

WOMEN & GENDER CONSTITUENCY

WGC submission on different elements of the work programme on just transition pathways referred to in paragraph 52 of decision 1/CMA.4.

14 September 2023

The Women and Gender Constituency (WGC), on behalf of 38 observer organisations, welcomes the call to submit views on different elements of the work programme on just transition pathways.

As the Women and Gender Constituency, we believe that the just transition has the potential to create radical and necessary change across societies and economies. We do not accept understandings of the just transition that restrict the concept solely to jobs in the energy sector. Rather, we believe that a holistic and intersectional economy and society-wide approach is necessary to guarantee respect for human rights and equality for all and to move away from patterns of exploitation and degradation.

Introduction

The climate crisis is happening in a context of growing economic inequality and conflict, rampant privatisation and deregulation, increased militarisation, and hostility towards collective organising and unionisation. Directly emerging from the dominant economic model of neoliberalism, these overlapping crises constrain and threaten the rights and wellbeing of women, trans and gender non-conforming people, and those of other marginalised identities.

A just transition away from extractive economies, particularly those dependent on fossil fuel exploration and exploitation, must therefore not only be a transition away from polluting industries and unhealthy work environments, but also from an economic model that is socially and environmentally unsustainable. In this context, women, trans and gender non-conforming people are key agents of change, and our contribution and participation is essential for achieving an equitable just transition.

Why a gender-just transition is important

Understanding the importance of a gender-just transition requires recognition of the ways in which the current economic system perpetuates gender inequality and violence, and invisibilises women's labour.

Any consolidation of a just transition work programme (JTWP) should consider:

1. Unpaid care work and domestic labour

We need a feminist economy that meets the needs of all people, and that respects human rights and the Earth. Care must be at the heart of this. Current systems of capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy commodify, profit from, invisibilise and marginalise the life-sustaining work of caring for the land and for each other.

- [Women and men do 16.4 billion hours of unpaid care work globally a day, around 76% of which is carried out by women.](#)
- 606 million women of working age perform unpaid care on a full-time basis.
- Of the total number of hours worked weekly around the world, 45% are in unpaid care work, with unpaid care work's contributions excluded from GDP calculations.
- The ILO estimates the value of unpaid care and domestic work to be as much as 9 percent of global GDP (USD 11 trillion).

From a gender perspective, this means that 65% of women's working hours overall are unpaid. The invisibility of care work in the considered formal economy has led to it acting as a hidden subsidy to the market economy. **Care work must not act as the unpaid scaffolding that allows present and future economies to operate by remaining ignored, marginalised, undervalued and invisibilised.**

2. Precarity of women's work

Women's work tends to be more precarious, characterised by reduced opportunity, occupational segregation, increased harassment and violence. Women are more likely than their male counterparts to find themselves in uncontracted, insecure and low-paid work. This precarity is compounded by current trends such as seasonal and forced migration, the feminisation of agricultural labour, the lack of formal recognition for women as farmers, and the lack of health and social protections in the informal sector. **Consideration of and action against gender-specific challenges faced by women workers must be at the centre of a just transition.**

3. Women and agriculture

Women are overrepresented in the agriculture sector, which is characterised by seasonal work and high rates of informality. Deteriorating working conditions are expected to hit women in agriculture especially hard, with Indigenous women disproportionately affected. Climate related agricultural losses and impacts on livelihoods are already further increasing care obligations and the need to make ends meet through more informal and precarious means. [This increases the burden of impoverished women and girls](#). **Agriculture as a sector, and women's gender-specific experiences as agricultural workers, must be included and considered as part of the just transition.**

4. Women and climate technologies

Women often face disparities when it comes to designing, accessing, and deploying new technologies in the context of climate resilience. Climate technologies must be designed with a gender-inclusive approach to avoid perpetuating gender-based inequalities.

It is equally crucial to scrutinise both the methods and materials used in the development of new technologies. Exploitation of minerals for climate technologies must not contribute to deforestation, habitat loss, or drought, where biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation can impact local livelihoods, nor should this mining entail or promote child labour, workers' rights violations, and displacement of Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Moreover, mineral extraction should not exacerbate internal conflicts arising from competition for control over these resource-rich areas. **The pursuit of development and climate innovation must not perpetuate a neocolonialist paradigm, wherein communities and nations in the Global South are exploited and mistreated for the benefit of rich countries.**

5. Women in the renewable energy workforce

Women are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) sectors. This makes them more vulnerable to automation and job destruction. According to a report by [McKinsey \(2023\)](#) just in the United States, women are 1.5 times more likely to be displaced from their jobs due to Artificial Intelligence. Deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and discrimination around technology limit women's access to education and training in STEM fields, restricting their participation to operational and low-level job positions. According to [the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(2021\)](#), without counting administrative and secretarial roles, women only represent 20% of the renewable energy workforce. Workplace policies for pregnancy and caregiving, childcare provision, and flexibility are also critical elements for promoting greater gender balance among the energy sector workforce, **A gender-just transition must tackle the perpetuation of harmful**

stereotypes and discrimination and must promote the up and reskilling of women to strengthen women's active and meaningful participation in technical and leadership positions.

6. Women's access to finance

At the local level, access to credit and other forms of loans is also a barrier limiting women's participation in the provision of safe and modern climate solutions and sustainable businesses. Due to gender-based discrimination and unequal gender roles, almost one billion women globally lack bank accounts. This affects their ability to accumulate assets, generate income, manage financial risks, and fully participate in the economy. An equitable and just transition must promote financial inclusion, provide financial education, and facilitate finance flows to women.

Recommendations

The work programme must address structural and systemic inequalities embedded in extractivist, colonial, racial and patriarchal economies in order to avoid worsening gender inequality, violence and impoverishment. The work programme must include gender responsive approaches to just transition as a cross-cutting element in all activities. Gender must be included **operatively** in any decision text as guided by the GAP.

To do so, the work programme must identify and build upon other workstreams under the Convention and the Paris Agreement, including the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) and its Gender Action Plan (GAP) and the Action for Climate Empowerment Action Plan. The Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) must lead on and enable the systematisation and articulation of just transition across other UNFCCC workstreams and bodies, and be empowered to make recommendations to these workstreams and bodies, rather than the other way around.

The Women and Gender Constituency strongly encourages Parties to consider and integrate the findings and recommendations of the technical paper "[Just Transition: An essential pathway to achieving gender equality and social justice](#)" by the ILO in the development of decision texts and modalities. Also, we encourage Parties to engage in the high-level dialogue organised by ILO and the UNFCCC happening at COP28 on the nexus between climate change and action, gender equality, inclusion and the world of work.

The Women and Gender Constituency further maintains that a just and equitable transition must include all sectors and types of work, must strive to create work and standards of work that are decent and fair, must incorporate and prioritise socioeconomic dimensions including

social protections, and must be based on social dialogue and full and meaningful participation of all stakeholders, all of which must be based on nationally defined development priorities and national capacities.

The following are the Women and Gender Constituency's recommendations for the work programme:

1. Set Broad and Comprehensive Objectives

The JTWP should act as a space to develop shared understandings of equitable and just transition pathways amongst Parties, particularly those that protect the human rights of women, young people, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, workers, disabled people, and people with racialised identities, amongst other marginalised groups.

The work programme should also serve to share and synthesise knowledge and best practices on just, equitable and inclusive transition pathways, and to develop guidance and aspirational pathways that can be utilised and implemented at national and regional levels.

The JTWP should also act to develop indicators and standards against which national progress can be measured, and should serve as a space for reporting, monitoring, and accountability of Parties by both Parties and observers on progress towards achieving a just and equitable transition.

Furthermore, the work programme should identify and address barriers to implementation of just transition initiatives, and identify and facilitate opportunities for international cooperation to accelerate just transition action, including unlocking of finance and other implementation resources.

The JTWP should make recommendations on decisions to constituted bodies, to ensure that just transition principles are incorporated and adhered to appropriately across workstreams of the UNFCCC.

2. Explicitly Respect, Promote, and Consider Human Rights

Meaningful participation of civil society will be key to the success of the work programme on just transition pathways. Decision texts must include explicit provision for participation of civil society organisations (CSOs) that goes beyond participation in workshops and dialogues. Any decision text must also include explicit safeguards for human rights, including the right of self-determination and to collectively bargain free from retaliation.

The JTWP must support all Parties to develop rights-based just transition national strategies that anticipate the potential impacts of climate action policies on human rights and the environment, and take into account historic and current injustices. These must respond to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) ensuring that countries with different capabilities can gradually and equitably diversify their economies while guaranteeing rights and social protections.

3. Specify Fossil Fuel Phase-Out

Any JTWP decision text coming out of COP28 must include strong, clear and equitable obligations upon Parties to phase out all fossil fuels. We strongly warn against inclusion in decisions of language such as “unabated” when referring to fossil fuels, and language such as “inefficiency” or “reform” when referring to fossil fuel subsidies. We consider use of such language by Parties to be a bad faith attempt to create loopholes for fossil fuel polluters.

To respond properly to today's multiple crises, it is crucial to recognize and address dangerous distractions from the need to limit global warming to 1.5°C, and to ensure that these do not exacerbate existing inequalities. Proposals such as geoengineering, carbon dioxide removal, solar radiation management, amongst many others, shift attention and resources away from the real need to address the systemic causes of climate change. These include corporate interests, extractivist patterns of production and consumption, as well as the appropriation of territories for the exploitation of natural resources. The JTWP cannot implicitly or explicitly endorse these false solutions as part of a just transition, or it will not be just.

4. Encompass All Sectors and Types of Work

The work programme should take a broad sectoral approach and avoid focusing solely or primarily on the energy sector. The just transitions that are needed are economy and society-wide. Parties must consider and measure care and domestic work as sectors that will be essential for a just transition. The JTWP should identify aspirational pathways towards a care economy and develop guidance on how Parties can build economic systems that recognise, reduce and redistribute care work, domestic work and unpaid work. The work programme must also focus on agriculture as a sector that is highly vulnerable to climate breakdown and a key driver of greenhouse gas emissions, and that will require a gender-just transition.

4. Provide Finance and Means of Implementation

Means and forms of delivery of finance are crucial to ensuring just and equitable transitions. Governments play a key role in this delivery of finance, which cannot be left to markets, the

private sector or multilateral development banks (MDBs). The JTWP must focus not only on quantity but also on quality of funding mechanisms to ensure that delivery of resources is equitable. The work programme should develop guidance for Parties on investing public resources into economic sectors geared towards social protections, and on enabling shifts in industry and corporate power through government fiscal policies.

5. Promote and Facilitate Gender Budgeting

At the national level, States too often fail to incorporate gender perspectives into fiscal policies and budgeting, which are critical for investing in gender-responsive projects in energy systems, building and construction, urban development, mobility and transport, and agriculture policies, amongst others. The JTWP should provide guidance and resources, and act as a forum for cooperation and collaboration to assist Parties to integrate gender budgeting within national climate policies, and to invest in social protection floors, care-related social infrastructure, and skills training in order to minimise the gendered risks associated with the impacts of climate change. Furthermore, the work programme should act as a space for accountability amongst Parties by developing indicators and monitoring to ensure that climate finance and associated projects or initiatives do not exacerbate existing gender inequalities, and instead support a just transition for all women and men in all their intersecting identities.

6. Promote and Facilitate Collection of Disaggregated Data

The JTWP should provide guidance and resources to assist Parties to collect comparable and coherent data across time on emerging jobs as part of a just transition. This includes disaggregation of data by gender and other intersecting characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, Indigenous identity, age, disability, wealth and migration status. The JTWP must develop guidance to assist Parties to assess at national level the precise consequences and potential negative impacts of the transition to new economies for women and those of other marginalised identities.

Conclusion

A truly just transition has the potential to radically improve wellbeing and standards of living, and to eliminate multiple forms of oppression. The examples set by women and community-led initiatives show clearly that a just, safe, and ethical transition is possible.

Feminists demand that the transition away from extractive economies be gender-just. Structural and systemic inequalities embedded in extractivist, colonial, racialised, militarised

and patriarchal economies must be addressed through reinvigorated state and multilateral action. Work must be recognised, not just as jobs carried out in the formalised, waged sector, but as the market and non-market work that all people engage in to sustain life.

The Women and Gender Constituency will continue to work with our fellow observer groups on pushing forward the agenda for a comprehensive, fast, feminist and fair society and economy-wide transformation away from extractive economies.