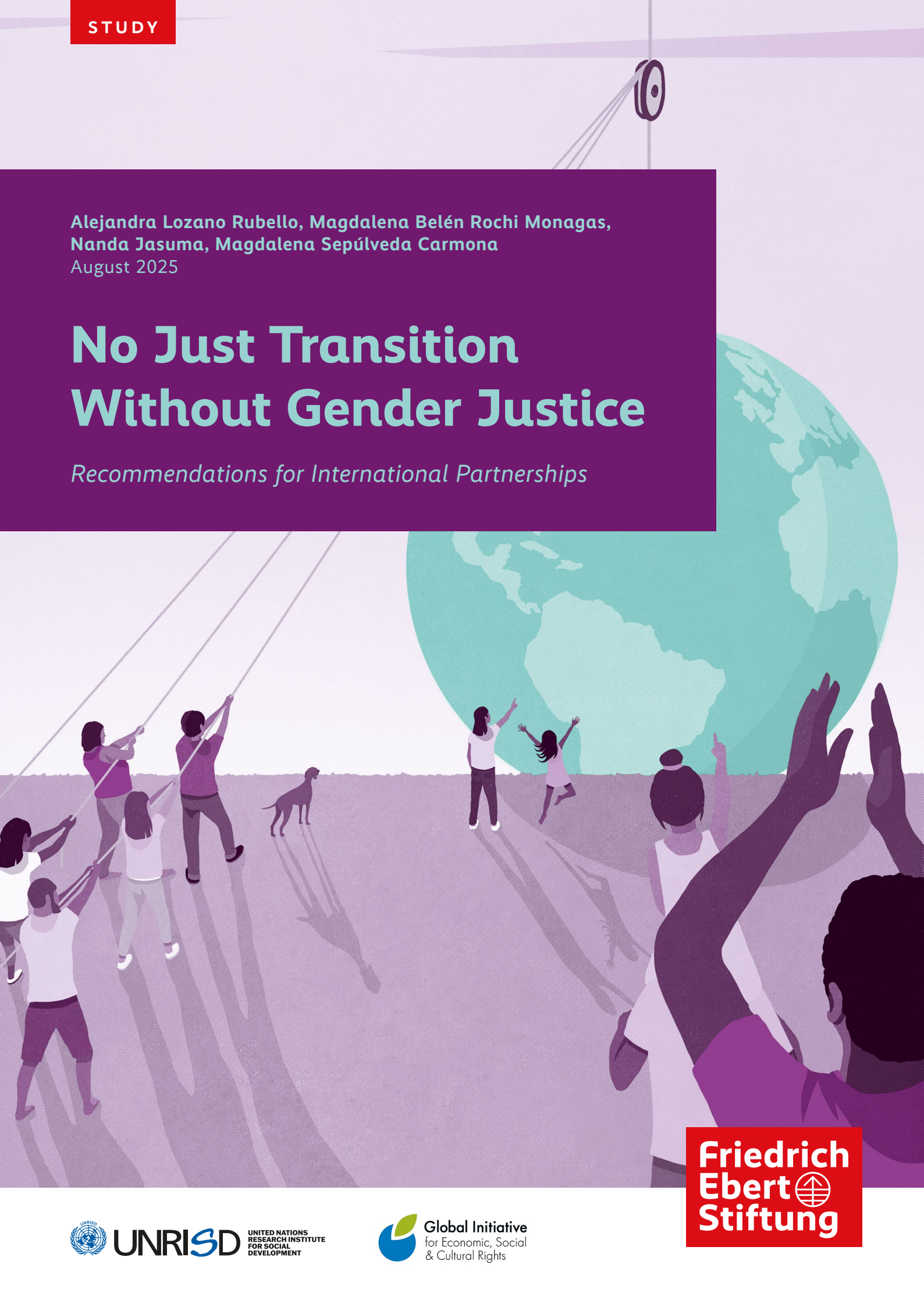


Alejandra Lozano Rubello, Magdalena Belén Rochi Monagas,
Nanda Jasuma, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona
August 2025

No Just Transition Without Gender Justice

Recommendations for International Partnerships



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info@fes.de

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Division for International Cooperation/Global and European Policy

Responsibility for content and editing

Yvonne Blos | International Climate and Energy Policy

Contact

Christiane Heun
Christiane.Heun@fes.de

Design/Layout

Brendle Grafik | Design, Stefanie Brendle

Editing

Helen Ferguson

Cover illustration

picture alliance | fStop, Malte Mueller

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Executive Summary

Today, the concept of a just transition is used to shape a policy framework that advances the goals of climate action and ecological transformations, focusing on the perspectives of workers, frontline communities, and the most marginalized. The framework has been adopted by a diverse range of stakeholders, including developed countries, to foster climate and energy partnerships aimed at providing finance, technology, and various forms of assistance to support the transition in countries of the Global South. While these partnerships have made some progress in centring justice in climate and energy policy, they have largely fallen short when it comes to delivering tangible results for marginalized populations and taking effective steps to make progress on restorative justice, with a view to repairing the harm done to individuals, communities, the environment, and future generations.

Shortcomings in delivering justice are particularly prevalent in climate and energy partnerships, which are often characterised by a lack of gender awareness. Despite efforts to incorporate gender objectives, partnership agreements generally overlook the gender dimensions and the power imbalances in relations between people of various genders in the context of the transition to low-carbon societies. As a result, such agreements often tend to reinforce existing patriarchal practices.

This brief provides an overview of gender-related approaches to a just transition and argues that the most promising analytical tool to advance gender equality entails adopting an approach centred on gender-transformative policy and programming with an intersectional lens. On this basis, the brief reviews various models of climate and energy partnerships to address how they have integrated the just transition framework and gender concerns. Considering the limitations of climate and energy partnerships in these respects, the brief provides four case studies of grassroots and community-led experiences in gender-just transitions to distil key lessons learned that can be integrated into international cooperation schemes. The brief subsequently provides key guidelines for structural transformation and criteria on gender to adopt a gender-transformative approach based on, and going beyond, the International Labour Organization's Guidelines for a Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Societies and Economies; it also proposes complementary policy tools to tackle the root causes of gender inequality. Finally, key policy recommendations are tailored specifically to host and partner countries, civil society, trade unions, and businesses to assist a range of

stakeholders in ensuring that gender-transformative approaches are integrated from their specific perspectives.

1. Introduction

Despite progress achieved in the last few decades on measures to avert the climate emergency, global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have not been reduced but have rather increased exponentially over time. In 2023, emissions hit a record high of 57.1 GtCO₂e, which represents a 1.3 percent increase from 2022 levels (Hausfather, 2024). This kind of annual rise in global emissions looks set to grow despite progress on low-carbon technologies and other critical measures deployed to decarbonise the economy. The consequences are devastating, with climate-related resource scarcity and extreme weather events posing a risk to the conditions that sustain all life on Earth. Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 excess deaths per year, from undernutrition, malaria, diarrhoea, and heat stress alone (WHO, 2023). Whether we think of wildfires in the United States and droughts in South Africa and Uganda or floods in Pakistan and typhoons in the Philippines, climate-related weather events are compromising life, critical infrastructure, and the overall sustainability of our societies for present and future generations.

The six largest greenhouse gas (GHG) emitters – China, the United States, India, the European Union, Russia, and Brazil – account for 63 percent of total global emissions. In contrast, the least developed countries (LDCs), a group of forty-six nations that are particularly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks, contribute only three percent of global GHG emissions. Despite being the least responsible for the climate emergency, marginalized populations in those least developed countries face the largest and most disproportionate impact. For instance, in Malawi, low-income women farmers who produce more than 80 percent of the country's subsistence crops and rely on natural rainfall cycles now face food insecurity and extreme poverty due to climate change, droughts, heavy rain, and pests (UN Women, 2024). This state of affairs highlights how serious the crisis is. Humanity is far from being on track to avoid the worst effects of the climate emergency. Those least responsible for this crisis, with the lowest capacity and most limited access to resources and technology to help them cope, are bearing the brunt of its impact.

Against this background, most responses undertaken to mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis have proven insufficient or unfit for purpose. They fail to unleash loftier ambitions to tackle the root causes of the climate emergency and address structural inequalities between and within countries. This has led to significant climate finance short-

falls and has fractured global responses that consequently do not offer solutions for the people and communities most impacted by climate disruption. Moreover, measures deployed to address the climate emergency frequently reproduce a lack of equality and power imbalances between states, corporations, communities, trade unions, and marginalised groups. Climate and energy policy are often drafted by decision-makers behind closed doors without due regard for the needs and interests of workers and communities affected by the climate emergency.

In this context, the concept of a just transition – underscoring as it does that justice and equality must be an integral part of the pivot towards a low-carbon economy – plays a decisive role in expanding debate and mobilising action to move towards social and environmental justice. At the core of the concept lies the idea that social and ecological justice must go hand-in-hand, without prioritising either one or the other. Originating from the 1970s US labour movement, the idea arose from concerns about the impact of new environmental legislation on workers in declining industries and the need to facilitate the transition to new forms of employment. Since then, the concept has gained traction and extends beyond the concerns of its initial proponents. Nowadays, it provides a framework that unites critical stakeholders, including trade unions, workers, communities, Indigenous Peoples, civil society organisations, and international organisations. It inspires solutions to the climate emergency that are based on lived experiences and collective decision-making (Morena, 2018). Today the just transition concept has become a vessel to carry the demands of workers whose employment and livelihoods are affected by environmental measures, for people aiming to foster systemic socio-economic change, as a means to demand large-scale polluters pay for effective climate action, as well as for communities whose rights have been abused or disregarded in the course of implementation of environmental policies and projects.

The idea of restorative justice is central to understanding the concept of a just transition. Restorative justice, which is related to and predates the concept of a just transition, seeks to repair harm done to individuals, communities, the environment, and future generations (Morena, 2018). It can be understood in at least three senses: recognitional justice, procedural justice, and distributive justice. *Recognitional justice* refers to acknowledging and valuing the identities, needs, and knowledge of historically excluded or marginalised groups, such as women, rural, Indigenous, and urban poor

communities, by ensuring their perspectives are respected and represented in decision-making processes (Zhu, 2018). *Procedural justice* calls for inclusive decision-making processes that engage diverse stakeholders, particularly marginalised groups, while respecting their local identities and ensuring it is genuinely possible for them to participate (Zhu, 2018). *Distributive justice* addresses fair allocation of environmental benefits and costs, as well as access to resources across society, while focusing on systemic inequalities in outcomes (Zhu, 2021).

The concept of a just transition has notably been recognised, albeit with a limited scope, in the preamble of the Paris Agreement and has been referenced in global, national, and regional climate and energy policy. In 2016, the International Labour Organization (ILO) issued a landmark framework and a tool that provides a baseline for countries at all levels to move forward with the transition to low-carbon economies: the Guidelines for a Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All (ILO, 2015). These guidelines aim to provide a roadmap for job creation and promotion of social protection at scale as countries shift towards sustainability. They highlight how a just transition can achieve social and economic justice in climate policy, allowing the concept to gain traction among key actors worldwide.

However, some advocates of a just transition have tended to overlook the significant gender impacts of shifting to a low-carbon economy, in particular deeply entrenched power imbalances related to gender. For instance, women tend to be overrepresented in the informal and caring sectors, leaving them with little opportunity to participate in labour reskilling and retraining programmes (Turquet, 2021). Land tenure rights are often held by men, which makes women disproportionately vulnerable to land dispossession by large-scale environmental projects (Turquet, 2021). Furthermore, more than 3.8 million people, mostly women and children, die annually due to indoor air pollution caused by cooking, lighting, and heating systems in households (Turquet, 2021). Due to gender-based discrimination, women and gender-nonconforming people also tend to have limited access to social protection systems and public services, which overexposes them to greater health risks and other consequences of the climate emergency. Transition policies risk worsening structural gender inequality if gender issues are not prioritized in the transition to low-carbon economies.

To address these challenges, in 2024 the International Labour Organization published a key reference policy guide on Gender, Equality, and Inclusion for a Just Transition in Climate Action. It is designed to contribute to mainstreaming gender equality in just transition frameworks (Pozzan, 2024). This tool is directed to states, workers, and employers, women's groups, and other stakeholders to provide guidance and policy insights based on practices that foster gender-responsive just transitions in various fields. It provides recommendations to integrate gender into key policy areas and sectors for the transition, including agriculture and forestry,

energy, transport, care, waste management, and the circular economy. It primarily focuses on the world of work and adopts a gender-responsive approach that fails to fundamentally question the economic model or address the root causes of gender inequality. For instance, the policy guide promotes macroeconomic growth policies as a key measure to create employment, transition to renewable energy and green technology, build robust climate-resilient infrastructure, and attract investment to develop the workforce needed for the transition (Pozzan, 2024). However, evidence shows that if we are to achieve a sustainable economy it is indispensable to reduce production and consumption levels, especially in a context of environmental breakdown and resource scarcity. This implies that relentless pursuit of 'economic growth' should not be the main objective of an alternative economic model that can deliver a just transition (Hickel, 2019).

As an alternative, various organisations and groups promote a more ambitious perspective by advocating for a gender-transformative approach to a just transition (WEDO, 2025; APWLD, 2018; Bidegain, 2013; WOMIN, 2024). Gender-transformative climate policies that incorporate an intersectional approach offer the most comprehensive and ambitious tools to simultaneously address environmental degradation and the oppression stemming from patriarchal systems. These initiatives often draw on a number of strands of ecofeminist theory, which recognise that oppression of women and gender-nonconforming individuals is linked to the patriarchal and economic structures that also drive domination and exploitation of nature (Zalta 2014). Advocates of this approach call for a substantial shift away from current economic, social, and political systems, moving instead towards an alternative pathway to achieve well-being and gender equality for everyone. The Women and Development Organisation, for instance, notes that »feminists have consistently advocated for a worldwide overhaul to dismantle the systems of extraction, exploitation, and oppression affecting both people and the planet« (WEDO, 2023). WEDO envisions that »a gender-just transition – at a global macroeconomic level, including and beyond a vision for an equitable energy transition – is fundamental to this structural transformation« (WEDO, 2023).

A growing number of women's rights and ecofeminist organisations have adopted a framing of the just transition that includes the specific gender needs and visions of the most marginalised, such as Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, women and people with gender-diverse identities. For example, Friends of the Earth acknowledges that »a feminist and just energy transition should be people-centered, not profit-centered; people-owned (so public ownership, energy democracy), not neoliberal private-market-driven« (Friends of the Earth, 2021). In adopting this stance, it recognises that »grassroots, anti-capitalist, Indigenous, anti-racist and feminist movements must lead the way towards a just and feminist energy transition, disputing practices, and narratives against mainstream energy transition« (Friends of the Earth, 2021).

2.

The Gender Integration Continuum: An Analytical Framework to Integrate Gender into Policy Programming

The following section will explain the main components of this framework as a key policy and project programming tool, with a view to gaining a better understanding of the aspects involved in a gender-transformative approach. Incorporating a gender perspective into policy and project programming, including in areas like the just transition, can take various forms depending on how effectively programmes tackle gender norms and gender inequality. This integration should occur throughout each programme or policy's design, implementation, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation stages. The Gender Integration Continuum is a conceptual framework that helps identify the extent to which gender concerns are integrated into policies and projects (Marcus, 2025). This diagnostic tool offers five distinct categories to help assess how gender concerns have been incorporated into a policy or project (FAO, 2024). It also provides guidance on how to make progress on these concerns in moving toward more ambitious gender equality programming in the light of these five categories:

- 1. Gender discriminatory:** reinforces conditions that foster the marginalisation and inequality of different gender groups. Policy in this category favours gender stereotypes and social practices. For instance, reskilling and retraining programmes are only made available to men and impose conditional cash transfers for women, reinforcing their role as the only care providers at the household level.
- 2. Gender-blind:** disregards gender implications and concerns, thus perpetuating the prevailing conditions of gender discrimination. These initiatives are typically technically available to all, but in practice, some people face structural gender-based barriers. For instance, the development of a contributory social protection system that does not take into account that women are over-represented in the informal sector and often do not have access to such services.
- 3. Gender-sensitive:** acknowledges the needs of gender groups without fully integrating gender-related objectives and specific actions to achieve gender-equal outcomes. For example, a just energy transition programme that seeks to provide energy services to women to tackle their energy poverty, but disregards the differentiated gender-related needs of women when it comes to new employment opportunities in the renewable energy sector.
- 4. Gender-responsive:** seeks to achieve gender-equal outcomes and recognises the needs of various gender groups. While it offers opportunities to address multiple gender considerations simultaneously, it does not adequately tackle the underlying structural conditions of marginalisation. For example, a policy that promotes implementation of gender and human rights assessments before designing a green energy project, while also creating spaces for women and gender-diverse individuals to voice their concerns still falls short if it reinforces discriminatory social and gender norms. It fails to eliminate and remove the barriers that different gender groups face, hindering their scope to participate effectively and meaningfully.
- 5. Gender-transformative:** adopts a comprehensive and holistic approach based on respect for human rights that tackles the root causes of gender inequality. It examines gender roles and practices critically, tackles structural barriers, and recognises positive norms that promote equality. It encourages organisation of meaningful representation for women and gender-nonconforming people in decision-making processes in alignment with respect for human rights. This approach explicitly aims to transform patriarchal values and institutions, including an intersectional lens that acknowledges that everyone has a unique form of experiencing oppression and provides tools to understand how overlapping identities create particular conditions of marginalisation for particular individuals and communities against the backdrop of the climate emergency. A gender-transformative approach fosters measures to improve the livelihood opportunities for women and gender-diverse people, while also implementing the full spectrum of human rights, heightening awareness of the significance of such rights and transforming the underlying conditions that enable gender inequality. To this end, gender-transformative programming aims to operate across key dimensions and spheres of influence. This entails promoting changes in aspects that relate to the agency of gender-diverse groups, power relations, and social institutions, as well as across various spheres of influence, including the individual, household,

community, organisational, and macro-environmental (FAO, 2024). For instance, a comprehensive gender-just transition policy would seek to recognise, reduce, and redistribute care at household and community level, provide grants and highly concessional finance to invest in public services and social protection systems, promote individual and collective action by underrepresented gender groups, and support women and gender-nonconforming people when they work and hold leadership roles in male-dominated sectors.

In our understanding, just transition frameworks should adopt a gender-transformative approach, which also involves endeavouring to move forward with the Gender Integration Continuum to address the root causes of the climate crisis and aiming to overcome systemic inequalities. As well as contributing to delivering justice as pledged, this will also secure effective, broad-based support for the far-reaching and rapid structural transformations needed to move towards a low-carbon society and avert the worst consequences of the climate crisis.

Furthermore, it is crucial to define key concepts and terms related to advancement of substantive gender equality to establish a common understanding that informs the design, implementation, and monitoring of gender-transformative policies and projects. Gender transformative approaches recognise explicitly that gender extends beyond a binary framework. When we refer to ‘women,’ we aim to encompass women in all their diversity, acknowledging the limitations of traditional binary categorisations.

One important challenge for this approach is that much of the available data is collected in binary terms (male/female); we utilise such data sources in some parts of this report due to the absence of more inclusive datasets. However, we underscore that the term ‘gender’ is not synonymous with biological sex and our analysis considers the impact on the transition process of a number of key sectors, historically shaped by men and for men, which often exclude those who do not conform to their gendered expectations. This includes women, non-binary individuals, and men who take on non-traditional roles, such as caregiving. We also view gender-just transitions through an intersectional lens, recognising how overlapping identities shape experiences within these systems. By applying an intersectional framework, we seek to highlight the differentiated impacts of just transition policies on individuals across diverse gender identities and backgrounds.

3.

The Role of Just Transition and Gender Equality in International Partnerships: A Short Overview

Climate cooperation spans a wide range of international initiatives beyond the formal structures of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), reflecting the diverse approaches needed to address the global transition to a low-carbon economy. By leveraging targeted cooperation, these initiatives aim to accelerate progress towards global climate goals while allowing countries to address their specific needs and priorities.

The UNFCCC also maintains comprehensive partnerships across multiple sectors, engaging with governments, private companies, foundations, international organisations, academic institutions, NGOs, and UN agencies (UNFCCC, 2025). These partnerships prioritise establishing meaningful relationships that combine technical expertise and knowledge-sharing with financial support to ensure implementation of the Paris Agreement. As a matter of fact, UNFCCC welcomes various forms of contributions – financial donations, in-kind expertise, materials or innovative solutions – that strengthen its capacity to assist developing states in their climate transformation efforts, support strategic outreach initiatives that promote climate action, and facilitate deployment of technology and innovations.

A broad spectrum of such partnerships and initiatives exists, both with and without direct involvement of UNFCCC and other multilateral organisations. Many were announced in recent years at the international climate conferences (Conferences of the Parties – COPs), as these are the main fora to create momentum for ambitious climate action.

Just Transition Approaches in International Partnerships

In recent years, the international community has adopted the just transition framework to channel its cooperation efforts towards low-carbon economies in countries in the Global South. The scale of the challenge certainly requires cooperation from the entire international community on a number of levels. Targeted approaches can be useful when tackling specific facets of the transition, such as sector-specific capacity-building or technology transfer. Moreover, such cooperation allows for individual policy mixes that

reflect domestic prerequisites and preferences (Luepke, 2024).

The Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) established by G7 countries are one example of an explicit just transition approach in international partnerships. These partnerships are a form of strategic collaboration targeting emerging economies and rapidly developing countries whose energy policies have a significant impact on global climate protection efforts. These cooperation schemes began with South Africa, followed by agreements with Indonesia and Vietnam in 2022, and Senegal in 2023 (Ordonez, 2024). At the global level, they are one of the only partnership models that make explicit reference to the just transition framework. The JETPs represent a targeted approach to supporting critical energy transitions in countries with significant emission profiles. Through these structured collaborations, the G7 aims to facilitate sustainable energy transitions in partner countries, combining policy support, technical assistance, and investment to accelerate climate action in regions that are crucial to meeting global climate objectives (Blos/Hirsch, 2024). There is no common approach among JETPs as the measures involved depend on the specific partnership approach adopted for each country.

While these partnerships make theoretical reference to a just transition, in practice, the ‘justice’ component does not seem to have any meaningful content in these models of international cooperation.

Despite offering a platform for financing and technical assistance, JETP models have faced significant criticism from various stakeholders. Concerns include their limited democratic governance, lack of transparency, and the predominant role assigned to corporations, private investments, and privatization efforts, thus neglecting the rights of workers and the communities affected.

In principle, these JETPs embody the just transition concept mentioned earlier. They serve as mechanisms through which some states that have historically been the largest contributors to excess emissions cooperate with other states to facilitate their energy transition. However, to achieve a just transition, it is essential to promote a para-

paradigm shift that ensures effective implementation of common but differentiated responsibilities, the polluter-pays principle, and obligations for international assistance and cooperation. The burdens of adaptation and mitigation must be redistributed on a global scale (GIESCR, 2024). JETP mechanisms, however, still place a significant burden on developing countries that are largely not responsible for the climate emergency.

Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) serve mainly as financial policy tools, but provide only a small portion of the climate finance needed. Most of this funding comes in the form of loans offered at market rates (Wischermann, 2024). This framing should be challenged because it places the bulk of the burden on borrowing countries, while failing to fully recognize developed countries' responsibility for the climate crisis. The lending structure of JETPs leads to significant transfers of resources from the Global South to the developed countries of the Global North, as developing countries not only receive insufficient resources to finance climate action, but are also subjected to capitalized repayment. Meanwhile, developed countries, which are primarily responsible for both historical and current excess emissions, benefit financially from this arrangement.

Commitments to social dialogue with social partners and stakeholder engagement with the wider community within these agreements are limited or vague (Government of the UK, 2025) and fail to ensure broad stakeholder participation and equal redistribution of the transition's costs and benefits. As evidenced by the example of the JETP with Vietnam, implementation can easily fail to ensure participation, even in the face of agreements for »consultations« in the JETP (Government of the UK, 2025). In contrast, the Comprehensive Investment and Policy Plan prepared for implementation of the JETP with Indonesia does envisage »robust stakeholder engagement [which] requires identifying vulnerable stakeholders, ensuring their access to accurate project information, providing a system to handle grievances, and a mechanism for participation in project decision-making« (Indonesia's JETP Secretariat, 2023). This clear contrast highlights that national-level implementation can vary significantly. Since the JETP with Indonesia evolved later than other agreements, this is also a clear sign that some of the recommendations and lessons learned from previous JETPs were included here, e.g. through the involvement of stakeholders who called for participatory engagement. An additional challenge is the scarcity of publicly available information about climate and energy partnerships, which complicates assessment of the content and overall functionality of these cooperation schemes (Blos and Hirsch, 2024).

Gender Equality in International Partnerships

While progress has been made on ensuring that some climate and energy partnerships pay more attention to the gender implications of transitioning to low-carbon economies, these cooperation schemes have largely failed

to integrate gender concerns fully. Most initiatives establish minimum standards that are limited to recognition of gender discrimination.

The Just Transition Energy Partnerships (JETP) do not have a standard and common approach to gender concerns. Each agreement tends to adopt different goals and levels of ambition for advancing gender equality. For instance, the JETP agreement with Vietnam contains only a few references to gender equality. Its Resource Mobilisation Plan establishes an objective with limited scope to »strengthen gender equality in work, jobs, and career change«. In practice, however, the over 400 projects accepted under the partnership agreement have largely failed to include gender-specific considerations (Wischermann, 2024). Other experiences with JETPs, such as the partnership established with South Africa, incorporate a gender-sensitive approach in their investment plan only for priority measures to combat energy poverty and promote inclusive education (JETP PMU, 2024). However, a more ambitious example is the JETP with Indonesia, which was developed most recently and could learn from previous examples. It explicitly adopted human rights and gender equality as principles underpinning the partnership agreement, including dedicated actions to address potential risks, while ensuring gender equality is mainstreamed into JETP implementation (JETP Secretariat, 2023).

This overview demonstrates that commitments and approaches to fostering gender equality vary significantly across different partnerships, although some progress has been made in incorporating a gender perspective and recognizing women within specific targeted groups. Most partnerships have adopted a gender binary framework that focuses exclusively on women and girls, neglecting LGBTQI+ and other gender-diverse individuals. Additionally, they do not explicitly integrate an intersectional perspective. This limited approach fails to foster the structural changes needed to address the fundamental issues that contribute to power imbalances among all genders, an analysis that would be in line with gender-transformative approaches as outlined in the theoretical framework in chapter II.

Additionally, most gender-related approaches adopted in the aforementioned partnerships do not aim to tackle the root causes of gender inequality. Instead, they tend to be limited to improving specific dimensions of women's agency in existing social and economic structures without questioning the driving forces underlying structural conditions of marginalisation. Partnerships commonly lack a strategy for genuine gender-mainstreaming in all stages of the implementation process to address barriers that uphold gender inequality, challenge gender roles and social practices, and contribute to building the individual and collective power of women and gender-diverse people.

For climate and energy partnerships to be just, they must move beyond inclusion of gender as a priority criterion and embrace an ambitious approach to promoting substantive gender equality. Following the Gender Integration Continuum

outlined in section II, climate and energy partnerships should strive to adopt a gender-transformative approach with an intersectional lens. Placing gender equality at the centre of these cooperation schemes will contribute to delivering their critical commitment to be just, while also securing effective, broad-based support for the far-reaching and rapid structural transformations needed to curb climate change.

4.

Case Studies and Lessons Learned: Promising Practices for Gender-Just Transitions

Learning from grassroots and community-led experiences in gender-just transitions is essential in order to gain a better understanding of how to integrate a gender-transformative approach into climate and energy partnerships. Such community-led experiences offer valuable insights that can enhance implementation of gender-transformative approaches in climate and energy partnerships. Understanding these aspects can help shape gender-transformative programming for a just transition. The following section aims to unpack some of the key lessons learned from these experiences.

Some of the most promising practices in the gender-transformative approach to a just transition can be witnessed in countries in the Global South. In these countries, communities face vulnerabilities stemming from a long history of colonialism, extractivism, and climate change, yet they have developed strategies to strengthen climate resilience and address deeply embedded structural gender inequality. While there is always room for improvement, the four case studies below highlight grassroots initiatives that address climate concerns, economic injustice, and gender equality effectively. We selected four case studies from India, Fiji, South Africa, and Colombia to illustrate diverse geographical contexts and varied approaches in the Global South. We synthesise key findings through a comparative framework that evaluates how each initiative aligns with gender-transformative programming.

These initiatives were selected because they challenge the gap between environmental sustainability and gender justice with promising results for the following key criteria: 1. Redistribution of benefits, 2. Redistribution of decision-making power, 3. Creation of employment opportunities, 4. Recognition of care work, and 5. Development of an intersectional approach. These criteria are grounded in both the ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition and feminist theories of systemic change, recognising that addressing only surface-level gender disparities is insufficient. Instead, considering these aspects collectively is a means to assess whether initiatives challenge the root causes of inequality by shifting power relations, redistributing resources, valuing historically invisible labour, and responding to overlapping forms of marginalisation (ILO, 2015). Examining these criteria

across a range of geographical contexts and intervention types emphasises that gender-just transitions require attention to both tangible resources (e.g., energy and income) and structural power (e.g., participation in decision-making or recognition for care work). While we tried to include initiatives from diverse regions from a range of policy areas, we would like to stress that this list is not exhaustive and that the initiatives are primarily used to illustrate the approach rather than providing a comprehensive or representative empirical assessment.

SEWA's Green Livelihood Campaign: Transforming Lives and Livelihoods in India

SEWA's Green Livelihood Campaign, launched in 2009, supports rural women by providing affordable clean energy solutions like cookstoves, solar panels, and biogas, reducing household energy costs by 30–40 percent (SEWA, 2022). Partnering with UNEP, local governments, and others, the programme targets salt farmers, agricultural workers, and young women seeking technical skills. SEWA established India's first women-owned solar park in Naradi village, enabling year-round income. Programs like the one named *Surya* train women in solar technology, creating economic opportunities and building social safety nets (SEWA, 2022). This initiative provides insight into how grassroots practice at the regional level, which involves a wide range of partners and stakeholders, can tackle structural barriers within the community. SEWA addresses such barriers by creating opportunities for women to be involved in green jobs, while contributing indirectly to reducing care responsibilities through improved energy access.

Child-Centred Climate Change Adaptation (4CA) in Fiji

The 4CA Program (2011–2014) in Nasau village, Fiji, addressed climate threats like cyclones and flooding through a collaborative, inclusive approach (Institute for Sustainable Futures, 2018). Led by Plan International Australia and Partners in Community Development (PCDF), with funding from the government of New Zealand and support from local partners as community engagement facilitators, it

focused on empowering women and children in decision-making. The programme set quotas for women on committees and created inclusive forums, while combining scientific and traditional knowledge to implement solutions like mangrove planting, climate-resilient crop introduction, and an evacuation centre (Institute for Sustainable Futures, 2018). The outcomes were significant and multidimensional. Women gained increased confidence and decision-making authority, while men began advocating publicly for greater female involvement in community governance. Moreover, children became effective climate change advocates, creating inter-generational knowledge transfer systems that ensure sustainability.

COSATU's Just Transition Toolkit in South Africa

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was one of the first unions to develop a Just Transition Blueprint, addressing the economic and social impacts of the transition on workers (COSATU, 2024). The blueprint emphasises the need for strong social dialogue, decent work, and support for sectors that will be highly affected by the shift away from fossil fuels. Partnering with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the South African government, COSATU's stakeholders included women union members, particularly from sectors like mining, agriculture, and transport, shop stewards, educators, and organisers and various COSATU-affiliated unions across a range of sectors. Its initiatives have targeted female workers in male-dominated sectors, women in unpaid care work, and union educators and organisers who need gender-focused just transition tools. COSATU has developed a toolkit to help integrate gender equity into collective bargaining, workplace strategies, and policy dialogue.

The La Mojana Project in Colombia

The La Mojana project is a climate-resilient initiative funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to support the government of Colombia. Its goal is to enhance integrated water resource management practices in La Mojana, one of the poorest and most climate-vulnerable regions in the country. The project involves collaboration among several institutional partners, including UNDP, the GCF, the National Adaptation Fund (NAF), the Colombian Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, various research agencies, and local environmental authorities (UNDP, 2017). Stakeholders also include diverse protagonists, ranging from the government to local organisations and health centres. 45 percent of the 203,918 direct beneficiaries are women, while indirect beneficiaries also include rural communities with specific water vulnerability, female-headed households, and Indigenous communities. The project emphasises restoring wetland ecosystems, adapting livelihoods to seasonal water variations, and empowering vulnerable communities and local authorities to manage climate risks. It also introduces

new technologies to address water scarcity, builds on proven local solutions, and ensures strong community participation with a gender-balanced approach.

The following table aims to assess these initiatives in the light of the main factors for achieving gender-transformative just transition approaches. The criteria are based on the theoretical framework outlined in chapters I and II and mainly follow the ILO policy guide on »Gender, Equality and Inclusion for a Just Transition in Climate Action« (Pozzan, 2024). The following table also uses a framework directly informed by the theoretical foundations presented in Chapters I and II. Chapter I introduces the just transition as a concept rooted in restorative justice, emphasising the need to move beyond simply addressing climate harm in order to also dismantle the structural inequalities that underpin it, particularly those related to gender. Chapter II builds on this by introducing the Gender Integration Continuum, identifying gender-transformative approaches as the most ambitious and necessary for systemic change. These approaches operate across three key dimensions (agency, power relations, and social institutions), and across multiple spheres of influence, from individual and household levels to community, institutional, and macro-environmental structures. The criteria used in the table, such as redistribution of benefits and decision-making power, creation of employment opportunities, recognition of unpaid care work, and use of an intersectional lens, draw on this framework. Each reflects a distinct element of what gender-transformative change entails: not just inclusion or access, but restructuring who holds power, whose labour is valued, and how intersecting systems of oppression are dismantled.

Informed by this framework, the table's criteria likewise incorporate aspects from the ILO policy guide on »Gender, Equality and Inclusion for a Just Transition in Climate Action.« However, they extend beyond the world of work to consider broader structural transformations essential for achieving genuine gender justice. By applying these criteria to real-world initiatives, the table serves to synthesise lessons from the case narratives and evaluate how theoretical principles are implemented in practice. This comparative lens reveals both the strengths and limitations of current grassroots models and helps identify areas for replication, improvement, and further support in international climate and energy partnerships (Pozzan, 2024).

Criteria	Grassroots Experiences			
	SEWA (India)	COSATU (South Africa)	La Mojana (Colombia)	4CA (Fiji)
Redistribution of Benefits <i>Ensuring equitable access to resources, income, and services among gender groups.</i>	<i>Distributed solar tech and clean energy, lowering energy costs and enabling women-owned infrastructure.</i>	<i>Advocated for economic justice by embedding gender into worker protections and transition planning.</i>	<i>Improved access to clean water and climate-resilient infrastructure for rural women and Indigenous communities.</i>	<i>Ensured vulnerable groups benefited from adaptation investments, like climate-resilient crops and evacuation centres.</i>
Creation of Employment Opportunities <i>Generating decent, sustainable, and accessible jobs for women and gender-diverse individuals.</i>	<i>Created solar entrepreneurship pathways and vocational training for women.</i>	<i>Enabled union women in male-dominated sectors (e.g., mining) to participate in green economy dialogue.</i>	<i>Introduced climate-resilient agriculture and water-tech training for community-based employment</i>	<i>Empowered children and women as local climate educators and knowledge transfer agents.</i>
Redistribution of Decision-Making Power <i>Increasing women’s and marginalised groups’ influence in planning, implementation, and governance.</i>	<i>Women shaped renewable energy deployment and ownership, including India’s first women-owned solar park.</i>	<i>Women in the union contributed to the national and international just transition policy dialogue.</i>	<i>Community-driven water governance ensured Indigenous women influenced project design and delivery.</i>	<i>Formal quotas for women and children in village committees changed governance norms.</i>
Recognition of Informal/Unpaid Care Work <i>Valuing and reducing the burden of unpaid care and domestic work traditionally done by women.</i>	<i>Improved access to clean energy reduced time spent on fuel collection and indoor tasks.</i>	<i>Highlighted unpaid labour in climate discourse and advocated for public care infrastructure.</i>	<i>Reduced care burden by improving water systems and investing in rural women’s livelihoods.</i>	<i>Alleviated caregiving stress by reducing disaster vulnerability and improving local services (e.g., shelters, crops).</i>
Intersectional Approach <i>Designing programmes that acknowledge overlapping identities and systemic oppression.</i>	<i>Focused on informal sector women across caste, region, and occupation.</i>	<i>Took an intersectional labour approach focused on women in informal jobs.</i>	<i>Prioritised Indigenous communities and female-headed households through tailored implementation.</i>	<i>Integrated gender and age dimensions, promoting leadership among women and children.</i>

5.

Approaches for a Gender-Just Transition in International Partnerships

Building on grassroots experiences and the theory of gender-transformative policy programming, we propose a set of criteria to guide integration of gender-transformative approaches in global partnerships for a just transition. These are informed by, and expand upon, the existing ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Societies and Economies for All (ILO, 2016), as well as the ILO's principles of Gender, Equality, and Inclusion for Just Climate Action (ILO, 2024).

In order to ensure that such partnerships address the root causes of gender inequality effectively, they should include the following guidelines to foster structural change:

- **A definition of the just transition that extends beyond the world of formal work and the energy sector**, promoting systemic transformation across key sectors of the economy to ensure the well-being of both humanity and the planet.
- **Innovative finance mechanisms and policy alignment** to increase global climate finance to support an ambitious, gender-transformative just transition. A variety of measures are essential to ensure robust financing. These can include loans or highly concessional finance as well as grant funding, blended finance, climate-for-debt swaps, and carbon tariff strategies.
- **Avoid over-reliance on the private sector.** It is essential to refrain from promoting privatization of the energy sector and other public services that are crucial for the transition to low-carbon economies. This includes areas such as health, education, water, sanitation, and social security systems. Research and human rights mechanisms have shown that giving the private sector a central role can undermine human rights and gender equality, as well as jeopardising democratic control, ownership, and management of critical services and infrastructure (International Resource Center, 2018)
- **Ensure new renewable energy systems and other key sectors for the transition provide more equitable outcomes by going beyond the supply of green energy and paying attention to energy demand.** The objective of combating energy poverty and inequality that disproportionately affect women and gender-diverse groups should be fully integrated as an essential component of the just transition framework.
- **Conduct impact assessments that consider the human rights impact and gendered socioeconomic implications of environmental measures to ensure adequate compensatory actions can be adopted, in order to avoid exacerbating inequalities, including gender inequality.** In this spirit, policies that strengthen social cohesion and contribute to building up social protection systems should be developed by, for instance, providing support to community services, care systems, and local environmental stewardship.
- **Respect, protect, and fulfil human rights, including procedural environmental rights, which comprise the right to information, participation, and access to justice.** All of these are indispensable rights to advance environmental and social justice. The human rights framework should guide climate and energy partnerships in their goals and decision-making processes.
- **An intersectional approach.** When designing, implementing, and monitoring policies and projects, consider how various forms of discrimination – such as racism, sexism, and classism – intersect, particularly in the experiences of marginalised individuals or groups. This approach addresses the specific conditions that create systemic discrimination and marginalization.
- **Strengthen democratic and transparent decision-making processes at the national and international levels to advance gender equality in participation, decision-making, and representation.** Climate and energy policy should not be developed behind closed doors. Measures should be implemented to combat opaque decision-making and ensure participation of key actors, including civil society, trade unions, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, women, gender-diverse persons, and other groups at the frontlines of the climate emergency and the measures articulated to respond to it. In this spirit, as much as possible, foster decision-making

at the international level that is the product of democratic multilateral processes in which all countries and key stakeholders are represented.

Aligned with these key guidelines, global partnerships need to adopt the following criteria on gender to move from incipient gender-blind or gender-sensitive approaches to fully integrating a gender-transformative approach that can tackle the root causes of gender inequality:

Criteria for gender-transformative approaches in global partnerships

Table 2

	Description
Gender assessment and stakeholder analysis	<i>Conduct a comprehensive analysis of gender dynamics, power relations, and context-specific barriers by mapping all relevant gender stakeholders, with particular attention to marginalised groups, to inform public policy and ensure their involvement in decision-making.</i>
Prioritising and defining gender-transformative objectives	<i>Establish clear, measurable goals and ensure they are prioritised across all phases of design, implementation, and monitoring of climate and energy partnerships to challenge structural gender inequalities – such as redistributing unpaid care work or increasing leadership by women and gender-diverse people in climate solutions – within broad public policy decisions and programmes.</i>
Mainstreaming gender at all levels of programming	<i>Integrate gender considerations into every stage – from design to implementation and evaluation – so that all efforts address gender disparities and structural gender inequality.</i>
Redistribution of costs, benefits and decision-making power between gender groups	<i>Active rebalancing between those who bear burdens and those who reap gains in climate and energy partnerships to ensure equal redistribution between people of various genders through policy design and investment. Shift roles and resources (e.g. through fiscal policy and spending, investment in public services) to tackle disparities and structural inequalities between people of different genders.</i>
Engagement with men and boys to transform uneven gender relations	<i>Work with men and boys to challenge their behaviours, social norms, gender stereotypes, and attitudes based on toxic masculinity and patriarchal norms that reproduce structural conditions of gender inequality. Encourage men and boys to be allies and supporters of gender equality.</i>
Challenging gender stereotypes in male-dominated sectors	<i>Break down gender stereotypes by creating opportunities in male-dominated sectors that are key for the transition, including energy, transport, waste management, construction, water, sanitation, and others. For instance, invest in education, training and apprenticeships so women can enter and advance in those fields.</i>
Support for women and other gender-diverse people-led initiatives and solutions	<i>Actively support women-led and gender-diverse initiatives (e.g., by providing preferential access to finance and incentives). These initiatives can drive innovation that addresses local needs. Investing in these projects can help tackle gender inequality and create opportunities for women and gender-diverse individuals, while also transforming male-dominated sectors, such as the energy field.</i>

<p>Establish gender safeguards to avoid any potential backlash</p>	<p><i>Design risk-mitigation measures – such as community dialogues, complaint and redress mechanisms, and monitoring mechanisms – to protect women from retaliation or increased vulnerability in the wake of systemic transformation.</i></p>
<p>Ensure sustainable, steady, sufficient, and predictable finance</p>	<p><i>Allocate dedicated, sustainable, multi-year funding for gender-transformative activities, ensuring continuity and the capacity to scale systemic change without creating additional debt burdens for partner countries.</i></p>
<p>Investing in care systems</p>	<p><i>Recognise the importance of care work within societies and invest in public and community-based care infrastructure – such as childcare, eldercare, support for people with disabilities, and healthcare – to redistribute unpaid care burdens that are disproportionately shouldered by women.</i></p>
<p>International partnerships based on democracy-enhancing multilateralism</p>	<p><i>When designing energy transition policies, promote partnerships through cooperation that amplifies the voices and considerations of communities and populations especially affected by the climate emergency in the Global South. Consider turning to multilateral institutions, such as the UNFCCC context, to develop partnership frameworks based on internationally agreed norms and standards.</i></p>
<p>Monitoring progress towards gender-transformative change</p>	<p><i>Implement monitoring mechanisms to evaluate progress in implementation of climate and energy partnerships. Track not just outputs but shifts in norms, power, and agency. Involve stakeholders in defining and measuring success to reveal whether programmes are truly transforming gender relations and inform the continued development of public policies.</i></p>

6. Policy Recommendations

The framework for a gender-transformative transition can be put into practice in climate and energy partnerships by adopting a wide range of policies pursued by different stakeholders, including host and partner countries, civil society organisations, trade unions, and businesses. Many of these stakeholders share the common goal of transitioning towards low-carbon societies and economies. However, as demonstrated in previous sections of the report, this aspect generally lacks substantive content in existing climate and energy partnerships such as JETPs – although progress has been made on adopting a justice component. These imbalances exacerbate inequalities and undermine efforts to accelerate the shift to sustainability.

The following practical recommendations tailored to specific actors can contribute to implementation of a gender-transformative approach to just transition partnerships:

Recommendations for host countries:

- Adopt an institutional and policy framework based on the structurally transformative guidelines and gender criteria provided above. Set clear objectives and indicators based on human rights obligations for a gender-just transition to guide the design, implementation, and monitoring of climate and energy partnerships.
- Foster capacity building on gender-transformative policy and project programming and implementation among decision-makers and relevant stakeholders in both the host and partner countries, including gender-differentiated data collection, gender assessment and stakeholder analysis, gender mainstreaming, and prioritising the achievement of gender equality objectives when implementing climate and energy partnerships.
- Enable a suitable environment by protecting and providing means for feminist groups, women's rights organisations and other stakeholders on the frontlines of transition measures to organise and participate actively in design, implementation, and monitoring of climate and energy partnerships.
- Create mechanisms to supervise and monitor climate and energy partnership implementation, addressing potential adverse impacts on women and other gender-diverse groups.

- Implement an internal coordination system or platform to enable better coordination between ministries, embassies, agencies, and other missions. Ensure that all national stakeholders are aligned with a gender-transformative understanding of a just transition.
- Ensure climate and energy policies create value at the national level, fostering the development of green industries that provide employment opportunities to women and gender-diverse groups.
- Guarantee that climate finance directly benefits and supports marginalised women and communities subjected to structural conditions of poverty, discrimination, and inequality, and contributes to strengthening their resilience to the impacts of the climate emergency.
- Consider developing climate and energy partnerships under the auspices of multilateral institutions to ensure all countries can participate in democratic decision-making according to agreed standards and principles. In this spirit, develop and strengthen new and existing partnerships with other relevant international and regional organisations, including UN specialised agencies, funds and programmes, civil society, and academia, to advance a gender-transformative just transition.

Recommendations for partner countries:

- Include a just transition with a gender-transformative and intersectional lens in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as the guiding tool for development and implementation of national climate policy.
- Foster policy coherence and coordination between relevant ministries and other governmental institutions for effective implementation of a gender-transformative policy. In this spirit, align gender, social, economic and climate policies in national contexts across all relevant sectors for the transition.
- Identify frontline communities, women and other disadvantaged and marginalised groups and ensure that they can participate actively and meaningfully in decision-making processes from the outset. Consider establishing a permanent consultative mechanism with representatives of various groups at the frontlines of the transition that can advise on delivery of a gender-transformative just transition.

- Ensure that all information about design, implementation, and monitoring of climate and energy partnerships is publicly available and accessible to ensure transparency.
- Take all necessary steps to ensure that responsibility for addressing climate change is shared fairly, keeping in mind each country's economic status and historical context.
- Provide more of the financial resources needed to achieve these goals, with fewer strings attached. Additionally, expedite the flow of funds to guarantee equitable transition outcomes.
- Advocate for meaningful participation of civil society organisations, ensuring they can provide analysis, expertise, independent scrutiny, and evaluation.

Recommendations for civil society:

- Actively monitor and evaluate decision-makers' performance in designing and implementing climate and energy partnerships in both host and partner countries to ensure they abide by the guidelines and criteria for a gender-transformative just transition.
- Identify the human rights violations and gender-differentiated impacts of climate and energy partnerships and undertake efforts to advocate for host and partner countries to address and remedy abuse and inequality.
- Provide assistance, accompany, and when necessary, ensure legal representation for women, gender-nonconforming people, frontline communities, and other marginalised groups affected by climate and energy partnerships to ensure their rights are respected and protected and that redress is provided.

Recommendations for trade unions:

- Adopt a gender-transformative policy to engage with workers in key industries for the transition, including inter alia the energy, transport, waste management, water, and agriculture sectors, to ensure gender-diverse representation and protection of the rights of women and gender-nonconforming people in design, implementation, and monitoring of climate and energy partnerships.
- Foster retraining and reskilling of workers in the fossil-fuel industry, considering gender-related power imbalances and ensuring women and gender-diverse individuals and groups have equal opportunities to benefit from these and other social security programmes.
- Ensure that the labour rights of women and gender-nonconforming people are upheld in climate and energy partnerships, recognising the conditions of structural

gender discrimination in the world of work, including in the formal and informal economy and in paid and unpaid work.

Recommendations for the private sector:

- Develop and adopt a human rights and gender equality due diligence policy to implement the »protect, respect, and remedy framework« contained in both the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and its complementary guidance tool on the Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (OHCHR, 2011). In this spirit, businesses should identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for adverse human rights and environmental impacts that affect women and other gender-diverse individuals and groups while conducting their activities along value chains.
- Ensure equal distribution of benefits and decision-making power between communities and people of various genders, including equal creation of employment opportunities, development of democratic decision-making mechanisms, revenue-sharing, and alternative co-ownership models with local communities.

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List of Acronyms

GHG	Greenhouse Gas
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
JETP	Just Energy Transition Partnership
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex
NAF	National Adaptation Fund
PCDF	Partners in Community Development
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

About the authors

Alejandra Lozano Rubello is the Director for Means of Implementation and Enabling Environment at the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico. She was previously Programme Officer on Climate and Environmental Justice at the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR).

Magdalena Belén Rochi Monagas is the Programme Officer on Climate and Environmental Justice at GI-ESCR.

Nanda Jasuma is an intern at GI-ESCR in the Climate and Environmental Justice Department. She recently graduated from NYU with a focus on the global economy and environmental policy.

Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona is the Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and a member of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation. She was previously Executive Director of the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2019–2024) and the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights (2008–2014).

No Just Transition Without Gender Justice

A just transition to a climate-neutral economic system can only be achieved if it not only takes gender differences into account, but also actively works to overcome them. This publication therefore examines the opportunities for integrating gender-transformative approaches on the path to a socio-ecological transformation. It focuses on how international climate partnerships such as Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) can promote gender equality.

It argues that the most promising analytical tool to advance gender equality entails adopting an approach centred on gender-transformative policy and programming with an intersectional lens. On this basis, the study provides an overview of four case studies of grassroots experiences in gender-just transitions, presents guidelines for structural transformation and develops criteria and recommendations to adopt a gender-transformative approach.

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