

# “Fair Shares – What are they good for?”

## An Equity and Fair Shares Briefing for Climate Action Network International

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**NOTE: A full version of this briefing will be made available as soon as possible in March, after the CAN-I Annual Strategy Meeting (ASM). Meanwhile, the ideas herein will be presented, and discussed, during the Festival of Ideas section of the ASM.**

**The final draft will be posted soon thereafter at**

**<https://climateequityreference.org/can-equity-briefing>**

**Please use this link to check for a full version (or for drafts of individual chapters) or to sign up to receive an email alert when the full version is ready.**

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# **Climate Action Network International Equity and Fair Shares Briefing**

## **“Fair Shares – What are they good for?”**

**“There is no easy way, but there’s a way.”**

**— Willie Nelson**

### **Executive Summary**

The fair shares idea is no longer novel. But as the crisis deepens, its profile is changing. We are facing a civilizational emergency – a “polycrisis” with both climate and injustice at its core – and we need big ideas that can help guide us out of it.

This briefing is focused on one such idea: fair shares. It briefly discusses the ethical principles that underlie the Climate Equity Reference Framework, and its nuts and bolts, but its purpose is to contribute to CAN discussion and strategizing, with the immediate goal of supporting analysis of and campaigns for equitable national mitigation contributions, including – very explicitly – international mitigation finance.

The fair shares idea, of course, has implications beyond mitigation, and we do discuss other climate equity challenges. But, importantly, these other challenges – which include adaptation, loss & damage, and global just transitions – resist the kind of straightforward quantitative analysis appropriate to mitigation, for they involve even more complex and sprawling national and international efforts.

At any rate, conceptually and politically, the equity challenge applies across all dimensions of our global climate response. The global effort must be shared in a manner that is widely seen as, if not absolutely just, then at least fair enough. If it is not thus seen, sustained and substantive cooperation will prove to be impossible.

This briefing is divided into the following seven chapters.

## **1) Introduction**

This overview of the briefing.

## **2) Context setting: Climate, Politics, Equity**

The climate crisis is unfolding in a world that is simultaneously suffering a crisis of extreme inequality. In fact, these two crises are co-evolving. This has decisive implications, at both the strategic and tactical levels. The key point is that the solidarity – domestic and international – that will be necessary to rapidly stabilize the climate system is all but impossible in a world defined by extreme inequality.

## **3) CAN International's history with the Fair Shares idea**

The fair shares idea is no longer novel. CAN International has been engaged with it for some time. The story here began in earnest with the “Bali Equity Summit” in 2002 and extends through the Copenhagen and Paris equity debates and to the present moment. It is not necessary to know all the details, but it is helpful to know that there is a history here, and that it has marked CAN.

## **4) CAN-I's near consensus on Fair Shares. The role of the Climate Equity Reference framework**

Insofar as CAN has a position on global climate equity, it is rooted in the Framework Convention and its equity principles. Importantly, CAN generally understands these principles not in abstract and legalistic terms, but as universal ethical imperatives that can and should be applied to the real world of complex, dynamically evolving nations, rather than to static lists of “developed” and “developing” countries. The Climate Equity Reference Framework (“the CERP framework”) takes a similar tack, and thus serves CAN's purposes quite well.

## **5) CERP applications around the world and how they are usefully different**

A number of CAN members have been involved in the national application of the CERP framework, and have been active in the Civil Society Equity Review coalition, which has since the Paris COP published annual NDC assessments exploring multiple dimensions of the global equity challenge. This chapter reviews these various collaborations, and the differing approaches they have taken to defining and quantifying national fair shares.

## **6) Applying Fair Shares to global and national advocacy**

In this chapter, we discuss issues that arise after a national collaborative has defined its view of fair shares, the implications of which can be quite bracing. Unsurprisingly, many of these have to do with the political and specifically economic and financial challenges of making truly science- and equity-based demands. These take us beyond the fair shares framework proper, but are central to the challenge of making fair shares *relevant*.

## **7) Equity & Fair Shares – Strategic challenges and invitations to reflection**

The strategic challenges of the climate reckoning extend far beyond mitigation, and very far beyond fair shares. Here we propose a small number of large questions for further discussion and reflection. All of these questions are in the air, but few of them are often discussed in sufficient detail.

### **Appendix / Box: Fair Shares Assessment and CAN – Why this framework and not others?**

The CERP framework, which is at the core of this paper and the various fair shares projects it discusses, is not the only climate equity framework in the world. Building on the discussion in main text, and Chapter 4 in particular, this box briefly contrasts the CERP framework with various alternative approaches, in light of CAN's stated equity principles.

## Recommendations

- 1) CAN members and nodes should convene national and regional fair shares exercises and pledge assessments, in broad collaboration with allied organizations, social movements, and front-line communities. These collaborations should be explicitly deliberative, aiming to build the basis for active and invested advocacy and campaigning.
- 2) CAN members and nodes should demand that their governments commit to their fair shares. The science demands a wide-scale transformation, well beyond anything that is conventionally considered politically realistic. Shifting “political realism” toward “climate realism” is a necessary and urgent priority.
  - a. In developed countries, fair share efforts include extremely ambitious domestic mitigation efforts consistent with a 1.5°C global pathway *as well as* cooperative multilateral efforts to provide the international finance and technology support needed to meet the remainder of the national fair share.
  - b. In developing countries, fair share efforts include both ambitious domestic mitigation efforts and a readiness for even more ambitious efforts contingent on adequate support, consistent with a 1.5°C global pathway.
- 3) CAN members and nodes should chart out a just and equitable transformation on the scale implied by their national fair shares and then advocate for it in close collaboration with social movements and front-line communities within their countries and regions. These collaborations must, for both ethical and political reasons, explicitly and honestly support broad social justice goals as an integral part of transformative climate action.
- 4) CAN members and nodes should help define and promote equitable international cooperation. In wealthier countries, they should identify sources of revenue that can appropriately be drawn upon to provide international climate finance, ensuring that these are progressive and do not unfairly burden the poor. In all countries, they should work to understand how international cooperation and implementation could actually and rapidly occur, and at the same time to demonstrate the feasibility of cooperation at the necessary scale, while prioritizing the needs and priorities of local communities.
- 5) CAN members and nodes should work with a view to shifting power and reducing inequality, so as to make effective consensus on a climate transformation feasible. The details here will vary from time to time and place to place, but the overarching goal should be reversing the extreme inequality that makes the emergence of a culture of solidarity, including international solidarity, all but impossible. There is no end to the possibilities here, from electoral reform and finance sector regulation to tax and immigration justice to reversing austerity measures and imagining a “global green new deal.” The list, obviously, goes on. The point is that we must make solidarity possible.

## Chapter 1. Introduction

The fair shares idea is no longer novel. But as the crisis deepens, its profile is changing. We are facing a civilizational emergency – a “polycrisis” with both climate and injustice at its core – and we need big ideas that can help guide us out of it.

The fair shares idea, of course, has implications far beyond mitigation, and in this paper we do discuss other equity challenges as well as mitigation proper. But, importantly, these other challenges – which include adaptation, loss & damage, and global just transitions – resist the kind of straightforward quantitative analysis appropriate to mitigation, for they involve even more complex and sprawling national and international efforts.

At any rate, conceptually and politically, the key dynamic is the same across all dimensions of the global climate response. The global effort must be shared in a manner that is widely seen as, if not absolutely just, at least fair enough. If it is not thus seen, then sustained and substantive cooperation will prove to be impossible.

Importantly, this briefing is not intended as a primer. While it provides a general overview of the Climate Equity Reference Framework (“the CERP framework”), and the UNFCCC equity principles it is based on, it shifts relatively quickly to a discussion of the concrete decisions and choices involved in using this framework, based on the accumulated experience of CAN members and others. In the process, it takes care to map key political challenges that arise when applying fair shares approaches. These prominently include the critical task of assessing and critiquing current mitigation NDCs “in the light of equity.” Here, the briefing draws heavily on the work of the civil society collaboratives that have applied the fair shares framework as a guide to policy and advocacy campaigns. The lessons learned from these initiatives are quite instructive.

There is obviously more to climate equity than fair shares. An enormous set of profound justice related issues surrounds the climate reckoning, including adaptation, loss and damage, the challenge of a global just transition away from fossil fuel extraction and dependence, and the ultimate challenge of just and sustainable development in a climate constrained world. Though we raise some of these issues (as part of the overall context discussed in chapter 2, and in chapters 6 and 7), the core of this briefing centers on fair shares and mitigation. At the end of the day, despite our focus on mitigation, we argue that the climate equity agenda is impossible to circumscribe, not least because it inevitably implicates the global inequality crisis, which can no longer be politely set aside.

As we enter the third year of a pandemic that has exposed the short-sightedness and venality with which the elites can ignore the needs of the poor and the vulnerable, it is altogether obvious that the old politics will not suffice. But while, within the climate movement, a new politics is rapidly being created, one that centers both justice and emergency, this is not the direction of the official climate “process.” Rather, the high politics of climate suffers a constant grinding pressure to replace the anchoring equity principles of the post-Rio climate regime – “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities” – with ad hoc and undifferentiated “shared responsibilities” approaches in which, as we gradually learn, the challenges of international cooperation and finance are never to be met. This pressure, importantly, is

understood by its partisans (many of whom know the depth of the emergency as well as we do) as a realist imperative, but this only shows that realism itself is now a contested notion.

There will, obviously, be more to say about this in the years ahead. For the moment, in this paper, our aim is to contribute to the deepening of CAN's fair share discussions, a deepening that is absolutely necessary if CAN, a leading international civil society organization, is to play its proper part in the reckonings ahead. Here, inevitably, the challenge of fair effort sharing must finally be faced, and in a manner that is relevant in the world as we actually find it, a world as bitterly divided by class as it is by nation.