



The Global Initiative
for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



Learning Lab

Towards a Gender-Just Energy Transition: A Human Rights Based Approach

Outcomes Report

1. Introduction

On 25 February 2022 a small group of about 25 civil society organizations with diverse backgrounds working on the women's rights and gender equality and environmental and climate justice fields participated on the *Learning Lab Towards a Gender Just Transition: A Human Rights Based Approach*. The event aimed to:

- Collectively identify the key gender impacts of current decarbonization policies and frameworks in different contexts and conceptualize how a feminist renewable energy transition could look like in practice.
- To strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations to mainstream gender into their approaches to just transitions using the human rights framework as key guiding tool, and
- Facilitate cross-movement building breaking down silos between the feminist and the environmental movement.

The present document aims to synthesise the main contributions and insights provided by the participants during the event, as well as to highlight how we can collectively build on this rich discussion to set key milestones for collective action.

2. Rationale

Just transition movements have been gaining traction in the last few years to embed social concerns in efforts harnessed to address the climate emergency and the broader environmental emergency. By bringing together a wide diversity of stakeholders from civil society, academia, corporate and government sectors, just transition movements aim to discuss the equality and social justice dimensions of climate action and sustainable development pathways. However, most proponents of green transition policies do not recognize the human rights implications of the solutions they promote, nor the deeply entrenched power imbalances between genders that tend to be replicated in this context. Furthermore, the wide diversity of stakeholders engaged in discussions on just transitions often have different views and competing interests that might blur the meaning of what a "just-transition" would entail, and which should be the components of a collective narrative with clear principles and guidelines to ensure this framework is able to achieve transformative change.

This Learning Lab aimed to detonate the debate amongst a group of civil society organizations to start identifying the elements of a common agenda that can be translated into effective collective action to drive a gender-just transition aligned with human rights and gender equality principles and developed through bottom-up participatory exercises. The leaning lab also allowed to bridge the feminist and environmental movements by convening representatives of organizations working in



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both fields and spaces to share their views of the risks and opportunities that the energy transition represents for women and girls. The space was thus a mix of experience sharing, capacity-building and strategizing amongst peers, colleagues and friends on how we can move forwards on a gender-just energy transition.

3. Collective analysis

To structure the conversation, the Learning Lab was organized in three main sessions to discuss the key questions to identify the problem, envision potential alternative solutions and effective strategies and tactics to breakdown silos and articulate collective action. Participants took the floor and shared in writing their insights on these issues after a brief presentation by organizing partners to set the framework of the debate.

Question 1: What is holding back a gender-just transition?

The energy transition is one of the most fundamental global transformations to avert the climate emergency and reduce emissions, as well as to create opportunities to provide access to sustainable efficient energy technologies to meet our energy demands. Due to its fundamental role as a key climate mitigation strategy the energy transition is often seen as “inherently good”, but the pressure it is causing on natural resources, land and communities are gaining increasing attention. Moreover, there is an increased realization that we cannot leave behind those who depend on fossil fuels to sustain their livelihoods. The question then is how can we transform our energy model at a system level? We are particularly interested in devising means to ensure the energy transition is deep and just, not only in terms of the type of energy produced, but on the transformative changes it can generate on energy rules and laws of governance and on the alternative development pathways it allows us to envision. The energy transition should allow us to question the dominant economic paradigm based on infinite growth and extraction and imply new human-environment relationships to develop alternative sustainable regenerative economies.

Just transition movements should, therefore, actively dismantle interlinked systems of oppression such as patriarchy, extractives, classism, and racism. In other words, this means adopting a feminist intersectional lens to understand how gender—social norms and attributes ascribed to persons of different genders— creates power imbalances and impacts the possibility of advancing an energy transition that enables full and substantive equality for all. Integrating an intersectional feminist perspective into energy transition frameworks implies looking at the root causes of gender intersectional discrimination to consider how different identities on ethnicity, class, disability, gender identity and sexual orientation, among others, combine to create different experiences of marginalization for different people.

Using this lens, we see that gender inequality is pervasive in the global energy transition. Industries key to the shift to low carbon economies are mostly male dominated; pre-existing energy poverty increases care and domestic burdens mostly performed by women and girls and women also tend to be more dependent on natural resources, land and territories impacted by large-scale renewable energy projects. Structural discrimination against women creates barriers that hinders women’s possibilities to access training and education opportunities to join the workforce of the thriving renewable energy workforce and to meaningfully participate in decision-making.



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context, participants of the Learning Lab shared their views on the factors that are holding back the shift to a gender-just decarbonised future. The contributions of the representatives of CSO's were structured to reflect different levels of analysis and go beyond the immediate impacts of gender inequality to look at the more profound and engrained patterns, structures and collectively and personally held beliefs that create barriers for the advancement of a gender-just energy transition. The key points raised by all participants are synthesised in the following table:

Symptoms/Practical evidence	Patterns	Structures	Beliefs
Women often do not participate in decision-making processes in the energy sector and within their communities.	Care and domestic work mostly performed by women and girls hinder their possibility to exercise their rights to education, work, health, and participate in decision-making.	The prevailing economic paradigm that prioritizes profit over human and environmental well-being.	The pervasive and near-universal belief that land and property is not an arena for women - and the relationship of this belief to the patriarchal notion of women as chattel (more subtle in some societies, but still vestiges even in Western countries).
Persons of different genders are not equally represented in STEM, which are key to build capacities and participate in the energy transition.	Energy technology use and acquisition often reproduces gender inequality. The technification of processes can marginalise women if not mainstreamed with a gender perspective.	There is a lack of intersectional feminist politics in the economic decisions of State authorities.	Assumptions about literacy (including digital literacy) of different people when designing energy solutions.
Developers of large-scale renewable energy projects often resort to land grabbing disproportionately affecting women and girls who are more dependent on land and natural resources to sustain their livelihoods.	There is lack of gender disaggregated data on the impacts of energy projects and policies, as well as on the effects of energy poverty.	Transnational corporations have the power to effect low tax rates and other fiscal benefits (for the wealthy and for corporations), and to gain overwhelming political and economic control with little accountability, and to control the narrative (trickle down, job creation, xenophobia).	The belief that women do not have specific energy needs according to their context and the assumption that they are unable to lead local or public policies.
Women and girls face unequal access to	The strong economic dependence on fossil fuels and the consequent	Centralized and male-dominated power structures that do not	Any emissions reducing policy is considered to be

education and other key public services.	devastating impacts on women in the territories.	foster democratic governance structures.	positive regardless of its human rights impacts.
Women are underrepresented in land ownership and thus their perspectives are not envisaged in land use agreements, compensation, and relocation schemes.	Patterns of unequal energy consumption that reproduce gender inequalities in the access to these resources.	Extractive policies based on ever expanding economic growth that increase energy demands and foster the endless extraction of natural resources.	Women have internalised doubts about their knowledge, skills or abilities.
Women expected to perform care and domestic work without recognition or support.	Even when legal frameworks guarantee women's equal rights to land, these rights are often not implemented in practice. And customary and indigenous rights especially are rarely legally recognized - women within these communities have secondary rights and experience vulnerability and marginalization.		Deeply entrenched gender roles and stereotypes that pre-define women's role and contributions as reserved for domestic and caring responsibilities away of strategic decision-making and male dominated sectors.
Women do not have equal access to finance for the development of renewable energy solutions.			The idea that competition instead of cooperation and solidarity should prevail in the organization of economic systems and institutions as a mean to foster productivity and efficiency.
Widespread S/GBV, including as a result of women trying to claim their rights to decision-making in all spheres, especially related to rights to land and natural resource management.			The generalized assumption that decarbonization is enough, without enough focus on thriving, protected ecosystems.

How could a human right respecting framework lead to a gender just transition?



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transition from fossil fuel to renewable energy opens a unique opportunity to tackle the challenges identifies and advance democratic governance, gender equality and the protection of local ecosystems. The energy transition is thus not only a technical transition from one form of energy to another but a transformation from a centralized energy system that concentrate power relations to a decentralized energy system that can provide greater opportunities for people, specially marginalized groups, to participate in decision-making and rebalance power relationships. Renewable energy provides with the opportunity to produce energy in the same place where energy is needed. This allows to have participatory energy systems that empower people to act as producers, users, investors, employees, decision-makers and sellers of sustainable energy resources and solutions. To advance a gender-just transition it is critical, in particular, to empower women, low-income and marginalized communities to act and take control of their energy resources.

To achieve these aims, we know that transitioning from one model to the other does not necessarily ensure that the energy system will be more just, equitable or gender transformative. One of the essential tools that we can leverage and use to ensure the transition embeds gender equality and social justice is the human rights frameworks, which provide legal obligations, standards and institutional frameworks that can help us guide this shift. In this line, it is essential to prioritize the **right to equality and non-discrimination** to ensure the energy transition distributes the costs, as well as the benefits of this global transformation. In this sense, providing access to renewable technologies to all is paramount, but also ensuring access to education, health, land, and finance. We need to ensure women have access to all the critical assets for the energy transition, which are not reduced to the provisioning only of access to renewable energy technology.

In addition, in line with the human rights framework, we need to create **participatory mechanisms** for all groups, especially for women and low-income households to have a say and take part of energy decision-making. We have found that, for instance, gender-just renewable energy communities can provide for participatory, solidarity and cooperative arrangements that empower women to take leading roles in the management, provisioning, and distribution of sustainable energy. This alternative energy arrangements allows to build trust and increase social acceptance of new energy technologies to drive the transition faster and more effectively at the community level.

Accountability is also a key principle derived from the human rights framework that allows to create institutions and processes that are responsive to the needs of women and communities. Fostering democratic governance and accountability in energy systems allows us to address the needs of the people the energy system intends to serve.

In this context, the question is how would a gender-just transition look like in practice? In our view, it should be an energy transition that protects the climate and local ecosystems, alleviates poverty, creates jobs, challenges gender roles, fosters reduced energy consumption and energy efficiency, as well as improves welfare and strengthen equality for all without discrimination.

After this brief introduction, participants of the Learning Lab were divided into three break-out groups to conduct discussions on how they imagine feminist alternatives that can foster rights aligned sustainable energy solutions. For this conversation, we once again used a model to deepen the analysis on gender-just transitions though a multilevel lens that considered the symptoms/



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practical evidence of promising gender-just energy solutions to then move towards the alternative patterns, structures and ideas that can lead to transformative energy frameworks that place women’s voices and needs at the heart of the global energy transformation. The following table compiles some of the key insights and brainstorming provided by the participants during the event:

Symptoms /Evidence	Patterns	Structures	Beliefs
Energy communities take gender and social justice into account and in their business model	Local, context, and decentralized deployment of renewable energy technologies addressing the real needs and priorities of the communities.	Recognize access to sustainable energy as a human right.	Develop narratives that place energy as a holistic part of livelihoods, especially for those in rural and indigenous communities and informal settlements.
Female energy ambassadors sharing their expertise, experience and interest with neighbours and other community members.	New auction models for renewable energy projects considering communities, women, vulnerable groups.	The framework provided by the CEDAW gives space to work on energy equity and climate change through resource rights.	Talk about energy as a service rather than a commodity.
Involve women and gender-perspective groups / local communities in the decision making positions.	Re-territorialise decision-making to make it more responsive to local energy needs.	Decentralize energy provision.	Belief that human rights institutions (at global and national levels - i.e., national human rights institutions) are worthy of investment.
Foster sustainable energy business models based on gender and social justice.	Encourage all, particularly girls, to explore STEM careers/jobs - foster key role models.	Promote an agrarian reform that rethinks the issue of land ownership and equality to foster more cooperative and democratic ownership models.	Replace neoliberal economics narrative with an ecofeminist narrative.
Foster coherent policies, e.g. in Bulgaria, cooperation of Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Energy with water commission provide low income populations with secure energy and water supply.	understanding digital literacy and designing it to be gender sensitive rather than gender neutral.	Include gender balance requirement for governance bodies in statutes.	Challenge the directing of renewable energy to sustain our current fossil mode of unsustainable energy use.

Investment in production of gender-disaggregated data on land and natural resource rights and secure tenure, including as related to renewable energy investments, ecosystem protection and restoration, and sustainable livelihoods.	Foster practices that create spaces for mobilisation and empowerment of women in all their diversity.	Map the gender-specific requirements or needs when designing interventions or strategies.	Decarbonizing the economy means going through a feminist and care economy, offering a structural change in labour gaps.
Encourage and support equal access to education and professional development.	Creation of safe and inclusive spaces for everyone that are context specific.	Development of economic policies that support energy cooperatives and communities to access funding for renewable energy.	Women tend to be either seen as virtuous or vulnerable within the energy transition, rather than as active participants with agency. That needs to be strengthened.
Take gendering of technology into account when implementing new energy technologies	Programmes that build access to legal aid, so that women can formally exercise their rights.	Strengthening design and policy implementation that respects the right to a clean, safe and healthy environment for all.	Recognize, revalue and redistribute care burdens.
	The discussion of energy transition is not placed in rural communities, it is necessary to generate key information for women and popularize the debate in these contexts.	A human rights approach fundamentally acknowledge the power of the marginalised and works within frameworks of recognises, respecting and upholding those rights. So it is important to be acknowledged within the just transition framework.	Question assumptions about the purposes of energy production and use, as well as on who is controlling the processes.

How can we create spaces to break down silos and promote collective action?

After analysing the challenges and potential solutions, we moved forwards to consider how we can build collective action to drive a gender-just energy transition. Feminist theory and practice have for a long time highlighted the critical need to create bonds of trust and solidarity, as well as to develop spaces to exchange, grow and learn from each other to achieve transformative change. These collective spaces are essential to instil a sense of entitlement and empowerment for communities and individuals to exercise their rights, which is difficult to obtain in isolation. The



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sense of empowerment that arises through pooled resources, skills and knowledge also fosters stronger and more effective advocacy approaches to drive a gender-just energy transition. Building collective action help us to rely in our strengths, address our weaknesses and find innovative and effective ways to challenge gender-blind policies and frameworks, as well as to identify promising feminist alternatives.

To this end, it was highlighted the role that the international human rights framework can play as an effective tool that can be mobilised and leveraged to build collective action and guide the global energy transition. The obligations, standards and principles envisaged in the human rights framework are broad, but also sufficiently specific and flexible, to adapt them to different contexts and address a most essential well-being and social justice needs. Most importantly, they allow us to establish a common language between and across constituencies, individuals, and communities to push for a feminist energy alternative narrative—one that can challenge the fossil fuel extractive male-dominated energy paradigm.

In this light, for this final session participants of the Learning Lab were asked to share a few thoughts thoughts on the main strategies, activities and tactics to move from the barriers holding back a gender-just energy transition discussed in the first session to the solutions envisaged on the second session of the event. The ideas and inputs shared by participants are compiled and ranked as follows according to their relevance and time sensitivity:

Key strategies, tactics and activities to advocate for a gender-just transition

Priority 1

- Build a network of partners with common interests and objectives.
- Breakdown silos and bridge environmental with feminist organizations.
- Map the networks of participating organizations/we as individuals are already a part of networks. This can help us understand how we are already aligned/co-engaged.
- Sharing promising practices, lessons learned, and alternative gender-equal energy models to develop alternative feminist narratives.
- Promote feminist values of sustainability (ecofeminist principles) in all spheres and advocacy spaces- in politics, education, technology development, etc.
- Develop informative and capacity-building tools on gender-equality mainstreaming for organizations working on the energy transition.
- Develop collective action at the CSW66.
- Foster participatory research action to identify feminist alternative solutions that can inform advocacy strategies.
- Organize another Learning Lab with a “next steps” agenda.
- Expand understandings on “gender-just transitions” to identify its key elements.
- Protect women that are now leading their communities in making more just energy transitions

Priority 2

- Reaffirm the need for dialogue and partnerships between climate scientists and communities to combine local realities and priorities with scientific knowledge to produce gender just transitions.

- Generate strategies to facilitate and detonate debate at the local level that can, in turn, inform decision-makers.
- Share eco-feminist approaches to foster more equal and less energy consumption while pursuing social targets.
- Taking part in G20 Presidency in the C20 WG to voice out urgency on health, gender, human rights, environmental climate justice + energy transition.
- Create a collective space-process with elected women and feminist organisations and movements aiming to work on a common agenda for COPs and regional political spaces.
- Identify key actors in positions of power who are aligned with an ecofeminist economic framework.

Priority 3

- Use social media to create a critical mass on gender and climate change using short and accessible messages.
- Typify the priorities or problems in gender and climate contextualized in each region Asia, Africa, Latin America, etc., to work on relevant solutions.
- Develop appropriate language to communicate the gender-just transition to different audiences.
- Engage with the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change

4. Prospective

Building on this learning experience, key organising partners will aim to strengthen the analysis, the collaboration and the advocacy strategies to:

- Collectively draft a first set of common principles that can help build and guide collective action to advance a gender-just transition. We will invite a small group of close and like-minded partners to contribute to the development of this document to progressively set a common advocacy agenda to identify what brings us together. As part of these efforts, we will convene periodic meetings, establish an online platform to share resources on key issues relevant to a gender-just transition and will set-up a mailing list to share news and stay in close communication.
- Jointly with partners we will continue to foster spaces to learn from each other, strategize, and deepen our understandings on a gender-just energy transitions and the interlinkages between climate, energy, and women's rights. We will aim to engage in research projects to bridge the gaps in knowledge in this field through participatory methodologies informed by the experiences and contributions of marginalized women and communities at the ground level. Special focused will be placed on identifying feminist alternative solutions and promising experiences that challenge the fossil-fuel extractivist male-dominated and market-based energy model.
- We will invest efforts in bringing together leading experts, activists, community members and civil society organizations to progressively develop and shape a collective narrative with a clear set of principles and guidelines based on the human rights framework, as well as on community experiences and demands. This narrative will be informed from the perspectives



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women most disproportionately affected by the impacts of the dominant energy paradigm and participating in the frontlines of the struggle towards a gender-just transition.

- Finally, we will collectively seek for opportunities to inform and influence key decision-makers at the international and local levels. We will develop key advocacy tools based on our common narrative and foster spaces to allow representatives from local civil society organizations and struggles to share their views and experiences with policymakers. We will seek to push the frontiers of the human rights framework so it addresses the energy, gender and just transition nexus as a key human rights concern.