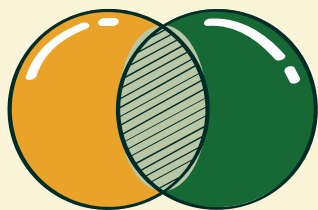AFRICAN CLIMATE ALLIANCE

WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY AND
WHY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE CRISIS?

This resource is best paired with our resource "what do we mean by climate justice"
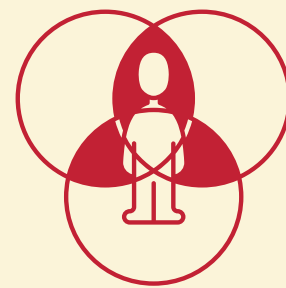*Find out more at africanclimatealliance.org/resources*
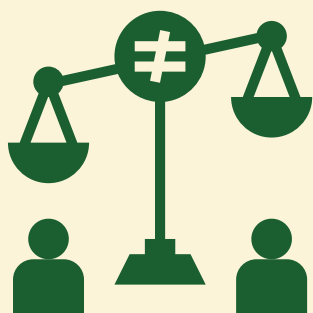
WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?

Intersectionality comes from the root word "intersect" which means to join, meet, or cross. **An intersection** is the point where two or more things meet (or simply a place where things come together).

The term **"intersectionality"** was coined in 1989 by Kimberle Crenshaw to **help us better understand layered inequalities in the world.**

In practice, intersectionality studies connected forms of discrimination and oppression. It acknowledges that there are many forms of oppression which might be present at the same time in a person's life or in a particular struggle (social justice). **Examples of these oppressions include classism, racism, and homophobia.**

INTERSECTIONALITY IS A FRAMEWORK THAT CAN HELP US UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEX SYSTEMS OF THE WORLD WHILE ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE CRISIS MORE EFFECTIVELY AND EQUALLY.

The world works in a way where those most affected by inequality, structural racism and classism, and other systems of oppression, also suffer more due to climate change and natural disasters. **Applying the intersectionality framework means we are able to center the people most affected.** This then allows us to better develop and apply solutions that benefit all.

In all this, it is also important to also understand that **the idea of intersectionality cannot fix all the problems that exist in our world**. However, it is a necessary framework that can help us usefully engage with issues around privilege and power – and find proper ways forward.

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EXAMPLES OF APPLYING AN INTERSECTIONALITY FRAMEWORK TO ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:

PROBLEM

Apartheid South Africa saw the **Group Areas Act** force Black and Brown people out of areas which were classified for white occupation.

They were **set up to live in areas that were environmentally inadequate and resource deficit.**

They also had few trees and plant life. As a result, **the majority of people of colour experience heatwaves, floods and food insecurity in far more intense ways.**

Developed nations that took part in the **colonisation of Africa** and extraction of its resources have **continued to mine many of those resources** in ways that have caused large environmental harm.

The same countries contribute the most to **releasing the carbon emissions that cause the climate crisis** that we see today. At the same time countries in Africa are far more vulnerable to the harms of climate and environmental breakdown.

SOLUTION

Applying **measures that are able to address social, economic and environmental issues** at the same time is important.

To name a few: land reform and restoration, environmentally conscious affordable housing, implementing universal basic income grants, providing accessible (environmental) education, and creating green jobs which focus on transitioning away from fossil fuels and restoring degraded landscapes, and building food sovereignty.

People from **all around the world** who are serious about confronting the climate crisis must **work together in finding fair solutions.**

This can look like: working to ensure that developed nations provide funding to third world and developing nations in the form of climate reparations. Reparations which are transparently spent and can put people before profit, and can be used to shift to sustainable practices and economies

DEFINITIONS:

OPPRESSION: A cruel use of power or authority.

DISCRIMINATION: Unfair treatment of people based in characteristics such as race, gender, sexuality or age.

INTERSECTIONALITY: People's various social identities, like race, gender, sexuality, and class, contribute to the specific type of systemic oppression and discrimination experienced by that individual (or a groups). We must realize that everything and anything that can disempower people.

SUPREMACY: State of having more power, authority, or status than anyone else.