately education-oriented initiatives. They collaborated with Action 24— a large news organization in South Africa— to create podcasts about the real impacts of climate change in South Africa, tailoring the content specifically to those within the country. SDCEA puts out bi-yearly newsletters discussing the work they have been doing in the community and important information in regards to environmental justice. These newsletters provide an accessible way to spread their message in a way that is unencumbered by the politics of a news organization or overly sophisticated and fluffy language often used in corporations press briefings. SDCEA regularly hosts meetings and town halls to discuss the ways in which pollutants are being released in the community, provide cancer screenings, and give residents a chance to voice their concerns openly.

One of SDCEA’s six key campaigns is “Community Empowerment,” which includes organizing protests, facilitating discussions for special interest groups like fisher folks, and of course, education outreach. One of the most impressive community empowerment projects was The Coalition for the Poor’s Human Rights Day march. This venture included fifteen organizations that partnered with SDCEA to emphasize the need for more human rights-centered legislation. These

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<sup>168</sup> Beth A. Bee, Jennifer Rice, and Amy Trauger, "A feminist Approach to Climate Change Governance: Everyday and Intimate Politics, *Geography Compass* (2015): 5.

organizations included a metal worker’s union, an anti-mining agency, a media watchdog group, and a non-profit organization that works towards a goal of equal housing in South Africa. SDCEA, along with the partnering organizations, created a memorandum for the mayor containing sixty-four demands ranging from topics such as housing equity, media freedom, xenophobia, street vendor protection, and environmental justice. The march represented the intersectionality of the issues SDCEA deals with by collaborating with so many organizations assisting similar communities with overlapping challenges. SDCEA understands these issues do not happen by accident, and that all of these concerns are perpetuated by and propagate environmental injustice.

Moreover, SDCEA demonstrated the importance of community engagement by providing transportation for residents of South Durban to participate in the march. Their presence was essential because it emphasized that the decisions made by the government had real, tangible results. City hall is located downtown, a fifteen-minute drive without traffic from the industrial hub of South Durban. City officials can too easily turn a blind eye to the communities they aim to serve, therefore the demonstration aimed to make it impossible for those in power to ignore South Durban. Such an action is not uncommon for SDCEA. Their work frequently emphasizes the importance of environmental justice, while advocating for the community in a peaceful, yet forceful way.

#### *SDCEA and Ecofeminism in the International Arena*

In 2014, Desmond D’Sa was honored as a Goldman Prize Recipient for his continued participation in the fight for all citizens to have access to safe and healthy communities. The Goldman Environmental Prize is the world's foremost award honoring grassroots environmental activists who are extraordinarily “involved in local efforts, where positive change is created through community or citizen participation in the issues that affect them.”<sup>169</sup> D’Sa’s work—done through the organizational vessel of SDCEA—demonstrates the relevance and importance these efforts have on

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<sup>169</sup> Goldman Prize, about, [goldmanprize.org/about](http://goldmanprize.org/about).

an international scale.

Grassroots organizing is effective in combating climate change. It is for that reason that the Goldman Award gives priority to grassroots initiatives over scientific, academic, or governmental activities, and why private citizens are highlighted instead of executives of large NGOs, and why government employees are eligible only for work outside the scope of their official responsibilities.<sup>170</sup> It is why time and again research has demonstrated that “significant lessons can be drawn from examining how,” marginalized communities disproportionately impacted by climate change, “are already coping with conditions of increased vulnerability, including how they respond to existing environmental hazards.”<sup>171</sup> The international arena can learn from SDCEA’s initiatives. Global institutions could benefit from a crash course on organizing from grassroots groups like SDCEA, specifically because of the small scale efforts that occupy their time.

SDCEA knows what solutions will be effective and what will flop in their community, because they are a representation of the community. Small organizations like SDCEA all around the world are working twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week to ensure the safety of their communities and to advocate for a human-centric approach to climate change advocacy. Critical theory must provide room for pedagogy like that of these grassroots organizations. Big picture concepts that contextualize the issue of climate change in the history of imperialism and poverty and racism are necessary to provide a structure for completely reimagining the ways in which society functions so it can become more just.

As demonstrated previously in this chapter small organizations have the capability to reimagine laws, to rewrite economic norms, to disrupt the hierarchy of bureaucracy. But these organizations also provide immediate action. They take care of those experiencing respiratory issues

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<sup>170</sup> Goldman Prize, nominations, <https://www.goldmanprize.org/nominations>.

<sup>171</sup> Huraera Jabeen, Cassidy Johnson, and Adriana Allen, “Built-in resilience: learning from grassroots coping strategies for climate variability,” *Environment and Urbanization* 22, no. 2 (2010): 428.

as a result of polluted air. They provide cancer screenings to those who cannot afford to travel to a hospital. They feed those whose harvest has been destroyed by extreme weather conditions. These organizations accommodate for the most marginalized because their goals are neither political, nor financial, nor for clout; they help people because they believe in a more equitable society, and *that* is why their work is more effective.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has demonstrated the ways in which ecofeminism can be implemented through a small, grassroots organization. SDCEA is an example of how environmental action can be genuinely impactful and beneficial to those its aiming to serve. Community organizing is happening in those communities most impacted by climate change; it is not an act of activism, but one of survival. The field of international relations must accept that the Global North does not necessarily know what is best for those in the Global South. Scholars must begin shifting their understanding of knowledge and prioritizing firsthand experience and generational knowledge over assumptions made by outsiders. The following chapter will use the case study of SDCEA as well as the NRLP to provide recommendations for global institutes and the greater international arena in regards to combating climate change and environmental injustice.

## Chapter 4: Recommendations

### *Introduction*

The previous chapters have demonstrated the need for a revised understanding of international actors' roles in response to environmental injustice. This chapter will provide a succinct understanding of the two case studies, as well as recommendations for how the international relations field and international actors should move forward with a prioritization of ecofeminist values.

### *The Need for Immediate Action: Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier*

Internationally, the narrative around climate change is generally understood as an issue of the future. At the 2015 World Economic Forum meeting, former president of France Francois Hollande stated that "we have a single mission: to protect and hand on the planet to the next generation."<sup>172</sup> While this quote inspires hope, it denies the reality of climate change's immediate impact. Countries such as France or the United States do not feel this sense of urgency. Despite the fact that "most of the greenhouse gas emissions that have caused and will continue to contribute to climate change are from high-income countries," they have "disproportionate effect[s] on the nations and peoples of the Third World because of geography and limited resources to adapt to and face the challenges of a quickly warming climate."<sup>173</sup><sup>174</sup> Climate change sees no borders, its brutal effects disturb poor communities, communities of color, and women most prominently.

The issue of discrimination in regards to what communities are being affected by climate change is prevalent at a national level, even in the wealthiest countries. This notion is articulated in relevant literature that states "[e]nvironmental hazards are inequitably distributed in the United States with poor people and people of color bearing a greater share of the pollution than richer people and

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<sup>172</sup> José Santiago, "15 Quotes on Climate Change by World Leaders," World Economic Forum, 27 Nov 2015.

<sup>173</sup> Climate Change and Children: A Human Security Approach, 6.

<sup>174</sup> Gordon, Ruth, "Panama and the Specter of Climate Change," *The University of Miami Inter-American Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 2, (Winter 2010), 139.

white people,” with parallel situations in Canada, France, Australia, and the Netherlands.<sup>175</sup> This is due to a variety of factors, such as proximity to coastal or industrialized areas, access to aid in the event of a natural disaster, and poor water quality.<sup>176</sup> Privileged communities are better protected from the perils of environmental degradation than their marginalized counterparts in every country.

Haiti provides an extreme example of both domestic and international discrimination, as it itself is a developing country, though its poorest citizens are facing the largest burden from climate change. At least 1.3 million Haitians have become environmental refugees, having to flee their homes due to environmental travails. This is a result of a “grand-scale rundown of environmental resources—soil, water, and tress—that underpin their agricultural economy.”<sup>177</sup> Despite Haiti having the 158<sup>th</sup> most carbon dioxide emissions in the world, they are deeply impacted due to issues of poverty, population pressures, malnutrition, landlessness, unemployment, and pandemic diseases.<sup>178</sup> Haiti also shows that those with wealth can avoid climate change’s most drastic harm in the short term by living at a higher altitude to avoid flooding or being able to purchase imported food when local agriculture is scarce.

Within the literature of political ecology and scientific studies, “climate change is recognized as originating largely from the activities of industrialized nations and from ‘unsustainable production and consumption practices,’” providing a clear source of pollution that is evidently not from those countries being most affected. Climate change should be the number one priority of international relations scholars and global institutions such as the UN and the World Bank, for it is the most significant threat multiplier impacting the world to date. A threat multiplier is an issue that’s impact

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<sup>175</sup> Rachel D. Godsill, “Viewing the Cathedral from Behind the Color Line: Property Rules, Liability Rules and Environmental Racism,” *Rutgers Law School*, no. 22 (2004): 1832.

<sup>176</sup> R. Dean Hardy, Richard A. Milligan, Nik Heynen. “Racial Coastal Formation: The Environmental Injustice of Colorblind Adaptation Planning for Sea-Level Rise,” *Geoforum* 87 (2017): 63.

<sup>177</sup> Norman Myers, “Environmental Refugees: A Growing Phenomenon of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences* 357 no. 1420, (2001): 610.

<sup>178</sup> Open Data, “International Energy Statistics,” Environmental Impact Assessments, 2016.

<sup>179</sup> Open Data, “International Energy Statistics,” Environmental Impact Assessments, 2016.

leads to more negative factors. Climate change has direct connections to poverty, population pressures, malnutrition, landlessness, unemployment, over-rapid urbanization, pandemic diseases, government shortcomings, food and water shortages, and deforestation.<sup>180</sup> Climate change is a planetary scale threat. It has the ability to effect people of “different classes, different nations, different political ideologies, different countries,” without a hint of discrimination.<sup>181</sup> It is our systems—the political, social, and economic structures—that have led to the inequitable impacts. Poor folks “already have higher rates of many health conditions, are more exposed to environmental hazards and take longer to bounce back from natural disasters.”<sup>182</sup> Low-income populations “typically have less access to information, resources, institutions, and other factors to prepare for and avoid the health risks of climate change,” not because of any biological reason, but because society has been constructed to leave them out.<sup>183</sup> The international relations field and the global community overall must take immediate action against climate injustice and prevent further environmental degradation and protect those communities most impacted by climate change.

### *The Faults of a Problem Solving Lens*

As articulated in the literature review, the international relations field does not provide an ample framework for understanding climate change and creating revolutionary, sustainable solutions that simultaneously utilize upstream and downstream analysis.

A problem solving lens is an insufficient means to address climate change because it fails to look holistically at systems that have caused inequities and assumes the international political and

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<sup>180</sup> Norman Meyers, “Environmental Refugees: A Growing Phenomenon of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences*, Vol. 357, No. 1420, 610. and Norman Myers, “Environmental Refugees,” *Population and Environment*, Vol. 19 No 2 (Nov., 1997), 170.

<sup>181</sup> Amar Causevic, “Facing an Unpredictable Threat: Is NATO Ideally Placed to Manage Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier?,” *Connections*, Vol. 16, No 2. (Spring 2017), 65.

<sup>182</sup> Carmin Chappell, “Climate change in the US will hurt poor people the most, according to a bombshell federal report,” CNBC, November 26 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/11/26/climate-change-will-hurt-poor-people-the-most-federal-report.html>

<sup>183</sup> Carmin Chappell, “Climate change in the US will hurt poor people the most, according to a bombshell federal report.”

economic world is natural. Such assumptions prevent the creation of solutions that are sustainable and will lead to the demolition of power structures that have consistently led to the disproportionate environmental impacts on the Global South. This is because they do not provide the historical to understand the cause of these problems, nor the context to provide connections between generational poverty, systemic racism, colonialism, and climate change impacts.

Critical theory does articulate a necessary historical context and aim to create a well-rounded understanding of international issues such as climate change. Though, as discussed in the literature review, there is a lack of action within many critical theories throughout the international relations discipline. Much of the work is philosophical and fails to prevent legitimate solutions to the problems they expose. Ecofeminism as a critical international relations lens can provide both the systemic and historical context necessary for understanding the roots of climate injustice, as well as guidance for change.

The two case studies addressed in this thesis—World Bank’s National Rural Livelihoods Project and the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance—are tangible examples of the two aforementioned types of international intervention. The former is a top-down, government initiated program that has a goal of financially empowering women. NRLP has been largely unsuccessful in their efforts due to their inability (or unwillingness) to change structures of oppression and make specific accommodations for each individual community’s needs. NRLP is a representation of problem-solving theory because the program takes the economic and social systems for granted and attempts to make space for women in these already existing structures. The program does not look at the problem wholly and therefore fails to understand that women—specifically in the Global South—will never have full autonomy and power until these systems of oppression are brought down.

On the contrary, the latter is a local, grassroots organization run by those in the communities being impacted by climate change most severely. The organization does ample work fighting for

structural change through both legal and governmental channels, as well as changing local perspectives of large corporations and climate change through educational outreach. SDCEA demonstrates the potential for IR utilizing an ecofeminist lens because they prioritize the same values as ecofeminist scholarship does. Both attempt to help those most disproportionately impacted through empowerment and systemic change, while also providing more immediate aid. SDCEA uses a bottom up approach to environmental justice efforts and aims to put power in the hands of those who have the most knowledge and real life experience fighting against polluters.

One inconsistency with the SDCEA case study is the lack of discussion around women specifically. Women *are* disproportionately impacted by the toxic smog in South Durban, primarily because they often stay home or do not leave the neighborhood for work, as their male counterparts do.<sup>184</sup> In South Durban, women are obviously in the intersection of many marginalized identities. Though, through my experience of working in the neighborhood I found that gender was not at the center of so many women's fight. I met a lot of women in the area doing great work to combat climate change and aid the community. I often asked these women if they felt they was not taken as seriously due to their gender. I received extreme pushback from this question time and again. It seemed to me—through my limited experience—that women seek an almost “gender-blind” world; a place where gender is not relevant in the conversation of activism because it is frankly annoying. Therefore, the chapter did not discuss women as specifically, which may feel like an inappropriate oversight considering the emphasis on ecofeminism. Though, the point of the ecofeminism I prefer does not exist to romanticize women's relationship to nature or insinuate that they are the caretakers of the world and should therefore be tasked with repairing the earth.

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<sup>184</sup> Desmond D'Sa, “South African Environmental Justice struggles against “toxic” petrochemical industries in South Durban: The Engen Refinery Case,” *University of Michigan*, (2015).

Rather, I see ecofeminism as arguing the importance of empowering those most impacted by climate change, as such empowerment will promote more radical, sustainable solutions. In the case of South Durban, it is not that women specifically were taking action in regards to their gender, but rather that so many activists were women. Over 50 percent of SDCEA's staff are women, and a number of their partner organizations are run by women.

SDCEA can certainly act as a model for environmental justice organizations around the world due to their community-oriented programming and efficient, broad, and effective programming. Though, the usefulness of SDCEA's case study— for global institutions in particular— is not that they provide a template for other organizations to follow. They demonstrate the knowledge already held in the communities global institutions are attempting to aid. SDCEA substantiates what ecofeminists already know, that many of these communities have a “long history of civic activism,” as well as “long histories of facilitating the formation and functioning of women's groups.”<sup>185</sup> Therefore, the aid these communities need is not in the assistance of organizing or providing guidance on how to best support those who are suffering. Marginalized communities would benefit most from financial resources and assistance in legal aid to promote the agendas and initiatives they deem most imperative to the environmental justice efforts. Rather than telling communities what to do, global institutions should be supportive figures, trusting the community's judgement.

#### *Recommendations for Appropriate Applications of the Ecofeminist Methods*

There is no one-size-fits-all method for ecofeminist engagement with marginalized communities—that would defeat the purpose of using a bottom-up approach. Though, there are key points global institutions can prioritize in their efforts to aid those most impacted by climate change.

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<sup>185</sup> Shareen Joshi and Vijayendra Rao, "Who Should Be at the Top of Bottom-Up Development? A Case Study of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission in Rajasthan, India." *The World Bank Policy Research* (2017): 19.

Firstly, these global institutions must understand that there are multiple levels of necessary solutions to climate change problems, including individual (e.g. household), community (e.g. neighborhood) or institutional (e.g. citywide or beyond).<sup>186</sup> The community is probably most aware which of these levels need immediate attention, regardless as to whether there is already organized action or not. Simply providing space to hear the concerns of the community and understand what is most immediately impacting their day-to-day lives is a useful start. The point ecofeminism makes is not that communities should be left to fend for themselves, but rather that those with power and resources should provide the necessary assets and funding to empower community members and ensure they have all they need to create their own solutions.

Of course, we know that many problems are beyond the control of individuals. Histories of systemic racism and classist urbanization has led to generations of families being exposed to pollution or losing their crops to industrialized farms. Because “some of the most effective adaptation strategies at scale may be beyond the control of the local community and must be implemented at the institutional level,” global institutions and other international actors can assist communities by managing projects that are beyond the capacity of the residents, while still creating space for their input.<sup>187</sup> This work often includes infrastructure changes such as large-scale water filtration systems to clean polluted water or the implementation of a storm water drainage system to accommodate higher instances of extreme weather.

Similarly, governments and global institutions can be very impactful in preparing communities for extreme weather by “ensuring that land use planning and the development of buildings and infrastructure take account of climate change risks.”<sup>188</sup> As we know, infrastructure is

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<sup>186</sup> Huraera Jabeen, Cassidy Johnson, and Adriana Allen, "Built-in resilience: learning from grassroots coping strategies for climate variability," *International Institute for Environmental Development* 22, no. 2 (2010): 418.

<sup>187</sup> Huraera Jabeen, Cassidy Johnson, and Adriana Allen, "Built-in resilience: learning from grassroots coping strategies for climate variability," *International Institute for Environmental Development* 22, no. 2 (2010): 418.

<sup>188</sup> Huraera Jabeen, Cassidy Johnson, and Adriana Allen, "Built-in resilience: learning from grassroots coping strategies for climate variability," 419.

inherently intertwined with historically racist and classist development, therefore “local adaptation to climate change cannot be divorced from a wider development perspective that simultaneously focuses on tackling risk through lifeline infrastructure in areas where such risk has historically accumulated.”<sup>189</sup>

Furthermore, international actors can help communities begin to unravel the long histories of laws and corporate favoritism that has created so much disproportional environmental degradation. Communities should have a voice in regards to creating new laws and regulations around industries that have harmed them—such as corporate farming and oil and gas manufacturing. Global institutions have the potential to advocate for those too often ignored when it comes to decisions about their own livelihoods.

Bottom up change does not necessarily mean that all the labor must be put on those in the community. Rather, it indicates that institutions with power and resources should center the views of the community and work *with* them to lead to institutional change. This process can look very different depending on a community’s needs or the institution assisting them, but everyone from local governments to global institutions “can make good use of indigenous knowledge systems built up from the historical experience,” of those within a marginalized community.<sup>190</sup> Therefore, ecofeminism in the context of international relations does not argue that the global community should let marginalized peoples fend for themselves so as to prevent further imperialist action. An ecofeminist analysis provides a more nuanced approach that will both empower communities impacted by climate change and create necessary long and short term solutions to environmental degradation.

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<sup>189</sup> Huraera Jabeen, Cassidy Johnson, and Adriana Allen, "Built-in resilience: learning from grassroots coping strategies for climate variability," 419.

<sup>190</sup> Huraera Jabeen, Cassidy Johnson, and Adriana Allen, "Built-in resilience: learning from grassroots coping strategies for climate variability," 418.

*Conclusion*

Of course, the transition to more holistic climate change solutions will not happen overnight. The evolution of global institutions must be thoughtful and extremely intentional, so as to ensure a justice-oriented process. Throughout this paper, I have demonstrated the importance of tailoring programs to a specific community's needs, listening to individuals, and focusing on sustainable projects that will lead to both systemic change and immediate aid—all of which is certainly no small feat. Global institutions, as well as the international relations field, have a long way to go before systems of oppression are dismantled. Applying an ecofeminist lens and genuinely centering grassroots organizations like SDCEA is a great place to start. If the field of international relations wants to enact real, tangible change in regards to climate change, a critical, ecofeminist theory must be normalized throughout the discipline.

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