



MAKING THE GREEN TRANSITION WORK FOR WOMEN

Unlocking gender-just economic opportunities in the era
of crisis recovery



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Executive summary

Increasing gender gaps in the world of work demonstrate the deep and persistent barriers that women face to realise their economic rights and opportunities.¹ Gender gaps in the world of work have widened to an all-time high, with labour force gender parity now standing only at 63%, a trend that the World Economic Forum has recognised as a gender-related “emerging crisis” in the workforce.² COVID-19 has further set back progress on gender equality by a generation³ and severely impacted women’s economic justice and rights.⁴ This is because of the many intertwining structural barriers that women and girls face to the fulfilment of their economic rights; in the world of work, as entrepreneurs, or when accessing quality education.

At the same time, the transition to green economies holds huge potential. Estimates suggest that shifting to a low-carbon economy could create US\$26 trillion in growth and more than 65 million new jobs by 2030.⁵ However, women will not automatically benefit from these. Current green work policies and investments focus on male-dominated sectors such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths), construction and manufacturing; and high barriers to women’s economic justice risk excluding women from these new opportunities and potentially further entrenching gender inequalities in the world of work. Focused interventions are needed to ensure that the green transition is just and inclusive, and will allow diverse groups of women to take full advantage of the multitude of opportunities.

This paper provides an in-depth look into the opportunities that come from fostering a gender-just transition, and outlines the multipronged approach that is needed to practically integrate a gender lens into the green transition. This includes proactively addressing the barriers women face in the world of work; fostering decent work opportunities through sustainable approaches to women’s entrepreneurship, formal and informal work; and broadening the concept of green jobs to include sustainable forms of work largely dominated by women, such as care and social work. At the same time, there is scope to work with the private sector to complement public sector action at the company level, and a need to ensure women’s leadership in the green transition.



Jeanne Sekongo is a role model for CARE and H&M Foundation’s Women in Enterprise programme, Ivory Coast. ©Tim Mwaura / CARE Nederland

- 1 World Economic Forum (2022). “Global Gender Gap Report 2022: Insight Report July 2022.” <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/digest>
- 2 Gender parity in the labour force was measured at 62.9% in 2022, the lowest figure since the WEF index was first compiled. Ibid.
- 3 Crotti, Robert, et al. (2021). “Global Gender Gap Report 2021.” World Economic Forum. <https://www.wherewomenwork.com/Career/3248/World-Economic-Forum-Global-Gender-Gap-Report-2021>
- 4 Buschmann, Mareen and Sarah Fuhrman (2020). “COVID-19 Could Condemn Women To Decades of Poverty: Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women’s and Girls’ Economic Justice and Rights.” CARE International UK. <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/publications/covid-19-could-condemn-women-to-decades-of-poverty>
- 5 The New Climate Economy (2018). “The New Climate Economy: The 2018 Report of the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate - Report Summary.” <https://newclimateeconomy.report/2018/executive-summary/>

Recommendations

To ensure women can benefit from the green transition and the work opportunities it generates, a multipronged approach is needed. **Decision-makers – from governments, multilateral agencies and the private sector – should focus on gender equality in the transition to green economies by:**

1- Integrating a gender lens into the green transition and green work opportunities and prioritising measures and investments that women and girls benefit from while collecting, analysing and using sex-, age- and disability- disaggregated data to assess the green transition's impact on gender equality.

2- Proactively addressing barriers to women benefitting from the green transition, including by upskilling women and girls for green and higher-skilled jobs, and tackling the structural barriers that women face in the world of work. This requires urgent action and investments to build caring economies in line with the "5 Rs" (of recognition, reduction, redistribution, representation and reward) and providing universal social protection that captures diverse groups of women workers (including women working in the informal sector, migrant and refugee workers).

3- Generating decent green work opportunities for women by providing targeted training and education to open up high-skilled work opportunities and traditionally male-dominated sectors to women, removing barriers for women and girls to enter these jobs – for instance, through quotas, specialised recruitment and engaging with women's rights organisations – and ensuring that all green work is decent work in line with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition.

4- Broadening the definition of green work to encompass mostly low-carbon to carbon-neutral sectors that are dominated by women, such as care and social work. This includes increased action and investments in the care economy, including by providing 10% of public national budgets for care and social services while generating 80 million decent care jobs globally.

5- Engaging the private sector to complement public sector action at the company level to foster a holistic approach to a gender-just green transition. This includes increasing understanding of gender inequalities and climate vulnerabilities in businesses and the company's supply chains and suppliers, taking targeted action to upskill, reskill and prioritise women workers for green work opportunities, and work towards gender-just corporate decision-making and equal opportunities.

6- Fostering women's leadership in the green transition, including through increasing women's participation and leadership in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of climate responses and green transition measures, putting in place stronger anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws in the world of work and green sectors, and increased investments to women's rights organisations and their priorities (including in climate finance provided to developing countries).

Fostering a gender-just green transition is both essential and smart – and can lead to a triple win for people, economies and the planet. Climate action with a gender lens increases women's economic justice and helps close the gender gaps in the world of work.⁶ Closing gender gaps in employment alone can unlock up to \$160 trillion in global economic growth.⁷ And investing in sustainable green jobs, such as low-carbon jobs and care work, will benefit both the planet and people.⁸ These measures will help us get back on track towards an inclusive, feminist, sustainable and climate-smart future, a vision much needed in the current context of crisis.

6 Livingstone, Deborah, Olivia Jenkins and Isabelle Cardinal (2021). "Women's Economic Empowerment and Climate Change: A Primer," WOW Helpdesk Guidance Note No 3. UK Aid Direct and Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980912/Guidance3-WEE-Climate-Change-Primer.pdf

7 Wodon, Quentin and Benedicte de la Briere (2018). "Unrealized Potential: The High Cost of Gender Inequality in Earnings." The World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29865/126579-Public-on-5-30-18-WorldBank-GenderInequality-Brief-v13.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

8 Livingstone, Deborah, Olivia Jenkins and Isabelle Cardinal (2021). "Women's Economic Empowerment and Climate Change: A Primer," WOW Helpdesk Guidance Note No 3. UK Aid Direct and Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980912/Guidance3-WEE-Climate-Change-Primer.pdf

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The opportunity of a green transition in the context of a gender crisis in the world of work

A gender crisis in the world of work

Increasing gender gaps in the world of work demonstrate the deep and persistent barriers that women face to realise their economic rights and opportunities.⁹ Over the past decade, disparities in women's economic participation and opportunity have widened to an all-time high, with labour force gender parity now standing only at 63%,¹⁰ a trend that the World Economic Forum has recognised as a gender-related “emerging crisis” in the workforce. This is in keeping with a wider trend documented in a new UN progress report – the current (lack of) action and ambition means that achieving full gender equality could take 286 years.¹¹ We are facing an era of crisis for gender equality.

The current context of multiple and protracted crises has entrenched existing inequalities, and set back progress on gender equality by a generation.¹² COVID-19 provides a stark testimony – from a pandemic, but the lesson is similar for crises from conflict and climate change – of how crises set back women's economic justice and opportunities severely.¹³ When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, women were among the first to lose their jobs, often with no safety nets in place to mitigate the impact on their livelihoods.¹⁴ In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, the crisis triggered a “mass exodus of women from the labour force”,¹⁵ due to a mix of factors, including higher job losses and/or increased demands on women at home. The high amount of unpaid care work that women and girls perform has exacerbated COVID-19's economic impact. Before the pandemic, women and girls were spending three times as much time on unpaid care and domestic work as men and boys;¹⁶ with the pandemic, this has increased by another 2–3 hours per day

9 World Economic Forum (2022). “Global Gender Gap Report 2022: Insight Report July 2022.” <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/digest>

10 Gender parity in the labour force was measured at 62.9% in 2022, the lowest figure since the WEF index was first compiled. Ibid.

11 Azcona, Ginette, et al. (2022). “Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2022.” UN Women and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022>

12 Crotti, Robert, et al. (2021). “Global Gender Gap Report 2021.” World Economic Forum. <https://www.wherewomenwork.com/Career/3248/World-Economic-Forum-Global-Gender-Gap-Report-2021>

13 Buschmann, Mareen and Sarah Fuhrman (2020). “COVID-19 Could Condemn Women To Decades of Poverty: Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women's and Girls' Economic Justice and Rights.” CARE International UK. <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/publications/covid-19-could-condemn-women-to-decades-of-poverty>

14 In Bangladesh, for example, female garment workers were six times as likely to lose paid working hours than men. Abraham, Lesley (2021). “Made by Women: Impact Report 2020.” CARE International. p.3. https://www.care.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MbW_Impact-report_2020_FINAL.pdf

15 The rate of women's job market participation declined from 52% in 2019 to 46% in 2020. Hernandez, Julieta and Ada Zambrano (2017). “Strengthening the Domestic Workers' Movement in Latin America and the Caribbean.” CARE International. p.3. https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/CARE_LAC_DW_Movements_Report_July-2017.pdf

16 UN Women and Women Count (2020). “Whose time for care? Unpaid care and domestic work during Covid-19.” p.1. https://data.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Whose-time-to-care-brief_0.pdf

(a 30–40% increase).¹⁷ In a context where women are overly concentrated in precarious work sectors,¹⁸ and therefore have little access to social protection and benefits, losing paid work often means facing poverty.¹⁹

Crises impact women and girls disproportionately because of the many intertwining structural barriers they face.²⁰ Women and girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination – Black or minoritised women, or disabled women, for instance – will feel the biggest impacts.

Box 1: How crises impact on women's economic justice

When a crisis occurs, women's and girls' economic rights and opportunities shrink.²¹

1- They suffer disproportionately from job losses: women workers were 1.8 times more likely to lose their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic,²² and during the current phase of recovery, they are re-entering the world of work at slower rates than men.

2- They tend to work in sectors with less social protection and fewer safety nets: women are predominantly concentrated in informal work sectors and labour markets that offer little to no safety nets or social protections.²³

3- They take on the increased care and domestic work: structural barriers for women's economic justice such as unpaid care work increase. For instance, during COVID-19, women's and girls' unpaid care work increased by a further 2–3 hours per day.

At the same time, the climate emergency continues accelerating and urgently requires that we drastically shift our investment, production, consumption and mobility patterns. Time is running out to transition to a green economy that will allow us to operate within the planet's boundaries.

The climate crisis, like COVID-19 and other crises, disproportionately impacts women's and girls' economic opportunities. In the first instance, while developing countries are bearing up to 80% of the costs of climate change – including through food insecurity, forced migration, damage to property and productive assets, and diminished livelihoods – the poorest half of the world's population is responsible for just

17 Buschmann, Mareen, et al. (2021). "The Care Manifesto." The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Women's Working Group on Financing for Development, The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Manki Maroua and CARE International. https://femnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/EJR-AC_CS0_Care-Manifesto.pdf

18 For instance, 90% of women's employment in Asia is in the informal sector. Khatiwada, Sameer, et al. (2021). "Covid-19 and Labour Markets in Southeast Asia: Impacts on Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam." Asian Development Bank. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/758611/covid-19-labor-markets-southeast-asia.pdf>

19 Azcona, Ginette, et al. (2020). "From Insight to Action: Gender equality in the wake of Covid-19." UN Women and Women Count. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-COVID-19-en.pdf>

20 Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality recognizes how people's identities, relationships and lived experiences are products of the privileges and oppressions they may face, which are determined by the ways in which different aspects of their identities socially intersect (e.g., race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability). This paper discusses the barriers that women and girls face in the context of the climate crisis and the green transition, however, it is important to take things a step further by acknowledging any additional challenges women and girls facing intersecting forms of oppression may have, and ensuring they are not left behind. See: Crenshaw, Kimberlé (1989). "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." University of Chicago Legal Forum. <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf>

21 For purposes of the current paper, we focus here on three ways in which women and girls are disproportionately affected by crises. Several other impacts can affect women's access to economic opportunities and justice - some indirectly - in both the short and long term. For example, economic stress associated with crises increases the risk and incidence of domestic violence and gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence and other harmful practices such as girls being pulled out of school to help with extra care work; or early, forced and child marriage, which can greatly affect their capacity to earn income or forge a career. During crises, women have also been found to increasingly turn to high-risk livelihood options including street trading and sex work, as their usual income generating opportunities reduce or disappear altogether (as was the case during COVID-19 lockdowns). For more on the impacts of crises on women and girls, see Peterman, Amber, et al. (2020). "Pandemics and Violence Against Women and Children." Center for Global Development working paper, available at <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/pandemics-and-violence-against-women-and-children>

22 Madgavkar, Anu, et al. (15 July 2020). "COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects." McKinsey Global Institute. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-counteracting-the-regressive-effects>

23 UK Aid Direct and Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) (2020). "Implications of COVID-19 on women informal workers." p.1. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/911533/Query-53-covid-and-women-informal-workers.pdf



Pwani Teknowgalz members at a STEM workshop in Mombasa, Kenya. ©Cernius Juozas/CARE

10% of greenhouse gas emissions that trigger global warming.²⁴ At the same time, there is a clear gendered dimension to the climate emergency. Women and girls are more impacted by the knock-on effects of climate change, such as famine, and represent more than 70% of people facing chronic hunger.²⁵ Structural gender inequalities (such as inequity in unpaid care) increase with the climate crisis, as climate- and weather-related shocks will increase the amount of time required for care and domestic activities.²⁶ This has a knock-on effect on girls – who are more likely than boys to be kept out of education to help with increasingly onerous domestic tasks – and on women, as it reduces their time to engage in paid work. Without action, the climate crisis will deepen and exacerbate the emerging gender crisis in the world of work even further.

Against this backdrop, much is to be made of transitioning to a green economy,²⁷ and creating new and green work opportunities that put gender equality at their heart. This paper provides an in-depth assessment of the opportunities that come from fostering a gender-just transition, and outlines the multipronged approach that is needed to integrate a gender lens into the green transition in practice. This includes proactively addressing the barriers women face in the world of work; generating dignified work opportunities through the green transition; and broadening the concept of green jobs to include sustainable forms of work largely dominated by women, such as care and social work. At the same time, there is scope to work with the private sector to complement public sector action at the company level, and a need to ensure women's leadership in the green transition.

Opportunity of the transition to a green economy

The green transition presents huge potential to create jobs, especially in those sectors set to benefit directly from substantial investment in clean energy and infrastructure. Estimates suggest that shifting to a low-carbon economy could create US\$26 trillion in growth and more than 65 million new jobs in fields like clean energy or public transport by 2030.²⁸

However, women will not automatically benefit from these opportunities because of the structural barriers that are hard-wired into the global economy. Work opportunities from the green transition are likely to be created as a combination of well-paid, high-skills green jobs in the science and technology sectors, and low-end jobs with poor working conditions, remuneration and stability. For the most part, women's participation is lower in those sectors where the highest number of "good" green jobs will be created (such as solar and wind energy, transportation, and construction). Women are disproportionately represented in those sectors that will create low-end green jobs (such as greening of conventional agriculture, forestry,

24 CARE International (2020). "#SheLeadsInCrisis: Putting gender justice at the center of the global response to climate justice." <https://careclimatechange.org/sheleadsincrisis-campaign-brief/>

25 Al-Arah, Ras (2021). "Hunger is Rising, Covid-19 will make it Worse." United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). <https://2021.gho.unocha.org/global-trends/hunger-rising-covid-19-will-make-it-worse/>

26 Buschmann, Maren et al. (2021). "The Care Manifesto." The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Women's Working Group on Financing for Development, The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Manki Maroua and CARE International. https://femnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/EJR-AC_CSO_Care-Manifesto.pdf

27 The most widely used and authoritative definition for green economy is the UNEP definition that states, "[A] green economy [is] one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities." UNEP (2011) as cited in ILO (2015a). "Gender Equality and Green Jobs." p.1. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_360572.pdf.

28 The New Climate Economy (2018). "The New Climate Economy: The 2018 Report of the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate - Report Summary." <https://newclimateeconomy.report/2018/executive-summary/>



Almanda is a member of CARE's The Growing is Learning project in Tanzania. ©Vanessa Mwingira/CARE

waste collection or recycling activities).²⁹ The majority of “good” new green jobs will be created in male-dominated sectors, which present high barriers to entry for women workers. Such barriers are multifaceted and include unequal access to education, gendered occupational segregation, legal restrictions, and more time spent by women on unpaid care and domestic work.³⁰

Despite the potentially detrimental impacts that the green transition could cause for women and girls (if not done in a gender-just way), there is no systematic evidence collection on how transition measures impact gender equality. The latest UN Women annual

report on progress on all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from a gender perspective found that only 47% of the sex-age-disability-disaggregated data required to track progress is even being collected – with progress on the gender dimensions of climate change being one of the areas where disaggregated data is sorely lacking.³¹

Targeted action is needed to ensure that the green transition does not entrench or even worsen existing inequalities in the world of work, but instead will allow diverse groups of women to take full advantage of the multitude of opportunities.

1: Go Green, Tanzania³² – Generating decent work opportunities for women in the solar sector

In Sub-Saharan Africa, advancing solar energy technologies have created huge economic opportunities for women. Investment in solar technology and targeted support for women entrepreneurs – through training, credit, mentorship – helps increase access to energy and enables women entrepreneurs to run their own businesses in sustainable ways.³³

The Go Green initiative was a three-year project (2017–2019) aimed at increasing access to sustainable energy solutions for women in rural Tanzania. Go Green established a clean energy value chain that linked business groups, clean energy suppliers, local agents, community-based trainers (CBTs) and banks to provide energy products in the Kilimanjaro Region.

As part of Go Green, 75 Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) have established clean energy businesses, training 375 women entrepreneurs whose businesses now sell products such as solar lamps and clean cookstoves to meet the needs of the rural population. Within 3 years, the women involved boosted their household incomes (cumulatively earning a total of TZS 133,214,902, approximately £46,397),³⁴ were linked to financial institutions through their VSLAs and were able to acquire loans to

29 Strietska-Ilina, Olga, et al. (2011). “Skills for Green Jobs: A Global View.” ILO. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_159585.pdf

30 Livingstone, Deborah, Olivia Jenkins and Isabelle Cardinal (2021). “Women’s Economic Empowerment and Climate Change: A Primer,” WOW Helpdesk Guidance Note No 3. UK Aid Direct and Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980912/Guidance3-WEE-Climate-Change-Primer.pdf

31 Azcona, Ginette, et al. (2022). “Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2022.” UN Women and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022>

32 Fonden, Augustinus (2019). “GO GREEN Tanzania - Access to Sustainable energy solutions in rural Tanzania.” CARE International. <https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CARE-Go-Green-Tanzania-Augustinus.pdf>

33 Amankwah-Amoah, Joseph (2015). “Solar Energy in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Challenges and Opportunities of Technological Leapfrogging.” Thunderbird International Business Review. <https://mpr.ub.uni-muenchen.de/88627/>

34 Cumulative earnings of TZS 133,214,902: CARE Denmark (2020). “Go Green Project Tanzania 2017-20: Access to Sustainable Energy Solutions in Tanzania.” p.2. https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Go-green-Project_v3.pdf

invest in their clean energy businesses. The wider community also benefitted – more than 160,000 individuals now have access to clean energy products in their homes, which helps reduce indoor pollution and workload, as well as saving fuel costs for families and reducing forest degradation.

CARE's programming experience in Malawi provides further testimony to the long-term positive impact of generating work opportunities for women in the solar sector.³⁵ A group of 23 women solar entrepreneurs trained in 2003 has grown to nearly 2,000 today by training other women in surrounding communities to operate solar technology, with every 5 existing solar entrepreneurs reaching an additional 20 women. According to the solar entrepreneurs, the use of solar energy has helped reduce deforestation, gender-based violence and helped women to generate independent income.

Elizabeth Mboya, Go Green Entrepreneur



Elizabeth Mboya, Go Green Entrepreneur

Elizabeth Mboya lives in the Kilimanjaro Region of Tanzania. As one of the Go Green women entrepreneurs,³⁶ Elizabeth has invested in a new solar kiosk business to sell high-quality renewable energy products in her community. “Before joining the Go Green project, I was just selling bananas and vegetables with a very small profit margin and sometimes loss. I had no idea about the clean energy products business. But the business management and sales training I received has opened my eyes, ears and mind.”

After completing her business management training in 2019, Elizabeth started her own business selling portable solar lights. With a loan through her VSLA, she invested in a small number of lights and soon generated profit which she reinvested in other types of products including gas stoves. She paid back her first loan within three months and was able to take out a larger loan, and continues to receive mentorship and to develop new business plans to expand her business in renewable energy products.

As her business has grown, Elizabeth has been able to provide for her family, contribute to school fees and save extra money to start the construction of a new house. Her children now use the solar lights to study at nighttime and she benefits from a clean indoor environment thanks to her gas stove: the same benefits that she brings to her customers. She stated, “I’m happy that my clean energy customers provide positive feedback regarding my products and I know that my community is getting the best for their family and the environment at large.”

35 See, e.g., Lendwithcare (25 August 2021). “Introducing the ‘Shining Mothers of Malawi!’” <https://lendwithcare.org/news/post/YSYQzRAACMAiVBI>

36 Fonden, Augustinus (2019). “GO GREEN Tanzania - Access to Sustainable energy solutions in rural Tanzania.” CARE International. <https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CARE-Go-Green-Tanzania-Augustinus.pdf>

To ensure women can benefit from the green transition and the work opportunities it generates requires early action to integrate a gender lens into the green transition from the outset. Policies and programmes need to take into account the strong gendered dimension of climate change and transition measures,³⁷ and prioritise measures and investments that benefit women and girls. It further requires collecting, analysing and using sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data, while putting in place gender strategies that apply across sectors.

Ensuring that women and girls are at the heart of the green economy is both essential and smart: climate action that uses a gender lens can create rapid improvements in women's economic justice.³⁸ At the same time, addressing gender-specific barriers and ensuring women have access to and control over decent work and economic resources, can also lead to better environmental outcomes.³⁹ Finally, closing gender gaps in employment alone could unlock \$160 trillion in global wealth.⁴⁰ Concerted action to drive a gender-just and inclusive green transition could therefore lead to a "triple win" of tackling climate change, fostering economic growth and a better recovery from crises, and accelerating gender equality in the world of work.

Risks and opportunities for women's economic justice from a green transition

While a gender-just transition to green economies holds much opportunity, if done without a gender lens, it presents significant risks to women workers. Many traditional jobs are likely to be eliminated, substituted or transformed due to climate action,⁴¹ while women are often excluded from new opportunities through the multiple barriers they face when seeking to take up jobs in the low-carbon/net zero economy. Together with longer-term trends in the global jobs market that could disproportionately impact women workers, like digitisation and automation, the green transition could lead to millions of women losing their jobs and livelihoods. Without preventative action and increased funding to address these risks, the green transition is set to worsen the labour market gender gap, at great cost not only to the women involved and their families and communities but the global economy as a whole. McKinsey estimated even back in 2015, that gender parity in the global labour market could generate an additional \$28 trillion to global gross domestic product (GDP).⁴²

Women dominate in some of the sectors likely to be most affected by job losses from a shift to green economies and/or increased automation, such as garments, tourism and retail.⁴³ These trends will affect workers everywhere; for example, in the UK, the Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN) estimates that, on average across sectors, 1 in 5 workers representing 6.3 million jobs will require upskilling due to the transition to a net-zero economy.⁴⁴ However, workers in low-skilled, informal and precarious sectors are most at risk of job losses, and women are disproportionately represented in these sectors.⁴⁵

- 37 ILO (2015b). "Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all." https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_432859.pdf
- 38 Livingstone, Deborah, Olivia Jenkins and Isabelle Cardinal (2021). "Women's Economic Empowerment and Climate Change: A Primer," WOW Helpdesk Guidance Note No 3. UK Aid Direct and Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980912/Guidance3-WEE-Climate-Change-Primer.pdf
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Wodon, Quentin and Benedicte de la Briere (2018). "Unrealized Potential: The High Cost of Gender Inequality in Earnings." The World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29865/126579-Public-on-5-30-18-WorldBank-GenderInequality-Brief-v13.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- 41 ILO (n.d.). "Frequently Asked Questions on Climate Change and Green Jobs." https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/WCMS_371589/lang-en/index.htm
- 42 Woetzel, Jonathan, et al. (2015). "How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth." McKinsey Global Institute. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>
- 43 Buschmann, Maren, Sarah Fuhrman, and Sven Harmeling (2020). "Building Forward: Creating a equitable gender-just, inclusive, and sustainable world." CARE International. <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/publications/building-forward-creating-a-more-equitable-gender-just-inclusive-and-sustainable-world>
- 44 Robins, Nick, et al. (2019). "Tracking Local Employment in the Green Economy: The PCAN Just Transitions Job Tracker." Place-Based Climate Action Network (PCAN). <https://pcancities.org.uk/tracking-local-employment-green-economy-pcan-just-transition-jobs-tracker>
- 45 UN Women (2018). "Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment." <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

The opportunity of a green transition promises extensive job creation; however, strong entry and structural barriers can prevent women and girls from realising these opportunities. Some barriers to women's participation in green jobs are sector specific, such as social norms that deem construction jobs inappropriate for women. Others permeate all sectors. These include barriers to women's and women-led businesses' access to land, finance and technology; gender segregation in the education system and labour market; laws that limit women's access to certain tasks and jobs; and structural inequalities reflecting social norms that see women and girls performing the majority of unpaid care and domestic work, effectively taking away time and opportunities for other jobs.⁴⁶

Addressing the structural barriers that women face in the world of work is an issue that is not yet receiving enough attention, both in global economies⁴⁷ and in gender-focused climate interventions.⁴⁸ Measures aimed at supporting women in the shift to a net-zero economy are mainly economic (such as skills training for green jobs, research and development (R&D) subsidies, etc.), while very few address structural issues such as inequalities in unpaid care. Building the care economy and tackling other systemic barriers, such as lack of social protection and safety nets for women in the informal economy, migrant workers and refugees, are critical for a gender-just transition. As the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) points out, "linking more green recovery measures to supporting unpaid care could help to reduce gender inequality".⁴⁹ This also requires addressing structural barriers related to women's participation in the workforce, such as discrimination in hiring, gender-based job segmentation, lack of representation and persistent gender pay gaps.⁵⁰



Farmer from CARE's Growing is Learning project in Tanzania feeds her grandchildren. ©Vanessa Mwingira/CARE

46 Livingstone, Deborah, Olivia Jenkins and Isabelle Cardinal (2021). "Women's Economic Empowerment and Climate Change: A Primer," WOW Helpdesk Guidance Note No 3. Aid Direct and Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980912/Guidance3-WEE-Climate-Change-Primer.pdf

47 See: Publish What You Fund and International Center for Research on Women (2022). "Tracking International Funding to Women's Economic Empowerment in Bangladesh." https://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2022/07/Tracking-International-Funding-to-WEE-in-Bangladesh-1.pdf

48 Strumskyte, Sigita, and Dimitria Xynou (2021). "OECD Policy Response to Coronavirus: Gender-relevance of policies in the OECD Green Recovery Database." OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/gender-relevance-of-policies-in-the-oecd-green-recovery-database-e6a03378/>

49 Ibid.

50 Stevens, Candice, et al. (2009). "Green Jobs and Women Workers: Employment, Equity, Equality." International Labour Foundation for Sustainable Development (Sustainlabour). https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/sites/default/files/downloads/resource/Green_jobs_and_women_workers_employment_equity_equality_Sustainlabour.pdf

Box 2: Building the care economy as part of the green transition

A caring economy should be the bedrock of the decarbonised economy. This requires recognising care as a right and building the care economy in line with the “5 Rs”.⁵¹ These are:

Recognition of care work as productive, which adds value to the economy and society;

Reduction of the total hours that women and girls spend on unpaid services;

Redistribution at the household level, and by addressing gender-discriminatory norms and shifting responsibility to governments and employers;

Representation of the most marginalised caregivers in decisions on and design of care policies; and

Reward for care work, via generating decent working conditions and equal pay for work of equal value to protect a workforce largely made up of women, and generally building decent care jobs.



Participant of CARE’s Live Well Social Business in Zambia, holding her daughter. © Marshall Foster/CARE

Current levels of climate finance are neither adequate to address the climate crisis,⁵² nor are they provided in a gender-equitable way. The OECD found that those sectors known for high greenhouse gas emissions, such as heavy industry, infrastructure and aviation – typically very male-dominated sectors – are more likely to receive funding for the green transition. By contrast, there is comparatively less funding available in some environment-related economic sectors where women tend to be better represented, like forestry or agriculture.⁵³ At the same time, the global economy faces recession and crisis,⁵⁴ and many countries will further choose austerity policies over increased spending. This would decrease both financing for climate action, and social spending that could help address some of the structural barriers women face in the world of work (e.g. through public spending on social

protection and investments in the care economy). The 2008 financial and economic crises, and subsequent decade of austerity, have shown the devastating impact such policies have on women’s economic justice: cutting public funding for care and social services has further increased structural inequities in unpaid care, and widened gender gaps in the world of work.⁵⁵

51 See: Arora-Jonsson, Seema, Maeve Cohen and Sherilyn MacGregor (2022). “Caring in a changing climate: Centering care work in climate action.” Oxfam. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/caring-in-a-changing-climate-centering-care-work-in-climate-action-621353/>

52 In 2009, developed countries committed in Copenhagen to provide USD 100 billion a year by 2020 to help developing countries reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate impacts. Even that level of financing would have been below needs, yet public finance only reached USD 83 billion in 2020, falling USD 17 billion short of the commitment. In October 2021, Canada and Germany produced a climate finance delivery plan which forecasts that developed countries plan to fulfil their commitments and provide USD 100 billion a year by 2023. OECD (2022). “Climate Finance Provided and Mobilised by Developed Countries in 2016-2020: Insights from Disaggregated Analysis.” <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/286dae5d-en.pdf?expires=1664977988&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=2B7D740FC93EF9A1892F2D9A4D429156>

53 Strumskyte, Sigita, and Dimitria Xynou (2021). “OECD Policy Response to Coronavirus: Gender-relevance of policies in the OECD Green Recovery Database.” OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/gender-relevance-of-policies-in-the-oecd-green-recovery-database-e6a03378/>

54 OECD (2022). “Paying the Price of War: OECD Economic Outlook, Interim Report September 2022.” <https://www.oecd.org/economic-outlook/september-2022/>

55 World Economic Forum (2022). “Global Gender Gap Report 2022: Insight Report July 2022.” <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/digest>

2: Turning barriers into opportunities: DESFERS project, Senegal, Mali and Niger⁵⁶

The DESFERS project (Développement Economique et Social des Femmes à travers les Energies Renouvelables au Sahel),⁵⁷ part of the European Union (EU)-funded EUR 18.1 million Women and Sustainable Energy initiative, has transformed economic opportunities for women in Senegal, Mali and Niger. The project aims to foster women's economic empowerment by tackling social and cultural norms that hinder women's access to economic opportunities through renewable energy. It seeks to strengthen women's engagement in Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), with measures to increase their social status, institutionalise women's entrepreneurship and create jobs in the sustainable energy sector.

DESFERS supports a gender-just and inclusive transition to a low-carbon economy by giving economically marginalised women access to solar-powered equipment (such as solar freezers or pumps) to use within their existing or new businesses. This aims to strengthen women's resilience to climate-related shocks, and reduce their dependence on expensive and polluting sources of energy.

The project also provides business training and seeks to tackle gender-discriminatory norms with awareness-raising activities, including community-based dialogues and advocacy sessions. These have helped ensure that whole communities, particularly community leaders, support the project and facilitate women's access to renewable energy technologies. This has also included engaging men to support women to establish and build their businesses.

As a result, 600 women's groups have acquired technical, management and financial skills to operate in the sustainable energy sector, and 21,000 women now have access to renewable energy and credit. This enables them to take up opportunities for entrepreneurship and work by using or marketing sustainable energy. Though it is too early to fully assess the impact of the project on the lives of the women and their households, anecdotal evidence suggests that those who have received the solar-powered equipment have been able to increase their daily income. DESFERS demonstrates clearly that decreasing dependence on fossil fuels can work hand in hand with increasing the economic empowerment of women.

Within the current economic context, political priorities and financing models, the green transition would set back gender equality. Preventive action and increased funding is needed to reduce its risks and barriers to women's economic justice. Women workers need to be reskilled for green and higher-skilled jobs, while being prioritised for any green jobs programmes. At the same time, it is key to tackle the multiple structural barriers that women face in the world of work, by building a caring economy in line with the 5 Rs (of recognition, reduction, redistribution, representation and reward), and ensuring that social protection and safety nets are in place for diverse groups of women workers (including women working in the informal sector, migrant and refugee workers).

⁵⁶ See European Commission (14 February 2019). "New EU project will support development of over 4 000 small renewable energy women-led businesses in Senegal." <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/intpa/items/641734/en>

⁵⁷ Alliance for Rural Electrification (n.d.). "Plan International - DESFERS mini-grid project (Senegal)." <https://www.ruralelec.org/project-case-studies/plan-international-desfers-mini-grid-project-senegal>

Generating dignified work opportunities for women through a green transition

The transition to a green global economy presents huge potential to generate work opportunities. Advancing solar energy technologies and green infrastructure open up new sectors, while there is increased demand for informal activities like waste picking and entrepreneurs engaged in green businesses. As outlined in previous chapters, new job opportunities in the green economy will be created both as well-paid and high-skilled work, as well as low-paid, low-skilled work, much of which tends to be situated in the informal sector and subject to poor working conditions.

Box 3: Fostering dignified work for women

In the ILO's framework,⁵⁸ decent work "is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men". CARE's concept of "dignified work"⁵⁹ uses this framework as a starting point, but places the emphasis on women's access to and control over decent work and its reward.



Beneficiaries of the Empowerment of Women through Sustainable Entrepreneurship programme. ©CARE Morocco

58 ILO (n.d.). "Decent Work." <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>

59 Boyle, Garry (15 November 2016). "Dignified Work - What is it? And why is it crucial for women's economic empowerment?" CARE International. <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/development-blog/private-sector-engagement/dignified-work-what-is-it-and-why-is-it-crucial-for-women-s-economic-empowerment>

Generating green and dignified work opportunities for all requires opening up higher-end opportunities in male-dominated sectors for women (case study 3), establishing measures to improve working conditions and/or formalise lower-end green jobs (case study 4), and facilitating access to green jobs, especially for women facing intersecting forms of discrimination, such as migrant women workers, for instance, through entrepreneurship (case study 5).

In the fast-growing renewable energy sector, about 32% of jobs are currently held by women, compared to 22% in the energy sector overall.⁶⁰ With jobs in the sector forecast to triple to nearly 29 million by 2050,⁶¹ it is essential that women are equipped to be ready to take full advantage of this opportunity. Particular opportunities exist, for example, for women entrepreneurs in the provision of solar and off-grid energy as well as clean cookstoves. Opening up a traditionally male-dominated sector for women workers often requires a mix of policy measures, ranging from upskilling and training, building business skills, to increasing decentralised access to energy. ▼



47-year-old Marian Kamara runs one of the most successful retail businesses in Northern Sierra Leone. ©CARE Netherlands

3: Opening up traditionally male-dominated sectors to women workers Solar Harnessed Entrepreneurs (SHE) project,⁶² Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, where only 6.4% of the country's rural population has access to electricity, the Solar Harnessed Entrepreneurs project has opened up work and business opportunities for women. Lack of access to electricity has been a significant barrier to entrepreneurs' ability to run their businesses effectively and efficiently. The Ministry of Energy and partners from local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and three power companies, PowerGen, WinchEnergy and PowerLeone, have invested £43 million in providing renewable energy through mini-grids, but there are multiple financial and social barriers to women accessing these grids.

The two-year Solar for BetehBiznes project, which started in November 2021 and is funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, supports 350 women's groups (7,000 beneficiaries in 20 communities) and 120 women-owned enterprises across seven districts to leverage mini-grid power supplies to build their agro-businesses. The goal of the project is to ensure that women have more equitable access to and control over decentralised renewable energy, in order to run their businesses. This project aims to foster women's economic inclusion by expanding and developing women's enterprises in mini-grid sites, building the case for decentralised energy provision as an entry point for women, and strengthening the enabling environment and sustainability.

60 IRENA (2019). "Renewable Energy: A Gender Perspective." <https://www.irena.org/publications/2019/Jan/Renewable-Energy-A-Gender-Perspective>

61 Livingstone, Deborah, Olivia Jenkins and Isabelle Cardinal (2021). "Women's Economic Empowerment and Climate Change: A Primer," WOW Helpdesk Guidance Note No 3. UK Aid Direct and Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW). p.23. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980912/Guidance3-WEE-Climate-Change-Primer.pdf

62 Ministry of Energy (2 February 2022). "Deputy Minister of Energy in collaboration with CARE launch the 'Solar for Beteh Biznes' Project." Sierra Leone. <http://www.energy.gov.sl/2022/02/02/deputy-minister-of-energy-in-collaboration-with-care-launch-the-solar-for-beteh-biznes-project/>

The ILO estimates that 61% of all workers globally are informally employed,⁶³ representing two billion workers worldwide. Informal employment comprises “all remunerative work (i.e. both self-employment and wage employment) that is not registered, regulated or protected by existing legal or regulatory frameworks”.⁶⁴ Women are over-represented in the informal sector and often work in precarious, low-value and low-paid informal work with few or no labour standards, social protections, occupational health and safety rules, and in contexts where it is harder to organise to negotiate improved conditions.⁶⁵ There is a clear relationship between low levels of GDP and high levels of informal employment, so countries should have an intrinsic interest in formalising work to generate growth. ▼

4: Strengthening women's rights in the informal green economy – Saamuhika Shakti project, India⁶⁶

The Saamuhika Shakti project, which means “collective impact”, started in 2020 and is funded by the H&M Foundation. The project aims to empower waste pickers, who work in the informal waste economy, by supporting them to collectivise to improve their working conditions and how they supply recycled materials to various sectors, including the garment sector. Nearly 90% of project participants are women. The H&M Foundation, in partnership with a consortium of eight NGOs, has now connected the project with H&M's global supply chain sourcing products for their garments. Since 2021, the project has developed a project called Social Buttons, which works with Hasiru Dala Innovations, a sister organisation of one of the consortium partners, to procure PET bottles from waste pickers. These bottles are then made into buttons for use by H&M.

Waste pickers in India, all of whom belong to castes in the country's system that are socially, economically and politically marginalised, live in slums, many without access to basic amenities such as water, electricity and decent housing. Many are migrants and do not have proper documentation that would allow them to access government schemes and services, nor education levels which give them access to formal work opportunities. They earn their livelihoods by collecting waste and selling or separating waste in segregation centres in extremely poor working conditions.

Through the Saamuhika Shakti project, participants have increased their income within the waste economy. In the last 2 years, the project has skilled 2,600 waste pickers in life skills, 1,100 in digital and financial literacy, 550 in entrepreneurship development, and has brought together 1,000 women and men in 61 collectives. Trainees are supported to save money, have increased access to loans through their collective, and use this money to start small-scale businesses such as in tailoring or selling street food. Some women have combined these new businesses with waste picking. Gender is integrated throughout project activities. This has included involving male partners and family members in dialogue to overcome the gender-based barriers that women face. Ultimately, the women have improved their livelihoods, whether within or outside the waste value chain.

63 ILO (30 April 2018). “More than 60 per cent of the world's employed population are in the informal economy.” https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_627189/lang--en/index.htm

64 See ILO (2003), as cited in ILO (n.d.). “4.5 Informal Economy Workers.” https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/wages/minimum-wages/beneficiaries/WCMS_436492/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=By%20doing%20so%2C%20they%20defined,in%20an%20income%2Dproducing%20enterprise

65 Livingstone, Deborah, Olivia Jenkins, and Isabelle Cardinal (2021). “Women's Economic Empowerment and Climate Change: A Primer,” WOW Helpdesk Guidance Note No 3. UK Aid Direct and Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980912/Guidance3-WEE-Climate-Change-Primer.pdf

66 See: Saamuhika Shakti (n.d.). “Work.” <https://www.saamuhikashakti.org/work>

Women entrepreneurs and women-led start-ups can help diversify value chains, reduce risk, increase competitiveness and enable climate-responsive innovation.⁶⁷ These jobs often go beyond conventional notions of green businesses, such as in the energy or construction sectors, to encompass a much broader range of low-carbon enterprises. However, multiple barriers prevent women from accessing business opportunities – for instance, there is a gender credit gap of \$285 billion for women entrepreneurs, with 70% of women-owned businesses either excluded or under-served in terms of access to credit.⁶⁸ Barriers are deepest for women experiencing intersecting discrimination, such women living in poverty and in rural areas. Investing in female-led businesses can transform societies as well as women's lives: women typically reinvest up to 90% of their income in the education, health and nutrition of their family and community, compared to 40% for men.⁶⁹ ▼

Facilitating women's access to green jobs through entrepreneurship

Sarojini's success story – A Sri Lankan entrepreneur overcoming multiple barriers⁷⁰

Sarojini (45) is a Sri Lankan entrepreneur whose business processes coconut husks into chips, which are made into bricks by another company and then exported to China for the building industry. When she is asked about the secret to her success, Sarojini has one clear answer: "Self-confidence."

Sarojini grew up in extreme poverty, with her mother struggling to make ends meet with four children. Sarojini started making small packets out of newspaper by moonlight after school to sell to groundnut sellers. Soon, she had dropped out of school to help support the family with her income. Sarojini married and had three children of her own, but then crisis hit. Her husband had an accident which left him in a coma for four months. Left without family income, Sarojini pawned her house and jewelry, but soon spiralled into debt, losing her home and being forced to relocate her family.



45-year-old Sarojini is a Sri Lankan entrepreneur who processes coconut husks for the building industry. ©CARE

Seizing the opportunity to make a new start, Sarojini got a job preparing cement blocks, her first insight into the building industry. Meanwhile, her husband slowly recovered. His work as a driver transporting coconuts showed him how coconut chips were produced. The couple saw an opportunity and secured a charitable grant to buy a coconut chip-making machine. However, they needed further funding to run, maintain and house the machine, so she sought a bank loan. For five months one bank manager after another turned her down, requesting property to secure the loan and two guarantors, which she didn't have. She says, "They couldn't understand what I had been through and I wasn't comfortable openly discussing our poverty with them."

67 Livingstone, Deborah, Olivia Jenkins and Isabelle Cardinal (2021). "Women's Economic Empowerment and Climate Change: A Primer," WOW Helpdesk Guidance Note No 3. UK Aid Direct and Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW). p.4. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980912/Guidance3-WEE-Climate-Change-Primer.pdf

68 Ibid. p.23.

69 Department for International Development and Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP (25 August 2019). "UK aid to break down barriers for female entrepreneurs in Africa." <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-aid-to-break-down-barriers-for-female-entrepreneurs-in-africa>

70 Purdy, Lucy (30 April 2019). "Funding female entrepreneurs: the Sri Lankan coconut husk business owner." Positive.News. <https://www.positive.news/economics/funding-female-entrepreneurs-the-coconut-husk-business-owner-from-sri-lanka/>

They would casually say to me 'ma'am, we aren't giving out any more loans.'" However, she tried one more time, and this time the bank manager was a woman. "She could clearly see that I was a real business woman, employing other women and running a good business. So I got the loan I needed!"

Sarojini used the loan to purchase more coconut husks and built a temporary shed to house her machinery. She received more training, support and further funding from CARE and its partner, Chrysalis. Sarojini has been able to build a permanent structure from which she now runs her business. Her enterprise continues to grow and she now employs seven other women who, like her, have faced significant challenges in their lives. Sarojini is not only able to support her own family, but is enabling other women to work so that they can feed and educate their own children. Her ambition is to expand the business into making end products from the coconut chips, so that she can employ more women from her community and support them to "grow in confidence and make them feel proud". Sarojini's concluding advice to the banks is clear: "Employ more women."

5: Green Enterprise Fund, Sri Lanka⁷¹

The Green Enterprise Fund (ENTERPRISE) (2017–2020) was funded by the British Council. The aim was to empower and enable women and youth in Sri Lanka to create and participate in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The programme developed skills in social entrepreneurship via innovative business models that tackled social issues and contributed to sustainable development. Successful applicants received grants out of a total of LKR 40 million (£91,000), with applicants contributing at least 25% of the total grant. The recipients were enabled to "green" their business functions and introduce environment friendly initiatives. Examples include the following women entrepreneurs:

Malani Jayasekara is the inspiring owner and entrepreneur of Malashani, based in Linudla, a coffee plant nursery using only organic fertilisers. Now in her seventies, Malani continues to pursue her passion for organic agriculture, growing organic coffee plants for the government Department of Agriculture and coffee estates, as well as being a certified seed handler for export coffee plants. Malani also produces and sells compost.

Amaya Natural Bathik is a start-up owned by Shiromi Pathirana, which promotes organic batik designs made using natural dyes derived from boiling leaves, wood, sawdust and barks collected from fallen trees. She uses these dyes to produce shirts, dresses, sarongs, bedsheets and nightwear, and has recently introduced a mosquito repellent dress for children. The products are sold locally, mainly to the tourist market. Since launching in 2015, the enterprise has gone on to employ four women, including two who have disabilities, as well as providing income for around 25 suppliers of the raw materials.

Sunara Osuhala is an enterprise in Matale promoting Ayurvedic beauty and personal healthcare products. It was established by Nadeeka Gajanayaka in 2018, a Ayurvedic medicine specialist, and now produces 13 Ayurvedic products made with all-natural ingredients. The enterprise also has a medical centre and an Ayurvedic spa for women. Nadeeka launched her business by producing a natural toothpaste supported by an ENTERPRISE grant, which helped the business to invest in a barcode-printing machine. Now her products are sold in shops and beauty salons and the brand is recognised by consumers for its quality. The enterprise has employed 9 women from low-income families and created 25 indirect jobs for local cultivators of herbs and medicinal plants.

71 See: British Council (n.d.). "ENTERPRISE." <https://www.britishcouncil.lk/programmes/society/enterprise>



24-year-old Pham Phuong Thao set up a business selling flowers three years ago and now employs six people.
©CARE Vietnam

Generating equitable green work opportunities for women is key to fostering gender-just economic markets and advancing the shift towards sustainable ways of operating that is so urgently needed. The climate emergency requires rapid action on solutions for renewable or low-carbon energy sources, and there is huge potential for making these green jobs equally accessible to both women and men. Importantly, these and other types of investments in the green economy need to be systematically evaluated across economic and social dimensions, including their impact on gender-transformative change. Green jobs present a particular opportunity to break down gender barriers as gender segregation is not yet deep-rooted in new occupations.⁷² It is therefore possible to challenge the very notion of “women’s” or “men’s” work – including bringing more men into so-called “feminised” industries.

Decision-makers need to put in place a multipronged approach to generate new, green and dignified work opportunities for women and girls. Opening up higher-end opportunities in male-dominated sectors for women requires supporting them to develop the highly specialised skills needed through targeted training and education. At the same time, measures should be put in place to formalise lower-end green jobs. This includes removing barriers by, for example, establishing stronger anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws and family-friendly workplace policies, while ensuring women are targeted in recruiting for these jobs (e.g. through quotas, specialised recruitment and by engaging with women’s rights organisations). It also requires that all green work is decent work, which provides fair pay, access to social protection and the right to take part in collective bargaining. Special focus needs to be placed on facilitating access to green jobs for women who face intersecting forms of discrimination, such as migrant women workers.

As a next step, opportunities from the green transition should benefit all workers who are engaged in sustainable forms of work: to recognise these broader work opportunities requires a rethink and broadening of the current definition of “green jobs”, as outlined in the next chapter.

Building decent care work and the care economy as part of a gender-just green transition

As the climate crisis accelerates, so increases the amount of time needed for care and domestic work⁷³ – such as arranging for food, firewood or clean water – tasks that are largely performed by women and girls.

“When communities are displaced because of calamities, such as floods, droughts, and landslides, women are more impacted, as women are caregivers. Women have to arrange food and fuel for their families. Moreover, because of climate change, there are less trees and greenery, which makes the lives of rural women more difficult in terms of fetching wood and food for their cattle.”

Rashmila Prajapati, Indigenous Newar Woman, Nepal⁷⁴

72 Strietska-Ilina, Olga et al. (2011). “Skills for Green Jobs: A Global View.” ILO. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_159585.pdf

73 Such as arranging for food, water or fire wood. See Chapter 1 and Arora-Jonsson, Seema, Maeve Cohen and Sheryllyn MacGregor (2022). “Caring in a changing climate: Centering care work in climate action.” Oxfam. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/caring-changing-climate-centering-care-work-climate-action>

74 Buschmann, Mareen, et al. CARE International et al. (2021). “The Care Manifesto.” The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Women’s Working Group on Financing for Development (FEMNET), Manki Maroua and CARE International. p.9. https://femnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/EJR-AC_CSO_Care-Manifesto.pdf

Increased climate shocks impact women and girls disproportionately through the increase in time they need to spend on domestic and caring work. Inequity in unpaid care is caused by multiple factors: the lack of quality care infrastructure (such as childcare centres or health facilities), as well as paid and unpaid care work being undervalued⁷⁵ and perpetuating low salaries and poor working conditions for women – who make up the majority of the employed care workforce.⁷⁶ Social norms further define “women’s” and “men’s” work roles at home and in the community, with women doing a disproportionate amount of unpaid work. All these factors contribute to impacting women’s economic opportunities, as well as health and well-being, and limit their ability to move into higher-paid economic activities, including from green work.⁷⁷ However, the green transition also holds the potential to rectify this structural inequality. Generating decent care work and building a caring economy will be central to a gender-just green transition.

6: Building care infrastructure and jobs will accelerate women’s economic justice – Village creche, Côte d’Ivoire⁷⁸

CARE’s POWER Africa project⁷⁹ in the north of Côte d’Ivoire highlights the strong barriers inequitable care work presents for women’s economic justice. It shows how, through investment in and provision of childcare, women’s incomes and economic opportunities have increased.

In line with the global trend, women perform most of the childcare in Côte d’Ivoire. When external childcare services are not available, this becomes a barrier to women entering the workforce, or reduces their productivity at work. POWER Africa highlighted this structural barrier starkly: women were participating in agricultural and processing activities for market gardening, corn, peanuts, potatoes and shea butter, yet without access to childcare, they had to carry their children on their backs when working in the fields. This had multiple negative impacts for women and their children – in terms of their health, incomes and education. The women were exhausted and carrying their children slowed down their ability to work, while the children faced delayed walking and growth.

The President of the VSLA network, Soro Dorcas, realised the negative impact of the lack of childcare and took action. The Crib is a childcare centre founded by members of the VSLAs in 2014. Older women who are not able to work in the fields take care of the children of mothers who are members of the VSLA, receiving an income for their work. The centre is financially self-sufficient. Members pay a small fee, either in kind or in cash. The centre is now also open to the children of women who are not VSLA members, who pay a slightly increased fee.

To date, 205 women and 309 children have benefitted from use of the childcare centre, while the community is taking further action to build a school with the support of the European Union. Women’s and children’s health has improved, and women’s incomes have increased because they are able to work faster and more efficiently. As a result, they are more easily able to afford the cost of education, food, healthcare and clothing for their families. The market is well supplied due to the increase in food production and the shea value chain has seen considerable expansion, creating new jobs for young people and women. At both the household and community levels, women are now also increasingly engaged in decision-making.

75 Unpaid care work adds USD 10.8 trillion to the global economy per year; yet remains undervalued. See: Ratcliff, Anna, and Anna Theriault (2020). “World’s billionaires have more wealth than 4.6 billion people.” Oxfam. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/worlds-billionaires-have-more-wealth-46-billion-people>

76 Livingstone, Deborah, Olivia Jenkins and Isabelle Cardinal (2021). “Women’s Economic Empowerment and Climate Change: A Primer,” WOW Helpdesk Guidance Note No 3. UK Aid Direct and Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW). p.22. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980912/Guidance3-WEE-Climate-Change-Primer.pdf

77 Ibid. p.22.

78 This creche was created by a women’s VSLA group under CARE’s “POWER Africa” project. See: CARE International (n.d.). “POWER Africa: Promoting Opportunities for Women’s Economic Empowerment in rural Africa.” <https://care.ca/projects/power-africa/>

79 CARE International (n.d.). “POWER Africa.” <https://www.care.org/our-work/education-and-work/microsavings/promoting-opportunities-for-womens-economic-empowerment-in-rural-africa/>



Devota is a 29-year-old farmer with three children in Zambia.
©Vanessa Mwingira/CARE

Building the care economy – through quality care and social infrastructure, and new decent care jobs – will help address both the structural barrier of inequity in unpaid care that limits women's economic opportunity, and the disproportionate impact on women and girls from the climate crisis. CARE, together with our civil society organisation (CSO), women's rights organisation (WRO) and youth group partners in the UN Economic Justice and Rights Action Coalition, recommends decision-makers to invest 10% of public funding for care and social services, while generating 80 million decent care jobs,⁸⁰ as a first step to address inequity in unpaid care. New ILO research shows that investing in long-term care with 2.45% of GDP could create 184 million jobs, and reduce the gender employment gap by 7.4 percentage points.⁸¹ UN Women estimates that investing in free universal childcare in African countries, the continent where women make up 80% of the domestic workforce,⁸² could significantly increase decent work opportunities and accelerate women's economic participation. With these investments, up to 1.2 million new care jobs could be generated in Côte d'Ivoire, 17 million in Nigeria and 1.4 million in Rwanda.⁸³ Funding the care economy is essential to avert the gender crisis in the world of work, accelerating women's economic justice.

Investment in care is also an investment in sustainability. In the context of the COVID-19 recovery, compared to construction-led recovery,⁸⁴ building back from the pandemic by investing in care would create 2.7 times as many jobs and produce 30% less greenhouse gas emissions.⁸⁵ Key multilateral agencies such as the UN⁸⁶ and OECD, CSOs and feminist networks have started making the case that care work is in fact green work, and that a caring economy is an integral part of a "feminist green new deal", or indeed, an equitable future.⁸⁷ UN Women describes expanding the definition of green jobs to include care jobs as a "win-win scenario".⁸⁸

Expanding the definition of green jobs to include a focus on low-carbon, low-impact sectors, rather than reducing and reforming carbon-intensive industries, holds break-through potential for women's

80 Buschmann, Mareen, et al. (2021). "The Care Manifesto." The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Women's Working Group on Financing for Development, The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Manki Maroua and CARE International. https://femnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/EJR-AC_CSO_Care-Manifesto.pdf

81 De Henau, Jerome (2022). "Costs and benefits of investing in transformative care policy packages: A macrosimulation study in 82 countries." ILO. p.45-46. Retrieved on 08 October 2022 from, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_839252.pdf

82 De Henau, Jerome, et al. (2021). "Investing in Free Universal Childcare in Sub-Saharan Africa: Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal and the United Republic of Tanzania: Estimating spending requirements, gender employment effects and fiscal revenue." UN Women. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Issue-paper-Investing-in-free-universal-childcare-in-sub-Saharan-Africa-en_0.pdf

83 Ibid.

84 Johnston, Anna (2021). "Gender Differences in Access to Coronavirus Government Support." Women's Budget Group. <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/LDP-briefing-1-FINAL-report.pdf>

85 Cohen, Maeve, and Sheryl MacGregor (2020). "Towards a Feminist Green New Deal for the UK." Women's Budget Group and Women's Environmental Network. <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Feminist-Green-New-Deal.pdf>

86 UN Women and the African Development Bank (2021). "Green Jobs for Women in Africa." https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2021/11/20211206_UN%20Women_Green%20Jobs_report_ENG%20webpages.pdf

87 Novello, Amanda and Feminist Green New Deal Coalition (2021). "Building Narratives for a Caring Green Economy: A Feminist Green New Deal Coalition Report." The Feminist Green New Deal Coalition and Data for Progress. <https://feministgreennewdeal.com/2021/09/21/building-narratives-for-a-caring-green-economy/>

88 UN Women and the African Development Bank (2021). "Green Jobs for Women in Africa." https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2021/11/20211206_UN%20Women_Green%20Jobs_report_ENG%20webpages.pdf

economic justice. Many of the jobs predominantly done by women, such as care, domestic and social work, are sustainable forms of work that are low in emissions, and also essential for societies to function.⁸⁹ Reframing work in these sectors as “green work” as part of a gender-just green transition could contribute to fostering sustainable economies, attract more men to work in these sectors and “redistribute” care work.⁹⁰ This would also lead to much-needed increased public investments in care, as part of countries’ green transition strategies.⁹¹ This broader definition would fit the ILO’s rationale of green work including jobs that produce environmentally beneficial goods and services (regardless of whether their production processes benefit the environment) and jobs that use environmentally sustainable production processes (regardless of whether they produce environmentally beneficial goods or services).⁹²

Including care and social work in the concept of green work will also help women benefit further from green work opportunities. It will contribute to a fundamental narrative shift that is required to acknowledge the essential role of unpaid care. It is also a high priority for voters, communities and societies. The Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) has conducted public polling as part of building its narrative for a caring green economy, with nearly three-quarters of respondents agreeing that green work should include “all jobs related to the wellbeing of people and the planet”, and thus include care work.⁹³ Respondents also expressed a desire for the public sector to give higher priority to care infrastructure, services and jobs, and to include this in its response to the climate emergency.

7: Care work and its added value to women’s economic opportunities, societies and green economies – Advancing Women’s Economic Empowerment in Vietnam (AWEEV)⁹⁴

CARE’s programming experience in Vietnam shows the potential of building the care economy for women’s economic justice, while outlining the sustainable nature of the sector and its value to societies. The high and unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work on women in Vietnam prevents many working-age women from obtaining paid work and accessing decent work.⁹⁵ On average, women in Vietnam spend 10 hours more per week on unpaid care and domestic work than men.⁹⁶ More than 20% of women did not do paid work because of household chores, compared to 2% of men.⁹⁷ As Vietnam’s population ages,⁹⁸ unpaid elder care in the home increases, which disproportionately falls to women. However, more women will be required to enter the labour market in order for Vietnam to achieve its ambitions of becoming an upper middle-income and high-income country by 2025 and 2045, respectively. CARE’s research also found that women in areas mainly populated by ethnic minority groups faced even greater constraints in seeking paid and decent work.

89 Cohen, Maeve, and Sherilyn MacGregor (2020). “Towards a Feminist Green New Deal for the UK.” Women’s Budget Group and Women’s Environmental Network. <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Feminist-Green-New-Deal.pdf>

90 Ibid.

91 UN Women and the African Development Bank (2021). “Green Jobs for Women in Africa.” https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2021/11/20211206_UN%20Women_Green%20Jobs_report_ENG%20webpages.pdf

92 ILO (2016). “What is a green job?” https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/news/WCMS_220248/lang--en/index.htm

93 “69% of respondents agree[d] that green jobs are any job related to the well-being of people and the planet.” Novello, Amanda and Feminist Green New Deal Coalition (2021). “Building Narratives for a Caring Green Economy: A Feminist Green New Deal Coalition Report.” The Feminist Green New Deal Coalition and Data for Progress. p.12. <https://feministgreennewdeal.com/2021/09/21/building-narratives-for-a-caring-green-economy/>

94 See CARE International in Vietnam (2 March 2022). “CARE launching an initiative to advance women’s economic empowerment in Vietnam.” <https://www.care.org.vn/project/aweev-reducing-gender-inequality-in-unpaid-care-and-domestic-work-in-vietnam/#:~:text=AWEEV%20contributes%20to%20enhancing%20the,livelihood%20activities%20and%20business%20activities>

95 Thang, Nguyen, Nguyen Thi Thu Phuong and Pham Minh Thai (CAF/VASS) (2022). “Reducing Gender Inequality in Unpaid Care and Domestic Work in Vietnam: The Case of Ethnic Minorities.” Centre for Analyses and Forecast (CAF), Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS), and CARE International in Vietnam. <https://www.care.org.vn/project/aweev-reducing-gender-inequality-in-unpaid-care-and-domestic-work-in-vietnam-the-case-of-ethnic-minorities/>

96 ActionAid Viet Nam (2016). “How much does it cost women for men to be the family’s backbone?” <https://vietnam.actionaid.org/en/publications/2017/how-much-does-it-cost-women-men-be-families-backbone>

97 Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS) (2015). “Social Determinants of Gender Inequality in Vietnam.” https://vietnam.embassy.gov.au/files/hnoi/ISDS_Report_Binh%20dang%20gioi_EN_PDF-2.pdf

98 According to the GSO’s data from the Population Census 2019, Vietnam will enter a period of an aging population by 2026. See General Statistics Office (GSO) (2019). “Press Release of In-Depth Research Results of the 2019 Population and Housing Census.” <https://www.gso.gov.vn/du-lieu-va-so-lieu-thong-ke/2020/12/thong-cao-bao-chi-ket-qua-nghien-cuu-chuyen-sau-tong-dieu-tra-dan-so-va-nha-o-nam-2019/>



AWEEV farmers in Vietnam. ©CARE

The AWEEV project in Vietnam, funded by Global Affairs Canada (2021–2025), and in partnership with several Vietnamese organisations, aims to improve the economic well-being for poor rural women, particularly from ethnic minority groups, by enhancing their economic rights, and increasing their participation in paid economic activities in Lai Chau and Ha Giang Provinces. This includes increasing understanding of, and promoting ethnic minority women's economic rights through, engaging the media, documenting good practice, holding regular learning events and convening roundtables with policy-makers. AWEEV also increases women's agency to participate in economic activities via training on leadership, communication and decision-making, and establishing a male champion network that develops action plans to promote women's voice and leadership.

The AWEEV project raises awareness of the time women spend providing unpaid care by measuring it and engaging with government and employers. The project focuses on redistributing the amount of care work women perform by: transforming social norms to increase men's and women's willingness to share care work; increasing affordable and accessible care services; and reducing the time women spend on care work through labour-saving technologies and gender-responsive infrastructures. The project will assist women from ethnic minorities to increase their capacity to earn income through technical assistance on tea production and other on-farm and off-farm livelihood options, and by training private sector companies on women's economic rights. Women will also increase their capacity to save and borrow money via the establishment of Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), training on financial literacy, and technical assistance on VSLA management and record-keeping. Lastly, women will increase their capacity to set up women-led grassroots social enterprises by attending women-led business clubs that support women to generate business ideas and to put them into practice.

To foster a gender-just green transition, focused action and investments into sectors that women benefit from is needed. This requires broadening the definition of green work to include sectors traditionally dominated by women, such as care and social work. Increased action and investments for care jobs will further help decrease the climate crisis' disproportionate impact on women and girls. Ten (10)% of public national budgets should be invested in care and social services, with concerted action being taken to generate 80 million decent care jobs.

The role of the private sector in accelerating a gender-just green transition

The transition to a low-carbon economy presents huge opportunities for the private sector, especially in those industries set to benefit directly from investment in green energy and infrastructure. Companies increasingly recognise the climate emergency and support stronger legislation to address the climate crisis,⁹⁹ as it poses a threat to their operations, the communities they work among and their customers. As for policy-makers, it is key that private sector stakeholders take a gender-equitable approach to fostering the green transition, focusing on both identifying and mitigating the risks of deepening gender disparities in the world of work, as well as creating new work opportunities that will benefit women workers.

8: Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) – a public-private partnership to accelerate a gender-just green transition

Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) is the UK Government's flagship women's economic empowerment programme. The objective of WOW is that women have access to improved economic opportunities through business interventions in supply chains and economic development programmes. WOW is delivered by an alliance of global experts on women's economic empowerment research, programme design and delivery – including PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), CARE International UK and Social Development Direct. Over the past year, WOW has explored the intersection of climate and gender, including a toolkit for businesses on the actions they can take in their supply chains to ensure a gender-just transition to a low-carbon economy.¹⁰⁰ WOW has also supported a series of research pieces in partnership with Primark, Waitrose and the Ethical Tea Partnership to assess the impacts of climate change on women workers in the tea, cotton and fresh produce value chains, the findings of which will be published shortly. Following the UK commitments made on gender and climate at COP26,¹⁰¹ WOW is now working towards implementing partnerships with business to take forward this crucial agenda.

Leading companies are responding to these global trends by assessing where women work in their supply chains, in order to identify climate-related risks to their jobs and livelihoods and develop suitable gender-sensitive solutions. This includes increasing resilience in those jobs that are already affected by climate change – for example, companies with women smallholder farmers in their supply chains are taking steps to help strengthen their adaptive capacity and/or supporting the creation of alternative livelihoods as extreme weather and other climate shocks threaten their harvests and incomes. The green transition further presents opportunities to reassess organisational structures and business goals through a gender-equity lens, and accelerate gender justice within the private sector.

99 For instance, this letter signed by the CEOs of 120 UK companies urges the UK Government to put climate neutrality into legislation and support the creation of new green jobs by 2030. See University of Cambridge (2019). "More than 120 leading businesses urge UK Government to legislate for 2050 net zero economy." <https://www.corporateleadersgroup.com/reports-evidence-and-insights/news-items/businesses-urge-2050-legislation>

100 UK Aid Direct and Work Opportunities for Women (WOW) (2021). "Women in the Net-Zero Economy: A Transition Toolkit for Businesses with Global Supply Change." https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1031763/Women-Net-Zero-Economy-toolkit-businesses2.pdf

101 Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) et al. (9 November 2021). "UK boost to advance gender equality in 2021." FCDO. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-boost-to-advance-gender-equality-in-climate-action#:~:text=At%20its%20COP26%20Gender%20Day,them%20to%20take%20climate%20action>

9: Selected case studies that demonstrate the positive contributions the private sector can make to a gender-just green transition.

L'Oréal Foundation is funding **She Grows the Future**,¹⁰² a three-year programme focused on supporting women farmers in dealing with the effects of climate change. Some 5,500 women will benefit from four projects launched in Madagascar, Ecuador, India and Vietnam – all countries heavily affected by extreme climate events. The projects will aim to develop climate emergency management plans; improve food security for women through access to new technologies, seed banks and the establishment of farm schools to promote appropriate agroecology; support women to gain technical advice and learning for female entrepreneurship and access to microfinance; and promote equality by supporting women's participation in decision-making within their homes and strengthening their voice in communities.

Primark launched its **Sustainable Cotton Programme**¹⁰³ in 2013 with the aim to train cotton farmers in adopting more sustainable farming practices (including using less chemicals and fertilisers, reducing water use etc). The programme targets women smallholder farmers with active interventions to help them adapt to a changing climate and improve their resilience and livelihoods.

The **Women in Finance Climate Action Group**¹⁰⁴ (lead by Aviva) is a collective of women leaders from business, the public sector and civil society who came together to tackle the gender gap in private climate finance. The Action Group argues that while climate change impacts women across the world significantly, women remain seriously under-represented in climate policy, climate decision-making and climate finance. The Group calls for urgent action to improve gender equality when designing, delivering and accessing private climate finance, such as addressing the disparity of senior female representation on climate issues and improving financial inclusion for women.¹⁰⁵

Recommendations

To accelerate a gender-just transition, private sector stakeholders should:

- ▶ Increase their understanding of gender inequalities and climate vulnerabilities across the organisation, supply chain and suppliers, including by collecting sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data.
- ▶ Provide specific support to those women who are at risk of job loss as a result of the green transition. This could include, for example, ensuring preferential access to any new jobs being created during the transition; or proactive targeting of women at risk of job displacement in upskilling and reskilling training.
- ▶ Foster green work opportunities for women, for example, by providing tailored training for women workers; specifically targeting/supporting female workers and entrepreneurs and female-led sectors for the green transition, as they are more likely to receive less attention and funding;¹⁰⁶ and by tackling gender segregation in different occupational sectors, particularly those most likely to benefit from new job creation.

102 Fondation L'Oréal (2017). "She Grows the Future." <https://www.fondationloreal.com/our-programs-women-climate/she-grows-future>

103 Primark Cares (n.d.). "Product: Our Sustainable Cotton Program." <https://corporate.primark.com/en/product/sustainable-cotton-programme>

104 Women in Climate Action Group (2021). "Women in Finance Climate Action Group report." <https://www.aviva.com/sustainability/women-in-finance/#:~:text=The%20Women%20in%20Finance%20Climate%20Action%20Group%20%2D%20a%20collective%20of,amplify%20the%20voices%20of%20women>

105 The Action Group collaborated with CARE on a report on women in climate finance, which was launched at COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021. See: e.g., AVIVA (2 November 2021). "COP26 - women excluded in fight against climate change." <https://www.aviva.com/newsroom/news-releases/2021/11/cop26-women-excluded-in-fight-against-climate-change/>

106 Livingstone, Deborah, Olivia Jenkins and Isabelle Cardinal (2021). "Women's Economic Empowerment and Climate Change: A Primer," WOW Helpdesk Guidance Note No 3. UK Aid Direct and Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW). p.22. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980912/Guidance3-WEE-Climate-Change-Primer.pdf

- ▶ Address inequalities in unpaid care by supporting the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work, including through the provision of affordable and accessible childcare services, parental leave, flexible working and other family-friendly work policies. At the same time, engage women, including caregivers, in designing and implementing company policies.¹⁰⁷
- ▶ Drive corporate decision-making with a gender lens and implement gender transformative policies, including ensuring that women are part of decision-making on green work opportunities. A critical mass of 30% women on a company's board has been shown to improve climate governance and innovation, and to be associated with a lower growth rate of emissions: 0.6% compared to 3.5% for companies with no women on their board.¹⁰⁸
- ▶ Ensure equal opportunities at work: close the gender pay gap; implement transparent and equitable recruitment, retention and promotion practices; tackle patriarchal culture in workplaces; ensure women can attend meetings, trainings and other events; and foster women's organisational representation.



CARE and H&M Foundation beneficiary Rajitha is now manager of a handloom business employing 15 women in her village. ©Jayawardena/CARE

107 Buschmann, Mareen, Sarah Fuhrman and Sven Harmeling (2020). "Building Forward: Creating a equitable gender-just, inclusive, and sustainable world." CARE International. <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/publications/building-forward-creating-a-more-equitable-gender-just-inclusive-and-sustainable-world>

108 Biegel, Suzanne and Sophie Lambin (2021). "Gender and Climate Investment: A strategy for unlocking a sustainable future." Gender Smart. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6089294d7cb43b4cfff93591/t/60ec750cdcef4a49b3a96120/1626109200947/GenderSmart+Climate+Report.pdf>

Women's leadership in the transition to green economies

Women play a central role in the response to the climate crisis by developing creative and effective solutions to build the resilience of their communities to climate shocks and stresses. To foster a gender-just green transition, their knowledge should be acknowledged: it is essential that recovery/rebuilding plans are developed with women's co-leadership to progress gender equality.¹⁰⁹ To date, however, there is a distinct lack of women's leadership in the crisis response and integration of gender equality into green transition strategies. A recent CARE report found that women are routinely under-represented both in recovery teams and rebuilding plans.¹¹⁰

According to the UN's recent research on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and achieving gender equality, it could be 140 years before women are equally represented in positions of power and leadership in the workplace.¹¹¹ This is true across sectors; for instance, women make up 40% of the workforce in the global agricultural sector, but hold only 23% of agribusiness management positions and make up only 5.4% of entrepreneurs in agriculture globally.¹¹²

Women are also significantly under-represented in political leadership. While women's participation in ministerial positions and parliament has increased over the last decade, globally it remains 16% and 23% respectively.¹¹³ Women's representation in leadership roles and political decision-making has been limited, including in the COVID-19 response and crises task forces, e.g. across the Mekong region. In 2021, women made up only 38% of the national delegations attending COP, thus are also under-represented in international climate talks.¹¹⁴ Without gender-equitable representation, any recovery is unlikely to include women's priorities.¹¹⁵

Women's rights organisations, which often seek to amplify women's priorities in decision-making, have faced many challenges in accessing climate finance; thus, it is critical to simplify funding requirements, replicate successful pilot models and take these to scale.¹¹⁶

Nationally and globally, women's meaningful participation in climate decision-making and negotiations needs to increase, both by aiming for gender parity and more women in leadership roles on government delegations, and by engaging with women's rights organisations that are on the frontlines of the climate crisis.¹¹⁷ Commitments to strengthen women's leadership and women's rights organisations' contributions to the climate crisis response at COP26¹¹⁸ were a welcome starting point. COP27 needs to build on this with increased ambition and funding on women's leadership and their role as agents for change, as part of the discussions on the implementation of the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan.

109 Kadyrzhanova, Inkar and Parimita Mohanty (2020). "Gender and Climate Change in the Context of Covid-19." Em:Power: Women for climate resilient societies, United Nations Environment Programme, Sweden, and UN Women. https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/sites/default/files/downloads/resource/gender%20and%20climate%20in%20the%20context%20of%20covid-19%20context_UNEP.pdf

110 Fuhrman, Sarah, and Francesca Rhodes (2020). "Where are the Women? The Conspicuous Absence of Women in COVID-19 Response Teams and Plans, and Why We Need Them." CARE International. https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/CARE_COVID-19-womens-leadership-report_June-2020.pdf

111 Azcona, Ginette, et al. (2022). "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2022." UN Women and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022>

112 Biegel, Suzanne, and Sophie Lambin (2021). "Gender & Climate Investment: A strategy for unlocking a sustainable future." GenderSmart. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5af586a9a9e0287427653654/t/601ae6fe2f333d2a1fb598aa/1612375826979/Gender%26ClimateInvestment-GenderSmartReport-Feb21.pdf>

113 World Economic Forum (2022). "Global Gender Gap Report 2022: Insight Report July 2022." <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/digest>

114 WEDO (2022). "Women's Participation in the UNFCCC: 2022 Report." https://wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/WEDO_ParticipationNumbersBrief_2022.pdf

115 Ngyuen, Athena, et al. (2020). "Rapid Gender Analysis During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Mekong Sub-Regional Impact Report." UNICEF, UN Women and CARE International. <https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/6871/file/Rapid%20Gender%20Analysis%20during%20COVID-19%20Pandemic.pdf>

116 CARE International (2020). "#SheLeadsInCrisis: Putting gender at the center of the global response of climate justice." <https://careclimatechange.org/sheleadsincrisis-campaign-brief/>

117 Ibid.

118 See: Article 95 in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (8 March 2022). "Report of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement on its third session, held in Glasgow from 31 October to 13 November 2021." FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/10/Add.1. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2021_10a01E.pdf

10: Women's leadership accelerates climate action – San Bartolomé Cooperative, Guatemala¹¹⁹

Sometimes a passion for conservation can lead to creating economic opportunities for women who would otherwise have no access to work. This is the case in the municipality of San Bartolomé Milpas Altas, 30km outside Guatemala City. Here, a women's conservation group, Nimachay, named after the protected local area, Cerro Nimachay Municipal Regional Park, was formed by women who belonged to women's groups supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAGA). The group is driven by their passion for conservation and protection of orchids in protected reforested areas. They were formally recognised as a non-profit by MAGA in 2017. The women working in the project have been empowered, strengthening their livelihoods opportunities, which have spilled over into women exploring other types of business activities and giving them more agency within their households.

As the group's work expanded, they became part of the San Bartolomé Milpas Altas Sacatepéquez Integral Cooperative, in order to generate income for the conservation work of Nimachay. The cooperative initially started by producing organic fertiliser with earthworms, which helps to naturally replace nutrients lost in the soil as a result of chemical fertilisers. The fertiliser is sold at markets and to small businesses. Since then, the collective has developed and marketed new products. It has started growing oyster mushrooms, a nutritious food source, as well as developing forest nurseries, medicinal products and vegetable seeds for sale, generating income both to support the incomes of cooperative members and the conservation work of Nimachay. The cooperative has received financial support from conservation organisations, including a local NGO, to set up a laboratory to culture and support plant species in danger of extinction. The laboratory has developed the knowledge and specialist conditions to grow and nurture rare and endangered plant species. It has gone on to receive other contributions to help it grow and seek strategic alliances with other communities interested in conservation and environmental education. Twenty women in the community have received training in managing the laboratory, with three women working there at any given time.

The impact of the cooperative is far-reaching. This year it has participated in several local projects, including planting 42,000 trees, developing a municipal community nursery, and producing medicinal plants and traditional fabrics. The cooperative has supported the development of a new laboratory of medicinal plants in the municipality of San Antonio Aguas Calientes, which is creating employment for more women. Above all, the cooperative has demonstrated the powerful contribution that women can make to conserve natural resources for future generations while responsibly generating income.

To ensure the green transition prioritises gender-equitable solutions, a diverse range of women need to actively participate in decision-making that affects their lives. This doesn't just mean a "seat at the table" but having a voice and influence, both in politics and the workplace. At the political level, this requires increasing women's participation and leadership in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of climate responses. This will ensure that resulting policies both reduce climate-related risks and reduce barriers to gender equality, thereby enabling longer-term recovery and social justice for affected populations.

In the workplace, it is key to ensure initiatives are women worker-driven and owned to include the needs of women workers, while ensuring they have the information, awareness and resources necessary to exercise their voice and identify their most pertinent challenges. Businesses should be representative of and responsive to the needs of women workers – which includes reducing the barriers and potential detrimental impacts of the green transition, and fostering equitable opportunities for women.

119 See: Cooperative San Bartolome R.L. (n.d.) *Cooperativa San Bartolome R.L.* [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved on 04 October 2022, from: <https://www.facebook.com/CoopeSanBartolome>



Activist in London holds up sign at 2018 March4Women. ©Guy Bell/CARE

Recommendations

In order to tap into the potential of the green transition for economic justice, reduce the risks and avoid the threat of a gender crisis in the world of work, a gender lens needs to be integrated into transition strategies and green work opportunities right from the start. This requires putting gender equality and women's leadership at the heart of the transition to green economies, while taking specific action to accelerate its potential for women's economic justice.

Specifically, national governments, international and regional decision-makers, business partners and the private sector should place a focus on gender equality in the transition to green economies by:

- ▶ Integrating a gender lens into the green transition and green work opportunities from the outset. This includes prioritising measures and investments that benefit women and girls and requires collecting, analysing and using sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data, while putting in place gender strategies that apply across sectors.
- ▶ Increasing preventive action and investments to reduce gender-related risks of the green transition, including by reskilling women and girls for green and higher-skilled jobs, and prioritising them for any green jobs programmes.
- ▶ Tackling the structural barriers that women face in the world of work, including by building a caring economy in line with the 5 Rs (of recognition, reduction, redistribution, representation and reward) and ensuring that social protection and safety nets are in place for diverse groups of women workers (including women working in the informal sector, migrant and refugee workers).

- ▶ Recognising that many new green jobs will require highly specialised technical skills, which will put women at a further disadvantage in these already male-dominated sectors. This can be addressed through targeted training for women in green jobs skills, including specialised apprenticeships and gender-sensitive training initiatives, and by investing in STEM education for girls and women.
- ▶ Removing barriers to women taking up jobs in the low-carbon/net zero economy, for example, through stronger anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws and family-friendly workplace policies, and ensuring women are targeted in recruiting for these jobs, e.g. through quotas, specialised recruitment and engaging with women's organisations. Special measures are needed to specifically facilitate access to green jobs for informal and migrant women workers, and others facing intersectional inequalities.
- ▶ Ensuring that all green jobs, including those taken up by women, are decent jobs that provide fair pay, access to social protection, benefits and safety nets, as well as opportunities to progress. This should include allowing workers the right to join a union or workers' representative organisation and take part in collective bargaining; and providing access to adequate social protection to everyone employed in these jobs, including those from poor, marginalised and minoritised communities.
- ▶ Focusing action and investments on sectors that women benefit from, including by broadening the definition of green work to include sectors traditionally dominated by women, such as care and social work. Increased action and investments for care jobs will further help decrease the climate crisis' disproportionate impact on women and girls.
- ▶ Investing at least 10% of domestic public income in care and social services, including for childcare, care for elderly people and care for people with disabilities, while providing increased public funding for universal health coverage, quality education and universal social protection. At the same time, promote decent work by creating 80 million care jobs and ensuring care workers are paid living wages.
- ▶ Companies increasing their understanding of gender inequalities in their organisation, supply chain and suppliers, while fostering green work opportunities for women, for example, by providing upskilling and reskilling opportunities for women workers, and providing specific support to those women who are at risk of losing their jobs because of the green transition.
- ▶ Driving corporate decision-making with a gender lens and implementing gender-transformative policies, while ensuring equal opportunities at work, including by closing the gender pay gap, and investing in care services, flexible working and family-friendly workplaces.
- ▶ Prioritising action and investment to increase women's leadership, in response to the climate crisis and in the transition to green economies. At the political level, this requires increasing women's participation and leadership in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of climate responses. In the workplace, initiatives are needed to ensure women's needs and priorities are included in company policies, while taking proactive action to ensure women workers have the information, awareness and resources necessary to exercise their voice and identify their most pertinent challenges. This needs to include increased funding to WROs and their priorities.

Fostering a gender-just green transition is both essential and smart – and can lead to a triple win for people, economies and the planet. Climate action with a gender lens increases women's economic justice and helps close the gender gaps in the world of work. Closing gender gaps in employment alone can unlock up to \$160 trillion in global economic growth. And investing in sustainable green jobs, such as low-carbon to carbon-neutral jobs and care work, will benefit both the planet and people. These measures will help us nurture a pathway towards an inclusive, feminist, sustainable and climate-smart future, a vision much needed in the current context of crisis.

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