



# WOMEN-LED COAL TRANSITIONS

*A background brief providing rationale for a dedicated focus on gender equality and women leadership in planning and implementing successful coal transitions*

// March 2024

## TOPICS

- Gender Equality
- Just Transition
- Social Inclusion

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# 1. BACKGROUND

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**There is an urgent need for a transition away from coal and towards clean energy solutions.** Coal power plants produce a fifth of global greenhouse gas emissions — more than any other single source. Meeting the Paris Agreement’s ambitious goal of restricting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels requires a transition away from coal and towards clean energy solutions. The transition will entail the need for investments in renewable projects that not only protect the environment but also ensure sustainable livelihoods for all stakeholders affected. The type of investments and projects that are envisioned under “Energy Transition” include operations targeting the closure of coal-powered plants, the establishment of new transmission lines, and the adoption of renewable energy sources such as biomass, green hydrogen, wind, and solar.

**The transition from coal to clean energy poses major social, economic, and political challenges, particularly for women, and requires a transformative approach** to promote a sustainable transition. Women, and other disadvantaged social groups, such as Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, minoritised groups, and migrant workers, are disproportionately affected by the transition due to pre-existing gender and socio-economic inequities. Nevertheless, the transition also creates opportunities to challenge deeply entrenched social and gender disparities and restructure prevailing power relationships. To take advantage of these opportunities calls for a transformative approach, built on a deep understanding of the barriers to change and a rigorous and determined effort to address them.



**Climate finance is a tremendous opportunity to address gender and other social inequities because it has the potential to support transformative processes.** It can also bridge the gap in women’s access to finance, which can pose additional challenges when transitioning to a more sustainable economy. Oxfam research shows that only 1.5 percent of overseas climate-related development assistance identified gender equality as a primary objective, and only 0.2 percent of this help reached women-led organizations. According to Oxfam, two-thirds of projects and programs did not consider gender equality in their design, budgeting, or implementation. As such, it is imperative for climate finance to strengthen its support for gender equality and women’s leadership.

**There is a significant opportunity to better integrate gender-smart investments in climate finance.**

According to a 2022 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) report of the Standing Committee on Finance, the volume of climate finance has steadily increased over the last decade, reaching US\$803 B/year.<sup>1</sup> A report of the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) suggests that only 0.01 percent of climate funding supports projects which are specifically addressing climate and gender issues as primary objectives.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the absence of a gender perspective in climate financing at scale fails to align with the guidelines of the Paris Agreement, which emphasize the importance of gender-responsive adaptation in Article 7.2. The incorporation of gender considerations in policy mechanisms has a transformative potential that can lead to stronger social outcomes. Also, investors who prioritize gender equality in their investments can experience improved returns, as well as enhanced effectiveness and sustainability.

**While climate change impacts women and frontline communities adversely, women are key agents of change and, therefore, they must be placed at the center of climate leadership.** The Gender-Smart Climate Finance: The Policy Angle report by 2X Global illustrates the role of women’s distinct perspectives in driving effective climate solutions, as long as they are empowered to participate in climate action and

leadership.<sup>3</sup> Women, particularly those in developing countries, bear a disproportionate burden of climate change’s adverse effects, and yet, they play a crucial role in developing effective and sustainable climate solutions. 2X Global’s report showcases the transformative power of women in climate finance and advocates for a shift in mindset — investing with a gender lens is not only about being inclusive but also about driving effective climate action. Female innovators and entrepreneurs are spearheading disruptive solutions to tackle the climate crisis, and supporting their leadership unlocks new investment opportunities and enhances long-term value.<sup>4</sup>

**The Women-Led Coal Transitions (WOLCOT) grant mechanism was set up under the Climate Investment Funds’ (CIF’s) Accelerating Coal Transitions (ACT) program to foster women’s climate leadership.**

The program aims to test bold and innovative “business unusual” models that intend to enhance women’s representation and leadership in just transition in public, private, civil society, and community institutions.<sup>5</sup> WOLCOT forms a key part of the CIF’s work to support transformational, rapid, and system-wide just transition approaches in the energy sector.<sup>6</sup>

**This paper presents the rationale for the WOLCOT program,** explaining the significance of supporting women’s leadership in institutions addressing coal-to-clean transitions in the energy sector for effective and equitable action.

## 2. GENDER IMPACTS OF COAL TRANSITION

The major gender impacts of coal transition are related to (i) employment and livelihoods, (ii) social protection, (iii) use of land, (iv) increased risk of GBV, and (v) access to infrastructure and services.

Any process of rapid social change affects men, women, boys, and girls differently. In the case of coal transitions, in either coal mining or coal power generation contexts, the impacts on women are typically more severe and less visible than those on men.<sup>7</sup> The most important gender impacts related to the “out of coal and toward renewable energy” transition are analysed below:

### (i) Employment and Livelihoods:

- **Women are often disqualified from employment and development programs aimed at workers who lose their jobs in the**

**mining industry, because they are mostly employed in the informal mining sector, and are, therefore, being deprived of a voice, status, and leverage.**<sup>8</sup> Historically, men have held the majority of formal jobs in the mining sector,<sup>9</sup> while women make up over 40 percent of the informal artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) labor force globally. Despite often performing the least remunerative jobs in the value chain and facing specific health and safety risks,<sup>10</sup> women are not included in the formal benefits packages offered to male workers.

- **Women’s needs and interests related to employment tend to be overlooked.** Due to women’s underrepresentation in formal mining jobs and their concentration in secondary





industries dependent on the coal sector (e.g., hospitality), unions and other worker advocacy organizations may not be fully aware of the effects of closure and transition planning on female workers.<sup>11</sup>

- **Mine closures result in women becoming breadwinners, often through jobs that are characterized by insecurity, low pay, and exploitation.** In response to the layoffs of male workers and the subsequent decrease in household income, women have been compelled to look for income-generating activities, resulting in an increase in female employment rates. However, these jobs were reported to be precarious and insecure.<sup>12</sup>
- **There is an increase in women’s “triple burden” of paid work, unpaid domestic work, and caring responsibilities.**<sup>13</sup> In some countries, existing laws prevent women from formal employment in the coal mining sector. With few alternative employment prospects for women in coal regions, they often find themselves relegated to unpaid work.<sup>14</sup> As mine closures become more common, women are compelled to engage in income-generating activities alongside their existing unpaid work and responsibilities.
- **Women experience employment constraints in the renewable energy sector** due to low female labor force participation in the sector, lack of technical and professional skills, and occupational segregation by gender, gender-insensitive work environment, and safety concerns.
- **Women’s less frequent out-migration due to mine closures compared to men negatively impacts their employment and livelihoods.** Out-migration is a widely documented gendered impact of mine closures that is closely tied to employment and livelihoods. Despite the severe socioeconomic impacts following closures, research in Canada and Australia finds that women are less likely

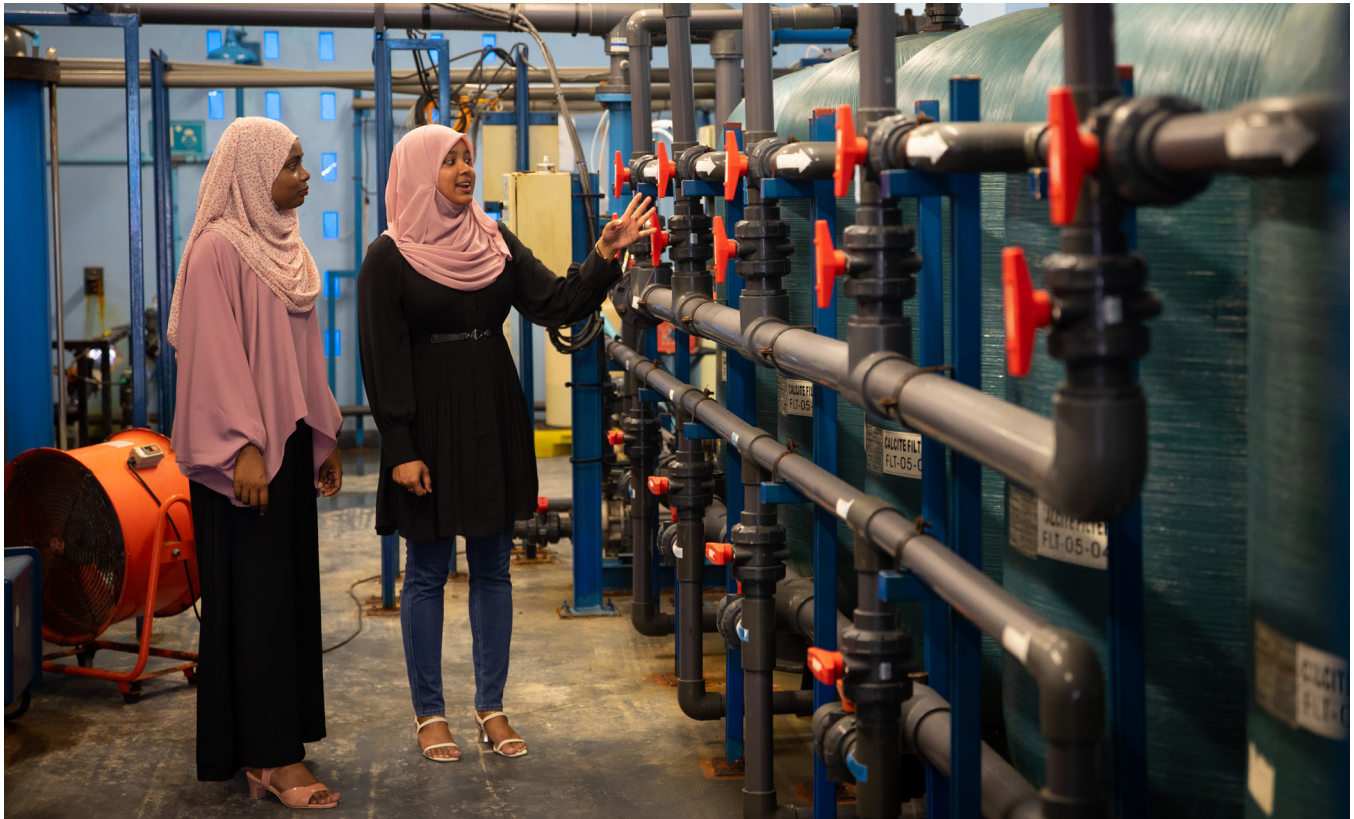
to out-migrate due to a strong sense of attachment to place, their reproductive role, and social networks within the mining communities.<sup>15</sup>

## (ii) Social Protection

- **Women in the informal mining sector, where they predominantly work, are ineligible for social protection related to mine closures.**
- **Women, as informal workers in the mining industry, do not receive disability protection.** In many countries, disability protection and benefits exclude large groups of informal workers. Coal mining is a hazardous occupation that can lead to disabilities and other health risks. However, the mining sector is not likely to employ women with disabilities who were previously employed in manual labor jobs, as they may lack the necessary skills for administrative and technical positions that can accommodate their disability.

## (iii) Use and Ownership of Land:

- **Renewable energy investments can negatively affect local livelihood systems** in the long run and can result in food insecurity, particularly for women.<sup>16</sup> For instance, even though renewable infrastructure projects may create job opportunities at the beginning, their impact on land use affects women disproportionately, as they face challenges in transitioning and adapting to alternative livelihoods.
- **Renewable energy-induced land-loss can impact traditional livelihoods and result in out-migration patterns,** which can increase women’s poverty risk.<sup>17</sup> Women experience difficulties in finding jobs in their new locations, or the out-migration of their husbands to urban areas in search of new jobs leads women who have remained behind to an increased burden of labor.<sup>18</sup> Renewable energy investments that result in land acquisition and



resettlement can further jeopardize women’s access to and use of land.<sup>19</sup>

risk, as well as increased rates of marriage breakdown.<sup>22</sup>

#### (iv) Increased Risk and Incidence of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

- **Women may face increased incidence of GBV as a result of men’s layoffs.** Financial stress and insecurity, increased mental health issues, and substance abuse amongst former mine workers often lead to increased rates of domestic violence, sexual assault, and abuse (of women and children).<sup>20</sup>
- **Women may also bear the consequences of shifting social identities among mine male workers who lost their jobs.** There is a strong association between mining work and dominant blue-collar masculinities, which encapsulates physical strength, toughness, and valor.<sup>21</sup> During mining sector restructuring and retrenchment, this traditional masculinity can become dysfunctional and can result in tensions in the household, an increased GBV

#### (v) Access to infrastructure and Services

- **Women, especially those in charge of households, face additional barriers in accessing clean and modern energy services,** which could positively affect their health, time, labor burden, and ability to engage in productive activities. Despite progress in achieving universal energy access, 770 million people live without access to electricity, of whom 75 percent are in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>23</sup>
- **The demise of infrastructure and social services following mine closures has a gendered impact.** Loss of access to health, education, and child-care services disproportionately impact women and may have long-term intergenerational socioeconomic impacts.<sup>24</sup>



***Low levels of women representation and leadership can be an underlying explanatory factor for the impacts described above.***

**Women’s marginalization is a recurring theme in the literature on the gendered impacts of mine closure and energy transition.**<sup>25</sup> Women are underrepresented in a wide range of decision-making spaces, including policy development, national government, local committees, and community consultations. As a result, their voices, needs, and interests go unheard, misunderstood, and unaccounted for in policies that affect their lives.<sup>26</sup>

**In the mining industry, women’s absence is often cited as a key obstacle to gender-sensitive development and planning.** While host communities may feel disempowered in consultations with mining companies, women face even greater constraints, especially in contexts where they hold lower social status and are more economically dependent on men.<sup>27</sup> This highlights the persistent barriers, complexity, and contingency surrounding women’s participation in negotiations with mining companies. Despite mounting evidence of the significant gender-based repercussions of de-industrialization, economic shocks, and the mining sector’s decline, current research suggests that attention to the gendered dimensions of energy transitions remains largely absent or relegated to an afterthought in planning processes.<sup>28</sup>

**In this context, WOLCOT has taken a strong stance to advocate for women representation and leadership** in energy transition processes, aiming to enhance women’s voices in long term planning, investment decisions, coordinated policy response, and project design. The subsequent sections will outline WOLCOT’s approach to advancing women in leadership; highlight the gaps in female leadership; identify the possible consequences of these gaps; and introduce the key pillars of action needed to address the existing disparities in women leadership and achieve a just transition.



# 3. WOLCOT'S APPROACH TO WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN JUST TRANSITION

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## 3.1 Theoretical Underpinning to WOLCOT's Approach

**Supporting an equitable transition to a low-carbon economy is crucial to address the challenges posed by climate change and ensure an economically and socially just, inclusive, and safe transformation.** The just transition lens makes it possible to identify which areas will feel the impacts of systemic shifts and what actions can be taken to minimize losses and equitably distribute gains. Evidently, previous response to crises, such as COVID-19, has exacerbated inequalities and exposed significant economic risks for communities, sectors, and regions. Furthermore, unprecedented challenges related to the climate change bring issues of just transition into sharper focus.

**Just transition should focus on both the mitigation of social and economic disparities and the empowerment of marginalized groups to participate in transition policy planning and implementation.**

The just transition framework includes a range of principles and actions, including protecting the rights and livelihoods of workers and communities affected by the transition, promoting social equity and inclusion, upholding labor standards and human rights, fostering dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders, and investing in skills development and capacity building to support the transition to new industries and technologies.

**Drawing on this theoretical foundation, WOLCOT has adopted the “transformative approach” to promote**





women's leadership, emphasizing transition-based approaches and interventions to address the root causes of persistent gender inequalities and enable sustainable and transformative change. In this manner, a just transition should enhance women's agency, technical skills, and leadership potential, enabling their participation in the emerging, more inclusive, low-carbon economy. This is in line with other development approaches, such as the UN Women's Feminist Climate Justice Framework for Action.<sup>29</sup> According to the UN's approach, to achieve climate justice, economic and social policies must shift away from prioritizing growth and profits for a select few. This approach highlights that the *representation* and meaningful participation of women in climate action is a critical dimension along with the *recognition* of diverse identities and experiences; the *redistribution* of resources; and reparations for past and future harm.<sup>30</sup>

## 3.2 WOLCOT's Objectives

**WOLCOT's Overarching Goal** is to support women's representation and leadership in just transition processes at (i) policymaking and (ii) project design and implementation. This will also strengthen the equity, efficiency, and effectiveness of the process.

**WOLCOT's Vision** is to enhance women's voice and agency at the (i) community, (ii) mining and energy sector employment; and (iii) green entrepreneurship levels.

- **Women Leaders in Communities:** Ensuring that women's needs, abilities, and concerns are understood and acknowledged in local transition processes; giving women equitable representation opportunities and leadership roles in community consultations and decision-making processes, including processes related to mine closure planning and transition finance; enhancing women's leadership to increase their opportunities for access to productive assets and renewable energy sources, while leveraging renewable technologies to support their livelihoods.

- **Women Leaders in Energy Sector Employment:** Prioritizing women's representation in the mining and renewable energy sector labor forces; cultivating among women the necessary skills to be employed and lead in organizations; ensuring that the energy companies have equitable and non-discriminatory hiring, promoting, and talent development policies that allow women to develop their leadership potential and advance as managers, executives, and board members; fostering a friendly and gender-sensitive working environment that predicts flexible work, parental/care responsibilities, and women's safety.
- **Women Leaders in Green Entrepreneurship:** Preparing women to take on green entrepreneurial endeavors; improving access to assets and transition finance; adopting policies that are conducive to women entrepreneurship and take into account their needs, reality, and structural barriers; ensuring that stereotypes and norms do not prevent women to aspire, initiate, and lead green businesses; opening leadership opportunities for women within networking structures, green business associations, and policymaking forums.

### **The principle of Intersectionality is at the basis of WOLCOT's approach to support women leadership.**

The transition will have a varying impact on different groups of women, depending on factors such as ethnicity, class, race, age, (dis)ability, immigration status, and sexuality. Intersectionality can therefore be understood as *the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power.*<sup>31</sup> In the context of coal transitions, intersectional disadvantage is apparent among two social groups facing disproportionate impacts, namely Indigenous Peoples and individuals with disabilities. Many coal mines around the world operate on the lands of Indigenous Peoples, who often face displacement and threats to their cultural identity, which is usually closely linked to the land.



Even though coal mining is a hazardous occupation and carries heightened risk of injury or developing long-term debilitating health conditions, in many countries, disability protection and benefits are limited and exclude large groups of informally employed workers.

**WOLCOT’s key objectives can be summarized as follows:**

1. Understand the impact of coal transitions on women, including the intersectional disadvantage.
2. Include and empower women in policy dialogues concerning coal transitions.
3. Enable women to develop locally-led solutions through financial and capacity building support.
4. Create opportunities for women’s employment and entrepreneurship during coal transition planning.
5. Build capacity and leadership skills of women impacted by coal transitions.
6. Enhance women’s participation in the clean energy economy through gender-sensitive systems of finance and regulation.

**To achieve these goals and objectives, WOLCOT, has focused on,** first, (i) highlighting the benefits of

women’s leadership at economic, social, and political levels, and, then, (ii) identifying the gaps which prevent stakeholders from deriving these benefits, (iii) emphasizing the potential implications of these gaps, and, finally (iv) proposing critical pillars of action, which can leverage the opportunities presented by just transition to enhance women’s representation and leadership. The subsequent sections of this brief will elaborate on these steps in greater detail.

### **3.3 Benefits of Women’s Leadership**

**Women climate leaders inspire and empower others, challenge traditional gender roles, and drive transformative change toward a more sustainable and just future.** Women bring perspectives, knowledge, and skills essential for effective climate action. Integrating women’s expertise, concerns, and insights into adaptation and mitigation policy making enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of resource allocation, ensuring financial resources are directed toward sustainable and socially-inclusive projects. Studies have shown that companies and organizations with more women on their leadership teams exhibit stronger support for pro-environmental corporate actions, achieve better financial performance, and

generate higher returns on investments compared to those with fewer women. Supporting women leaders to build connections, networks, and movements, and to reflect on effectively challenging patriarchal norms and structures, is pivotal for achieving transformative impacts and accelerating the pace of change.

**Within the just transition discourse, there are three key arguments — economic, social, and political — in favor of women leadership.** In fact, one of the most important levers for transforming gender relations during coal transitions is the possibilities created by social change to advance women’s leadership at all levels. The women leadership’s payoffs include:

- **Economic Benefits:** From an economic standpoint, women’s leadership in the just transition can lead to several positive outcomes related to (a) job creation; (b) diversification of industries; (c) increased productivity and profitability; (d) reduced costs; and (e) economic resilience.
- **Social Benefits:** From a social standpoint, women’s leadership in the just transition can lead to several positive outcomes related to: (a) health and safety, given that women’s leadership can help prioritize public health and safety during the transition; (b) social equity by ensuring that the benefits of the transition are fairly distributed; (c) community engagement, which can ensure the consideration of the needs and priorities of local communities; (d) local knowledge and expertise to inform decision-making that is responsive to local needs; (e) education and awareness regarding the benefits of renewable energy and the negative impacts of coal; and (f) social cohesion through collaboration.
- **Political Benefits:** From a political standpoint, women’s leadership in the just transition can lead to several positive outcomes related to (a) ownership and participation prioritizing the needs of local communities; (b) representation of women’s perspectives in policy and decision-making processes; (c) accountability

of decision-makers for their actions, ensuring gender-sensitive policies; (d) policy innovation through the development of new approaches to energy transition; (e) coalitions across sectors and stakeholders; and (f) increased legitimacy of policies and programs.

### 3.4 Gaps in Women Leadership

**The benefits of women’s leadership described in section 3.3 cannot be fully realized while critical gaps remain at five important levels:**

(i) community; (ii) energy sector employment; (iii) green entrepreneurship; (iv) policy making; and (v) transition finance. Policy making and transition finance represent cross-cutting levels, as inadequate representation at these levels directly impedes women’s voices and agency within communities, the labor force, and the business sector.

- **Community: The lack of women’s representation in communities is reflected by their limited participation in stakeholder consultations and grassroots organizations.** The literature on just transition highlights that gender issues are often not considered in mine closure planning and other energy transition processes. Gender norms and expectations and women’s time poverty due to unequal division of household work prevent them from meaningful participation in community consultation processes.<sup>32</sup> This results in community-level transition and socio-economic regeneration plans that are often gender-blind and do not address specific needs of women. In terms of access to energy technologies, women’s and men’s different decision-making roles inside the household can prevent women from purchasing energy technologies.<sup>33</sup>
- **Energy Sector Employment: Women are underrepresented in the energy sector workforce, including in decision-making positions — a pattern that extends to the renewable energy sector.** Traditionally, the just



transition sectors have been male-dominated, creating barriers for women to attain new jobs and leadership positions in the energy sector.<sup>34</sup> Renewable energy jobs are estimated to increase from 10.3 million in 2017 to 29 million in 2050.<sup>35</sup> Despite this, the renewable energy sector has a female workforce of 32 percent globally, primarily concentrated in administrative positions<sup>36</sup> due to the gender segregation in the energy sector.<sup>37</sup> Stereotypes about women engaging in technical areas such as energy, lack of technical skills due to women's underrepresentation in STEM, and discriminatory policies and workplace environments prevent women from making it to senior leadership roles.

- **Green Entrepreneurship: Women are underrepresented in entrepreneurial endeavors, including the realm of green entrepreneurship.** A growing body of evidence demonstrates the importance of addressing and closing gender gaps in entrepreneurship, yet women's contributions and leadership in climate and green entrepreneurship fields have received little attention.<sup>38</sup> Research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reveals that information and communication technologies are key to build green economies, but only 2.7 percent of women entrepreneurs are starting businesses in this sector compared to 4.7 percent of men.<sup>39</sup> In Canada, for example, only one in ten green tech business founders are women.<sup>40</sup> Climate transition risks are greater for women-led businesses due to persistent gender gaps in the entrepreneurial ecosystem hindering women's access to climate-related opportunities, investment, and venture capital.
- **Policy Making: The persistent marginalization of women in decision-making and policy forums at all levels of government hinders the progress of gender-conscious coal transitions.** The pattern of women's low levels of participation in decision-making spaces is extensively covered in the literature on the



gendered impacts of mine closure and energy transitions.<sup>41</sup> In the energy sector, decision-making bodies at the national level, such as energy planning commissions, continue to be dominated by men. Voices of women, minoritized groups, Indigenous people, and persons with disabilities are not sufficiently considered in policy consultations on energy transitions, and the organizations representing their interests often lack the technical capacity to integrate their inputs into policy processes. This results in gender-blind policies, strategies, and standards related to transitions.<sup>42</sup>

- **Transition Finance: The existing gender gaps in financial access, compounded by women's underrepresentation in the finance sector, further hinder women's opportunities to access transition finance.** A recent study reveals that across major financial services firms, women represent only six percent of CEOs globally.<sup>43</sup> The lack of women leadership in the financial sector, among other things, has negative implications on financial decisions. Climate technology ventures received more than a quarter of all venture capital funding

in 2022, but in emerging markets, only 11 percent of startups that attained seed funding were led by women.<sup>44</sup> Compared to their male counterparts, female investment partners invest in almost twice as many female-led businesses, but, globally, only 15 percent of senior investment teams are gender-balanced and nearly 70 percent are all male.<sup>45</sup> Research by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) estimates that climate business could generate \$23 trillion in investment and create 213 million jobs, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions by four billion tons in developing countries from 2016 to 2030.<sup>46</sup> This is expected to open up significant prospects for new business ventures, however, based on evidence, women are not predicted to benefit equitably.<sup>47</sup>

### 3.5 Potential Consequences of Not Addressing Women Leadership Gaps

**Failure to address women leadership gaps can have severe implications** for gender equality and just transition, perpetuating gender inequities





at the community, sector employment, green entrepreneurship, policy making, and transition finance level. The following implications may be identified if women leadership gaps persist:

**At the Community level:**

- **Underrepresentation of women in consultative and decision-making processes** in policy, project design, and mining closure planning contexts due to negative attitudes towards their leadership skills, fear of harassment, lack of confidence, and time poverty.
- **Women's inaccessibility to affordable energy sources** and clean technologies due to limited purchasing power, neglect of their needs, and discrimination.
- **Ongoing barriers preventing women from deriving benefits from the green and circular economies.**
- **Heightened risk of GBV and sexual harassment** due to tensions stemming from male layoffs and energy projects.
- **A lack of gender-disaggregated data** and statistics obstructs the comprehensive assessment of gender disparities in energy access across the energy value chain.

**At the Sector Employment level:**

- **Discriminatory laws, policies, and social norms,** prevent women from undertaking leadership roles in the economy.
- **A widening skill gap in technical and leadership areas** during the just transition process, reinforcing gender segregation and perpetuating women's challenges in accessing senior positions.
- **Stereotypical beliefs of women's ineptitude** in STEM and technical sectors, limiting their representation in leadership positions in these fields.
- **Negative workplace environments and discriminatory practices based on gender and family structures,** affecting hiring, retention, promotion, and leadership development in just transition sectors.

- **The lack of awareness among energy companies' management about the benefits of women leadership,** leading to a shortage of opportunities for women and their reluctance to advocate for themselves and pursue more senior roles.<sup>48</sup>

**At the Green Entrepreneurship level:**

- **Limited research and evidence on effective practices to support** women's entrepreneurship in the green sector.<sup>49</sup>
- **Insufficient development of skills such as entrepreneurship,** green growth, and soft/ leadership impedes women's potential in energy and green entrepreneurship.
- **Limited green entrepreneurship opportunities for women** due to insufficient capitalization of their strategic roles and strengths in the renewable energy sector.<sup>50</sup>
- **Barriers in accessing productive assets and technology,** as clean energy ventures require significant technology and capital investment, resulting in high initial costs and longer investment-to-profit periods.<sup>51</sup>
- **Continuous challenges in managing business and family responsibilities** due to time poverty.<sup>52</sup>
- **Absence of gender-sensitive energy policies and green entrepreneurship regulations,** neglecting women's needs and realities.<sup>53</sup>
- **Lack of women representation in energy associations and networking groups related to renewable energy and green growth,** limiting their leadership opportunities.<sup>54</sup>

**At the Policy Making level:**

- **Insufficient analytical work** to understand the discrepancies between opportunities for women and men and gender gaps in laws and policies.
- **Lack of institutional capacity** to address gender disparities in the just transition sectors, ensure design and coordination of gender-inclusive mechanisms, and safeguard institutional accountability of these processes.
- **Lack of tools to support gender integration in energy policies** (e.g., gender standards,



checklists, and guidelines) and promote women leadership.<sup>55</sup>

- **Gender-blind energy and green growth policies** that neglect women's representation in decision-making and policy forums.
- **Lack of gender-disaggregated data** and capacity to collect and use gender statistics.
- **Insufficient monitoring and evaluation** methods that fail to incorporate gender-responsive targets and indicators.<sup>56</sup>
- **Limited capacity of civil society to advocate** for policies that integrate gender perspectives.

#### ***At the Transition Finance level:***

- **Limited access to finance and credit related to just transition**, particularly affecting women-owned MSMEs, which face significant constraints in fulfilling their financial needs.
- **Ineffective targeting of women-owned and women-led start-ups** and enterprises by investment funds.

- **Failure to provide targeted training, mentors, role models, and networking opportunities** for women energy entrepreneurs on behalf of accelerators, incubators, and other platforms.<sup>57</sup>
- **Gender imbalance within investment teams and committees** reinforces gender inequalities in policies, practices, and compliance procedures.

**The key barriers to advancing women's leadership in coal transitions span across the public, private sector, and civil society domains.** These obstacles are the result of discriminatory norms, insufficient human and social capital, legal and regulatory constraints, and limited control over assets and resources:

- Discriminatory norms undermine women's ability to participate in the labor market, exercise authority in decision-making, and access credit. In the workplace, such norms may produce abusive practices, including gender-based violence and discrimination.



At the individual level, discriminatory cultural norms impact women’s self-esteem, aspirations, and confidence to assume leadership roles.

- Women’s lack of human capital creates multiple barriers to their leadership in coal transitions. The absence of effective healthcare, social protection, and social care implies that women do not receive the support they need for their household care roles to be motivated to extend their interest in taking up leadership positions. Poor personal safety, including from gender-based violence and sexual harassment, also restricts women’s agency. Lack of access to education and information, particularly to STEM subject areas, reduces the number of women qualified to take up senior roles in the energy sector. Women’s marginalization in professional and political networks restricts their social capital and potential to influence resource allocation through public institutions.
- In the legal domain, a lack of access to redress mechanisms restricts women’s ability to challenge experiences of discrimination. Opportunities for women to exercise leadership in coal transitions are restricted by lack of control over assets and resources. For example, lack of secure title to land may prevent ownership of renewable energy assets, and poor access to credit may restrict entrepreneurial initiatives in the new green economy.

### 3.6 Key Pillars of Action to Address Women Leadership Gaps

**An Action Framework, reflecting six pillars of action, namely (i) capacity building; (ii) policy and institutional strengthening; (iii) assessment; (iv) standard setting; (v) coalition building; and (vi) access to transition finance, is proposed to address the leadership gaps** described in section 3.4. A cross-cutting pillar of action focused on **gender norms and GBV** also needs to be introduced to tackle deep-rooted social norms and harmful practices that may

affect the success of all other pillars. Depending on the need and local context, these actions will be initiated to address women’s leadership gaps at all levels mentioned in section 3.5 (i.e., (a) community, (b) sector employment, (c) green entrepreneurship, (d) policy making, and (e) transition finance).

**The six key pillars of action** for promoting women’s representation and leadership in just transition processes are:

- **(i) Assessment:** Employing analytical work and evaluation frameworks to increase awareness of the gender impacts of just transition and provide evidence of effective methods for promoting women leadership across all levels. The analytical work will examine gaps, enabling factors, structural constraints, and best practices related to women leadership in just transition policies, projects, sectors, and green entrepreneurship.
- **(ii) Capacity Building:** Trainings and skill development programs targeting (i) decision-makers at policy, project, organization, and civil society levels to enhance their understanding of the importance and mechanisms on how to advance women leadership in just transition; and (ii) women and women groups to develop their leadership and technical skills to hold leadership positions across public, private, and civil society realms.
- **(iii) Policy and Institutional Strengthening:** Energy transition from old to new technologies has a wide range of distributional impacts. For this reason, it requires a multifaceted policy response across several key areas, including energy use and production, mine closure planning and regulation, land use change, infrastructure development, labor market planning, skills, relocation assistance, and business investment. In order to mainstream gender, including women leadership, through these policy areas several “enabling” policy and institutional conditions need to be met. Current research on the gender-energy nexus





confirms that standalone measures are not sufficient to produce a gender-responsive energy transition policy. Policies need to go beyond specific sectors and toward a range of other critical policy areas that “enable” gender equality and women leadership.<sup>58</sup>

- **(iv) Standard Setting:** Setting industry and cross industry standards while promoting their application through targeted interventions. These will include guidelines, quotas for women leadership at different levels, certifications, guiding principles on women leadership in just transition, measurement metrics, and training curricula. They will also include advancing the already adopted global instruments, such as gender-smart climate finance tools, and adapting them to just transition.
- **(v) Coalition Building and Networking:** Building partnerships across sectors and stakeholders is key to promote women’s leadership in the public, private, and civil society sectors. It is widely acknowledged that women networking groups, associations, and support/peer groups can enhance women’s resourcefulness, confidence, and skills to exercise their leadership roles. Similarly, coalition building can involve specific groups of stakeholders (e.g., policy, private sector, educators, and women groups), which, in partnership, can work towards facilitating and advancing women’s leadership in just transition processes. This synergy can promote greater collaboration and cooperation in the development and implementation of energy policies and programs, leading to more effective and efficient outcomes.
- **(vi) Access to Transition Finance and Income Generation Activities:** Increasing women’s access to finance to address their energy transition needs and fund women-managed income generation activities and women-owned businesses. This includes working with the energy companies to encourage





their investment in community development programs that foster women’s leadership and encourage investment in women-owned green entrepreneurship. A key component is the promotion of gender-smart climate finance instruments.<sup>59</sup> It will create partnerships with organizations championing women’s access to climate finance (e.g., Women in Finance Climate Action Group) and will direct financial and technical support to civil society organizations providing local leadership for gender-responsive coal transitions. Capacity building for these organizations will also foster the participation of women’s organizations in coal transition planning and implementation.

- **Cross-Cutting Pillar: GBV and Social Norms:**

This is a cross-cutting priority area, as it is expected to impact the success of all pillars of action. This pillar focuses, among others, on changing social norms affecting girls’ education in STEM, breaking gender stereotypes in technical fields and

entrepreneurship, addressing time poverty due to social norms pertaining to women’s roles and tolerance, and introducing drivers and mechanisms to eradicate GBV.

Annex/Table 1 includes examples of specific activities within the six pillars of action that can be adopted to address the leadership gaps observed at different levels identified in the brief. Rather than an exhaustive list, these are only illustrations of possible activities that can be undertaken in response to the unique needs of the local contexts.

# ANNEX 1: EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES THAT CAN BE UNDERTAKEN

KEY ACTIVITY PILLAR	SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES
<b>Level of Gap: Community</b>	
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct assessments on stakeholder impact and design frameworks for gender-inclusive, local, consultative processes on mine closure and energy transition.</li> <li>• Conduct a needs-based assessment to determine content for curricula on leadership in just transition training.</li> <li>• Identify and develop the indicator topics for the collection of disaggregated data, using a participatory approach.</li> <li>• Explore the gender impacts of circular economy and ways to enhance women’s representation in circular and green jobs.</li> </ul>
Policy and Institutional Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local governments to develop strategies to reduce connection costs and user fees for women.</li> <li>• Support women to shift to a green, circular economy through policies and actions that address pervasive discriminatory gender norms and inequalities, while harnessing potential leadership roles for women.<sup>60</sup></li> </ul>
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop capacity building programs to equip local women with the leadership skills necessary to become active participants in civil society and engage in policy making and reform.<sup>61</sup></li> <li>• Empower women, including Indigenous women and women with disabilities, to benefit from green jobs and skills development to foster their access to high paying employment.</li> </ul>
Standard Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a quota for equal participation and leadership opportunities for women in energy user structures and community decision-making and governance structures.</li> </ul>
Transition Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage energy companies to invest in community development programs that advance gender equality and women’s empowerment.</li> </ul>
Coalition Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with CSOs to advocate for the inclusion of women and girls in consultations organized by renewable energy companies to ensure their views, needs, and aspirations are taken into account, and their voices are heard.</li> </ul>
<b>Level of Gap: Mining and Energy Sector Employment</b>	
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the capacity building needs.</li> <li>• Identify the key drivers of change related to women leadership in the renewable energy sector workplace.</li> </ul>
Policy and Institutional Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the adoption of corporate laws, policies, and social norms that prevent discrimination, thus enabling women’s full and equal participation in just transition sectors.</li> <li>• Work with government and relevant lawmakers to reform discriminatory laws and policies that perpetuate gender-based discrimination.</li> <li>• Mainstream gender perspectives through audits and awareness.</li> <li>• Conduct training to address negative workplace practices.</li> </ul>

KEY ACTIVITY PILLAR	SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop skills that are critical for women’s employment in just transition sectors.</li> <li>• Develop companies’ capacity to integrate gender in their performance and accountability policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Provide training to strengthen the female talent pool and women’s leadership in supply chain management and procurement within the energy sector.</li> </ul>
Standard Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactively recruit women for managerial and executive procurement positions.</li> <li>• Establish promotion systems that consider gender equality.</li> <li>• Foster and reward the creation of inclusive corporate cultures by recognizing the commitment of senior executives to encourage women leadership.</li> <li>• Encourage companies to apply for the EDGE (Economic Dividends for Gender Equality) certification, a leading global assessment methodology and business certification standard for gender equality.<sup>62</sup></li> <li>• Develop standards and guidelines to deliver leadership development curricula.</li> <li>• Develop standards on mainstreaming gender perspectives in corporate audits.</li> <li>• Develop minimum standards or quotas to promote women along the corporate pipeline and ensure they make up a significant percentage of board members and management teams.</li> <li>• Encourage the government and the private sector to join the Equal by 30 Campaign which aims to enable the achievement of equal pay, leadership, and opportunities in the clean energy sector by 2030.<sup>63</sup></li> </ul>
Coalition Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the establishment of women leaders’ networks to enhance their skills; challenge the systemic biases of private sector institutions; and tackle GBV and demeaning practices in the workplace.</li> <li>• Support partnerships between the private sector and educators to increase girls’ representation in STEM.</li> </ul>
Transition Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund leadership development programs and coalition building.</li> </ul>
<b>Level of Gap: Green Entrepreneurship</b>	
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the gaps and potential for women green entrepreneurship.</li> <li>• Identify the legal, policy, and institutional gaps to boost women green entrepreneurship.</li> </ul>
Policy and Institutional Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt green entrepreneurship policies that open possibilities for women to take on entrepreneurial roles through support from regulatory institutions, public procurement procedures, and finance providers.</li> </ul>
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop tailored training and mentorship programs for women green entrepreneurs.</li> <li>• Shine a spotlight on role models of successful women entrepreneurs in the sector of sustainable energy.</li> </ul>
Coalition Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the establishment of women-led renewable energy associations and provide training, networking events, and career counselling to foster women leadership.</li> <li>• Facilitate networking and business opportunities for women green entrepreneurs through dedicated platforms and events.</li> </ul>
Transition Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the development of innovative funding mechanisms for women to access transition finance.</li> </ul>
<b>Level of Gap: Policy Making</b>	
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the representation of women involved in designing energy plans and policies, including those in decision-making positions.</li> <li>• Conduct stakeholder consultations to identify key discrepancies between opportunities for women and men in the energy sector.</li> <li>• Assess gender gaps in energy policies to ensure implementation against the baseline to enable monitoring and evaluation with gender-responsive targets.<sup>64</sup></li> </ul>



KEY ACTIVITY PILLAR	SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES
Policy and Institutional Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the government on reformulating existing and formulating new gender-responsive green industry policies.</li> <li>• Use gender matrices, checklists, and guidelines to shape the development of gender-responsive energy policies.<sup>65</sup></li> <li>• Mandate gender equality in decision-making spaces through measures, such as quota policies and gender-targeted education.</li> <li>• Adopt policies that provide health and social services to women in caring roles to enable them to pursue leadership opportunities.</li> </ul>
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen governments' institutional capacity to address gender disparities and mainstream gender within energy policies.</li> <li>• Strengthen national and local capacities of women's rights and civil society organizations and facilitate their engagement in the adoption of renewable energy.</li> <li>• Ensure that accountability frameworks monitor the impact of gender targets and energy policies.</li> </ul>
Standard Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the adoption of standardized Gender Analysis Frameworks for just transition policies, projects, and processes.</li> <li>• Institutionalize the use of gender-disaggregated data to enable policy formulation.</li> <li>• Develop standards for minimum required knowledge for government staff to mainstream gender in energy policies and project development.</li> <li>• Promote a cross-sectoral and integrated approach to policy making, bridging the energy, environment, gender, finance, and industry ministries.<sup>66</sup></li> <li>• Support the introduction of gender focal points, setting up of cross-sector committees or task forces, and inclusion of assessments of compliance with gender-responsive guidelines in the performance evaluation of sector staff.<sup>67</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Level of Gap: Transition Finance</b>	
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the key factors of low levels of women leadership in the financial sector.</li> <li>• Conduct research on best practices to increase women leadership in funds and banks.</li> </ul>
Policy and Institutional Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt finance-related policy and regulatory frameworks that support women's access to transition finance.</li> </ul>
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that teams and committees deciding on investments are gender diverse and aware of the advantages of promoting gender equality, and that investor organizations adopt and adhere to gender equality policies and practices.</li> <li>• Support accelerators, incubators, platforms for networking and information, and other entrepreneurship facilities to provide targeted training, mentors, role models, and networking opportunities for women energy entrepreneurs.<sup>68</sup></li> </ul>
Standard Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support finance institutions to adopt gender-smart climate finance instruments for transition finance.</li> <li>• Support financial institutions and funds to create funding calls targeting women-owned and women-led start-ups.</li> </ul>
<b>Cross-Cutting Level of Gap: Social Norms and GBV</b>	
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct training and information campaigns on GBV, including its causes, threats, and responses at different levels (e.g., corporate, community, entrepreneurship, etc.).</li> <li>• Support the government to take the lead in challenging discriminatory norms through, for example, ensuring access to leadership opportunities and strengthening women's voices and representation in local action arenas through gender-equitable project governance.</li> <li>• Support strengthening of preventive measures and services for GBV response at the community level.</li> </ul>

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# ENDNOTES

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The Climate Investment Funds (CIF) was established in 2008 to mobilize resources and trigger investments for low carbon, climate resilient development in select middle and low income countries. 14 contributor countries have pledged over US\$11 billion to the funds. To date CIF committed capital has generated an additional US\$62 billion in co-financing for mitigation and adaptation interventions at an unprecedented scale in 72 recipient countries. CIF's large-scale, low-cost, long-term financing lowers the risk and cost of climate financing. It tests new business models, builds track records in unproven markets, and boosts investor confidence to unlock additional sources of finance. The CIF is one of the largest active climate finance mechanisms in the world.



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