

CLIMATE CHANGE LAW SPECIALIST GROUP BLOG SERIES

REIMAGINING ENERGY JUSTICE: GLOBAL VOICES ON AN INCLUSIVE ENERGY TRANSITION

The global journey toward sustainable energy is not merely about technology or infrastructure. It's a deeply social endeavor, where equity, justice, and inclusivity are indispensable pillars. This powerful message echoed across continents during the [IUCN WCEL Climate Change Law Specialist Group's Inclusive Energy Transformation \(IET\) Cluster webinar](#), held on 13 May 2025 and hosted by IET Cluster Leads [Professor Leonie Reins](#) and [Associate Professor Madeline Taylor](#). In this blog post, they share key issues and insights from the discussion.



From Trilemma to Quadrilemma: Centering Justice in Energy Law

Kicking off the webinar, **Associate Professor Madeline Taylor** emphasized the urgent need to evolve from the traditional “energy trilemma”—focusing on security, sustainability, and

affordability—toward a more holistic “[energy quadrilemma](#)” that includes **justice**. This inclusion reframes energy not only as a commodity but as a **human right**, especially critical in light of growing disparities and setbacks to global Just Transition targets.

With contributions from six regional experts, the webinar offered a comparative panorama on how inclusivity is (or isn't) being integrated into energy policies worldwide—from Colombia's community-based solar projects to legal reforms in the European Union.

Regional Snapshots: Localizing the Global Energy Transformation

Latin America

[Camila Jimenez](#) (Baker McKenzie, Colombia) underscored that, while Latin America contributes relatively little to global emissions, it is highly vulnerable to climate impacts. She spotlighted initiatives like [Energía para la Paz](#), which installs solar microgrids in conflict-affected communities. However, she warned of financial and technical gaps that often hinder these programs, especially for rural and Indigenous populations.

Asia Pacific

[Professor Trevor Daya-Winterbottom](#) (University of Waikato, New Zealand) shared the [striking case of the Chatham Islands](#), where outdated infrastructure and high energy costs have left local populations stranded. His example illuminated how remote communities often face "invisible" injustices, compounded by inadequate government investment and unreliable supply chains.

United Kingdom and Commonwealth

[Dr. Désiré Ruragaragaza](#) (Commonwealth Secretariat) emphasized that without inclusivity, policies risk exacerbating energy poverty. He linked domestic initiatives in the UK with broader Commonwealth efforts, noting stark contrasts in energy access—[such as 50 kWh per capita in sub-Saharan Africa versus 2,050 kWh in New York](#).

Africa

[Jacquette Adam](#) (Exigent Environmental Group, South Africa) illustrated how [South Africa's Just Energy Transition Partnership](#) aims to shift from coal to renewables. Yet, she emphasised the importance of including rural communities in decision-making, as this helps ensure they can share in the direct benefits of green technologies installed on their land.

European Union

[Dr. Laura Sanaz Kaschny](#) (Erasmus School of Law) provided a critical lens on EU policy. While the [European Green Deal](#) talks a big game on inclusivity, legal frameworks often narrow their scope to coal regions. She highlighted recent shifts towards addressing affordability, but noted that financial burdens are increasingly falling on middle- and lower-income households.

Southeast Asia

[Dr. Mohammad Hazrati](#) (National University of Singapore) noted that in Southeast Asia, [regional cooperation via ASEAN](#) is promising but still evolving. The challenge lies in ensuring

that ambitious plans translate into localized benefits—particularly for underserved rural communities.

Bridging the Gap: Legal Tools, Finance, and Community

In the lively second half of the webinar, chaired by **Professor Leonie Reins**, speakers tackled provocative questions, such as:

- Do international climate agreements undermine local realities?
- Are legal incentives primarily benefiting corporations?
- Is the focus on inclusivity just symbolic?

Panelists agreed: inclusivity is not a distraction—it is a solution. As **Dr. Hazrati** put it, exclusion breeds resistance. **Professor Trevor Daya-Winterbottom** and **Jacquette Adam** both stressed that legal mechanisms must evolve to protect community interests, from land rights to [energy equity](#).

Meanwhile, **Associate Professor Taylor** called for innovative legal design, such as [reverse auctions](#) and revised eligibility rules for subsidies, to ensure marginalized communities aren't priced out of participation.

Looking Forward: A Blueprint for Collaborative Action

The webinar closed with optimism but also realism. As Professor [Francesco Sindico](#), co-chair of the WCEL Climate Change Law Specialist Group, reminded participants: international law alone cannot drive change. Implementation lies with domestic institutions, communities, and multi-stakeholder networks.

As the energy transformation accelerates, we must resist the urge to sacrifice justice for speed. True progress lies in ensuring **no one is left behind**—not in theory, but in law, finance, and on the ground. This webinar marks a milestone in that journey, and its insights should echo far beyond the Zoom screen into courtrooms, parliaments, and communities across the globe.

Participants left with a shared understanding that while pathways differ across regions, **inclusion, collaboration, and contextual legal design** are universal priorities. The [IET Cluster](#) plans to continue this work through more events, publications, and practical legal guidance.

This blog is written for the Climate Change Law Specialist Group, IUCN WCEL, as part of a series that aims to map activities, events, and panels related to Climate Change Law around the year.

Should you wish to learn more and join the IET Cluster, please contact [Marina Dutra Trindade](#), executive assistant of the WCEL Climate Change Law Specialist Group.