



THREE INSIGHTS

WHERE ARE THE GAPS IN BUSINESS LEADERSHIP FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE?

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We would like to thank the following lead discussants and members of the Business Fights Poverty community for their participation:

Amir Gerges, Founder, **Carboni Bank**; **Katie Hoard**, Global VP, ESG Strategy & Engagement, **AB InBev**; **Deborah Osei-Mensah**, Ambassador, Fairtrade & Operations Manager, **Asunafo Cocoa Farmers**; **Edward Palmieri**, Director, Global Sustainability, **Meta**

Moderator: Zahid Torres-Rahman, CEO, **Business Fights Poverty**

Hosted with **Meta**

This workshop brought business and civil society leaders together to answer the question: what more can companies do to support climate justice? Participants agreed that putting people at the heart of climate action is key, but doing so effectively means dismantling “business as usual” and embracing a company-wide mindset shift.

Climate justice is not a race to be won; it requires deep engagement with the people you are trying to support in order to appropriately invest and address their needs. Speakers touched upon how business leaders need to better communicate the co-benefits of tackling environmental and social challenges simultaneously.

INSIGHT 1: LEADERSHIP ON CLIMATE JUSTICE BEGINS WITH A SHIFT IN MINDSET

Speakers were clear that embedding climate justice into corporate activities requires a deep transformation of how companies operate. Katie Hoard emphasised the materiality of climate justice for companies and spoke about how businesses need to understand their impact on the communities they work with so that solutions are then embedded into the business. “This is not charity,” she emphasised, “this is a change in how we do business.” Participants agreed that moving away from shareholder models to stakeholder-driven strategies, moving from short-term profit-driven thinking to considering longer-term benefits, and focusing on locally-led

solutions to address global challenges are all fundamental to facilitate climate justice.

This shift in mindset is starting to take shape. Edward Palmieri shared how Meta is going beyond looking at their supply chain and operational footprint to drive “intentional, deliberate integration of climate justice and equity considerations” into projects and priorities. But as multiple speakers expressed, these types of changes cannot happen in silos and need to be done holistically and systematically. “We see a lot of silos from organisations; everybody’s doing their

We’ve realised that what’s good for our suppliers from a climate risk perspective—and from a training and education perspective—is good for us and how we can meet our goals.

Edward Palmieri, Director, Global Sustainability, Meta

To really move the needle, we need to unlock that systems approach. We need everyone at the table, and we all need to be moving in the same direction.

**Katie Hoard, Global VP, ESG Strategy
& Engagement, AB InBev**

own action,” said Deborah Osei-Mensah. “There is a lot of duplication [and people end up] not getting what is needed.” She went on to explain that when climate-vulnerable producers are not consulted when designing policies that are meant to help, “you see the gap between the top-down approach and the realities on the ground... and [these so-called solutions] are not able to holistically tackle the issues.”

Moving away from top-down decision-making to a collaborative, whole-systems approach is the difference between climate action and climate justice, and it is central to the mindset shift. As Edward mentioned, “finding ways to partner with communities not only drives those solutions, but [also helps] figure out what success is going to look like [within a] community.”

INSIGHT 2: CLIMATE FINANCE MUST REACH THOSE ON THE FRONT LINE OF CLIMATE CHANGE, AND INVESTORS WILL NEED TO BE PATIENT FOR RESULTS

Thoughtful collaboration and innovative investment mechanisms—like carbon markets—can help business leaders drive climate justice, but achieving a “return on investment” can take some time. Kristin Komives, Director of Programmes at the ISEAL Alliance, spoke about the confusing investment landscape for business owners who are so focused on doing the right thing. She emphasised the need for “patient capital” and for capital that’s not only looking at profit, and she also discussed the importance of investment that supports

good practice and consistent livelihoods—for example, through funding for climate protection and sustainable land practices.

Amir Gerges, Founder of Carboni Bank, explained how carbon markets could be part of financing climate justice, particularly for green startups in the global south. He suggested that big companies can create offsetting schemes within the communities in which they operate. “If you’re offsetting 10% of your annual GHG inventory, and 10% [or] 15% was with the local community where you have operations,” said Amir, “that structure would allow mobilisation for more funding for [those] communities.”

Deborah drove home the importance of engaging with communities on the ground to ensure finance for climate justice is effective, and she talked about her experiences with investments in climate smart agriculture. “We [as producers] need more financing to be able to enter into agroforestry,” she said. “But we are only receiving about 5% of the funding and it’s not enough. So it ends up reaching a few producers and the majority are not doing it.”

Some companies are trying to address these investment gaps through a more thorough understanding of community needs. “We’ve partnered together with our supply chain teams to integrate climate risk assessments, education, training, and thought leadership discussions into how we work with suppliers,” said Edward. “Through that process, we’ve seen new opportunities to invest again in those communities.”

INSIGHT 3: ADVOCATE AND PROVIDE TANGIBLE EXAMPLES TO SHOW THAT TACKLING ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES TOGETHER LEADS TO BETTER RESULTS

One particularly sticky part of climate justice is measuring social outcomes alongside environmental impacts and showcasing the effectiveness of interventions. Yet measurement and transparency feed into accountability, which is a key aspect of climate justice. “As a group, we need to think about that measurement piece,” said Katie. “How are we really elevating those social metrics

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alongside the environmental metrics? Are we bringing in the right partners to solve for [specific challenges]? Because we know that unless we think about the socio-economic aspects of it, we're not going to be able to move forward on the environmental aspects."

Companies should leverage their communications capabilities to highlight the benefits of addressing social and environmental issues simultaneously. Edward mentioned Meta's work on water restoration in partnership with the Navajo tribe in the US and how it also addressed water security and clean water access. "We've gotten better at starting to talk about this," he said. "There is a real opportunity for corporations to continue to match up environmental goals with an intentional focus on how to view the opportunities through a lens of climate justice.

It becomes clear which ones you should do, because you have these co-benefits."

This idea of co-benefits was also expressed by Deborah, who gave the example of involving women and girls in agroforestry projects. Agroforestry provides a diversified income while also lowering agriculture-related emissions and improving soil quality. By focusing agroforestry interventions on women and girls, benefits generally extend to the wellbeing of children within those communities. She added that fair trade is an essential part of the climate justice equation, something that business leaders in the global north should advocate for. "Climate justice can never be achieved without fair trade. There should be fairness in the trade from the global south to the global north."

RESOURCES SHARED:

- **ACTION FRAMEWORK:** [Business and Climate Justice Framework](#). Business Fights Poverty with the Corporate Responsibility Initiative at Harvard Kennedy School and Change by Degrees.
- **ARTICLE SERIES:** [The Business of Climate Justice](#). Stanford Social Innovation Review.
- **REPORT:** [How Can Companies and Investors Collaborate To Embed Purpose Authentically Into Business?](#) Business Fights Poverty.
- **REPORT:** [Leading with a Sustainable Purpose](#). Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership.
- **ACTION FRAMEWORK:** [Net Zero Business Transformation](#). Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership.
- **ACTION FRAMEWORK:** [Principles for Locally Led Adaptation](#). IIED.
- **TOOL:** [Open Supply Hub](#)