



OJTA

Operationalising a Just Transition in Africa

OPERATIONALISING A GENDER- JUST TRANSITION IN AFRICA

**LESSONS FROM GLOBAL SOUTH
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
(SDG) IMPLEMENTATION**

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INTRODUCTION

As the global community accelerates efforts toward a low-carbon future, the concept of a just transition has emerged as a cornerstone of climate and development policy. Yet, despite its growing attention and increasing traction, particularly in the global North, examples of the operationalisation of just transition principles remain in their infancy. In the global South, this is characterised by the challenge of integrating gendered dimensions of justice in just transition policies. Herein, women continue to be marginalised in energy discourse, policy design, and sectoral employment, resulting in skewed outcomes that fail to address the full spectrum of social and economic justice.

Operationalising a gender-just transition in the global South is not merely about adapting Northern models but requires a fundamentally different approach. It demands systemic transformation that addresses intersecting inequalities, reimagines governance, and prioritises social justice alongside climate action.

While both regions share the goal of inclusive, low-carbon futures, the starting points, needs, and capabilities diverge sharply, requiring tailored strategies and frameworks rooted in local realities. To realise a truly gender-just transition, it is essential to interrogate the intersection of gender and justice through the lenses of distributive, recognition, and procedural justice. This requires moving beyond top-down frameworks and embracing bottom-up policy approaches that empower local actors, especially women, as agents of change. Lessons from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to inclusive governance and community-led development, offer valuable pathways for bridging the gap between policy ambition and real-world outcomes.

While this paper does not claim to close that gap between global North and South models of a gender-just transition, it does offer an important starting point by outlining the initial building blocks of such a framework, drawing from concrete case studies in developing countries. These country experiences highlight how gender can be meaningfully integrated into energy transitions, labour restructuring, local climate adaptation, and social protection systems. In doing so, the paper identifies common principles, enablers, and policy entry points that can inform the development of a future, Africa-specific framework for gender-just transition—grounded in the continent’s social, economic, and institutional realities.



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CONTEXTUALISATION

As with many internationally determined commitments, the translation of global goals into national frameworks often results in high-level, broad policy approaches. However, the realities these goals aim to address differ significantly on the ground, with this disconnect being especially evident between developed and developing countries in the case of a just energy transition. In developed countries, policies primarily focus on encouraging opportunities for women in energy technology and innovation (Ngum & Kim, 2023). In developing countries, on the other hand, where energy access is the fundamental challenge, frameworks focus on issues such as time poverty, energy access and women's health and wellbeing (Prebble & Rojas, 2017).

While many countries are beginning to embed just transition principles into climate and development policies, the degree to which gender equity and intersectionality are integrated varies significantly across political, economic, and institutional contexts. For the global South in particular, evidence suggests that a truly gender-just transition must balance top-down coordination with bottom-up empowerment. While large-scale, multisectoral shifts are necessary, they must be complemented by processes that give agency to those most affected, particularly women and local communities (Strambo et al., 2024). This highlights the importance of the procedural dimension of justice: ensuring that decision-making processes are inclusive, transparent, and participatory.

Intersectionality adds another layer of complexity to the transition, especially in the African context and South Africa in particular. Here, gendered impacts of the transition are amplified by differences in race, class and geographic location, access to education, and historical marginalisation, compounding vulnerabilities and shaping how different groups experience both the burdens and benefits of the energy transition. The high levels of income inequality in most developing countries, including South Africa, only exacerbate the gender inequalities and deepen the structural barriers faced by already marginalised groups. Therefore, achieving a gender-just transition in the global South requires acknowledging these distinct contextual realities, rather than applying frameworks conceptualised in the global North.

For example, development priorities and energy access differ markedly and , and labour markets in the global South are structurally distinct with large informal sectors predominantly occupied by women. A gender-transformational approach must therefore address energy access, unpaid care burdens and livelihood resilience.



Moreover, civil society in the global North tends to be more organised and resourced. In contrast, African countries must focus on building voice and agency, beyond legislative and policy reform, to enable women to influence directly decision-making more directly. This is clear when looking at Africa's energy sector which remains largely male-dominated, with systemic barriers hindering women's participation in policymaking, implementation, and the technical workforce. To bridge the gap between policy intention and tangible outcomes, implementation research is essential. This approach helps uncover why well-intentioned policies often fail to deliver on the ground and identifies strategies to improve execution. In South Africa, for instance, the Just Transition Framework, describes broad socioeconomic measures and energy system transformation. However, the discontent between national and local priorities presents a challenge in the application of such frameworks. Local actors face distinct challenges that are often overlooked in later stages of this top-down policy development approach (Strambo et al., 2024). These include employment, access to basic services, poverty alleviation, climate adaptation, food security, and public health infrastructure. As such, despite initial recognition of these priorities, there is a growing disconnect between policy design and implementation (Strambo et al., 2024).

Finally, it is important to note that Africa's youth demographics make operationalising a just transition fundamentally different from developed nations due to the continent's unique population structure and socio-economic context.

With over 60% of Africa's population under the age of 25, the region faces an urgent need to create inclusive, future-oriented policies that address youth unemployment, education gaps, and informal labour markets (UN Economic Commission for Africa, 2021). In contrast, developed nations such as Japan or Germany are grappling with ageing populations and shrinking workforces, which shifts their just transition priorities toward retraining older workers and managing industrial decline (U.S. House of Representatives, 2020).

Africa's youth bulge presents both a challenge and an opportunity. If harnessed effectively, it can become a demographic dividend that fuels innovation, entrepreneurship, and green growth. However, without adequate investment in education, skills development, and youth-friendly employment policies, it risks becoming a source of instability and social unrest (U.S. House of Representatives, 2020). This demographic pressure means that Africa's just transition must be more holistic—integrating climate resilience with social equity, gender justice, and intergenerational inclusion. Unlike developed nations, Africa must simultaneously build foundational systems (e.g., education, healthcare, infrastructure) while transitioning to sustainable economies, making the operationalisation of a just transition more complex but potentially more transformative (UN Economic Commission for Africa, 2021).

As momentum for just transitions accelerates across Africa, it has become increasingly clear that gender equity must be central to climate and development planning. This paper explores how gender justice can be embedded into just transition policies, highlighting the importance of co-creation, local contextualisation, and implementation research to ensure that policies are not only inclusive in design but transformative in impact

Operationalising a Gender-Just Transition

While global frameworks offer useful guidance for integrating gender into specific policy instruments like Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategies (LT-LEDS), and labour-market interventions a significant gap remains: to date, there is no comprehensive, standalone framework tailored to the African context that guides governments in operationalising a gender-just transition across sectors and scales. Through an exploration of African case studies and examples from the global South we have the opportunity to examine how gender-sensitive planning, participatory monitoring, and adaptive learning can operationalise a just transition that is equitable, resilient, and rooted in lived realities.

IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCES IN SOUTH AFRICA AND KENYA

South Africa has pioneered gender integration in just transition planning, including gender-responsive monitoring frameworks, community engagement in coal regions, and dedicated finance for women-led green businesses. South Africa was the first country to embed Just Transition considerations into its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and has since adopted a formal Just Transition Framework. South Africa has gone beyond general climate policy to embed gender equality into its operational Just Energy Transition framework. The Jobs First Project—led by the Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency and backed by the African Development Bank, CIF, AFD, and others—features a dedicated Gender Desk, inclusive stakeholder workshops, and mapping of women-led enterprises.

While South Africa's just transition framework is one of the most advanced on the African continent, it also presents a prime example of some of the dynamics and challenges other African nations may face in operationalising a just transition.



Insight from South Africa's experience in particular brings to light the importance of bridging the gap between policy design and implementation, especially when bottom-up approaches are foundational to success. While implementation is still in early stages, the inclusion of gender-responsive social dialogue, community engagement mechanisms, and commitments to disaggregated monitoring and evaluation are early signals of an institutional willingness to operationalise a gender-just transition. However, challenges remain, particularly around capacity, financing, and aligning local-level implementation with national-level strategies.

Similarly, Kenya has also made positive strides towards the goal of a gender-just transition in both its NDC, which recognises the gendered impacts of climate change and its Energy Transition and Investment Plan (ETIP) which promotes clean cooking technologies. However, like in the case of South Africa there is a worrying gap between the intention of the county's policy design and its implementation. This can be seen in the limited mention of how these policies will practically ensure the intersectional nature of women's realities, such as unpaid domestic burdens, financial constraints and meaningful participation will be addressed. In addition, there is a seeming lack of tracking metrics for women's participation, and the recognition of on the ground realities of women.

Nevertheless, South Africa and Kenya's experience underscore that centring gender equity from the outset of national transition planning is essential for inclusive and durable outcomes. Still, it also demonstrates the risk and importance of moving beyond the superficial adoption of gender-language without substantive change in power structures.

These SDG localisation tools are especially important in the African context, where there is a vital need to engage communities, especially women and marginalised groups, in every phase of policy development including planning, design, execution and monitoring phases. As such, lessons from SDG implementation efforts can be adapted to support just transition efforts, ensuring that local actors are not only consulted but also empowered to shape outcomes. The convergence of specific SDG's and just transition principles can be understood as follows:



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LESSONS FROM SDG IMPLEMENTATION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has catalysed important policy shifts and implementation practices across the Global South. Although progress toward the SDGs remains uneven, several countries have made measurable advances in integrating inclusive, cross-sectoral, and participatory development approaches. These experiences provide valuable lessons for the operationalisation of the just transition, particularly where gender justice, equity, and systems transformation are central concerns.

SDG 5 | GENDER EQUALITY



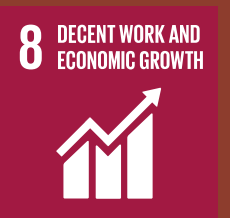
Gender equality is central to a gender-just transition. It calls for the elimination of gender-based discrimination and the empowerment of women in all spheres of life (UN). In Africa, where the energy sector remains male-dominated and women face systematic barriers to participation, lessons from the implementation of this goal provide successful examples of efforts to dismantle those barriers and promote women's leadership in climate and energy decision-making. Furthermore, it sheds light on the need to address unpaid care burdens and ensure that transition policies do not exacerbate existing gender inequalities.

SDG 13 | CLIMATE ACTION



Climate action reinforces the urgency of addressing climate change through inclusive and equitable strategies (UN). A gender-just transition recognises that climate impacts are not gender neutral and that women, particularly in rural and informal sectors, are disproportionately affected. As such, SDG efforts that address both SDG 13 and SDG 5 may provide useful insights on how gender-responsive climate action can ensure that adaptation and mitigation efforts reflect the differentiated vulnerabilities and capacities of women and men.

SDG 8 | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH & SDG 10 | REDUCED INEQUALITIES



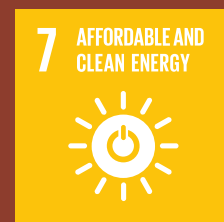
SDG 8 and SDG 10 converge with the economic dimensions of a just transition. In Africa, where informal labour markets are dominated by women, learnings from initiatives that address these goals highlight the importance of creating inclusive green jobs and ensuring that economic restructuring does not leave vulnerable groups behind. Herein, the combination of these SDGs speak to the imperative of a gender-just transition to promote decent work opportunities for women, address structural inequalities in labour market access and social protection.

SDG 3 | GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING & SDG 6 | CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



SDG 3 and SDG 6 together intersect with gender-just principles by recognising the health impacts of environmental degradation and energy poverty. In the global South, women's health is often disproportionately compromised by indoor air pollution, lack of clean water and inadequate sanitation, all of which are being exacerbated by climate change. Learning from how these issues can be addressed through a gendered lens could bolster how transition policies contribute to improved health outcomes and resilience.

SDG 7 | AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



Affordable and Clean Energy is particularly relevant in Africa, where over 600 million people lack access to electricity and energy access is a gendered issue (World Bank, 2024). Advancing SDG 7 through a gender lens supports the principle of distributive justice by ensuring that energy investments and infrastructure benefit those most in need, especially women in underserved communities.

SDG 16 | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS & SDG 17 | PARTNERSHIPS FOR GOALS



SDG 16 and SDG 17 support the procedural justice dimension of a gender-just transition. Herein, learnings from inclusive governance, transparency, and multi-stakeholder collaboration reinforce the need for a participatory process that empowers communities to shape just transition outcomes.

Building on the theoretical foundations and implementation challenges discussed above, the next section brings to light practical examples from SDG implementation that can be used to guide how a gender-just transition can be operationalised across diverse contexts in the global South.

CASE STUDIES & IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAYS

In the previous section, the disconnect between policy ambition and local realities underscored the importance of bottom-up approaches to the implementation of just transition principles. Grounding these sentiments in lessons from SDG implementation in the global South, this section explores how these challenges have been overcome and which principles successfully translated into action. To further distil these lessons for the purpose of operationalising a gender-just transition, these lessons will be categorised according to three distinct phases of policy implementation: planning, design, execution and monitoring and learning.

PLANNING PHASE STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT & GROUNDWORK

A gender-just transition begins with inclusive planning, and SDG implementation has shown the importance of grounding policy in local realities. Gender-sensitive baseline studies and stakeholder mapping, tools commonly used in SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 13 (Climate Action), have helped tailor climate adaptation strategies to community-specific needs. Through examples of the implementation of SDG 5 and 13 in India, Uganda and Morocco, we are shown useful examples of how to integrate participatory planning and gender sensitive assessments to tailor climate adaptation to local realities. Tools used in these cases emphasise the importance of gender-sensitive baseline studies and stakeholder mapping to understand local needs and dynamics.



ODISHA'S CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Integrating Indigenous Knowledge and Gendered Data Practices

In Odisha's Koraput district, Indigenous women led a pioneering climate adaptation initiative by creating "dream maps" that visualised ideal environmental conditions based on historical and current resource data. This locally driven effort surfaced critical climate vulnerabilities such as declining forest cover and water availability and bridged traditional ecological knowledge with formal planning processes (The New India Express, 2025). The initiative not only amplified women's leadership but also informed the State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) 2021–2030, aligning local adaptation strategies with India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and SDGs (Government of Odisha, 2021).

By institutionalising community-generated data and fostering dialogue with local authorities, Odisha's approach exemplifies how Indigenous knowledge systems and gender-sensitive assessments can strengthen climate resilience and policy relevance. This is why gender-just transitions in the Global South must be approached differently from Global North frameworks, which often overlook the cultural, Indigenous, and context-specific dimensions essential to truly inclusive and equitable climate action.



SDG IMPLEMENTATION IN UGANDA

Gender Mainstreaming and Intersectionality in Policy

SDG implementation that centres gender and intersectionality from the start creates better outcomes across all pillars of sustainable development—just as it must be in a just transition. Uganda's SDG localisation strategy prioritised gender equality (SDG 5) in education, health, and economic empowerment, particularly through rural development initiatives.

By disaggregating data and investing in gender-responsive budgeting, Uganda made notable progress in maternal health and girls' education. Similarly, to achieve a gender just transition, gender-responsive finance, policy design, and data systems must be prioritised to prevent deepening the marginalisation of women and girls in climate-vulnerable sectors.



MOROCCO'S RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR

Embedding Gender Equity Through Strategy, Institutions, and Accountability

Morocco's fast-growing renewable energy sector presents another case of the strategic and intentional integration of gender in the country's transition, and a pioneering model for gender equity. The country's national Energy Strategy strategically embeds and grounds gender equity in the implementation of renewable energy. The Women in Renewable Energy (WiRE) initiative paved new paths for women in solar and wind.

Through workshops, mentorships, and technical endorsements, Moroccan women—previously sidelined—started ascending roles as engineers, leaders, and entrepreneurs.

In addition, the Moroccan Agency for Sustainable Energy (MASEN), in collaboration with GIZ and UN Women, initiated gender audits and established inclusion metrics that influenced recruitment, leadership, and stakeholder engagement across flagship projects. Collectively, the institutional frameworks in terms of the national energy strategy, together with the gender audits, lay a foundation for the real application of gender equity in institutional operations and provide the necessary accountability measures through gender audits and gender metrics.

Embedding gender equity into national energy strategies, coupled with institutional mechanisms such as gender audits and inclusion metrics, enables a structural shift toward gender-just transitions and creates accountability pathways for implementation. Morocco's approach to embedding gender equity in its renewable energy transition illustrates a strategic, institutionalised model that moves beyond symbolic inclusion toward measurable impact and structural reform

IMPLICATIONS FOR BROADER POLICY PLANNING AND REPLICATION IN AFRICA

- Gender equity must be embedded in national policy frameworks, not treated as an add-on or project-level feature.
- Accountability tools such as audits and inclusion metrics are critical to translating policy intent into measurable progress.
- Institutional partnerships—between government, donors, and feminist organisations—are vital for scaling gender-just transitions.
- Sectoral targeting (e.g., renewable energy, transport) provides concrete entry points to implement gender-just transition principles.

These examples from India, Uganda, and Morocco demonstrate that aligning SDG principles with gender-just transition goals requires more than policy intent—it demands culturally grounded, participatory approaches that reflect local realities. Whether through Indigenous knowledge systems, gender-responsive budgeting, or institutionalised equity mechanisms, these cases show that inclusive planning rooted in SDG 5 and SDG 13 can lay the foundation for transformative climate adaptation. By centring gender and intersectionality from the outset, countries can ensure that transition strategies are not only technically sound but socially just and locally relevant.

DESIGN PHASE CO-CREATION & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The design phase of policy implementation involves translating insights from the planning phase into actionable policy instruments. As will be brought to light below, lessons from SDG implementation in Mpumalanga, South Africa and Brazil illustrate that co-creation with local actors, especially women's groups, enhances relevance and ownership. In the case of Mpumalanga, we see how, under SDGs 3 (Health), 5, and 16 (Justice), with these approaches, awareness of environmental injustices and gendered health impacts was successfully raised. In Brazil on the other hand, embedding gender into climate policy design (SDGs 13, 5, and 10) ensured accountability and equity. These cases underscore the need for African just transition policies to be co-developed with those most affected, recognising intersectional vulnerabilities shaped by race, class, geography, and historical marginalisation.



SOUTH AFRICA (MPUMALANGA)

Women-Led “Deadly Air” Campaign Influenced Environmental Justice Rulings

In Mpumalanga, South Africa, the “Deadly Air” campaign emerged as a powerful example of community-led environmental justice, with women playing a central role. Spearheaded by groups such as groundWork and the Vukani Environmental Justice Movement in Action, the campaign addressed severe air pollution in the Highveld region, which disproportionately affected socio-economically marginalised communities (Centre for Environmental Rights, 2022).

Women like Promise Mabilo, a community coordinator, led advocacy efforts and provided testimony in legal proceedings, asserting their constitutional right to a healthy environment. The campaign's success was underpinned by evidence-based advocacy, including commissioned health studies and collaboration with medical professionals, which helped build credibility and trust (Centre for Environmental Rights, 2022).

Ultimately, the South African High Court ruled in favour of the campaign, mandating government action to enforce air quality standards. This legal victory validated the lived experiences of women and marginalised groups, demonstrating how bottom-up pressure and inclusive legal strategies can compel systemic change.

The case exemplifies the intersection of gender justice and climate justice, with women leading efforts that reshape environmental policy and governance.

KEY ELEMENTS OF INCLUSIVE CO-CREATION

- **Community-Led Litigation:** Women from affected communities provided testimony and led advocacy efforts, asserting their constitutional right to a healthy environment.
- **Evidence-Based Advocacy:** The campaign commissioned health studies and collaborated with medical professionals to substantiate claims, building credibility and trust.
- **Legal Empowerment:** The High Court ruled in favour of the campaign, mandating government action to enforce air quality standards. This legal victory validated the lived experiences of women and marginalised groups, reinforcing their role in shaping policy

This case exemplifies how the power of community driven advocacy through bottom-up pressure and inclusive legal strategies can compel governments to act, and the importance of evidence-based gender transformative policy design, ensuring that environmental policies reflect the realities of those most affected. It also demonstrates how gender justice and climate justice are intertwined, with women leading efforts that result in systemic change



BRAZIL

Institutionalising Gender-Inclusive Governance for Structural Reform

In Brazil, initiatives like the Monte Serrat Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) project and the She Changes Climate Brazil Network have advanced gender-responsive climate planning through participatory processes (ICLEI South America, 2023). These efforts have advanced inclusive governance by integrating gender equity into climate resilience strategies (ICLEI South America, 2023).

In Santos, São Paulo, the Monte Serrat project involved participatory planning where local women and city officials co-designed EbA measures to address landslides and deforestation.

Workshops employed non-sexist language and explored gendered perceptions of climate risk, fostering mutual understanding and trust. Meanwhile, the She Changes Climate Brazil network brought together women from diverse sectors, including agriculture, activism, and policy, to co-create a national roadmap for COP30. The network supports women leaders through mentorship, access to funding, and policy engagement, linking local action to global frameworks (She Changes Climate Brazil, 2024).

Together, the cases of Mpumalanga and Brazil illustrate how co-creation and gender mainstreaming can transform climate and environmental policy into inclusive, accountable, and context-sensitive instruments. By centring women's voices and recognising intersectional vulnerabilities, these examples show that just transition policies grounded in SDG principles (particularly SDGs 3, 5, 10, 13, and 16) can move beyond symbolic inclusion toward structural reform. They reaffirm that gender equity is not a peripheral concern but a foundational element of effective and just climate governance. Importantly, it outlines why Co-creating gender-transformative policies for a gender-just transition is essential not only to foster local ownership but also to ensure that policies are grounded in context-specific realities— and therefore highlighting why frameworks developed in the Global North cannot simply be transplanted into Global South settings.

EXECUTION PHASE

PROGRAMME ROLLOUT & SERVICE DELIVERY



KENYA

Decentralisation and Localisation as Key Aspects of a Gender-Just Transition Pathway

Kenya provides a compelling example of how decentralised governance, community-driven innovation, and gender-responsive energy access initiatives can collectively support the realisation of a gender-just transition. Although Kenya does not yet have a national just transition strategy, its Climate Change Act (2016) and National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) creates space for integrating gender at both the national and county levels.

In particular, the legal requirement for county climate change plans has enabled gender-responsive action at the local level, especially where women-led civil society organisations (CSOs) and cooperatives are active. This enabled the embedding of gender-responsive priorities more effectively than a top-down national approach. In the same vein, a gender-just transition must leverage devolved governance and empower county governments to design and fund locally relevant, gender-inclusive climate and energy programs.



NEPAL

Women's Cooperatives Led Agroecological Farming and Water Conservation

In Nepal's Karnali Province, a LI-BIRD initiative supported women's cooperatives in developing climate-resilient agroecological villages. These cooperatives engaged in sustainable farming practices, seed banking, and water conservation, while simultaneously building leadership and technical capacity among women (LI-BIRD, 2023).

The initiative emphasised community-led co-creation, with women designing farming solutions based on indigenous knowledge and local needs. This approach ensured relevance, ownership, and sustainability.

Importantly, the program addressed equity across caste and class lines. Studies by ICIMOD revealed disparities in access to water infrastructure, and women's cooperatives in Dalit and Tamang communities mobilised resources to close these gaps (ICIMOD, 2022).

By reducing reliance on chemical inputs and improving water access, the cooperatives enhanced food security, health outcomes, and resilience to climate shocks. This case demonstrates how inclusive agricultural transitions can empower women as stewards of sustainability, while also addressing systemic inequalities in resource access and decision-making.

INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE TRANSITIONS EXEMPLIFIED

- **Community-Led Co-Creation:** Women co-designed farming solutions based on indigenous knowledge and local needs, ensuring relevance and ownership.
- **Equity Across Caste and Class:** The ICIMOD study highlighted disparities in access to water infrastructure between advantaged and disadvantaged caste groups, showing how women's cooperatives in Dalit and Tamang communities mobilised resources to address these gaps (ICIMOD, 2022).
- **Health and Livelihood Benefits:** By reducing reliance on chemical inputs and improving water access, women improved food security, health outcomes, and resilience to climate shocks.

The examples from Kenya and Nepal underscore that effective execution of gender-just transition policies in Africa must be locally grounded, inclusive, and responsive to structural inequalities. Kenya's decentralised governance model shows how empowering local institutions can embed gender-responsive priorities more effectively than top-down approaches, while Nepal's women-led cooperatives demonstrate the transformative potential of Indigenous knowledge in designing sustainable, community-owned solutions.

These cases highlight that for Africa, operationalising a gender-just transition requires not only targeted interventions in energy access and livelihoods but also the recognition and integration of traditional knowledge systems and local governance structures. Doing so ensures that transition efforts are not only equitable in outcomes but also rooted in the lived realities and leadership of women across diverse contexts.

MONITORING AND LEARNING PHASE

ACCOUNTABILITY AND ADAPTATION

Finally, the monitoring and learning phase concludes the process of policy implementation, ensuring that policies remain adaptive and accountable. The proceeding exploration of the implementation of SDG 17 (Partnerships), SDG 5 and SDG 13 offer valuable lessons in participatory monitoring using community scorecards, gender audits, and shared learning platforms. This case is an especially useful takeaway for implementing just transitions in Africa, as when done effectively, this phase represents more than a technical exercise, but a democratic process that builds voice and agency, particularly for women and marginalised groups.



MADAGASCAR, NEPAL, INDONESIA

South-South Cooperation on Renewable Energy & Gender-Sensitive Monitoring

A joint Indonesian-German initiative launched in 2021, South-South Triangular Cooperation on Renewable Energy (SSTC RE), has integrated gender equality and social inclusion into renewable energy implementation across Madagascar, Nepal, and Indonesia. This initiative aligns with SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) (UNOSSC, 2023).

One of its key achievements was the development of a gender-sensitive monitoring framework. This included a Results Framework with specific indicators for gender mainstreaming and a Concept Paper outlining barriers and opportunities for women's access to clean energy. The paper also addressed gender dimensions of energy poverty and climate vulnerability, offering recommendations for policy enhancement and innovation.

The initiative emphasised multi-stakeholder feedback and co-creation, involving government ministries, NGOs, and energy agencies from all participating countries. This collaborative process fostered national ownership, legitimacy of monitoring tools, and continuous learning through peer exchange. Transparency and accountability were promoted through open dissemination of findings, encouraging replication and scaling in other regions.

Additionally, the initiative incorporated digital and distance learning components to strengthen institutional capacity for gender-responsive energy planning. This ensured that monitoring and evaluation were not merely technical exercises but also tools for empowerment and adaptive management.

KEY OUTCOMES FROM THE SOUTH-SOUTH TRIANGULAR COOPERATION ON RENEWABLE ENERGY (SSTC RE)

GENDER-SENSITIVE MONITORING FRAMEWORK

The initiative developed a Results Framework that included specific indicators for gender mainstreaming. One key milestone was the creation of a Concept Paper on Gender Mainstreaming in Renewable Energy, which outlined:

- Barriers and opportunities for women's access to clean energy.
- Gender dimensions of energy poverty and climate vulnerability.
- Recommendations for policy enhancement, program development, and innovation.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK & CO-CREATION

The concept paper was co-developed by stakeholders from all participating countries, including government ministries, NGOs, and energy agencies. This collaborative process fostered:

- Ownership among national actors.
- Legitimacy of the monitoring tools.
- Continuous learning through peer exchange and shared best practices.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND DIGITAL LEARNING

SSTC RE included digital and distance learning components to strengthen institutional capacity for gender-responsive energy planning. This ensured that monitoring and evaluation were not just technical exercises but also empowerment tools for local actors.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The initiative emphasised open dissemination of findings and recommendations. By publishing the concept paper and sharing it across platforms like South-South Galaxy, it promoted:

- Transparency in how gender issues were being addressed.
- Accountability for progress on gender-sensitive energy transitions.

The South-South Triangular Cooperation on Renewable Energy offers valuable insights for operationalising a gender-just transition in Africa. Its emphasis on gender-sensitive monitoring, multi-stakeholder co-creation, and capacity building demonstrates how inclusive evaluation frameworks can strengthen accountability and empower local actors. For African countries, where institutional capacity and civil society engagement vary widely, these lessons underscore the importance of embedding gender equity into monitoring systems—not only to track progress but to adapt strategies in real time. By aligning with SDGs 5, 7, 13, and 17, and fostering shared learning across regions, this initiative provides a replicable model for ensuring that just transition efforts are both responsive and rooted in the lived realities of women and marginalised communities.



Cred. Priyanka Ukabhai

CONCLUSIONS

Operationalising a gender-just transition in Africa requires a fundamental shift from high-level policy ambition to grounded, inclusive, and context-specific action. As this paper has shown, lessons from the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across the Global South offer a critical foundation for this shift. These lessons are particularly relevant in Africa, where the intersection of gender, race, class, geography, and historical marginalisation and a rapidly increasing youth population shapes how different groups experience both the burdens and benefits of climate and energy transitions.

The SDGs, especially SDGs 5 (Gender Equality), 7 (Clean Energy), 13 (Climate Action), and 17 (Partnerships), have catalysed inclusive, participatory, and cross-sectoral approaches that align closely with the principles of a gender-just transition. However, discussed above, translating these global frameworks into meaningful outcomes in Africa requires more than policy alignment. It demands a reimagining of governance that centres procedural justice, empowers local actors, and integrates Indigenous knowledge systems. For example, while energy policies in the Global North often focus on women's participation in innovation, African contexts require a focus on energy access, time poverty, and women's health, issues that are deeply embedded in the lived realities of rural and informal communities.

The case studies explored in this paper from Odisha to Mpumalanga, and from Kenya to Nepal, demonstrate that when women are engaged as co-creators of policy, and when their knowledge and leadership are recognised, transition efforts become more equitable, resilient, and effective.

These examples also show that Indigenous knowledge and community-led data collection can bridge the gap between traditional practices and formal planning, offering culturally relevant solutions that are often more sustainable and widely accepted.

Moreover, the African context demands a transition model that is not only gender-responsive but also intersectional and development-oriented. Labour markets dominated by informal work, limited access to education and finance, and under-resourced civil society actors all point to the need for tailored, bottom-up approaches. SDG implementation has shown that tools such as gender budgeting, participatory monitoring, and decentralised governance can help close the gap between policy design and implementation—provided they are adapted to local realities. In sum, the SDGs provide more than a set of goals—they offer a tested, adaptable framework for embedding gender justice into the heart of Africa's just transition agenda. By drawing on these lessons and centring the voices, needs, and leadership of women and marginalised communities, African countries can move beyond symbolic inclusion toward structural transformation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN AFRICA-SPECIFIC GENDER-JUST TRANSITION FRAMEWORK

A gender-just transition in Africa requires more than adding women into existing models — it demands rethinking the structures, priorities, and financing of transitions to ensure equity, resilience, and inclusion. The following recommendations outline key policy actions to embed gender justice into Africa's transition pathways.

- **Embed Gender Equality at the Core of National Transition Frameworks**
 - Make gender equality a foundational principle, not an afterthought, in all just transition and energy policies.
 - Institutionalise gender equity through clear mandates, measurable targets, and budgeted implementation plans.
 - Establish inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms to ensure gender integration across climate, labour, and energy portfolios.
- **Link Social Protection to Climate and Transition Goals**
 - Integrate gender-responsive social protection systems—such as cash transfers, childcare and eldercare infrastructure, and community health services—into transition and adaptation planning.
 - Build on lessons from Brazil's gender-sensitive social programmes to strengthen resilience among informal workers, women-headed households, and rural communities.
 - Design multi-sectoral transition programmes that reflect the complexity of women's livelihoods and care responsibilities.
- **Ensure Transitions Are Development-Oriented, Not Technocratic**
 - Avoid overly technical or emissions-centric transition models that overlook inequality and social justice.
 - Promote development-driven pathways that prioritise poverty reduction, decent work, and equity.
 - Use participatory approaches to define what “just” means within specific African contexts.
- **Tailor Place-Based and Context-Specific Solutions**
 - Move away from “one-size-fits-all” frameworks.
 - Align transition interventions with local socio-economic realities, resource endowments, and community dynamics.
 - Integrate indigenous and traditional knowledge systems into transition planning.
- **Leverage Local and Devolved Governance for Inclusion**
 - Empower sub-national governments (e.g., counties, municipalities, traditional authorities) as key implementers of gender-responsive transition strategies.
 - Provide capacity-building, fiscal resources, and gender-sensitive planning tools to local authorities.

- **Recognise Women as Transition Leaders, Not Only Beneficiaries**
 - Position women as entrepreneurs, innovators, and workers in green economy sectors such as energy, agriculture, and transport.
 - Support women-led enterprises, cooperatives, and producer networks through access to finance, training, and market linkages
- **Strengthen Gender-Disaggregated Data and Accountability**
 - Address data gaps in sectors such as energy access, employment, land use, and climate impacts.
 - Build national and local systems for gender-disaggregated monitoring and reporting.
 - Institutionalise accountability tools—including gender audits, scorecards, and inclusion metrics—across public and private institutions.
- **Integrate Gender Across Sectors and Policy Silos**
 - Embed gender analysis in land, health, transport, education, and care economy policies, not only in environment and energy.
 - Ensure cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms to support coherent and inclusive policy design.
- **Make Transition Finance Gender-Responsive**
 - Design climate and just transition finance to include dedicated funding streams for gender equality and women-led initiatives.
 - Incorporate gender equity criteria into JETP agreements, green bonds, and donor frameworks.
 - Track gender-responsive finance flows through transparent, public reporting.
- **Centre Feminist and Grassroots Movements in Transition Governance**
 - Recognise and fund feminist, Indigenous, and community-based organisations as co-creators of policy and implementation partners.
 - Protect civic space and ensure meaningful participation of women and marginalised groups in national and local decision-making processes.
- **Design for the Informal Sector and the Care Economy**
 - Acknowledge the informal economy and unpaid care work as integral components of Africa's socio-economic fabric.
 - Channel investment towards formalising, protecting, and upskilling informal and care economy workers as part of just transition plans

A gender-just transition in Africa must recognise that climate action and social justice are inseparable. Embedding gender equity across policies, institutions, and financing mechanisms will not only improve fairness—it will also strengthen resilience, economic inclusion, and the overall sustainability of Africa's transition.

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