

Just Energy Transitions for all – Gender in Just Energy Transitions

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Policy Brief

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Just Energy Transition in Coal Regions



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IKI JET and its JET-CR Platform aim to support and accelerate just energy transitions away from coal to renewable energies and other sustainable economic activities in Colombia, Chile, South Africa, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Mongolia.

The Just Energy Transition in Coal Regions (JET-CR) Knowledge Hub is an online platform building bridges between experts, policymakers, coal industry, trade unions and civil society organizations. It’s a space to bring together different perspectives, share real stories and search for effective tools and solutions. It aims to particularly amplify the voices of workers and communities dependent on coal showing how knowledge can work in practice.

Providing regular digests of articles, research papers, news stories and events it serves as a “one-stop shop” for collecting up to date information related to just energy transitions away from coal around the world. www.jetknowledge.org/

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Executive Summary

This policy brief underscores the significance of integrating gender considerations into discussions about the just energy transition (JET) away from coal. It highlights the gendered social, economic, and political impacts of this transition and underscores the potential to transform gender inequalities and enhance climate policies by including diverse gender perspectives. Just Energy Transition aims at securing participation of all those that are impacted by coal phase-out in the process as well as their just share of income generated in new economic structures. Recognising that the extractive industry is one of the most male-dominated sectors, the just inclusion of women in shaping the process and the distribution of its outcome requires specific attention, knowledge and will, but is very needed for the following reasons. First, women in mining regions are heavily impacted by the coal transition and secondly, they are part of the solution. Just transition plans that overlook women are missing out on valuable alternative opportunities for the region.

This policy brief addresses the lack of information on gender in just energy transition and gives orientation on the potential of a gender-transformative transition. A few key dimensions, namely social dialogue and political participation; labour market, education and training; clear commitments, awareness raising for gender in JET and transformative approaches; and research and knowledge sharing, have been identified as crucial for JET efforts on a regional level and can be understood as a starting point to inform the broader discussion of a JET from a gender perspective.

Key messages at a glance:

- Only **meaningful political participation of all genders** can facilitate truly just transition processes.
- **Structural changes in the labour market** are needed, for instance gender-equity workplace policies.
- **Training and education** opportunities must include women and the informal sector.
- **Need for male champions.** Debates around gender remain mainly discussed by women, discussions around norms, roles and masculinity facilitate gender equality efforts for a just energy transition.
- **Resources matter.** Access to financing schemes must be available for all affected stakeholders.
- **Awareness is key.** Education about the complexities of a just transition and how genders are affected differently by it is needed. **Promote information, knowledge sharing and research on the impacts of a just energy**

transition on different genders. Further understanding of the implications of a transition away from coal on different genders is crucial to formulate and find acceptance for targeted policy measures.

1. Background, aim and scope of the policy brief

This document was developed based on the Expert Exchange “A Just Energy Transition for all – Gendering the debate” conducted in September 2023. Please find the documentation with names of the speakers on our website jetknowledge.org under this [link](#). In the frame of the project “Innovation Regions for a Just Energy Transition”, the format of Expert Exchanges facilitates peer-to-peer exchange, learning together, sharing knowledge and creating connections between the participants.

While this paper follows a non-binary understanding of gender, which means gender is understood as a spectrum, the recommendations are primarily focused on women and men given the limits of existing data on gendered impacts of energy transitions.

2. Gendered impacts of coal phase out and advancing equity in transitioning coal regions

As the world is facing a transition away from coal, the impacts of the transition need to be considered and acted upon directly. So far, links between the energy transition and gender (in)equality have received little attention. However, transitions always provide an opportunity to change gender roles and make them more just. A transition away from coal can transform unequal gendered power structures and create more gender-equal circumstances. At the same time, research has shown that increased gender equality can contribute to more effective climate policies (Mohr et al. 2020, Norgaard & York (2005), Salamon (2023)).

To make transition processes just, the processes must be designed in a participatory way to contribute to a just distributional outcome. In coal regions, in many cases, territorial just transition plans are being elaborated. For the development of such plans, it is crucial that women who live in coal communities have a say in their elaboration and are recognised with their contribution in different sectors. Women are important actors in mining communities across multiple sectors, for example as workers, entrepreneurs, or family care takers. Gender must be considered in the elaboration of those plans, otherwise it is likely that gender inequality is perpetuated or even exacerbated. Promoting just transition means to also address other relevant factors such as age, race, class and income.

In many mining regions women are subjugated by the socio-economic circumstances of being solely in charge of the household with no income other than that provided by their partner(s). There even exist constellations in which a woman can have several partners with a child from each to guarantee a minimum subsistence for her family. Women in these constellations are highly vulnerable in mine closure scenarios and should be specifically considered. Further examples for

gendered impacts of coal mine closure may encompass social impacts, economic impacts as well as political impacts as shown in the table below (Table 1). For instance, the share of work for women often increases. When men lose their employment in mines, women tend to take over the role as breadwinners as well, ensuring financial income for the family. This often happens in precarious, insecure and/or exploitative work and is done in addition to work in the household. At the same time, the risk of domestic violence against women increases. Another issue around mine closures is the unequal training opportunities. While men who were formerly employed in the mining sector might receive re-skilling opportunities, women who have been working informally in the mining sector often do not get access to these kinds of education or re-skilling opportunities as they have not been formally employed.

Table 1. Distributional Impacts of Mine Closure

Social impacts	Economic impacts	Political impacts
Double burden of care, domestic and paid work for women in often insecure, low paid or exploitative work.	Unemployment for men; unskilled work for women.	Increased activism of women in mining households.
Increased domestic violence and abuse against women in former mining households.	Surplus male labour displacing female employment.	Disenchantment and anti-authoritarian culture among youth.
Mental health effects for former male miners.	Few/no employment opportunities for youth and older people.	
Stigma against seeking assistance for men.	Outmigration/brain drain of youth/skilled workers.	

Source: Lahiri-Dutt et al. (2022) based on Aung and Strambo (2020:6)

3. Empowering gender equity in transitioning coal regions

3.1 Social dialogue and political participation

Coal use and coal phase-out heavily impact not only men who might lose their jobs in mining; they also heavily impact women in coal communities. As women are also impacted by the transition, it is crucial that they have a say in the process of just energy transition and that they are recognised with their contribution in different sectors.

Women in all their diversity are represented in different sectors of mining communities to varying extents. Comparatively well-paid formal jobs in mining companies are often held to a large extent by men, whereas women often work in informal self-employed jobs as artisanal miners or food sellers. In most mining regions women are working in households, agriculture, self-employed or as small-scale entrepreneurs, or as family care takers. In political bodies and institutions as trade unions or chambers of commerce, they are often underrepresented. This leads to the most likely situation that gender is not adequately factored in to just transition processes. Gender inequality may be perpetuated or even exacerbated. This makes it so important for women to gain a strong negotiating position in social dialogue processes on restructuring.

At the same time, other factors such as age, race, class, and income must be considered as well, otherwise inequalities will be reproduced and reinforced. And when focusing on gender issues, it is vital to include both men and women in the debate and inform all stakeholders of why it is important to talk about these issues. The inclusion of (more) women in decision-making processes will not only lead to more gender-sensitive decisions that alleviate the negative impacts of coal mine closures, but new alliances for climate action can be formed. As women often suffer from the negative impacts of coal mining, for instance impacts on health or exploitive work, and imagine a different future for their families and children, they can become allies and link arguments for climate action with arguments for a healthier life. Bringing several angles together can strengthen the aim of coal phase-out.

To overcome inequalities, the needs of everyone affected by the transition away from coal must be integrated into planning processes. Regional consultation forums are important tools for consensus building and democratic involvement of affected stakeholders. It is important to design consultation processes in ways that ensure women and their interests are incorporated. An environment in which disadvantaged groups can be trained and supported for meaningful participation in stakeholder negotiations must be created. Women's representation and leadership in stakeholder engagement can be fostered by facilitating women task forces to formulate women's priorities and demands in relation to JET (e.g., by sharing success stories of female engagement and empowerment). Civil society organisations may organise meetings and trainings for women that live and work in rural areas affected by mining to empower them to represent their interests in negotiations of stakeholders. Women-only roundtables can be another tool to facilitate an environment in which women might feel safer to discuss their opinions, interests and needs. For meaningful participation, it is vital to ensure women's and marginalised groups' representation at **all political levels** in relation to all relevant policy areas associated with a just energy transition.

3.2 Labour market, education and training

In the coal sector, women comprise only a small percentage of the formal workforce and are mostly working in small-scale, artisanal, and **informal sectors**. The focus on the formally employed workforce makes women more vulnerable in coal phase-out processes, as they often do not receive re-skilling, education, or other training opportunities. Training and education opportunities therefore should target the informal sector as well to include women in employment in new green jobs. Including women in such processes could offer new economic opportunities and contribute to a more equal society in general.

Women in mining regions often work in agriculture, gardening and handcrafts close to the house. Their income can be improved by training programs that improve these value chains. At the same time, training and skilling women can support the economic diversification of coal regions. As women who are financially dependent on men are highly vulnerable in mine closure scenarios, it is important that they are considered in the development of JET plans. Women often need specific empowerment and training to create their own businesses. Programmes supporting and empowering women founders can leverage additional economic potential in the economic diversification process. Specific support for women can facilitate the creation of enterprises, and micro credits can help women to invest in business opportunities.

Structural change means that new green businesses and industries are developed and attracted. Often these new businesses are knowledge-based or require a higher level of education. In many cases, this offers new opportunities for women, who, not only in industrialised countries, but also in developing and emerging economies, often have higher levels of education than men. (World Bank, p.40). Nonetheless, careful analysis of the situation of women in urban areas compared to mining regions is needed to develop JET plans accordingly.

In any case a gender-sensitive skills analysis should be elaborated, one that describes the skill profiles of the existing workforce and skills that are needed, in a possible future economic structure.

It should be considered how this structural change can be supported by policy reforms in the regions that could include support for the care sector, childcare and the introduction of flexible and gender-equity workplace policies, as well as access to education.

3.3 Clear commitments, awareness raising for gender in JET and transformative approaches

To promote gender equality in just energy transition efforts, **clear commitments** and **language emphasising the gender dimension** are essential. These commitments serve as

foundational blocks of a more inclusive and equitable energy transition. Existing policies require revisiting and reshaping to mainstream gender considerations into current policies, strategies, and commitments. It must be recognised that gender mainstreaming is not a one-time task, but an ongoing process that needs continuous monitoring, assessment, and adaptation of policies to ensure that gender considerations remain vital in just energy transition efforts. For successful gender mainstreaming in policy planning, **awareness raising** (e.g. via workshops) on gender issues is key, especially for planning agencies in coal regions through a series of discussions on gender in JET's key policy areas.

In addition to these clear commitments, **transformative approaches** are crucial. This means applying gender integration approaches that address structural barriers to gender equality including gender norms, power asymmetries and discriminatory social structures. Transformative approaches in a Just Energy Transition go beyond policy changes; they aim to fundamentally reshape societal norms, structures, and power dynamics to achieve lasting gender equality. In practice, that could mean gender-sensitive policy frameworks, capacity building and empowerment, challenging harmful gender norms through educational initiatives and community dialogues, and equal access to resources and training.

The commitment to a gender-just energy transition must be mirrored by allocated funding.

To **finance policy measures** for a JET, mining royalties, of which a share often is dedicated to local authorities, can be used to invest in measures such as education, training programmes, facilitation of social dialogue, and research on gendered impacts of the transition away from coal.

3.4 Research and knowledge sharing

More research and data collection is vital to better understand the gendered impacts of coal phase-out in different contexts to inform targeted policies and to continuously revisit and resharpen them when needed. Furthermore, **knowledge sharing** facilitates the dissemination of information, best practices, and lessons learned from successful initiatives. Communities of practice, workshops, and other formats can serve as valuable spaces for knowledge exchange while driving awareness and sensitisation for gender issues in JET processes.

Moving forward

This policy brief underscores the urgency and importance of considering gender perspectives in JET processes. To address the challenges and seize the opportunities at hand, the implementation in the described policy fields is recommended, and at all times it is crucial to include men and women equally and educate on gender issues in JET. By adopting these measures, the transition away from coal can transform existing gender roles and norms and contribute to a more equal society.

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