Gender & Development

Call for contribution: Volume 35, Issue 1

The role of grassroots women and local communities towards achieving just and accountable energy transition

About the journal

Gender & Development (G&D) is a unique journal that offers a forum to share experiences and analysis among feminist activists, scholars, and women leaders across the globe working in research, policy, and practice. For its March 2027 Issue, the Journal will focus on the role of communities in working towards achieving just and accountable energy transition.

Context

Global emissions crossed 57.1 gigatonnes of CO_2 in 2023, which constituted a 1.3 per cent rise from the previous year (UN Women Asia and the Pacific 2024). Given that the fossil fuel sector is responsible for almost 70 per cent of these emissions, its transformation has become urgent (ibid). Simultaneously, the energy sector has the potential to enable social justice and gender just policies; offer a low carbon future; create options for clean energy; ensure that the most marginalised, especially women, gain access to these clean sources of energy; and generate decent work through these transformations (UN Women Asia and the Pacific 2024, ILO 2024, Oxfam 2023). Crucially, these transformations may promote peace and strengthen social cohesion, ensuring that a shift to sustainable energy contributes to more stable, inclusive, and resilient societies.

There is a need for a reinvigorated and more urgent effort to expedite adoption of a carbon neutral economy given the current state of international politics, governance, inequitable economic policies, and uneven climate policies. Further, in the context of overwhelming dependence on oil/ fossil fuel of most countries (particularly those in the global South), and the current wars in the Gulf countries and Ukraine that have revealed the precarity of the global dependence on oil, the need to transition towards green and renewable sources of energy has become more pressing than ever. While the urgency of addressing the climate crisis and accelerating the transition to renewable energy is widely recognised, it also heightened tensions between (1) the need to move quickly and the need to ensure that the transition is just and inclusive and (2) governments and communities as tensions arise over the design and operationalisation of the transition, that could significantly alter stability and social cohesion. These concerns also raise important questions about climate inequality, power, and what ‘green’ or ‘clean’

energy entails in terms of power, labour, racial and gender implications, and the human costs of energy transition. They also highlight the need for conflict-sensitive approaches to energy transitions to ensure that such processes do not deepen existing vulnerabilities, inequalities, or sources of fragility.

In this context, this special issue aims to bring together voices and research from communities that are actively calling out the social, economic, and ecological injustices and tensions that have historically accompanied the pursuit and extraction of critical minerals, sources of nuclear energy as well as renewable sources in the global South. It aims to unpack 'green energy' and 'green colonialism', demand equal access to renewable energy, and call for equitable climate finance. Finally, and importantly, it aims to bring together experiences and case studies of women's cooperatives, grassroots collective and other community-led initiatives in working towards a just, accountable and conflict sensitive energy transition that redistributes power, recognises care and gendered labour, promotes social cohesion, prioritises locally led solutions, and empowers local communities and economies.

Climate inequality and energy poverty

The disproportionate contribution of industrialised countries to the climate crisis is glaring and becomes central to discussions about climate justice and energy transitions. In 2019, the richest 1 per cent were responsible for 16 per cent of global carbon emissions, which is equal to the emissions of the poorest 66 per cent or 5 billion people (Oxfam 2023). Countries in the global North are the largest producers of global CO2 emissions (Fanning and Hickel 2026). While these countries and groups contribute disproportionately to the climate crisis, it is countries in the global South and those living in poverty that bear the worst of its effects. Industrialising countries like India and Indonesia are also increasingly emitting more greenhouse gases according to the Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research 2025 report (Crippa et al. 2025). The effects of the climate crisis and ecological degradation, and depletion of vital resources are felt most by women, Indigenous people, rural communities, and the urban poor (Menon, Yonder and Gupta 2024) as it compounds their already existing vulnerabilities and deepens the structural inequalities they face. These groups often inhabit ecologically sensitive areas that are disaster prone and/or marked by violence, conflict, and war - all of which have compounding effects on their land, lives, and livelihoods.

The solution to counter energy inequality is the global call to invest in renewable and non-fossil fuel, or 'green' energy sources. The global pursuit of 'green energy', however, tends to leave the most vulnerable populations out. The state of energy inequality is dire with an estimated 685 million people without access to electricity in 2022. Additionally, up to 2.1 billion people still use polluting fuels and technologies for cooking, largely in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia (WHO 2024). Communities should get equal opportunities to participate in the clean energy economy and get support in their livelihoods and businesses. While the Paris Agreement (2015), UNFCCC (1992), and Kyoto Protocol (1997) set

the stage for decarbonisation and asked the 'developed' countries to take the lead, the Copenhagen Accord (2009), Glasgow Climate Impact (2021), and Loss and Damage Fund (COP27/COP28), and Belém COP 30 (2025) pushed for just and accessible climate funding. The International Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels (TAFF), held in April 2026 in Santa Marta, Colombia was the first of its kind, in that it discussed the transition away from fossil fuel in a just, equitable manner. Despite these agreements, there remain risks of replicating old colonial and patriarchal hierarchies due to delays and disruptions in climate justice and just energy transitions and a lack of commitment on the part of national governments (Dagnet 2023). These also highlight the need for conflict sensitive approaches that recognise how energy inequality intersects with fragility, entrenched social tensions, and existing vulnerabilities.

The role of critical minerals and nuclear energy in achieving decarbonisation

The ongoing transition to green/clean energy has meant an increase in demand for critical minerals such as cobalt, graphite, nickel, lithium, copper, which in turn is feeding global conflict and inequality (Stewart 2025). The role of critical minerals and other rare earth materials thus become central to 'green' or 'clean' energy transitions and the diversification of conventional energy resources. These mineral resources are key to transforming energy sectors, ranging from aerospace, automobiles, telecommunication, electricity and digital sectors, solar panels, wind turbines, batteries and electric vehicles, national security, healthcare, space; and generally powering the transition of the energy sectors away from fossil fuels. The fact that most of these resources are concentrated in a few countries like China, Chile, Bolivia, Argentina, Indonesia, and many sub-Saharan countries, reveals the precarity of the supply chain of these minerals and lays bare the colonial, historical patterns of extraction of these resources, which are continuing in brazen and blatant ways, with countries like the US and China demanding control over citizens' data, mineral sector, terms of trade, and even threatening to withhold assistance (Nolen 2026). From a climate, peace, and security (CPS) perspective, this growing demand for critical minerals can generate new forms of competition, insecurity, and geopolitical contestation, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings. These dynamics raise important concerns regarding resource governance, strategic competition, and the equitable distribution of the costs and benefits associated with the global energy transition, with significant implications for stability, social cohesion, and conflict sensitive development.

The extraction, processing, and mining of these minerals also pose serious ecological harms that affect communities, particularly forest and land dependent communities. In many contexts, these environmental and social pressures can exacerbate existing grievances, deepen inequalities, and heighten the risk of localised conflict, particularly where governance systems are weak or communities are excluded from decision-making processes. These minerals in their crude form are exported to foreign countries that process and sell the minerals back to the source countries at high prices. As a

result, there is increasing dependence on foreign countries (US, China, European Union), degradation of local capacities, and a gradual erosion of public faith in their own governments who fail to improve human development despite being resource rich. Ecologically responsible mining processes and conflict-sensitive approaches need to be implemented to address these concerns. It also becomes imperative for governments of mineral resource rich countries to assert themselves in the global energy policy landscape to ensure that the communities that stand to be affected, are included and prioritised. Meaningful participation, transparency, and benefit-sharing mechanisms are particularly important for reducing grievances and strengthening the peace-positive outcomes of energy transitions. This has led many of these countries, particularly African countries, to start working on regaining control over the mineral supply chain to generate local employment, stimulate economic growth, and build domestic capacity (Nantulya 2025).

Nuclear energy is also an important resource in the global energy transition, is significant in achieving decarbonisation, and powering data centres and digital technologies. Further, it has non-electric applications, including district heating, hydrogen production, desalination, and heating for industrial processes. Notwithstanding its significance for low-carbon development, nuclear energy occupies a complex position within global energy transitions. It offers opportunities for decarbonisation while simultaneously raising concerns around security, governance, technology access, and geopolitical influence. Simultaneously, the blatant neocolonialism embedded within the nuclear energy sector, revealed through the ways in which a few Northern countries try to control who gets to use nuclear sources and how, is important to unpack. It is also important to understand the ways in which resource rich countries of the South—particularly in the African region, like Niger, Namibia, and Rwanda—have been advocating for Africa's leadership in global energy platforms (Agbetiloye 2025, IAEA 2026), signalling to the Nuclear Suppliers Group that there are 'other' strategic actors in this sector whose cooperation would be necessary to make advancements in nuclear energy. These developments highlight the importance of inclusive and equitable global energy governance that recognises the agency of countries in the global South in promoting climate transitions that are both conflict-sensitive and supportive of sustainable peace.

Investing in renewable energy sources

Renewable energy sources like solar and wind energy have the potential to be ecologically sustainable, socially just, create employment and economic growth and have significant potential in creating energy self-reliance. These become even more significant in regions that are poor, resource scarce, and are undergoing conflict and humanitarian crises (Haselip 2017). In such contexts, investing in renewable energy can significantly contribute to resilience, improve livelihoods, strengthen social cohesion, and reduce vulnerabilities associated with energy insecurity.

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the scope of employment in the renewable energy sector is quite considerable with Asia Pacific accounting for almost 60 per cent of jobs therein. It was 11 million in 2018 and is expected to increase to 42 million in 2050. Further, women account for one third of jobs within this sector, which though higher than other sectors, has not increased since 2019 (IRENA 2025), with even fewer occupying leadership positions (19 per cent for senior management and board positions) due to gender biases, lack of sufficient training, and limited access to finance. Women account for only 1 out of 10 leaders in the renewable energy sector (UN and UN Energy 2025). There are international commitments to integrate gender needs and perspectives into renewable energy policies and ensure that women are meaningfully represented in discussions to tackle energy poverty, have equal access to and control over sustainable energy products and services, and can lead energy transition. The 2021 Gender and Energy Compact calls for equal access to and control over sustainable energy products and services and the 2024 Just and Inclusive Energy Transition (JIET) Compact aims towards tackling energy poverty and sustainable economic growth. Ensuring gender equality and social inclusion in renewable energy governance is, thus, important for promoting inclusive development outcomes and strengthening the sustainability and legitimacy of energy transition processes. The role of governments and corporations in offsetting emissions through carbon markets though important, has uneven effects due to lack of political will and accountability (UNDP Climate promise 2025). The gendered implications of these carbon markets (for example REDD+ projects) also depend on how and to what extent women have access to climate finance, decision making mechanisms, and project assessments. The capacity of carbon projects to include gender needs and women's active participation in all aspects is immense and is unfolding gradually (Montaño Guerrero and Kovács 2025).

The role of women in managing efficient, inclusive, and effective energy policies is significant (Sakshi 2026). There is thus an urgent need to strengthen global commitments on climate action, gender equality, and sustainable energy and allocate national budgets to implement gender-responsive energy solutions. However, renewable energy projects need large amounts of land (that are often classified as wastelands in India for example) to set up, which has led to the displacement of most vulnerable populations who are often not beneficiaries of the energy generated (Mishra 2026, Land Conflict Watch n.d). These experiences highlight the importance of adopting conflict-sensitive approaches to investments in renewable energy, particularly in relation to land governance, community consultation, and benefit-sharing arrangements. In Kenya, courts recently ruled that the Lake Turkana Wind Power Project, Africa's largest wind farm (State of Green 2024), acquired land irregularly at the expense of Indigenous peoples (Business and Human Rights Centre 2021). This points to the need for renewable energy investments to be guided by principles of inclusion, procedural justice, and meaningful community participation, ensuring that energy transitions are socially equitable, minimise potential sources of tension, and contribute to sustainable development as well as long-term peace and stability.

Centring communities in energy transition and recognising their role in leading resistances against extractive industries and state exploitation

While resource rich economies of the global South assert themselves in the face of extractive measures of many Northern countries, it is the voices and interests of the local communities that often get lost. The role of communities in leading resistances against extractive industries and exploitative governments is significant. Communities have filed court cases due to pollution and inadequate consultation resulting in social conflicts and blockades of copper mines in Peru and Colombia. In Mozambique, communities who were displaced from their lands due to graphite mining, blocked access to the mine for months, demanding proper compensation for their lost livelihoods. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a copper mine company is accused of polluting waterways and not properly compensating displaced communities (Laplane et al. 2025). In South Africa, in the small Eastern Cape village of Xolobeni, an Indigenous community has been leading resistances against foreign mining companies, which have threatened their ancestral lands and way of life (Rai 2023). In India's eastern states of Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, and Odisha, Indigenous communities have resisted deforestation and displacement through a demand for decentralised mining and community-based forest governance (Bose 2023). A global coalition of civil society movements and mining affected communities representing voices from Colombia, Uganda, the Philippines, Spain, Scotland, South Africa called Y*es to Life, No to Mining,* launched a website as a platform for resistance (Gaia Foundation 2025). More than 200 civil society groups have signed an open letter urging countries to address energy transition minerals at COP30 (Farand 2025). These examples demonstrate that communities are not merely passive recipients of energy transition policies and initiatives but active agents shaping more equitable, accountable, peace-positive, and sustainable approaches to resource governance.

It is thus essential to centre the people who are most at risk—the rural women, urban poor women, those living in the urban periphery and struggling with energy crisis and precarity, Indigenous communities as well as LGBTQI persons, and those living with disability—while outlining and designing climate justice goals and policies. These practices reduce the risk of tensions associated with exclusionary development and resource extraction. Understanding the gendered, racialised, and other effects of just energy transition is critical, and just energy transitions must contextualise these intersectional experiences within the history of colonialism, wars, civil wars, and military occupations, as well as other overlapping structures of oppression. It is critical to understand who has access to clean energy, and the role of community-led models, such as women's cooperatives, grassroots collectives, and movements, that would make it accessible for all those who need it. The value of supporting women's groups and initiatives in the transition and their participation in decision-making should be underlined, to integrate necessary perspectives on care and access. Therefore, the meaningful participation by

affected communities is essential not only for advancing energy justice but also for ensuring that energy transitions are inclusive, responsive to local needs, and capable of fostering long-term stability and social cohesion.

Towards 'just' and 'inclusive' energy transition and transformative climate action

Transitioning to just energy sources does not simply entail using clean energy and replacing fossil fuels. It requires more than transforming economic and technological systems and processes and needs access and control over funding (Caretta and Vela- Almeida 2025). Importantly, for just energy transition and transformative climate action, climate finance plays a critical role. This means that countries (and communities) undergoing resource extraction should have a say in the process, be able to avail financial benefits, and enhance local capacities. It underscores the importance of equitable and conflict-sensitive governance of climate finance to ensure that distributional outcomes do not exacerbate existing inequalities.

There are also gender and labour relations, livelihoods, production and consumption patterns, investments, technological knowhow and capacity, energy policy, and governance that are tied to the energy sectors. Changes and innovations need to happen at multiple levels and sectors to transform the use of energy (Kraft et al. 2023). The exploitation, health risks, and unsafe work conditions that the workers involved in resource extraction projects experience also add to the burden of communities. Additionally, the gendered (care) labour involved in the process of transitioning needs to be accounted for, recognised, and remunerated. These dimensions highlight that energy transitions are not only technical processes but also deeply social and political, with implications for equity, labour justice, and community well-being. Energy transition thus would need transformations at the levels of culture and society – it would mean ensuring that the most affected be considered and represented in any energy policy discussions and decision-making forums, involving them in energy projects, and ensuring their rights and knowledge systems remain preserved (Green Peace Africa 2025). The economic and social implications of transitioning from one to another source should be considered and compensated by mining industries and national governments. Such measures are critical to ensure that transitions are perceived as legitimate and inclusive. Finally, and most importantly, the collective knowledge and political efforts by communities needs to be valued and considered at the level of research, knowledge, and practice.

Objectives:

1. To analyse the intersections between energy transition, neocolonialism, gender equality, and social inclusion with a focus on moving towards a more just and people centred energy transition and sustainable development.

2. To understand the gendered, racialised, colonial, and ecological effects of energy transition processes.
    - Discuss displacement, dispossession, exploitation of labour, care, impact on land, water, soil, and air.
    - Examine how these processes may generate or intensify social tensions and conflict dynamics in resource-dependent communities.
    - Discuss the deep yet neglected relationship between energy transition, and social reproduction and gendered labour through feminist intersectional research.
3. To decolonise research, policy, and practice around clean and green energy and climate justice by analysing the neocolonial, neoliberal power dynamics embedded within national and global energy policies and their implementation.
4. To present research and case studies of governments, women's cooperatives, and grassroots movements demanding just representation in policy implementation, investments and climate finance, and equitable access to clean energy and all its benefits (ecological, financial, others). Further, present research on how inclusive governance and participatory approaches can reduce inequalities and mitigate potential tensions in energy transition processes.
5. To showcase community-led alternatives, knowledge, and coalitions on just energy transition that often get negated and devalued in global energy forums/ policy making spaces, and ensure equal access to renewable energy, non-fossil fuel energy, and just and equitable access to climate finance.

Questions:

1. How do we unpack the contradictions and power inequities embedded within green renewable and non-fossil/carbon energy?
    a. What does it signify for the local communities, especially for women and other marginalised groups?
    b. What do these reveal in terms of social cohesion, stability, and potential social tensions arising from energy transition processes?
2. What are the feminist, decolonial, and intersectional ways in which just energy transition research, policy, and practice are being executed?
    a. How do these approaches contribute to more inclusive, equitable, and conflict-sensitive energy governance?
3. How do or can women's cooperatives and community-based solidarity economies generate alternative models for just energy management, energy democracy, and a just transition?
4. In what ways is social reproduction and gendered labour invisibilised in the just energy transition processes?

    a. How can the relationship between energy poverty, care work, and women's poverty be made visible?
    b. How can policies and programmes ensure these burdens be relieved/ compensated/ acknowledged/ more proportionately distributed?
5. What innovative and women- / community-led strategies are successfully leading and advocating for gender-responsive, equitable, and accessible renewable energy policies at local, national, and international levels (including at the COP) and designing and monitoring programmes? Explain through case study experiences.
6. What novel and effective strategies are being deployed by communities to demand equitable representation in policy discussions at multiple levels (community, national, international)? What challenges do they face in these processes?
7. How can investments and climate finance be monitored to ensure that they reach those who are most vulnerable to energy poverty and those whose livelihoods have depended on the fossil fuel industry, rather than reinforcing existing wealth gaps?
    a. How can the transparency and accountability of climate finance mechanisms be ensured? How can the capacity of local actors, women's groups to monitor and audit these processes be strengthened?
    b. How can transparency and accountability of climate finance support equitable and conflict-sensitive distributional outcomes?
8. What is the role of coalitions and movements tackling ecological crisis and its impacts, and how do they contribute to strengthening just energy transitions?

Our guest editors:

This issue will be guest edited by Eileen Wakesho, Desy Ayu Pirmasari, Gracsious Maviza, and others.

Submissions:

We invite contributions from community and grassroots leaders, civil society organisations and networks, researchers, academics, policymakers, and practitioners in the form of research articles, case studies, and essays.

Please submit an abstract of 500 words (not counting references) with details about your research and preliminary findings or a small multi-modal proposal (a two-minute video clip abstract or 500 word abstract with images) using the submission link below.

Abstract/proposal submission link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdMPKD4efVT1LuIghA-7cOzxP565_D23IwKM7i3bH0x6FL96w/viewform?usp=header

Deadline: 12 July 2026 at 11:59pm UTC

Please read the Guidelines for contributors carefully before abstract/proposal submission. Please send any queries to genderanddevelopment.south@gmail.com.

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