



# ► Just Transition Policy Brief

October 2022

## Gender equality, labour and a just transition for all

### Key messages

- There is growing scientific consensus that climate change has gendered effects and exacerbates pre-existing gender inequalities in the world of work. Climate policy responses themselves can have unintended negative gender-based impacts. If just transition policies are not in place, occupational gender stereotypes are likely to persist even in the emerging green economy, preventing women from benefitting from the new jobs created. Moreover, climate change further exacerbates existing care burdens, worsens women's access to occupational health and safety and has a further negative impact on girls' access to education.
- Women's full and equitable participation and leadership needs to be ensured in all steps of the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of just transition policies and programmes. Such policies must be based on sound statistical information grounded in international statistical standards and must fully consider the possibility that women face compounded inequalities and discrimination due to their personal characteristics such as race, ethnicity, indigenous identity, age, disability, HIV/AIDS status, migration and socio-economic status.
- The recognition of the gender dimension in green job opportunities and the inclusion of gender-specific policies within just transition plans and strategies has yet to be realized on a wide scale. Clear commitments and language highlighting the gender dimension of just transition plans, policies, and programmes need to be introduced in a more systematic way in nationally determined contributions (NDCs), national adaptation plans (NAPs), national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) and Net Zero initiatives and pledges.
- Climate finance should support countries in carrying out just transition planning and implementation that leverages gender equality and women's representation and empowerment and promotes decent work for all women and men in the green and blue economy.



- ▶ Four of the policy areas outlined in the ILO Just Transition Guidelines are particularly relevant to achieving gender equality in the world of work. Skills development policies will be key to addressing occupational segregation and ensuring that women and girls fully benefit from emerging employment opportunities in a green economy. Care and social protection policies play a central role in ensuring women's safety and well-being and providing adequate conditions for women's engagement in the labour market as well as transforming gender norms. Enterprise development policies and rights at work policies will help facilitate an optimal business environment and ensure decent work and quality jobs that encompass safe, healthy working conditions and offer equal opportunity and treatment.

## Background

The ILO *Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All* (hereafter the Just Transition Guidelines), adopted by representatives of governments, employers' and workers' organizations in 2015, provide a policy framework and an operational tool to address environmental change in a way that advances social justice and promotes decent work creation.<sup>1</sup> This policy brief is part of a series of briefs that seek to deepen the technical and policy understanding of the application of the Just Transition Guidelines. They are mutually reinforcing and together form a body of policy guidance on the Just Transition Guidelines.

The just transition briefs are intended for use by policymakers and practitioners at all levels to provide practical information and guidance, fostering a common understanding of what is meant by a just transition in specific topic areas and providing recommendations for implementation by countries, international institutions and other actors in academia and civil society. The briefs seek, in particular, to provide guidance on just transition to ILO constituents, including workers' organizations, employers' organizations, and governments and relevant line ministries.

The briefs cover the following thematic areas: macro-economic and growth policies; industrial and sectoral policies; active labour market policies; enterprise policies; skills development; green works; occupational safety and health; social protection; rights; social dialogue and tripartism; collective bargaining; labour migration and human mobility; indigenous peoples; gender and labour; youth



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employment; persons with disabilities; persons with HIV/AIDS; and financing a just transition.

This policy brief is intended to present the linkages between just transition and gender equality and labour, providing stakeholders with information and recommendations for implementation. The broad implementation of just transition across all policy areas and cross-cutting thematic topics requires careful consideration of the guidance provided in the ILO Just Transition Guidelines, taking into account the needs, priorities and circumstances of each country.

<sup>1</sup> ILO. *Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All*, 2015.



## 1. Introduction

Despite the progress made towards gender equality in the past century, women continue to face exclusion, discrimination and disproportionate exposure to socio-economic vulnerabilities. Climate change risks are likely to further contribute to widening existing gender inequality gaps including in the world of work unless bold and coordinated action is urgently taken.<sup>2</sup>

The ILO estimates that 1.2 billion jobs, or 40 per cent of the global labour force, are dependent on ecosystem services and are thus at serious risk due to global warming and environmental degradation.<sup>3</sup> Women are expected to be severely affected due to their high representation in sectors that are particularly susceptible to climate change impacts, such as agriculture. Policies to respond to climate change and build the global transition towards a low-carbon and sustainable economy will also have significant implications for the world of work, leading both to the elimination and transformation of some jobs and the creation of new jobs.<sup>4</sup> However, unless gender-transformative measures are in place, women will not benefit as much as they could from the created jobs, and gender inequalities at work are likely to persist or worsen.<sup>5</sup>

This policy brief explores linkages between gender-responsive climate action and a just transition that promotes decent work and inclusive opportunities in a net-zero carbon emissions economy. In a world of work disrupted by climate change impacts, the ILO Just Transition Guidelines provide an essential pathway for ensuring gender equality and inclusiveness.<sup>6</sup> They do so by providing a policy framework and a practical tool to assist countries in managing the transition to a low carbon economy in a gender-transformative manner. By addressing the gender dimensions of environmental

challenges and opportunities, just transition policies and programmes can minimize social, economic and environmental risks while supporting greater inclusion and equity. What's more, the empowerment of women as key agents of change can strengthen climate mitigation and adaptation efforts. Thus, achieving a just transition and promoting gender equality are intrinsically linked and mutually reinforcing.

### What is meant by a just transition in the context of gender equality?

A just transition means greening the economy in a way that is fair and inclusive of everyone concerned, including women, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind. This focus on ensuring a just transition for all, including women and men who experience intersectional forms of discrimination, can be gender transformative. It requires mainstreaming gender considerations in the design and implementation of just transition policies. In addition, by closely considering how gender intersects with characteristics such as race, ethnicity, indigenous status, age, disability and migration status, it is possible to observe a more complex range of negative impacts from climate change on women's employment and occupation.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, women are often among the most vulnerable workers for whom the disruptive effects of a changing climate, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation are particularly acute. These include workers in the informal economy, rural workers, workers from lower-income countries and small-island developing States.<sup>8</sup> Climate change disproportionately affects those in poverty and can exacerbate economic and social inequalities, including gender inequality.<sup>9</sup>

2 ILO, *Gender, Labour and a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All*, 2017.

3 ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook. Greening with Jobs*, 2018.

4 ILO, *The Role of the ILO in Addressing Climate Change and a Just Transition for All*, GB.338/POL/1, 2020, para. 1.

5 ILO, *Skills for a Greener Future: A Global View*, 2019.

6 This policy brief is based on the ILO 2022 paper, *Just Transition: An Essential Pathway to Achieving Gender Equality and Social Justice*, submitted to the to the UNFCCC to assist Parties, Non-Party stakeholders and Subsidiary Bodies to clarify how a just transition is key to gender-responsive climate action in the world of work.

7 ILO, *Gender, Labour and a Just Transition*.

8 ILO, *The Role of the ILO in Addressing Climate Change*.

9 Government of the United Kingdom, "Supporting the Conditions for a Just Transition Internationally", UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), Glasgow, 11 April 2021.



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## 2. Challenges to achieving gender equality in a just transition

The impacts of climate change, as well as climate responses that exclude women, further exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities in the world of work. These inequalities persist in women's access to decent work and in local and global labour markets, where women greatly lag men in terms of opportunities, treatment and outcomes. Women tend to have less access to climate adaptation resources, including land, credit, agricultural inputs, decision-making bodies, technology, social insurance and training. They are more dependent on the informal economy, subject to poor working conditions and limited access to social protection, while still shouldering a disproportionate amount of unpaid household and care work.<sup>10</sup> The stubborn and persistent gender wage gap, together with sectoral and occupational segregation, continue to mean that women fall behind men in both the number and

quality of jobs they hold. For the majority of women working in the informal economy and in small enterprises, it is particularly difficult to recover from the effects of environmental disasters.<sup>11</sup>

Additional barriers to enter the formal economy include discrimination, exploitation and violence and harassment at work. These are of particular concern for women who have an indigenous, tribal or ethnic identity, as well as for those with migrant or disability status.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, climate shocks such as induced water scarcity and disruptions in water supply can affect women and girls disproportionately, including increasing their care burdens. The responsibility for this additional work often falls on girls and young women, translating to less time to study and more risk of dropping out of school.<sup>13</sup> It also takes time away from women's income-generating activities.<sup>14</sup>

10 Globally, women comprise 76.2 per cent of the total time spent in unpaid care work. This pressing gender inequity partially explains why many women remain outside the labour force or face inequalities in paid work as well as "time poverty" in both industrialized and developing countries. ILO, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*, 2018.

11 ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Greening with Jobs*, 2018.

12 ILO, *Gender, Labour and a Just Transition*, 2017.

13 Catherine Porter, "Education is Under Threat from Climate Change – Especially for Women and Girls", University of Oxford blog, 8 November 2021.

14 IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, 2022.



In sum, the impacts of climate change, and mitigation or adaptation measures that exclude women in decision-making and overlook their

specific needs, can compound the challenges to achieving gender equality in the world of work.

### 3. Opportunities for achieving gender equality in a just transition

Even in the face of such challenges, a just transition can offer significant opportunities for generating green jobs and achieving gender equality in the world of work if the right policies are formulated and implemented. There is potential for creating significant numbers of additional decent jobs in green sectors through investments in environmentally sustainable production and consumption and management of natural resources.<sup>15</sup> For instance, a circular economy that emphasizes the reuse, recycling, remanufacture and repair of goods could create a net total of 12 million new jobs by 2030, jobs that could be available to women as well as to men.<sup>16</sup>

Just transition policies can yield improvements in job quality and incomes on a large scale from more productive processes and greener products and services in sectors like agriculture, construction, recycling and tourism.<sup>17</sup> For example, the adoption of more sustainable agricultural policies together with just transition measures can create decent job opportunities in medium and large organic farms and allow smallholders to diversify their sources of income through a transition to conservation agriculture.<sup>18</sup> In fact, women and girls are often early adopters of new agricultural techniques and are the

ones who make decisions at home about energy use and waste.<sup>19</sup>

Substantial improvements for women workers in agriculture, reforestation and similar activities can be realized in a just transition through addressing deep structural challenges such as land ownership and access, informality, precarious types of work and entrenched gender inequality.<sup>20</sup> What is more, just transition policies can drive inclusion outcomes through, for example, improved access to affordable, environmentally sustainable energy and payments for environmental services. These changes are of particular relevance to women and residents in rural areas.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, such policies encourage the development of emerging green sectors, including in traditionally male-dominated sectors, such as energy and construction, and address existing inequalities in time and income poverty.<sup>22</sup> Just transition policies may facilitate the opening of decent work opportunities for women in a range of occupations within the emerging green industries, including in the care economy and in skilled occupations, for example, in management, policy, research, statistics, education, engineering, architecture, design, communications and journalism, among others.

### 4. Women as agents of change in a just transition

While women are heavily affected by climate change, they also play an important role in finding innovative solutions and responses, including for those who are most disadvantaged.<sup>23</sup> Women are central actors in environmental protection, possessing

substantial knowledge and capabilities and leading and participating in effective networks to drive real solutions. These strengths have the potential to help drive a just transition by influencing production, consumption and market sustainable solutions.

<sup>15</sup> ILO, *Guidelines for a Just Transition*.

<sup>16</sup> ILO, *Skills for a Greener Future*.

<sup>17</sup> ILO, *Guidelines for a Just Transition*.

<sup>18</sup> ILO, *WESO: Greening with Jobs*.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations, "Women as Agents of Change", n.d.

<sup>20</sup> Samantha Smith and Marieke Koning, *Just Transition and Gender – A Review*, UN Women EGM/EVP/EP.17, September 2021.

<sup>21</sup> ILO, *Guidelines for a Just Transition*.

<sup>22</sup> Smith and Koning, *Just Transition and Gender*.

<sup>23</sup> IPCC, *Climate Change 2022*.

Women are thus important agents of change on the road to a just transition and their contribution to and participation in green economic activities is understood to be essential for achieving equitable sustainable development.<sup>24</sup>

Women have demonstrated leadership in advocating, designing and implementing just adaptation and mitigation measures that are particularly well-suited to the specific needs of their communities.<sup>25</sup> A UN Women study shows that women in local communities are leading innovative approaches to promote gender equality in sectors such as sustainable energy in Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania; and in agroecology in Brazil, Cuba and Nicaragua, protecting local ecosystems based on indigenous knowledge.<sup>26</sup> These efforts need support from governments so that their models can be replicated at scale. Other studies also found that gender diversity at the managerial level had stronger mitigating effects on climate change if women are

also well-represented in political institutions and civil society organizations.<sup>27</sup>

These examples of women's role in climate action underscore the importance and benefits of including them as agents of change in just transition policy development and implementation. However, women's role as key stakeholders in climate action is still insufficiently acknowledged.<sup>28</sup> While facing important barriers, women's participation in policymaking – including young women – has the potential to bring more knowledge and diversity to the negotiation table and contribute to the needed advancements in commitment to the climate agenda. Their effective participation in bottom-up processes is important in order to ensure the legitimacy and inclusiveness of the decision-making process and the design of socially just adaptation and mitigation actions.<sup>29</sup>

### Box 1. Women as agents of change in the national just transition strategy: the case of Spain

In 2020, Spain adopted its Just Transition Strategy, which seeks to maximize the social gains of the ecological transition and to mitigate its negative impacts. The document notes that policies to promote green jobs must ensure that women can take advantage of the opportunities provided by the transition and includes among its strategic objectives measures to reduce gender inequalities in the ecological transition. The strategy includes, for instance, a specific provision “to ensure the incorporation of women into green economy employment opportunities through gender mainstreaming”. It also provides for the presentation of gender disaggregated data in the monitoring of the situation, trends and evolution in the ecological transition of economic sectors and for specific support to the creation of green jobs in rural areas, with particular attention to the promotion of youth and women's employment and entrepreneurship.

In 2021, the Women's Institute of Spain's Ministry of Equality and the Institute for Just Transition signed a protocol to jointly develop actions in the framework of the development of Just Transition Agreements, aiming to promote entrepreneurship and improve the employability and working conditions of women in the territories affected by the energy transition. The protocol also gives visibility to the active and equal contribution of women as agents of change. While it is still early to assess the impacts of this partnership, this case demonstrates the relevance of including gender-specific provisions in just transition strategies as well as the importance of establishing coordination and partnerships among governmental institutions to design implementation strategies that ensure women's participation.

Sources: Government of Spain, *Just Transition Strategy*, 2020; Government of Spain, *La empleabilidad y el emprendimiento de las mujeres serán objetivos de las políticas de transición justa*, 2021.

24 ILO, *Gender Equality and Green Jobs*, 2015.

25 ILO, *Gender, Labour and a Just Transition*.

26 UN Women, *Address the Interlocking Crises of Care, Jobs and the Environment to Achieve the Promise of the SDGs*, 2021.

27 Yener Altunbas et al., *Does Gender Diversity in the Workplace Mitigate Climate Change?*, European Central Bank Working Paper No. 2650, February 2021.

28 United Nations, *Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change, Environmental and Disaster Risk Reduction Policies and Programmes*, Report of the Secretary-General, Commission on the Status of Women, Sixty-sixth session, E/CN.6/2022.3, 2022.

29 IPCC, *Climate Change 2022*.

## 5. Key stakeholders supporting women in a just transition

As indicated in the Just Transition Guidelines, the development of just transition strategies and implementation requires inclusive social dialogue between representatives of workers' organizations, employers' organizations and governments as an essential process of stakeholder engagement. Moreover, the process requires the meaningful involvement of key representatives of local communities and civil society organizations such as

women's movements and women's alliances. It is important to involve groups whose members may be affected by climate impacts or by environmental policies themselves, including any negative impacts on enterprises and jobs. Such stakeholders should be part of decision-making processes and capacity-building activities to ensure women and other at-risk groups in the affected areas are adequately supported by just transition policies.



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## 6. Leveraging gender equality throughout the just transition policy areas

Gender equality is among the nine policy areas outlined by the ILO Just Transition Guidelines as essential and mutually reinforcing for achieving decent work outcomes. At the same time, a just transition can only be fulfilled by mainstreaming gender equality in the design and implementation of all such policies. An important starting point is **gender-responsive macroeconomic and growth policies** to ensure the creation of green jobs. In

the path towards environmental sustainability, macroeconomic and fiscal policies should foster equity and stability.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, just transition actions must promote equal employment opportunities and treatment across all green sectors, targeting both horizontal and vertical gender equality by industry and occupation.<sup>31</sup> For instance, targeted **industrial and sectoral policies** and investments should create decent jobs for women in

30 ILO, "Building Forward Fairer: Women's Rights to Work and at Work at the Core of the COVID-19 Recovery", Policy Brief, July 2021.

31 ILO, *Gender Equality and Green Jobs*.

care, energy, transport, agriculture and waste and water management.<sup>32</sup>

Policies on **skills development** for a green economy should focus on filling new jobs in a gender-equitable manner through equal access to workforce training and related policy measures as well as in the design of workplaces and working arrangements that work for both women and men.<sup>33</sup> In addition to helping to meet the skills demands of new jobs, promoting equal opportunities and treatment for women in the skills policy response could alleviate the gender imbalance in the affected occupations.<sup>34</sup> This could include investment, targeted programmes and special measures in areas where women are underrepresented, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) as well as action to recognize and develop indigenous women's traditional knowledge and skills, which are vital for climate mitigation and adaptation.<sup>35</sup>

Education and training for green jobs requires a comprehensive lifelong learning approach. National skills development and employment policies linked to broader development plans need to incorporate education for environmental awareness with coherent skills strategies to prepare women and men workers, in particular young people, for a more sustainable world of work.<sup>36</sup> Gender mainstreaming and gender targets in skills development could empower women to move from low-skill and entry-level positions to high-skilled jobs, supporting growth of their sustainable enterprises. Curricula should take a gender-transformative and intersectional approach, and education efforts should be targeted at empowering women and girls and fostering their preparedness to participate in climate discussions.<sup>37</sup>

Enterprise development policies can substantially promote gender equality in the world of work by fostering opportunities for women to become entrepreneurs by starting their own green businesses and becoming green employers.<sup>38</sup> To that end, governments should ensure targeted incentives and funding, including through partnerships, to increase resilience and sustainability for both viable and vulnerable enterprises.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, targeted programmes should be established in sectors where a significant proportion of economic units are informal with a view to promoting formalization.<sup>40</sup> In the context of a just transition, it will be crucial to promote gender equality and foster the progressive formalization of micro and small enterprises in sectors such as waste management and recycling.<sup>41</sup> The use of the cooperative model, among others, can be an effective tool for formalization.<sup>42</sup> It is also essential to increase women entrepreneurs' access to new technologies and production methods that can boost productivity along with developing well-functioning markets and effective regulatory conditions that incentivize innovation and entrepreneurship.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, it has been demonstrated that gender diversity within organizations can have a significant impact in combatting climate change.<sup>44</sup> To harness the power of women as agents of change for a just transition within organizations, policies should aim at achieving gender balance at all enterprise levels and encourage strategic senior management to implement green policies and practices. Active equal opportunity and gender-inclusive policies such as flexi-time, maternity, paternity and parental leave and return-to-work programmes ensure that women are not disadvantaged at work for having responsibilities at home. ILO standards provide relevant frameworks

32 UN Women, *Interlocking Crises*.

33 ILO, *WESO: Greening with Jobs*; IOE (International Organisation of Employers), *Make Transitions Work: Climate Change and Employment*, 2020.

34 ILO, *Skills for a Greener Future*.

35 Ariell Ahern et al., *Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change: Emerging Research on Traditional Knowledge and Livelihoods*, ILO, 2019.

36 ILO, *Gender Equality and Green Jobs*.

37 Susan Hopgood, "Education: A Crucial Piece of the Climate Justice and Gender Equality Puzzle", Education International, 2 March 2022.

38 ILO, *Gender Equality and Green Jobs*.

39 IOE, *Guidance Paper on Climate Change, Employment and Just Transition*, February 2022.

40 ILO, *Gender Equality and Green Jobs*.

41 United Nations, *Investing in Jobs and Social Protection for Poverty Eradication and a Sustainable Recovery*, 28 September 2021.

42 ILO, *Gender Equality and Green Jobs*.

43 IOE, *Guidance Paper on Climate Change*.

44 Altunbas et al., *Does Gender Diversity*.



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to promote gender equality in the workplace.<sup>45</sup> While enterprises cannot single-handedly dismantle society-wide gender bias, they can challenge it by recognizing its existence and addressing it within their workplace culture. For instance, mentoring programmes, awareness campaigns and transparency policies are effective tools for tackling wider gender bias.<sup>46</sup>

Sound, comprehensive and sustainable social protection policies are an integral part of the strategy for just transition towards sustainable development, built on principles of decent work, social justice and social inclusion. First, social

protection can support adaptation efforts when it is used to protect populations who are at heightened risk of climate-related hardship. Second, it is a key tool to support individuals and households that are negatively affected by the unintended impacts of green policies.<sup>47</sup> During the transition, social protection policies should provide workers displaced by technological change or those affected by natural disasters, many of whom are women, with income support as well as access to healthcare and basic services such as energy, transportation and housing. Such measures would reduce inequality while supporting gender equity.

45 These include the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) and the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183).

46 ILO, *Women in Business and Management: The Business Case for Change*, 2019.

47 ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2020–2022: Social Protection at the Crossroads – In Pursuit of a Better Future*, 2021.

### Box 2. Just transition social protection policies: supporting women in the face of climate challenges

The Poverty, Reforestation, Energy and Climate Change Project (PROEZA), funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and implemented by the Government of Paraguay in partnership with the FAO, promotes incentives to mitigate climate change in an environmentally friendly and socially responsible way. PROEZA's adaptation strategy is to support poor and extremely poor rural vulnerable households to increase their resilience to climate change by providing them with intensive social and technical assistance. The aim is to help them diversify production through the establishment of climate-smart agroforestry production systems and multifunctional "Close-to-Nature" planted forests. The beneficiaries are 87,210 people living in poverty and extreme poverty in an area affected by climate change. About 43,600 are women and 14,800 are indigenous people. The project's Gender Action Plan includes specific indicators targeting women's social protection. Examples include: "Women from 17,100 households receive financial support ... to ensure food security until agroforestry models begin to generate incomes" and "Women of beneficiary's households receiving financial support from the social Tekoporã programme".

Source: Green Climate Fund, *Gender Action Plan*, FP062: Poverty, Reforestation, Energy and Climate Change Project (PROEZA). Paraguay | FAO, 2018.

Furthermore, adequate *care policies and services* in the context of gender-transformative social protection make it possible for more women to participate in the formal economy and to engage

in decent work, as they help promote employment and increase women's bargaining power. Thus, a just transition to a low-carbon economy is an opportunity to enhance social protection, while transforming gender norms and, in parallel, to recognize, reduce and redistribute care work.<sup>48</sup> Social protection systems need to be adequately designed in terms of inclusion and gender responsiveness, particularly as regards climate-related risks.<sup>49</sup>

In implementing a just transition, social protection policies should be coordinated with vocational training and active labour market policies to ensure the social dimension of a sustainable economy.<sup>50</sup> Such active labour market policies can help enterprises and workers, as well as unemployed persons, including women, face the challenges associated with transitioning to a green economy. Sound labour market information data collection that includes gender statistics can inform the changing labour market demands towards a greener economy. Employment services that facilitate the match between labour demand and supply in the job transition to green occupations and are non-discriminatory, can facilitate equal opportunity by applying appropriate gender-responsive mechanisms.

Of great importance are policies that ensure the fulfilment of rights at work. These provide key pathways within the just transition framework for ensuring decent work and quality jobs, which encompass safe, healthy working conditions that offer equal opportunity and treatment.<sup>51</sup> ILO standards on occupational safety and health offer a framework to safer and healthier workplaces, but also include provisions that contribute to the preservation of the environment while social dialogue is an invaluable tool for ensuring women's participation and representation. For instance, collective bargaining ensures improved pay and working conditions and provides essential support in just transition policies for reskilling and redeployment.<sup>52</sup>

48 ILO, *Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change: From Victims to Agents of Change through Decent Work*, 2017.

49 ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2020–2022*.

50 ILO, *Guidelines for a Just Transition*.

51 These include the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) and the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183).

52 Samantha Smith, *Just Transition: A Report for the OECD*, Just Transition Centre, 2017.



## 7. Incorporating just transition targets as a vehicle to gender equality in NDCs, NAPs and NBSAPs

Just transition policies can yield meaningful improvements towards gender equality and women's empowerment. Nationally determined contributions (NDCs), national adaptation plans (NAPs) and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) can be effective vehicles of change. However, while there are signs of marginal improvements in the inclusion of just transition considerations and the gender dimension in NDCs, NAPs are lacking in considerations of gender equality in the transition to green economies.<sup>53</sup> When implemented jointly with just transition policies, Nature-based Solutions (NbS)<sup>54</sup> may offer opportunities to support NBSAPs and broader green policy goals, but the extent to which such actions are included in NBSAPs and whether gender equality goals are embedded is unknown presently.

Thus, there is still an urgent need to build the capacity to recognize the crucial value of just transition policies for supporting gender-transformative climate action – and greening more generally – and to design targeted action in this regard. Just transition and gender-transformative green actions are cross-cutting and mutually reinforcing and are central to paving the way for fair and equitable green economies. Furthermore, there is a clear need to better use data and encourage data production supporting just transition policies in NDCs, NAPs and NBSAPs, including sex-disaggregated indicators. Ideally, NDCs, NAPs and NBSAPs should include specific targets and timelines for their implementation and ensure adequate budget allocations.

## 8. Climate finance for a just transition: supporting gender equality in the world of work

One of the main challenges in sustaining and scaling up just transition initiatives that leverage gender equality is access to financial resources. Expanding access to climate finance will strengthen women's organizations, enterprises and cooperatives and is thus key for achieving gender equality in the emerging green economy.<sup>55</sup> In addition to enhancing climate resilience and reducing emissions, climate finance that supports a just transition can advance women's enjoyment of human rights. However, both adaptation and mitigation strategies need to be carefully managed through just transition policies and processes, to avoid economic changes that could increase gender inequality.<sup>56</sup> Climate finance should be directed toward just transition projects that directly benefit women and are designed, decided, and implemented with their full and effective

participation. This financing should consider women in all their diversity as well as the particular challenges faced by them, including those due to social norms that limit their access to productive assets, such as land.

Recent financing initiatives show promise in this regard. At COP 26, multilateral development banks (MDBs) jointly committed to supporting a just transition through the [MDB Just Transition High-Level Principles](#). The principles highlight the centrality of deploying a gender-lens to mitigate negative socio-economic impacts and increasing opportunities associated with the transition to a green economy. They include provisions for inclusive planning, implementation and monitoring of just transition policies, aiming to advance gender equality.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, an increasing number

<sup>53</sup> UNFCCC, *Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement: Revised Synthesis Report by the Secretariat*, FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/8/Rev.1 2021.

<sup>54</sup> The UN [Definition of Nature-based Solutions](#) (NbS) contained in a resolution on NbS passed at the UN Environment Assembly in March 2022 defines NbS as "actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits".

<sup>55</sup> UN Women, "UN Commission on the Status of Women Reaffirms Women's and Girls' Leadership as Key to Address Climate Change, Environmental and Disaster Risk Reduction for All", 26 March 2022.

<sup>56</sup> ILO, *Climate Change and Financing a Just Transition*, 2021.

<sup>57</sup> Islamic Development Bank, "MDB Just Transition High-Level Principles", 2021.

of climate funds are recognizing the importance of the gender dimension of climate investments. Nevertheless, the pace of gender integration

in climate investment is slow and its impact is fragmented, suggesting the need for urgent attention to this issue.<sup>58</sup>

## 9. Conclusions and key recommendations

The current picture regarding gender equality in the context of a just transition for all underscores the complexity and urgency of this thematic topic. Following are conclusions that warrant attention as well as a set of recommendations intended for ILO constituents, governments and other relevant stakeholders.

Initiatives to address climate change must consider improving gender-targeted statistics in the work-environment nexus and fostering a just transition for gender equality in the world of work.<sup>59</sup> For instance, there are important research gaps on the precise consequences of the energy transition for working women.<sup>60</sup> In the process of developing policy scenario estimations, the disaggregation of employment should be available by sex, so negative impacts on women's working time and labour income can be detected, as well as testing the effects of equality policies on a transition scenario (for instance, family reconciliation with respect to the variation of working time).

The ILO Just Transition Guidelines offer a vital framework for designing policies, measures and actions for generating green job opportunities for all women and men, reducing gender inequalities and leveraging women's empowerment for furthering meaningful climate action. Just transition policies and programmes need to consider the strong gender dimension of environmental challenges and opportunities. In a just transition, specific gender transformative policies should be designed to promote equality of opportunity and treatment in the world of work. This involves minimizing social, economic and environmental risks while also encouraging greater inclusion and strengthening climate mitigation and adaptation efforts through the empowerment of women as key agents of change. Just transition and the promotion of gender equality at work are intrinsically linked and mutually reinforcing. Just transition is an essential pathway to ensure gender equality and inclusiveness in the world of work.

## Recommendations

### Implementing the Just Transition Guidelines

1. In view of the untapped potential regarding gender equality in the world of work and just transition, governments, workers' and employers' organizations should promote and ensure that climate action is gender transformative.
2. The Just Transition Guidelines offer an important pathway for ensuring gender-transformative climate action. Governments should develop nationally determined contributions (NDCs), national adaptation plans (NAPs), pledges and initiatives for Net Zero according to the guiding principles and national circumstances, and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), introducing clear commitments and language highlighting the gender-transformative policies in a systematic way.
3. Governments should foster cooperation with international institutions, including the ILO, workers' and employers' organizations, as well as other public, private and civil society organizations that support national action to include the gender-transformative dimension of just transition considerations in national climate change and biodiversity policy, including through capacity-building.

58 Mariama Williams, *Shaping the Future of Multilateralism: Just and Sustainable Finance to Address Multiple Global Crises Demands a Focus on Gender Equality*, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2021.

59 UN Women, "UN Commission on the Status of Women Reaffirms".

60 Pablo García-García, et al., "Just Energy Transitions to Low Carbon Economies: A Review of the Concept and its Effects on Labour and Income", *Energy Research & Social Science* 70, December 2020.



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4. At the national level, Governments should consider incorporating gender policy scenarios in national just transition plans, drawing on the Just Transition Guidelines. The ILO and other UN organizations are equipped to provide technical support in such efforts.

## Data needs

5. While there is growing scientific consensus that climate change has gendered effects and exacerbates pre-existing gender inequalities, there is a need for improved data on the gendered impacts of climate change and green policy in the world of work. The ILO, with support from its constituents, should consider developing an indicator framework defined by a common, core set of indicators that builds on the SDGs and focuses specifically on monitoring just transition policies at national level through a gender equality and intersectional lens.
6. Governments and national statistical producers may consider using international statistical standards, such as the *Guidelines concerning a Statistical Definition of Employment in the Environmental Sector*, to collect comparable and

coherent data within their country across time on the environmental sector and green jobs, including consideration for disaggregation of data by sex and other intersecting characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, indigenous identity, age, disability and migration status.

7. The ILO, Governments, workers' and employer's organizations and research organizations should consider developing evidence-based research to assess key determinants and consequences of the transition to a green economy for women. Policy scenario estimations should include gender-disaggregation, in order to detect potential negative impacts of transition policies on women's participation in the labour market, as well to test the effects of equality policies in just transition scenarios.

## Targeted action in key just transition policy areas

8. Governments should consider including detailed, and actionable frameworks to address skills gaps and worker rights gaps supporting women, indigenous peoples and youth, and include gender-transformative care and social

protection policies in their nationally determined contributions (NDCs), national adaptation plans (NAPs), strategies for Net Zero and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), including, for example, skills development for Nature-based Solutions (NbS).

9. Governments and employers' organizations should include gender-transformative public policies when they develop comprehensive policy frameworks to foster green entrepreneurship and enable business adaptation to climate change, particularly in measures to support MSMEs. Attention should be given to foster opportunities for women to become green entrepreneurs, thus encouraging green businesses and green employers that respond to the goal of gender equality.
10. Governments should take bold action in investing in decent jobs in the care economy, which is beneficial to strengthening resilience to climate change, to achieve gender equality at work and to create new jobs.
11. The ILO should step up constituent capacity building to accelerate the implementation of the Just Transition Guidelines and support governments, in consultation with workers and employers' organizations, in developing specific training programmes for women on green entrepreneurship, access to finance and resources and skills development, which are key to ensuring that enterprises become simultaneously greener and more gender equal. Employers and business membership organizations can play a key role in assessing current and foreseen skills gaps according to business needs.
12. Governments, international organizations, workers' and employers' organizations should strongly encourage inclusive and meaningful social dialogue processes involving stakeholders of affected local communities, women's organizations and associations and other civil society institutions as relevant to developing, implementing and monitoring just transition policies, drawing upon analytical and research findings to inform such a dialogue.

## Ensuring women's participation and representation

13. Women are key agents of change for a just transition and their contribution and participation in green economic activities is essential for achieving equitable sustainable development. Thus, women's – including young women – full and equitable participation should be ensured in all steps of the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of green initiatives, policies and programmes, including by international organizations, governments, multilateral development banks, workers' and employers' organizations and other relevant stakeholders in civil society.
14. Governments should ensure that gender considerations, human rights standards and international labour standards are fully integrated in climate action, as recognized by the Just Transition Guidelines, the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC.
15. Governments should ensure gender mainstreaming throughout governmental activities, including coordination between the governmental institutions working on women's rights, gender justice and human rights, and those working in relevant policy areas for the just transition, such as ministries of labour, environment, energy, agriculture and rural development and infrastructure, among others.
16. Governments, workers' and employers' organizations, as well as international organizations, including the ILO, should implement specific capacity-building programmes and policy measures to ensure women's participation in decision-making on climate action, green economy and just transition, including at the global, regional, national, and local levels.



## Financing the just transition

17. Climate finance for a just transition is essential for achieving gender equality in the changing world of work, facilitating an inclusive transition, and creating decent work opportunities in the green and blue economy. Governments should consider integrating gender budgeting within green policies and including financial commitments for a just transition in order to achieve gender-transformative climate action in their NDCs, NAPs and pledges, initiatives for Net Zero and NBSAPs.
18. At the national level, governments, multilateral and national development banks should consider strengthening access to finance for women's enterprises, including cooperatives, that contribute towards developing a low-carbon economy.
19. Governments and international financial institutions should consider investing in social protection floors, care-related social infrastructures, care leave policies and services, as well as skills training for minimizing the gendered risks from the impacts of climate change and supporting the inclusion of women in the low-carbon economy.
20. International organizations, multilateral and national development banks, climate funds and governments should ensure that green finance and the projects or initiatives supported by it do not exacerbate gender inequalities and instead support a just transition for all women and men.
21. Governments, SMEs, cooperatives and stakeholders in the civil society should consider utilizing financial mechanisms designed to support climate action and the green economy, such as the Green Climate Fund, for developing projects and initiatives that create green jobs opportunities in the low-carbon economy through a just transition for all women and men.

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