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### **Research agenda proposal: fair and equitable benefit sharing in climate finance**

This is a proposed contribution to this timely discussion of new directions in the climate justice debate. For obvious reasons, much of the discussion about climate justice centres on the extent to which equitable burden sharing must be reflected in a good climate response. This proposed contribution calls for attention and consideration to be given to the potential for fair and equitable benefit sharing in the climate change regime. Taking this approach has potential to ensure that climate actions might help alleviate, rather than reinforce, existing injustices.

The proposer is a researcher on the BeneLex project, an interdisciplinary project exploring the theoretical and operational dimensions of benefit sharing in environmental law. In particular, the project explores whether and the extent to which benefit sharing supports the achievement of fair and equitable processes and outcomes in relation to environmental protection, knowledge production and the use of sustainable resources. The proposer's work examines the potential of benefit sharing in the context of climate change. In the climate context, it is most meaningful to reflect on the extent to which benefit sharing might be reflected in climate change responses. For instance, communities affected by the development of renewable energy technologies (important greenhouse gas emission reduction) can and do enter into agreements, which secure their share in a number of pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits involving the sale and use of generated electricity. It is our contention that a good response to climate change will not only be effective and timely, but also reflect an approach to benefit sharing that does not compound or further exacerbate existing inequalities.

The specific work in progress considers how benefit sharing is reflected in the mobilisation and distribution of climate finance. The recent rejuvenation of interest in climate finance has created fresh opportunities to examine how tools and mechanisms in climate finance support or undermine the achievement of justice and fairness in the international climate change regime. As a benefit sharing approach demands attention to fair and equitable distribution, this presents an interesting lens through which to examine flows of finance. It would examine the extent to which the climate finance regime already makes explicit provision for benefit-sharing approaches, identifying instances where benefit sharing approaches are taken in the implementation of projects financed through climate funds. For example, the social and environmental policy of the Adaptation Fund expressly requires that parties affected by funded activities should have fair and equitable access to the benefits of those activities, in a way that enhances their sustainable development potential. It also examines areas where a benefit sharing approach might be implicit.

A more critical or aspirational approach to fair and equitable benefit sharing in the climate finance regime is also proposed. This strand of enquiry questions the extent to which benefit-sharing where used, does indeed lend itself to processes and outcomes consistent with justice and equity. This is important due to suggestions that benefit-sharing approaches in other contexts (in particular, in relation to natural resource use where benefits are shared with local communities) does not always yield the equitable results as intended. Questions are asked as to whether this is due to a narrow or cynical approach to benefit-sharing; and whether and how a more enhanced understanding may support more equitable outcomes.