

POLICY BRIEF

Towards a feminist just energy transition in Asia

KEY PRINCIPLES AND BARRIERS

DECEMBER 2023





Acknowledgments

This policy brief has been prepared for the Asia Feminist Coalition. It is written by Arimbi Wahono and Laura Doanová from Shared Planet with contributions from Ili Nadiah Dzulfakar, Myrah Nerine Butt, Lee Macqueen, Vijeta Mishra, Sona Mitra, Tasnima Mukit and Khotimun Sutanti.

The Asia Feminist Coalition is a network of feminist organizations across Asia working towards gender justice and equality. The coalition was formed in 2022 and is committed to building a feminist movement in Asia that is intersectional, inclusive, and diverse.

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INTRODUCTION

Energy transitions are not gender-neutral, and the impacts of energy policies and initiatives are felt differently by different groups of people. In Asia, it is women—and particularly those in rural and low-income communities—that bear the brunt of energy poverty¹ and are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and the climate crisis. Women’s limited access to assets like land and capital curbs their ability to adapt to transition processes. Relative to men, women take on a much greater burden of care work, limiting their access to paid work and educational and training opportunities, making it difficult for women to cope with structural transitions. Asia also houses half of the world’s population, of which half its own population lives below the poverty line, making them much more vulnerable to climate shocks and less prepared to adapt to transitions (Oxfam 2022).

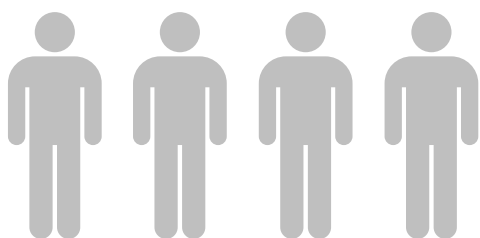
What is a feminist just energy transition?

The concept of a just energy transition builds on the concept of a just transition, which emphasizes that we must move away from fossil fuels (and therefore polluting industries and unhealthy work environments)—but just as importantly, from economic insecurity, inequality, and the systems of oppression that underpin fossil fuel capitalism (Friends of the Earth International 2023).

The just energy transition is a critical opportunity for overcoming gendered power structures. The evolution of both household power dynamics and the division of labor during energy transitions can generate opportunities for women that can promote human well-being and gender justice and give women greater access to decision-making spaces. Any effort to embed gender equality in the just energy transition must also be rooted in an intersectional approach, recognizing that not all women face the same disadvantages within the current energy system and will therefore face different challenges as Asia undergoes a large-scale shift towards just energy systems. The Asia Feminist Coalition asserts that we must work towards a feminist just energy transition that recognizes the existing structural disparities within our patriarchal extractivist system and actively works towards redressing them, ensuring that women and other marginalized groups are central to the development and implementation of energy policies.

THE URGENCY OF CHALLENGING THE CURRENT ENERGY SYSTEM

The current energy system does not affect women and men in the same way. Women are at a significant disadvantage due to the time they allocate to unpaid care and domestic work—in Asia and the Pacific, **women engage in more than four times more unpaid care work than men** (ILO 2018). In Pakistan and India, women spend up to ten and seven times more time on unpaid care work than men, respectively (ILO 2016). This results in women having significantly less daily free time than men, which inhibits their pursuit of economic and social activities. The burden of unpaid care work does not apply to all women equally, however, and it is important to apply an intersectional approach to acknowledge how gender, class, caste, race, location, and nationality (among other things) intersect, affecting the different ways in which women are disadvantaged. For example, **migrant women and women in rural areas tend to spend more time performing unpaid care work** than other women (ESCAP 2022).



IN ASIA, THE TIME SPENT ON CARE WORK BY ONE WOMAN IS EQUIVALENT TO THAT OF OVER FOUR MEN.

1. Energy poverty refers to a lack of access to adequate, affordable, reliable, safe, and sustainable energy services in the household.

Women’s position in the care economy puts them on the frontlines of the energy transition, as they are most exposed to the negative effects of a fossil fuel and polluting fuel-based system. **Women’s responsibility for cooking puts them at risk of deadly health complications, including heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, respiratory disease and other illnesses** (UN Environment Programme 2021). Women’s cooking and other domestic responsibilities increase their exposure to household air pollution caused by dirty cookstoves, which use solid fuel like wood, coal, charcoal, dung, and crop waste and are prevalent in both South and Southeast Asian households. In Southeast Asia, more than 1.2 billion people primarily used polluting fuels for cooking in 2014, even though solid fuel use is the single most significant environmental health risk factor in the world (ESCAP 2017; Stoner et al. 2021). Using dirty cookstoves puts not only women’s health at risk but can also damage the health of their children. Household air pollution increases the risk of low birth weight, pre-term birth, and small gestational age births for pregnant women (ASEAN & UN Women 2022). Ultimately, this negatively affects the well-being of women as mothers and primary caretakers for the ill.

UNDER THE CURRENT ENERGY SYSTEM, WOMEN ARE NEGATIVELY IMPACTED IN THEIR...



EDUCATION



MOBILITY



HEALTH



SAFETY



PAID WORK

...IN PART DUE TO THEIR DISPROPORTIONATE RESPONSIBILITIES OF SHOULDERING UNPAID CARE WORK.

Women’s responsibility for domestic work also requires them to collect the fuelwood necessary to perform that work. This, however, puts their health and safety at risk. The **journeys required for the collection of fuelwood exposes women and girls to animal attacks, risk of injuries** (for example, because of carrying heavy loads on their back or heads) as well as to physical and sexual violence, which adolescent girls are especially vulnerable to due to their young age. At the same time, failure to collect fuelwood could put households under significant stress and expose women and girls to gender-based violence at home (ESCAP 2017).

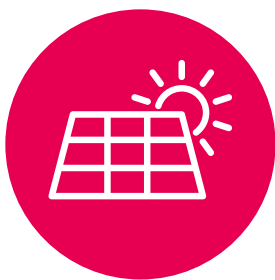
The responsibility to perform domestic work takes away women and girls’ time to dedicate to education, paid work, or other income-generating opportunities. In Asia and the Pacific, **more than half of working-age women who are not part of the labor force claim that unpaid care responsibilities are one of the main reasons** for not engaging in paid work (ESCAP 2019). Activities like collecting fuelwood are especially difficult and time-consuming for women as they either have no means of transportation or are constrained by social norms (ESCAP 2017). With climate change and environmental degradation, the time required for the collection of fuelwoods is set to increase as resources are becoming scarcer (ISPONRE 2021). Additionally, where women can engage in income-generating activities, the lack of access to clean, affordable, and safe energy restricts the number of hours they can keep their businesses open (typically small food kiosks or grocery stores) and therefore also the income they can generate (ESCAP 2017). Caring responsibilities are especially time-consuming under energy poverty, leading women to require their children’s support with household chores and fuel collection. This negatively affects young girls’ studying hours and their school enrollment (Karekezi et al. 2012). One survey in India showed that clean cookstove user households were more likely to send their children to school than users of traditional cookstoves (Practical Action 2015).

CASE STUDY: CLEAN COOKING STOVES AND IMPROVED HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR WOMEN IN RURAL BANGLADESH

Before she was enrolled in an improved cooking stoves (ICS) distribution program under the Alternative Livelihood Options (ALO) project, a woman living in rural Bangladesh used to spend six hours every day cooking with a traditional stove. This not only left her no time for any other activities, but it was also damaging her eyes—which would frequently sting with the smoke—and caused her respiratory and sinus problems, for which she was prescribed medication. Her mother-in-law, already suffering from a chronic heart condition, also showed symptoms of deteriorating health. In 2011, the woman was provided with an improved cookstove. This has significantly improved her health and wellbeing—her eyes no longer burn, her cold and sinus problems are gone, and her mother-in-law’s health has also improved. This has allowed the woman’s family to save on monthly medical expenses and the woman now has more time to engage in activities like vegetable gardening.²

KEY PRINCIPLES: WHAT MUST A FEMINIST JUST ENERGY TRANSITION LOOK LIKE IN ASIA?

A feminist just energy transition embodies the recognition that the consequences of energy systems and policies are not gender-neutral and that historical imbalances in power, resource allocation, and labor must be rectified for a truly equitable transition. It transcends the mere inclusion of women and marginalized groups; rather, it demands the restructuring of energy systems to prioritize social equity, environmental integrity, and economic justice. This means moving beyond a narrative of “women’s empowerment” to instead emphasize the need to be “gender-transformative”—radically overhauling the economic, social, cultural, and political systems which drive gender inequality. This is necessarily rooted in alternative pathways for development and transformative changes in the relationship between the environment and our systems of production and consumption (Lahiri-Dutt 2023).



ENERGY DEMOCRACY



FEMALE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION



RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

². This case study was contributed by the Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS) Bangladesh, a member of the Asia Feminist Coalition.



Strengthening energy democracy through small-scale, locally-owned, locally appropriate and gender-representative energy systems

To achieve a just and rapid phase-out of fossil fuels, it is critical to center the energy transition around environmentally and socially sound energy technologies that are as small-scale and decentralized as possible. This would not only make it easier to increase the pace of the energy transition, but also ensure that communities are equipped with the knowledge and skills to manage energy systems democratically and achieve energy sovereignty (Friends of the Earth International 2018). Oftentimes, local communities are encouraged or incentivized—frequently by governments—to adopt clean and efficient technologies, supporting the aims of transitioning away from fossil fuels. However, in many cases the provision of these technologies does not come with the support required for communities to use or adapt to the new tools. **It is therefore critical that technologies are locally appropriate and accompanied by holistic provision of support**, including financial support. In India, for instance, a government program encouraging a shift to liquefied petroleum gas (LPG, a clean cooking fuel relative to traditional cooking fuels) failed because the government did not cover the cost of refills, which have risen with inflation (IWWAGE & Indian Statistical Institute 2019). The challenges of recurring costs were particularly restrictive for lower caste, female-headed households (Patnaik & Jha 2020).³



IN SOME COUNTRIES, INCLUDING CAMBODIA, FEMALE-LED HOUSEHOLDS ARE MORE LIKELY TO LACK ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY THAN MALE-DOMINATED ONES, MEANING WOMEN CAN STAND TO BENEFIT MORE FROM DECENTRALIZED, SMALL-SCALE ENERGY SYSTEMS.

Energy democracy⁴ is particularly meaningful for women. This is because women have been traditionally underrepresented in the energy sector, limiting the incorporation of their knowledge, needs, and preferences in energy development processes. An example of an energy project that is gender-inclusive and strengthens energy democracy is a heatwave-resilient community fridge to ensure food security during heatwave-induced droughts, which would also reduce the time girls spend on food preparation and thus allow girls more time to pursue educational opportunities (Achampong 2023). However, **community-led renewable energy projects must actively incorporate women into decision-making or risk perpetuating existing gender disparities**—as was the case in a micro-hydro project in a village in South Solok District, Indonesia, which invited community engagement but often excluded women from meetings and other decision-making processes (ASEAN & UN Women 2022). Central to this approach should be a targeted focus on marginalized women whose participation in the energy sector is conventionally invisible or unsupported, building women's confidence to influence energy policy and legislation in a way that emphasizes women's rights and gender justice (Friends of the Earth International 2023).

Research has demonstrated the positive linkages between gender equality and small-scale alternative energy systems. One study on village electrification schemes in India showed that at the village-level, **decentralized solar home systems and micro-grids have contributed to higher flexibility of time use for women** who can reduce their reliance on kerosene lamps that have to be shut off at night in case of fires caused by kerosene spills. The use of solar microgrids to power streetlights also increases safety for women at night and allows them to pursue leisure and personal development activities after dark (Millinger, Mårilind and Ahlgren 2012). More broadly, decentralized energy systems also bring benefits for the small-scale energy users that are disproportionately made up of poorer households in rural areas. In some countries, including Cambodia, female-led households are more likely to lack access to electricity than male-dominated ones, meaning women can stand to benefit more from decentralized, small-scale energy systems (ASEAN & UN Women 2022).

3. This case study was contributed by members of the Asia Feminist Coalition, including the Institute for What Works to Advance Gender Equality (IWWAGE) and the Asia Dalit Rights Foundation.

4. Energy democracy refers to energy production and use being owned and controlled by and for the community, including by uplifting women and other marginalized communities in the decision-making of energy systems.



Addressing individual and systemic barriers to female labor force participation

Development finance institutions, multilateral banks, and international energy agencies are increasingly attempting to mainstream “gender” into their operations by placing women in positions of leadership and developing women’s entrepreneurial capacity. Such policies can be necessary: the underrepresentation of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields and renewable energy sector employment certainly leads to gender-blind decision-making in the energy sector (Lahiri-Dutt 2023). Facilitating female labor force participation and leadership is therefore a necessary step towards achieving a just transition rooted in gender equality. **Women currently employed in the dirty energy sector and other carbon intensive industries should be upskilled and reskilled, as they otherwise face decreased job flexibility, a shift into lower-paying and often precarious positions, or job losses** (Asia Feminist Coalition 2023). However, this must entail a concentrated focus on training, retaining, and incentivizing women to actively participate in the low-carbon transition, rather than merely offering skill programs or micro-entrepreneurship opportunities which push women to “empower” themselves through a narrative of self-sufficiency.

Yet, conventional approaches on skilling women for the low-carbon transition do not address the pre-existing systemic barriers that women face in accessing energy and employment in the energy sector, particularly due to women’s care work responsibilities (Lahiri-Dutt 2023). For instance, **in countries where women are increasingly pursuing STEM degrees**—and therefore are increasingly eligible to be hired in the high-skilled and STEM-focused renewable energy sector—**they continue to be hired at lower rates than men**. In Malaysia, a survey by the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia (ACCCIM) revealed that 41.3% of respondents anticipate that a recent Employment Act amendment to extend maternity leave would negatively impact women’s employability by increasing the marginal cost of employing women (ACCCIM 2023).

Empowering women within the renewable energy sector thus means recognizing the barriers that limit women and girls’ ability to pursue education and work—and especially the barrier of unpaid care work in Asia. **A feminist just energy transition must therefore advance a gender-responsive and care-sensitive policy framework to recognize and reduce the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women**. This framework must include four key components. These components are a robust care infrastructure (including health care, sanitation, and transport); care-related social protections (such as cash transfers); care services (including care for dependents); and employment-related care policies (including family-friendly working arrangements, career breaks, and employer-funded social protection schemes) (ESCAP 2022). There should be a particular focus on improving access to care infrastructure and services in rural and remote areas, where the gender disparity in care work obligations is most stark. This entire policy infrastructure must also be underpinned by strengthened labor rights and enhanced participation for women in labor unions (given women’s low membership in labor unions relative to men), to facilitate decent work conditions free of gender-based violence and harassment (IndustriALL 2023).

Urban women and girls also face limited access to education and labor opportunities relative to men due to their limitations in mobility. Women and girls rely significantly on public transport and non-motorized transport, including walking and cycling, despite frequent occurrences of sexual harassment and violence. **In South Asia, 70% of girls cannot freely decide whether to visit their friends or family due to their perceived vulnerability** (United Nations Children’s Fund 2019). Due to safety concerns, they are more likely to travel with company—children, men, or other women—and are disproportionately affected by potential increases in fares (Zolnik et al. 2018). Across South and Southeast

Asia, alarming percentages of women—often around 90%—have been harassed in public transport and in public spaces (Orlando, Pande and Quresh 2020). The lack of safety poses a significant barrier to women’s mobility and affects their employment and education decisions with further implications for their human capital attainment and labor force participation. In India, for example, women might choose lower-ranked colleges to avoid unsafe travel (Borker 2021). In urban spaces, a just energy transition must therefore include gender-responsive public transportation planning, which would simultaneously address the overreliance on personal vehicles.



Emphasizing a rights-based approach and the gender-based need for ecosystem resilience

A just energy transition must be underpinned by a rights-based approach to energy systems—including the right to access information (in order to facilitate the right to participation in decision-making), the right to justice and redress, and the right to free, prior, and informed consent. Renewable energy development must not come at the cost of community rights—as is the case when renewable energy projects requiring significant areas of land result in land-grabbing practices that displace local people and negatively impact the most marginalized communities, including women.

In Malaysia, the construction of the Bakun dam in Borneo, East Malaysia resulted in large-scale displacement and loss of livelihood for the surrounding Indigenous and local communities. The dam was constructed in a biodiversity hotspot, undermining the area’s ecological resilience and commodifying land that held ancestral and social significance for its inhabitants. Compensation was often inadequate, ineffectively deployed, and took much too long to distribute. The communities that had to resettle became dependent on capitalist structures such as currency and market systems of exchange (such as for food, which they could previously procure freely from the forest and dam area), which was particularly challenging for women who could not access remunerative work in resettlement areas (Cooke et al. 2017). **Rural women were also severed from their access to food crop cultivation for their family’s sustenance, or from the foraging activities that provided them with supplementary income.** This case study demonstrates that a feminist just energy transition must uphold a rights-based approach, in which the people whose lives will be impacted by energy development projects must play a central role in decision-making.⁵

GLOBAL MACROECONOMIC BARRIERS: CLIMATE FINANCE, DEBT, AND INVESTMENT RULES

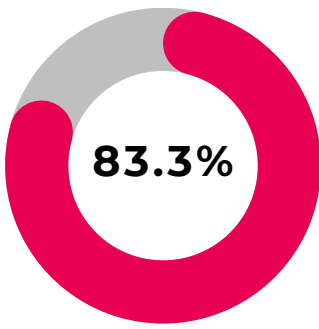


Climate finance and the \$100 billion commitment

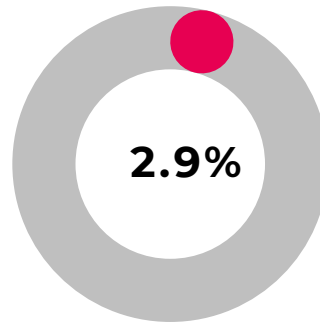
Developing countries in Asia have contributed the least to global emissions driving climate change but are some of the most affected by the climate crisis today. It is critical for developing countries to receive support through climate finance to cope with and manage the effects of the climate crisis, including to facilitate a just energy transition. Developed countries have a United Nations (UN) mandate to provide \$100 billion annually in climate finance to developing countries by 2020. Yet, by 2020, developed countries reported providing only \$83.3 billion in total climate finance in that year.⁶ Very little climate finance (2.9% as an annual average of 2019 and 2020) has identified gender equality as a principal objective, and **only half of all climate financing uses the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s (OECD’s) gender marker to indicate whether they have integrated gender as a policy objective** (Oxfam 2023).

⁵. This information, along with considerations on urban mobility and re-skilling women to participate in the just energy transition, was contributed by Klima Action Malaysia (KAMY), a member of the Asia Feminist Coalition.

⁶. Due to the goal not being met by 2020, the Parties have extended the goal to 2025. The 2025-onwards new collective quantified goal on climate finance will be agreed before 2025, surpassing the current \$100 billion goal.



Developed countries reported providing only \$83.3bn of their \$100bn climate finance commitment in 2020.



Only 2.9% of all climate-related development finance identified gender as a principal objective.

There is also a lack of data on how much financing is channeled into the local level—one of the most critical avenues for ensuring climate finance funds small-scale, women-led energy projects—but options to finance smaller-scale projects are often limited in part because they are considered less favorable investments for generating returns compared to larger-scale projects. Loss and damage also tends to be underfunded, despite this being critical to support women and other vulnerable groups experiencing some of the most harmful impacts of the climate crisis (Oxfam 2023). Without access to quality, grant-based public climate finance, Asian countries must continue to rely on extractive, polluting industries to generate the revenue for the transition or on debt-based instruments which may exacerbate the ongoing debt crisis.

➤➤➤➤➤ The debt-climate-fossil fuel trap

The majority of climate finance from developed countries is provided through loan-based instruments which exacerbate the ongoing debt crisis and further reduce the fiscal space of countries to invest in gender-responsive public services and the just energy transition. When such public services deteriorate to instead service debt burdens, women are relied on by the state as a “shock absorber” to take on even more unpaid care work (Achampong 2023).

Of the countries most vulnerable to the climate crisis, 93% are nearing or facing acute debt distress (ActionAid 2023). **In Asia, the proportion of climate finance disbursed by developed countries through loans is the highest in comparison to other regions**, accounting for over three-quarters of total public climate finance (88%) (OECD 2022). This only further fuels the debt crisis at a time when Asia (like all other regions) has seen escalating numbers of countries entering debt distress since the COVID-19 pandemic, with Sri Lanka being the latest country to default on its foreign debt in April 2022 (erlassjahr.de & Misereor 2022). Debt is a household issue as well as a national one: the lack of sufficient and quality climate finance forces women to turn to extractive loans to support urgent climate adaptation measures or pay for energy efficiency upgrades, coercing women into incurring personal debt (Achampong 2023).

Countries in debt distress are often forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to fund their economic recovery. Yet, as an institution which frequently attaches policy conditionalities stipulating austerity measures to access its loans, the IMF further curtails public investment and thus curbs the quantity and quality of the gender-responsive public services which must be a hallmark of a feminist just energy transition (Debt Justice 2023). **The gaps in social protection created by austerity are often filled by women, who must shoulder an increasing obligation to provide care work** (Oxfam 2022).



PAKISTAN AND THE DEBT-CLIMATE FOSSIL FUEL TRAP OBSTRUCTING A FEMINIST JUST ENERGY TRANSITION



The case of Pakistan is illustrative of the debt-climate trap: in 2022, Pakistan was hit by floods that resulted in total damage estimated at over \$40 billion, caused by monsoonal rains altered by a warming climate and glacial melt. The financial assistance they received amounted to only \$10 billion and mostly came in the form of loans which will have to be repaid. The country then entered an IMF bailout program which was contingent on hikes in gas and electricity prices and cuts in development spending (Singh 2022). IMF conditions thus hindered meaningful recovery for the poorest and most affected by the floods, hitting women particularly hard in a context where they are more likely to suffer casualties and experience a deterioration of their access to education and economic autonomy due to forced migration after the floods (Shahid 2022). By restraining Pakistan's fiscal space, debt and IMF conditions make it even more difficult for Pakistan to invest in gender-responsive public services and the clean, locally appropriate energy that is necessary for a feminist just energy transition.



Fossil fuel interests in international investment law

Global trade and investment rules also restrain countries' abilities to enact meaningful action to shift away from fossil fuel production. Current international investment law allows foreign investors in fossil fuel projects to use the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism to bring claims to international tribunals if their investments are threatened by regulatory measures adopted by host states. The fossil fuel industry has initiated the most ISDS cases across all sectors (with mining coming in second) and has generated some of the costliest pay-outs from states to investors (7 out of the top 10) by making claims through ISDS (International Institute for Sustainable Development 2021). This has allowed the fossil fuel industry to not only use ISDS extensively to protect its assets, but also to hinder the ability of countries to phase out fossil fuels due to fears of arbitration and costly pay-outs. **Research has shown that countries that cancel oil and gas projects could face substantial losses via ISDS, including Indonesia (\$3-4 billion in losses), which disincentivizes them from pursuing a rapid fossil fuel phase-out** (Tienhaara et al. 2022). The inability to phase out fossil fuels will more profoundly impact women compared to men, given that reliance on fossil fuels will only exacerbate the climate crisis and women are one of the most vulnerable populations on the frontlines of the climate crisis. Overhauling the ISDS regime is thus a precondition to enabling countries to pursue a feminist just energy transition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This brief has assessed the urgent need to accelerate a feminist just energy transition in Asia. Working towards this shift will require a consistent effort to go beyond false solutions—such as those based on extractivist renewable energy projects and corporate greenwashing—which seek to undermine a transition that is truly gender-just. The recommendations outlined here constitute actionable pathways for both achieving the vision we have set out in our key principles for a feminist just energy transition and overcoming the key macroeconomic challenges towards that vision. While a range of stakeholders are targeted in these recommendations, feminist civil society must be central to all decision-making processes relevant to climate, economic, and energy justice and must advocate for the recommendations set out here. Feminist civil society will play a pivotal role in voicing and centering the needs of communities, but especially for the women in Asia that are at the frontlines of the climate crisis and require a dramatic shift in our energy systems.

1. Develop gender-responsive and care-sensitive policy frameworks, including by using gender-responsive budgeting and developing evidence-based gender-disaggregated data.

- Countries should advance evidence-based **gender-responsive and care-sensitive policy frameworks** to better value, recognize, compensate, and redistribute the burden of unpaid care work, including by advancing gender-transformative financial policies.
- Policies must be based on **relevant guiding frameworks**, such as guidance under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- As part of this, governments should set **alternative economic indicators** and targets for Ministries of Finance to determine whether progress is being made towards valuing unpaid care work and human well-being.
- **Gender-responsive budgeting**—which involves analyzing government budgets to ensure that gender equality commitments are being met—will be an essential tool towards this, which must be accompanied by greater resources for developing gender-disaggregated data (e.g. on energy consumption).⁷
- There should also be greater public investment in the development of **accessible and affordable devices, technologies, and domestic appliances** to reduce the time and energy spent by women on domestic chores.
- In public infrastructure investments, **measures improving women’s safety**, such as better signage, enhanced lighting, and expanded CCTV coverage, should be prioritized.
- Achieving this policy framework will be difficult without having those in power—mostly men—on board. **Engaging men in positions of power** in discussions about gender-responsive and care-sensitive policies should therefore be a matter of priority, as well as incentivizing men and boys to engage in care work to redistribute its burden.

2. Mainstream a gender-inclusive approach in the governance (including design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and review) and accountability frameworks of renewable energy projects and transition policies and investments.

- Governments should support **women’s leadership in energy-related decision-making**, policy development, and implementation.
- Governments should adopt a just transition framework in renewable energy policy documents and plans, with clear **gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI)** components.
- By government mandate, renewable energy development plans should all include **gender and social impact assessments**.
- There must be greater **inter-ministerial collaboration** to achieve more meaningful integration of gender across different policy realms, given that issues relating to a gender-just energy transition are cross-cutting across different ministries.
- Large-scale and extractivist forms of renewable energy that result in land-grabbing (e.g., hydrodams) should not in fact be considered renewable energy by policymakers, given their negative social and ecological impacts.
- Women environmental defenders who fight against these projects should be provided with enhanced **access to grievance mechanisms** and protected by anti-Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP) laws.
- In the private sector, **mandatory due diligence processes** should be implemented, particularly focusing on women-centric indicators, to ensure responsible and equitable corporate practices in renewable energy infrastructure and projects.

7. For a toolkit on gender-responsive budgeting, see: Oxfam. (2018) A Guide to Gender-Responsive Budgeting. Oxfam International. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/rough-guide-to-gender-responsive-budgeting-620429/>

3. Scale up international climate finance for climate-vulnerable regions in Asia, prioritizing gender equality and making more consistent use of the OECD gender marker.

- Developed countries mandated to provide climate finance must significantly **scale up their provision and mobilization of grant-based public climate finance**, particularly to the climate-vulnerable and least-developing countries of Asia.
- This finance must be allocated in a way that **prioritizes the most vulnerable, including by prioritizing gender equality**, increasing funding at the local level, and more consistently and transparently using the **OECD gender marker** so there is greater transparency on the valuing of gender in climate finance.
- Climate finance providers should establish **small grant funds** that are particularly accessible for women experiencing financial insecurity, with these funds working towards local, women-led ownership of energy projects and the upscaling of local initiatives including cooperatives.
- Climate finance providers must also **integrate the vulnerability of women and communities into their project valuation**, including the risks that are incurred due to increased debt because of lagging climate action. Indicators should include gender inequity, poverty, debt, and risks to life.

4. Advance debt cancellation for the countries that most need it so that countries have the fiscal space to invest in a gender-transformative just energy transition, while dismantling global economic rules that privilege the interests of fossil fuel investors.

- All creditors must advance **debt cancellation** for the countries in high risk of or at debt distress, particularly for climate-vulnerable and least-developed countries.
- Given that almost all developing country loans held by external private creditors are governed under English and New York law, the **UK and US must advance legislation** to compel the participation of private creditors in debt relief negotiations.
- Debts accrued from fossil fuel projects should be cancelled, so that countries are not repaying investors that have locked countries into climate-harming activities.
- In the long run, it is critical to work towards a **UN-based debt workout mechanism** to provide an equitable framework for debt restructuring so that countries are not pressured to turn to the IMF as a last resort—but in the short-run, the **IMF must commit to a principle of “do no harm”** and be under greater scrutiny for their role in forcing countries to operate under conditions of austerity which prevent them from investing in gender-responsive infrastructure and services.
- These efforts must be accompanied by a reform in the global trade and investment rules that currently curtail countries’ abilities to implement higher environmental standards, including a **dismantling of the ISDS mechanism**.
- The current **intellectual property rights (IPR) regime also must be challenged**, so that Global North countries honor their responsibility to transfer IPR-free technology and access to knowledge and skills to Global South countries to develop low-carbon, locally appropriate energy systems.

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