



Natural Resource
Governance Institute

Primer

Fostering Gender-Just Energy Transitions in Mineral- and Fossil Fuel- Producing Countries

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Using this primer, you will explore questions including:

Q1

Why does gender matter for resource governance?

Q2

What are the main challenges and opportunities for gender equality in the energy transition?

Q3

How can stakeholders best promote a gender-just transition?

Background: A window of opportunity

As the world turns toward a sustainable energy future, humanity stands at a crossroads: will the energy transition bridge existing divides—such as income inequality, gender disparities and economic imbalances between nations—or will it deepen the disparities that already separate us?

Addressing gender equality is a crucial piece of the puzzle. Ensuring that women and men, and people with diverse identities, can shape and benefit from this shift is essential to achieving a truly just and inclusive transition.

In 2020, the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI) and partner organizations proposed a [Feminist Natural Resource Governance Agenda for a Just Transition](#). In 2021, in partnership with the World Resources Institute (WRI) we produced an initial primer about the importance of [gender-transformative policy reforms](#). The current primer builds on the first, diving deeper into why gender matters to natural resource governance in the context of the energy transition. It highlights the often-overlooked ways in which gender dynamics could influence—and be influenced by—how the transition is managed. From gender mainstreaming to equity and equality, we explore the concepts that can turn the energy transition from a risk to gender equality into an opportunity for all.

Energy policies have long been blind to gender, often neglecting the distinct needs, challenges and contributions of different groups.

But a different narrative is needed—one in which gender is not an afterthought, but a driving force for fair and effective energy governance. By embedding gender perspectives into every policy, at every stage, the global community can transform the energy transition into a powerful engine for social justice and economic empowerment. Gender equality in the context of the extractive sectors and natural resource-rich countries refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men and youth within these industries and regions, irrespective of their gender. Promoting gender equality in extractive contexts should ensure that all individuals can equally benefit from and contribute to the development and management of natural resources. However, in this document we focus our analysis on the role that women, particularly within vulnerable communities, can play in ensuring a just transition.

This primer offers an overview of the challenges that stakeholders must overcome to make this vision a reality. It also proposes general recommendations for a gender-just transition. Whether you are a policymaker, a practitioner, a member of an affected community or simply someone committed to a better future, we invite you to join us in ensuring that the energy transition does not leave anyone behind.

Key concepts

Sex: This refers to the biological classification of people as male, female or intersex, based on physiological characteristics, such as chromosomes and reproductive organs.

Gender: The social ideas and expectations linked to being male or female. These influence roles, responsibilities and power dynamics in various aspects of life, from family to work and politics.

Gender equality: This ensures everyone can fully enjoy their rights and opportunities, and gain access to social, economic and political resources, leading to a better quality of life for all.

Gender equity: This ensures that governments and communities take targeted actions to address the gender-specific barriers and disadvantages women and men face, so everyone can have fair and equitable opportunities.

Intersectionality: This concept highlights the ways in which gender overlaps with other factors, such as race, class and disability, creating unique experiences of advantage or disadvantage.

In terms of policies and the development agenda, the ambition is to move from gender-blind programs to mainstreaming gender across different areas of work, pushing for transformative action. According to the Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG), **gender-blindness** is a state where actors or systems ignore the social, economic, political and cultural factors at the root of inequalities between men and women, as well as the associated obligations placed on women. This state also fails to address existing power dynamics. Development agents move from gender blindness progressively by becoming aware of these inequalities and taking appropriate action. Programs can—sometimes inadvertently—exploit these inequalities, reinforcing stereotypes, or they can accommodate such differences, rather than challenging them. Yet, the goal is to define and implement programs that transform pre-existing inequalities and push for a more equitable distribution of benefits and costs, as proposed by the IGWG gender integration continuum.

In this context, **gender mainstreaming** is key. This is the practice of integrating gender perspectives into all an organization's policies and actions, ensuring that both women's and men's needs are considered.

See [Gender and Extractives: The Importance of Gender Transformative Policy Reforms](#).

Questions and answers

Question

1

Why does gender matter for resource governance?

Numerous studies and organizations have documented how women are more likely to experience harm across the oil, gas and mining supply chains. Despite this, extractive industries often overlook gender-specific factors in human rights due diligence, leading to an inadequate consideration of women's rights and a lack of understanding of the full social impacts on workers and communities. A study by the Responsible Mining Foundation found that only 11 percent of 40 big mining companies have outlined gender actions in their plans, and none has taken a strategic approach to directly tackle gender inequality across mining operations. Consultation procedures often lack legitimacy, because they are not inclusive.

Unfortunately, women are also less likely to access the benefits linked to the extractive industries. Despite accounting for 40 percent of the global workforce, women only represent 22 percent of the fossil fuel industry workforce and 15 percent of top 100 companies in the mining sector. They play a more important role in artisanal and small-scale (ASM) mining, but their roles are often associated with informal, sometimes dangerous, jobs.

In addition, tax avoidance and illicit financial flows limit the amount of revenues funding social services like education, health, sanitation, public transport, social infrastructure and care services that are key for gender equality.

An evaluation by NRGi and WRI in 2021 indicated that national mining policies needed to be improved in order to address gender inequality. Various national mining laws and policies prohibit single, unmarried or pregnant women from being involved in mining operations. In addition, women often find themselves excluded from crucial discussions and negotiations about benefit sharing. In oil-rich areas like the Albertine Graben in Uganda, stakeholders denounced that women were unable to benefit from government compensation to households affected by displacement.

As a result, a significant number of women's groups and human rights and development organizations have tried to bring women's needs, voices and visions to discussions about natural resource governance and management.

The Feminist Natural Resource Governance Agenda, developed by 6 international organizations and supported by 113 signatories, calls on different stakeholders to implement the laws, policies and practices necessary to guarantee an intersectional, transformative feminist approach to natural resource governance, centred on the leadership and lived realities of women and frontline communities. The agenda contains 18 policy imperatives, including on consultations, land rights and compensation, participation in the workforce, local procurement, gender-based violence, the rights of women's rights defenders, access to justice, revenue sharing and access to information.

In addition, several high-profile international consensus and frameworks have highlighted both the need to take account of gender and the benefits of a gender-mainstreamed approach in tackling the climate crisis. These include the Paris Agreement, which acknowledges that adaptation to climate change should follow a gender-responsive approach (Article 7.5.), the Enhanced Lima Work Programme, and the Gender Action Plan of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The latter contain strong language on gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming in climate solutions, the collection and availability of sex-disaggregated data to inform climate policy and action, and the nomination of National Gender Focal Points.

Other international standards at the nexus between extractive industries, climate and gender include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence Against Women (CEDAW), the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa.

Yet challenges remain. In UNFCCC processes, women made up only 34 percent of negotiators at COP27, received just 23 percent of speaking time at COP26, and gender issues were largely ignored in key reports. In the long-term low-emission development strategies submitted by 51 parties for COP27, less than 22 percent mentioned gender. This lack of women's high-level representation hinders the development and implementation of gender-sensitive policies, impeding efforts to achieve a just and equitable energy transition.

Question

2

What are the main challenges and opportunities for gender equality in the energy transition?

Almost 80 percent of CO₂ emissions globally are linked to the energy sector. Promoting an energy transition that reduces the use of fossil fuels and ensures that more renewable energy sources are used to meet energy demands is key to fight climate change. In 2023, the COP28 final statement invited countries to “accelerate efforts towards the phase-down of unabated coal power, phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, and other measures that drive the transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner.” Such efforts are already having implications in terms of limiting perspectives for fossil fuel extraction, expanding renewable energy projects and increasing the extraction of critical minerals needed for clean technologies. All these changes impact men and women differently, due to their varying roles in and dependencies on the extractive and renewable energy industries, as well as on natural resources such as land, firewood and water.

The climate crisis is already impacting vulnerable groups, including women, more severely than more privileged groups. Women and girls are more likely to die in extreme weather events, which are becoming more frequent and intense, and the process of energy transition can increase the burden for women and other vulnerable groups. Yet it also offers a unique opportunity to address and rectify deep-seated social inequalities. Achieving the Paris Agreement’s climate goals will require substantial financial investments

across diverse sectors, including energy, finance and transport. If these investments are guided by gender-sensitive strategies, the transition can catalyze broader social progress.

Fossil fuel phase-out’s differential impacts on women

The transition away from fossil fuels might involve a reduction of revenues and jobs for countries whose economies heavily depend on coal, oil and gas extraction. It is estimated that USD 8 trillion could be lost across 40 oil-producing countries, and that about 5 million people who work for the fossil fuel industry may lose their jobs by 2030. The closure of extractive sites could significantly impact both direct and indirect employment. Men are likely to face direct job losses in the extractives sector, while women may experience indirect repercussions, including the loss of employment in support services, such as cooking and cleaning. In addition, the environmental degradation resulting from abandoned fossil fuel sites can exacerbate women’s care burdens and negatively impact their subsistence activities, including agriculture and water collection. Yet, as new economic and energy systems are defined to replace fossil fuels, there are opportunities to diversify national and local economies in ways that include women. In fact, women inclusion is found to be associated with higher degrees of economic diversification.

Just transition in Colombia

As a Colombian coal region has started to phase out production, gender-specific impacts have become evident. The suspension of operations in the coal mining site of La Jagua de Ibirico has had significant repercussions on women. Many of them lost formal jobs or businesses, as well as peripheric and informal income from renting rooms or running food stalls. Further, the suspension forced some women into sexual labor, while others face increased caregiving responsibilities due to job losses and family breakdowns, as men were also directly impacted by the lack or loss of work. This also led to an increase in domestic violence.

Challenges and opportunities for women as transition mineral extraction increases

The growing demand for transition minerals, crucial for renewable energy technologies, presents some opportunities for women, mostly for employment, but with significant challenges still to be overcome. Women represent 30-50 percent of the workforce in ASM. However, they are more associated with lower-skilled, health-threatening and labor-intensive work, which pays less. In large-scale mining, women represent a smaller percentage, mainly in administrative roles, but benefit from indirect jobs.

Women represent around 10 percent of the workforce, mainly in administrative roles.

Other factors make entering the sector, and reaping its economic benefits, very challenging for women. Access to mining knowledge, training, and networks is very limited for women, and they tend to be excluded from miners' cooperatives and committees, from formalization efforts and as license holders. Gender-based violence on sites is also a concern, and a lack of childcare facilities can make onsite work impossible for women. These exclusionary practices present a considerable barrier to women's participation, progression and representation in decision making in the industry.

‘Glitter and Grit: Life as an Artisanal Miner in Uganda’

The [African Centre for Media Excellence](#), in partnership with NRG, produced a [short film](#) sharing a day in the life of an artisanal woman miner in the gold-mining sector in eastern Uganda. It exposes that mining is a significant source of employment and revenue. But it also captures the challenges associated with environmental degradation, health risks and social inequalities, compounded by a lack of regulatory oversight and the vulnerability of miners, particularly women.

Beyond ASM, environmental degradation from mining activities—such as water pollution—disproportionately affects women, who are typically responsible for water collection and subsistence farming.

Social displacement due to mining expansion can also disadvantage women, especially when compensation schemes prioritize male heads of households.

Voices of women in Chile

Based on testimonies from environmental leaders and activists, a [study by the Global Initiative for Economic and Cultural Rights](#) and FIMA Chile explored the gendered impacts of lithium extraction, emphasizing how it could exacerbate inequalities. In the report, Chilean women from Antofagasta and Atacama argue that the energy transition narrative justifies extractive activities without addressing the socio-environmental costs. They call for equitable mining practices with greater female involvement and respect for the ecosystems. A [documentary](#) accompanying the report amplifies these voices and advocates for a just, sustainable mining-energy model.

Gender implications of renewable energy scale-up

The expansion of renewable energy projects can bring important benefits for women, especially in terms of jobs, energy access and revenue generation. Wind and solar energy and other clean technology projects can provide employment opportunities. Currently, women account for 32 percent of the workforce in the renewable energy sector, but in Africa alone, 4 million more jobs are required to meet the continent's energy demand. Transitioning to cleaner domestic energy sources can also alleviate health issues associated with traditional fuels, including respiratory illnesses and reproductive complications often linked to dirty cooking fuels. By reducing the time spent on domestic chores and fuel collection, cleaner energy can also provide women and children with greater opportunities for education and paid work. As deployment of renewable energies allows for more decentralized production, women can also be at the forefront of electricity generation, which has the potential to translate into opportunities for additional income generation.

However, some large-scale renewable energy projects have reproduced the harmful dynamics that have long affected the extractive industries. They can displace communities and disproportionately affect women, who may lose access to land-based livelihoods and critical resources like water, complicating their subsistence responsibilities. Compensation mechanisms for displaced communities tend to lack a gender focus, frequently prioritizing male heads of households and exacerbating gender disparities.

In general, stakeholders and people affected can do much to address gender inequalities in energy transition policies and plans. The Green Growth Knowledge Partnership's Gender Expert Group conducted a study that revealed the need for an all-encompassing framework for setting and achieving a gender-just transition. Findings showed that the concept of a just transition lacks concrete definitions and targets to address gender equality, including levels of ambition for gender justice in energy transition processes.

Question

3

How can stakeholders best promote a gender-just transition?

Inclusive policy-making and gender mainstreaming

Governments and the private sector must move beyond isolated initiatives by fully integrating gender considerations into all energy transition plans and policies. Traditionally, energy policies have often been gender-blind, overlooking the unique experiences and needs of various groups, and the different ways women and men access and use energy, and approach subsidy programs or infrastructure development. However, to promote a just energy transition, it is essential to consider gender at every stage of policy development—planning, implementation and evaluation—and across all sectors. This gender mainstreaming approach ensures that the needs of both women and men are given equal importance, so that both benefit equally, across all races and classes, from clean energy initiatives and compensation as fossil fuels are phased out. It can also stimulate the uptake of new energy technologies, via the important roles women often play in their communities and families. Since gender inequality often leads to adverse outcomes for women, gender-mainstreamed policies frequently include targeted actions or programs designed specifically to address women's needs.

These actions must be underpinned by robust analysis and gender-disaggregated data to ensure evidence-based decision making. Including women in decision-making processes to inform and assess their understanding and concerns, as well as the potential they perceive in the energy transition, is an essential step. Women's insights on energy consumption are crucial to inform these processes, but women can also be agents transforming energy access as informed influencers, employees and entrepreneurs, especially in underserved communities. For this, it is paramount that all data related to the energy transition is disaggregated by gender, to enable better understanding of the differential impacts of energy access on men and women, and to inform better and gender-responsive policies.

International frameworks such as the UNFCCC Nationally Determined Contributions—the efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change—include calls for the comprehensive inclusion of women's needs and interests in national energy policy at all levels. Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can refer to existing guides and frameworks to design this kind of gender-mainstreamed national strategy.

Resources and toolkits: UNFCCC processes and national energy transition plans

[A Framework for Gender-Responsive National Adaptation Plan \(NAP\) Processes.](#)

A concise overview of the process and enabling factors involved in elaborating gender-sensitive transition plans.

[Conducting Gender Analysis to Inform National Adaptation Plan \(NAP\) Processes:](#)

[Reflections from Six African Countries.](#) A review of experience and lessons learned from six countries undertaking gender analysis of their energy transition plans.

In addition, a multi-stakeholder approach to dialogue, where civil society organizations, the media and authorities support the

development and implementation of gender-sensitive energy transition policies, could have significant positive impact.

Ghana's inclusive energy transition planning

In Ghana, gender-responsive approaches in energy transition planning have demonstrated the potential for significant positive outcomes. The country has engaged women in the development of [renewable energy projects](#) and Ghana's Energy Transition Framework 2022-2070 acknowledges the gendered impacts and potential loss of people's livelihoods that may come with its implementation. In that sense, the Framework outlined amongst its policies and mitigation measures that Ghana's government should "promote alternative livelihood programmes to [compensate affected persons](#)", which should include provisions for female-headed households. This inclusive approach has improved access to resources for women, facilitated equitable participation in the energy sector, and contributed to overall [social and economic development](#).

Meaningful representation of women

To benefit equally from the energy transition, women must have a meaningful presence in decision-making processes. Governments and the international community must ensure that women are not only included, but are actively engaged in shaping these decisions. This requires gender-sensitive consultation tools and inclusive dialogue among governments, civil society, communities and the private sector.

Consultations. The specific socioeconomic needs of populations and the changes they will face during the energy transition will vary from place to place, and the interests of communities and extractive companies may not always overlap. For this reason, consultation and analysis are required both to identify locally relevant gender issues and to inform appropriate, well-designed programs.

A wide range of toolkits has been designed to support such analysis. Many of these include models for participatory consultation proven to help identify local factors affecting the gendered distribution of resources or roles, and cultural assumptions which maintain gender inequalities. These toolkits also include participatory activities such as gender-specific livelihood impact assessments, and tips on gender-sensitive policy measures such as compensation programs which directly reach women.

Carried out properly, consultation and impact assessments can provide a chance for communities to ask critical questions and exercise their rights. In turn, this can help ensure that plans respond to local men's and women's needs, and include effective measures to offset the negative consequences of mine closure or decommissioning.

Resources and toolkits: Impact assessment and consultations

Gender-based Analysis Plus in Impact Assessment. An analytical process that can guide practitioners in identifying who is impacted by a project and assessing how they may experience impacts differently, focusing on sex, gender and intersecting identities. Methods include use of descriptive statistics, interviews, community forums and culturally appropriate consultation practices.

Guide to Gender Impact Assessment for the Extractive Industries. This provides an excellent framework for conducting gender impact assessments in communities, including participatory techniques and methods to assess the economic, employment and environmental impacts of fossil fuel phase-out.

Gender Impact Assessments for Projects and Policies Related to Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining. This includes specific participatory tools and tips on how to analyse the gender impacts of policy and legislation.

Strengthening women’s organizations and voice. Successful interventions promoting women’s participation in mining for transition minerals have included the establishment of women’s mining groups or cooperatives, and engagement with national governments to mainstream gender into national policy or coordinate specific gender-equality initiatives. The [Association of Women in Mining in Africa](#) works with governments and the African Union to implement the [African Mining Vision](#) for the benefit of women—for example, through the formalization of women in

mining groups, lobbying for land and mineral rights, and promoting measures to eliminate violence against women in the sector. Similar national-level initiatives can be found in many countries. Such organizations often elaborate gender-mainstreaming policy demands that are directly tailored to national mining strategies. These can include demands related to issues such as land licenses and legal protection; provision of finance, and access to technology, geological information, networks and markets.

Resources: Gender and transition minerals

[Women in Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining: Challenges and Opportunities for Greater Participation.](#) This provides evidence on economic, legal and political challenges to women’s participation in ASM, as well as case studies on measures and initiatives to tackle these challenges, including women miners’ cooperatives and associations, and access to credit and training.

[Four Ways to Empower Women in ASM.](#) This provides a concise summary of four key approaches to empower women in ASM.

Inclusive financial support

As governments, donors and other financial stakeholders allocate resources for the energy transition, it is vital that these investments actively identify and respond to women’s needs. This is crucial for translating policy commitments into practice. Stakeholders must design budgets and investment plans to ensure that women benefit equitably from the transition.

In particular, initiatives to support [women as entrepreneurs](#) have shown significant success. Factors necessary to [make such schemes sustainable](#) and successful include a comprehensive approach aligning these initiatives with national policy; gender-sensitive participatory design of women’s entrepreneurship programs, and ongoing support for participants—such as access to fair finance.

Community engagement to ensure buy-in—including from male community members—is also essential, as are peer-to-peer learning and the establishment of women’s organisations.

Apart from mobilizing resources to enable the energy transition, gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) could be a powerful tool for just transitions. GRB involves analysing whether domestic resource mobilization and taxation are equally benefiting women and men. Key to gender mainstreaming, it involves digging beneath rhetoric and “following the money” to see what activities and programs have been resourced, and who is paying for them.

In the context of climate change and the just energy transition, GRB can ensure that distribution of the costs of transition is gender-just, and that if specific resources are needed in order to include women in the transition, they are adequately funded. In most states, the knowledge and institutional conditions to enable effective GRB are still under development, and NGOs can play a key role in supporting capacity building. Grassroots methodologies aiming to affect local government spending priorities or project design can also play an important role in driving demand for governments to implement GRB, and in the development of the skills and knowledge required to implement such budgeting in the energy transition.



Resources and toolkits: Gender-responsive climate budgeting

Gender and Climate-Change Budgeting and Finance: Lessons from the IBFCCA Programme. A highly informative eight-page brief outlining key concepts in GRB and useful practical experiences drawn from four African countries' climate budgeting and finance experiences.

The Principles of Tax Justice and the Climate Crisis in Africa's Resource-Rich Nations. An excellent guide to tax justice, outlining core principles firmly linking international justice dimensions to national-level gender equality imperatives.

Energizing Finance: Financing for Gender-focused Energy Access. This provides a methodology to assess the gender-equality impacts of international financing for energy projects.

FOWODE's Village Budget Club Model. A Ugandan feminist NGO's grassroots model for gender-responsive budgeting in rural settings.

Incorporating Gender and Poverty Analysis in the Climate Public Expenditure and Institutional Review: A Methodological Note. An excellent, detailed technical guide on gender-sensitive public climate finance, including techniques to identify gender priorities; discussion of the politics of incorporating gender sensitivity into public climate finance; explanation of different implementation tools; useful checklists, and routes for capacity building.

Opportunities for Coordinating the Integration of Gender and Climate Change into Budgeting and Finance. A detailed technical guide on national-level gender-responsive climate budgeting, explaining links between program budgeting, climate budgeting and gender-responsive budgeting methodologies; different forms of climate finance; enabling conditions, and gender-responsive budget implementation and accountability frameworks.

Leveraging existing international and regional frameworks

Governments and civil society can draw on a wealth of international gender-equality frameworks and commitments to inform and guide national policies and strategies.

These frameworks provide mechanisms that civil society can use to raise awareness of the gender-equality dimensions of a just energy transition.

Framework for people-powered energy transition

Different stakeholders have distinct responsibilities in energy transition processes. Emphasizing key principles and offering targeted support can promote inclusive, fair transitions driven by people affected or potentially affected by the extractive industries and the energy transition. NRGi believes that these just transitions should recognize rights and leave no one behind; reflect and amplify the voices of people and communities; strengthen governance and accountability, ensure equitable sharing of benefits and compensation, and address global power imbalances, through transformative partnerships.

Figure 29.1. A framework for people-powered energy transitions in resource-rich countries



DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION REPORT 2024 © OECD 2024

Source: NRGi's Just Transition Framework for Development Cooperation Report 2024 | OECD

Where governments are signatories to these frameworks, public officers need to implement the gender-equality commitments they entail. CEDAW, for example, offers stakeholders an opportunity to hold governments to account for the human-rights impacts of their energy transition policies. The Maputo Protocol provides a useful, locally appropriate lever to legitimize women's rights in public policy and women's participation in all levels of decision making in African countries. The International Labour Organization and the Responsible Mining Foundation have made recommendations to improve women's access to the economic benefits of new extractives.

These include the abolition of laws that limit women's access to the sector, and the enactment of binding laws and policies to promote equal opportunity and treatment of women within it—for example, through support for women's training and provision of facilities for workers' families around sites. UNFCCC National Gender Focal Points can be useful partners within government to encourage or access gender-disaggregated data, or as partners in the development of gender-mainstreamed energy transition policies, both at national level and within UNFCCC proceedings.



About NRGi

The Natural Resource Governance Institute is an independent, non-profit organization that supports informed, inclusive decision-making about natural resources and the energy transition. We partner with reformers in government and civil society to design and implement just policies based on evidence and the priorities of citizens in resource-rich developing countries. Learn more at www.resourcegovernance.org
