

‘A Microcosm Of The Whole World’: An examination into the effectiveness of UN COP summits in amplifying Global South voices, with a focus on Malawi.

Our global climate emergency, primarily caused by the high-polluting activities of ‘developed’ countries, disproportionately impacts the world’s least developed countries.

Yet, the nations on the frontlines of climate change are often on the peripheries of international climate governance negotiations, such as those taking place at the United Nation’s annual COP (Convention of the Parties) summits.

This paper examines the effectiveness of COPs in amplifying “Global South” voices. ‘Amplification’ does not refer to the temporary attention on nations during COPs, but to the process by which Global South demands are recognised and acted upon. As there is no homogenous ‘Global South voice’, this dissertation focuses on Malawi for examples. Malawi is particularly vulnerable to climate change and requires extensive assistance from COPs, including easy-to-access financial assistance and capacity-building support.

Drawing from interviews with Malawian civil society and government representatives, COP technical advisors, and UK civil society representatives and climate governance scholars, this dissertation concludes that COP is a microcosm of the world – the geopolitics of our global systems are magnified within the COP venue, leading to the disproportionate amplification of Global North voices over Global South demands for climate justice.

To combat geopolitics at COPs, this dissertation concludes with recommendations:

COP Process

1. There must be *active amplification of Global South voices* – COPs should actively support the Global South. The UNFCCC should conduct regular consultations with Global South delegations about the negotiation format and apply participatory negotiation styles.
2. There should be financial support for every stage of amplification, from negotiation to implementation. COP outcomes should include *support for Global South delegations* – COPs should result in funding to support more delegates from the Global South, continual delegation training, and pre-COP meetings so delegations can prepare.
3. *More COPs should be hosted by the Global South.*

Malawi – As A Model For Global South Nations

1. *Malawi’s delegation should regularly meet before COPs* to establish concrete demands and prepare its negotiation stance and strategy.
2. *Malawi’s delegation should regularly consult Malawian civil society organisations and local communities* to identify barriers to climate action. The Malawian delegation can therefore attend COP with one voice, representing demands from across its nation.
3. *Malawi should regularly meet with other delegations in its blocs.* These sessions should involve the preparation of strategy or training led by certain delegations.