



# Gender, Climate and Energy in the United States

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# Acknowledgements

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## About the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), founded in 1990, is a global women's advocacy organization, working for a just world that promotes and protects human rights, gender equality, and the integrity of the environment. WEDO's headquarters is located in New York. Visit us at [wedo.org](https://wedo.org).

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# Preamble

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We cannot confront the climate crisis without transforming our current energy system, dismantling an energy system built on extraction, colonialism, and injustice—and building something new in its place. For generations, Black and Indigenous communities, and other communities of color and low-income communities have spearheaded visions of energy justice that position and honor energy as a human right. Deep and thoughtful processes of consent, consultation, and prioritization of the needs of these communities, who have been most impacted by the current violences of our energy system, are required to transition to an energy system that is accessible, affordable, and grounded in human rights.

While some seek to draw a binary between fossil fuel based energy and “renewable” or “green” energy, it is important to assert that a transition

to renewable energy is not inevitably just and fair. The potential—and current reality—of exploitation of land, labor and violations of consent to advance renewable energy must be resisted. There cannot be an energy transition for the benefit of some, at the detriment of others.

As the world’s largest historical emitter, the U.S. plays a particularly powerful role in perpetuating energy injustice in the U.S. and abroad. Global energy justice will require a powerful, intersectional energy justice movement in the U.S., one that demands and encompasses systemic change to U.S. policy that impacts the lives and the well-being of all around the world in addition to those in the U.S. We offer this brief, focused on advancing a more feminist analysis of energy justice in the U.S., as a contribution to a robust movement towards a global feminist energy just transition.





# Introduction

The energy sector is fundamentally intertwined with climate change, both as a contributor to and impacted by climate-related transformations. As one of the most influential actors in the global climate system, the energy system accounts for over three-quarters of global greenhouse gas emissions attributed to human activity.<sup>1</sup> These emissions have detrimental impacts on the environment, human health, and socio-economic development. The energy sector, including renewable energy sources\* such as wind and solar power, is also vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as rising temperatures, extreme weather events, sea level rise, and water scarcity.<sup>2,3</sup> These impacts can disrupt energy networks, damage infrastructure, and pose safety risks to people and communities, disproportionately affecting those made vulnerable by environmental racism and other racial, gendered, and class-based inequalities.

**Therefore, it is essential to pursue a robust energy policy framework that supports a just transition to a low-carbon, resilient, and rights-based energy system.**

Energy justice is a concept that applies the principles of human rights to the energy space, aiming to achieve equity in both social and economic participation in the energy system, while also remediating social, economic, and health burdens on those disproportionately harmed by the energy system. Energy justice is often defined by advocates as encompassing intergenerational justice (not harming future generations), environmental justice (the right to a clean environment), social protections and social justice (the right to affordable, accessible energy for all), and good governance (including transparency and accountability).<sup>4,5,6,7</sup>

Energy justice can help address some of the challenges posed by climate change by creating a framework that considers the needs and interests of all stakeholders. For example, energy justice can help ensure that:

- Low-income communities have access to affordable and reliable renewable energy sources;
- Indigenous peoples have their rights respected and protected in relation to their lands and resources;
- People of color and women - and especially women of color - have equal opportunities and benefits from participating in the energy sector;
- Workers are protected from displacement or exploitation due to technological change;
- Consumers are informed and empowered to make informed choices about their energy consumption;

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\* In the energy policy and advocacy space, renewable energy is commonly understood as energy that is not fossil fuel-based, including sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, and others. We recognize that there are dynamic and ongoing debates regarding the potential harm and extraction practices associated with various types of renewable energy. Rather than categorizing energy sources as inherently 'good' or 'bad,' this brief aims to provide additional considerations and analysis on how renewable energy initiatives must intentionally incorporate justice considerations to avoid perpetuating the same harm and exploitation that fossil fuel based sources do.

- Innovation is driven by social needs rather than market forces;
- International cooperation is based on solidarity rather than competition;
- Environmental standards are enforced without compromising public health or human rights.

Working towards energy justice necessitates formulating effective federal, state and local policies that promote renewable and low-carbon sources in just, consent-based ways, while ending the use of fossil fuels. In addition to looking forward, we must also look at what has come before, seeking potential repair processes with those most harmed by fossil fuel infrastructure and energy injustice. It is crucial to acknowledge and address the racialized and gendered harms of our current, fossil-fuel based energy system. The intersectionality of race, class, gender, ability, and other axes of oppression play a pivotal role in shaping the accessibility, safety, and employment outcomes within these systems. This report aims not only to highlight the urgent need for a transition to renewable energy but also to ensure that this transition is feminist, just, equitable, and inclusive of all communities, particularly those historically marginalized and disproportionately affected by the energy sector.

Gender, race, class, and other identities intersect with energy and climate disparities in various ways.<sup>8</sup> For example:

- Women bear the brunt of the burden of energy poverty globally, as they spend more time and money on collecting fuel for cooking and heating than men. They also face higher risks of exposure to air pollution from fossil fuel combustion, which can cause respiratory diseases and reproductive problems. In the United States, neighborhoods with households led by women of color, particularly Black women, are more likely to experience a significant energy burden.<sup>9</sup> Women's access to renewable and affordable energy can improve their health, education, income, and empowerment.<sup>10,11</sup>
- Indigenous peoples have been historically dispossessed of their lands and resources by colonialism and extractive industries, and are too often denied the rights to Free, Prior and Informed Consent, the rights to manage their own natural resources or access the benefits from industries extracting or processing on their lands. The environmental degradation, displacement, violence and gender-based harms<sup>12</sup>, and cultural loss that is associated with fossil fuel extraction is also still a risk with renewable energy. 54% of energy transition minerals projects globally<sup>13</sup>, and especially lithium, copper and nickel reserves in the US<sup>14</sup> are on or near lands of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination, land tenure, cultural preservation, and environmental protection are essential for achieving energy justice.<sup>15</sup>
- Low-income households have higher energy costs than high-income households due to factors such as inefficient appliances, lack of insulation or weatherization, poor transportation infrastructure, and inadequate subsidies or assistance programs. They also have less access to reliable electricity or clean cooking fuels than high-income households. Low-income households' energy affordability can affect their quality of life, education outcomes, health status, and economic opportunities.

- People with disabilities may face multiple barriers to accessing energy services, including needing assistive devices such as wheelchairs or hearing aids that require electricity or batteries; needing special adaptations such as ramps or switches that are not available in public buildings; or ensuring energy access and affordability information is in accessible formats such as braille or sign language.<sup>16,17</sup>
- Significant labor disparities remain in accessing the benefits of renewable energy employment; Black individuals, and especially Black women, remain underrepresented in the renewable energy space, with Black workers accounting for only 8% of those employed in the renewable energy sector in the United States in 2021.<sup>18</sup>

The potential for energy and climate initiatives to serve as catalysts for comprehensive transformation is huge, especially when these initiatives are underpinned by equitable investments, inclusive policies, and gender-responsive strategies. Achieving an equitable, feminist, just, US energy transition necessitates reckoning with existing inequities within the energy system, and building a new energy system built on feminist and human rights based principles.<sup>19</sup>

## Gender Considerations in Energy Policy in the United States

Gender considerations in energy infrastructure and energy justice are vital for ensuring equitable access to energy resources and the benefits of energy transitions. Analyzing how gender intersects with these issues reveals disparities in energy access and the impacts of climate change, which can be addressed through stronger energy justice policies to advance gender justice.

### Decision-making practices

Decision-making practices around energy policy must be deeply inclusive, consensual and democratic. Gender considerations may factor into decisions around initiating or rejecting infrastructure projects, into household energy decisions, and into participatory planning for siting and permitting. Integrating gender considerations in participatory planning for energy infrastructure is crucial, enhancing the inclusiveness and perspectives consulted in the process, leading to more sustainable and accepted outcomes.<sup>20</sup>

Gender roles often influence decision-making in households regarding energy use.<sup>21</sup> Understanding these dynamics is crucial for designing effective energy policies and interventions that address the specific needs and challenges faced by different household members.<sup>22</sup>

The process of **determining sites for energy infrastructure** (siting) requires an integrative approach that accounts for the diverse needs and perspectives of all community members. To ensure equitable outcomes, it is crucial to involve women and marginalized groups in the siting decisions, as their unique insights and priorities can significantly impact household energy use and community well-being.

A participatory planning approach not only enhances inclusiveness but also ensures that varied viewpoints contribute to sustainable and widely accepted energy projects.<sup>23</sup> When community members are excluded from the decision-making process, energy projects may lead to harmful outcomes, such as conflicts emerging between project opponents and proponents.<sup>24</sup>

**Infrastructure development** in the energy sector must prioritize gender justice and social sustainability to ensure women’s empowerment and broader community benefits. Projects demonstrating gender equality in access to land and labor markets exemplify the integration of gender considerations into energy infrastructure. For equitable outcomes, as well as the realistic achievement of energy goals,<sup>25</sup> it is essential to ensure the participation of women, gender-diverse people, and the full spectrum of the LGBTQIA+ community, in decision-making and access to the benefits of renewable energy projects.

## Accessibility

Energy insecurity is the inability to meet household energy needs and has three dimensions: economic, physical, and coping, corresponding to “financial hardship, housing quality issues, and the adaptive strategies people use to manage unaffordable bills and subpar living conditions”.<sup>26</sup> This insecurity is not equally distributed and often disproportionately affects marginalized groups, including women, emphasizing the need for energy distribution approaches that consider and seek to redress these disparities.<sup>27</sup> Approximately one-third of all American households are “energy insecure” – or forced to choose between paying energy bills or buying other necessities – but more than half of Black households and nearly half of Latino households are energy insecure.<sup>28</sup>

Countering gender-based accessibility issues in the energy sector requires a multifaceted approach that not only addresses the economic aspects of energy access but also considers the broader social and cultural factors that contribute to gender inequalities like socio-economic contexts, cultural norms, and the unique challenges faced by women. By focusing on targeted subsidies, energy efficiency, renewable energy incentives, and capacity building, alongside gender-responsive policymaking, it is possible to mitigate the impact of energy cost burdens on women and promote greater gender equity.<sup>27</sup>

In the pursuit of accessible energy, the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) must be a cornerstone, ensuring that renewable energy projects are developed not only with the consent of Indigenous communities but also in a manner that respects their rights and dignities. This approach challenges the corporate capture of energy infrastructures and paves the way for publicly owned, decentralized systems that serve all, irrespective of wealth.

## Affordability

It is crucial to understand how energy affordability disproportionately affects women, particularly in low-income or marginalized communities, and formulating policies to address these disparities.



Empirical evidence indicates gendered differences in energy technology preferences and environmental concern, suggesting that women legislators may influence energy policy outcomes differently from their male counterparts.<sup>29</sup> Women, especially in low-income households, bear the brunt of energy poverty due to a combination of factors, including lower income levels, greater responsibility for household energy management, and higher vulnerability to energy price fluctuations. Additionally, recent updates to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) highlight the importance of addressing energy insecurity, particularly for low-income households, many of which are led by women and are disproportionately affected by rising energy costs and climate change.<sup>30</sup> High energy costs can lead to difficult trade-offs in households, where women may need to choose between energy expenses and other critical needs like healthcare, education, or food. This situation exacerbates gender inequalities and hinders women's participation in the economy. Furthermore, energy poverty can limit access to renewable and efficient energy sources, disproportionately affecting women and children.<sup>31,32,33</sup>

### **Policy Recommendations for Addressing Energy Cost Burdens:**

- **Subsidized Energy Access:** Implementing subsidies for low-income households can help make energy more affordable. These subsidies should be designed to target households where women are the primary decision-makers or where women are disproportionately affected by energy costs.
- **Energy Efficiency Programs:** Promoting energy efficiency, especially in housing, can reduce overall energy consumption and costs. Policies should focus on providing access to energy-efficient appliances and retrofitting homes to be more energy-efficient, benefiting households headed by women.
- **Renewable Energy Incentives:** Encouraging the use of renewable energy through incentives can alleviate the energy burden on women. Incentives could include subsidies for solar panel installations or community renewable energy projects that prioritize participation from women.
- **Capacity Building and Education:** Educating women on energy management and providing them with the tools and knowledge to make informed decisions about energy use can empower them and reduce their energy cost burden.

Another key consideration in energy access is governance structure. Publicly owned, decentralized energy infrastructure—energy systems that are locally controlled and operated by public entities or community cooperatives, rather than private corporations—present an alternative model to mainstream energy governance approaches that have potential to lead to more gender-responsive frameworks.

By decentralizing energy ownership, communities gain direct control over their energy sources, which can lead to more responsive, transparent, and equitable energy management. This approach not only enhances energy security and resilience by spreading out the generation and reducing dependency on central grids but also aligns with principles of economic justice by prioritizing accessibility and affordability over profit.

Publicly owned, decentralized energy systems promote economic justice by ensuring that the control and benefits of energy resources are distributed more equitably across society. These systems may mitigate the economic disparities often seen in traditional energy setups, where lower-income households disproportionately bear the cost burdens:

- **Affordability:** By localizing energy production and eliminating the need for extensive profit margins required by private entities, publicly owned systems can offer more competitive and stable pricing. This is particularly beneficial for low-income households, which often spend a higher percentage of their income on utility bills.
- **Job Creation:** Decentralized energy projects typically require a diverse range of skills for installation, maintenance, and management, often leading to job creation within the local community. These jobs are not only more likely to stay local but also tend to pay higher wages compared to jobs in similar sectors.
- **Community Reinvestment:** Profits generated from publicly owned energy systems can be reinvested into local communities to fund public services, infrastructure improvements, and further energy innovations. This reinvestment helps stimulate local economies and enhances the overall quality of life for residents.

***Holy Cross Energy, a rural electric cooperative in Colorado, provides one such example of this governance structure, providing energy and additional programs, including rebates, to cooperative members.<sup>34</sup> Community choice aggregation programs (CCAs)<sup>35</sup> such as Melrose Community Power in Massachusetts, present another example of these kinds of structures.<sup>36</sup>***

However, significant challenges may remain in overcoming entrenched corporate energy governance structures to decentralize energy governance in the United States.

## Health and Safety

Environmental and gendered safety concerns are paramount in the realm of energy production and consumption. The current, fossil-fuel based energy system has caused deep gendered, racialized and environmental harms. The siting, processing and storing of fossil fuels have devastating health and safety impacts, particularly on communities of color, low-income communities, and particularly on women of color. Coal facilities have long been placed disproportionately near communities of color,<sup>37</sup> and the epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Two Spirit peoples is intricately linked with fossil fuel production, illustrated by testimony and research into oil industry “man camps” and their perpetuation of gender based violence against Indigenous people.

Pollution from these infrastructures has profound impacts on community health, including reproductive health, with women of color bearing a disproportionate burden. Acknowledging these injustices, our approach to energy safety must be holistic, recognizing the link between environmental health and the well-being of all community members, especially Indigenous women and other marginalized groups.<sup>38,39</sup>

The energy sector's susceptibility to climate-induced extremities exacerbates these safety concerns. The intersectionality of gender and environmental safety within the energy sector underscores the need for comprehensive strategies that address these multifaceted risks. It necessitates a nuanced understanding of how climate change amplifies existing inequities, demanding targeted interventions to safeguard these communities against the backdrop of an evolving energy landscape.

Implementing targeted programs that focus on energy efficiency and access, particularly in off-grid and under-served areas, can play a critical role in enhancing environmental and gendered safety.

***By integrating gender considerations into policy frameworks and infrastructure projects, stakeholders can ensure that energy transitions contribute positively to environmental safety and gender equity.***

## Gendered Employment in the Energy Sector

The energy sector, pivotal in the transition towards a sustainable future, mirrors broader societal inequalities, particularly in regards to gender and racial disparities in employment. While the push for renewable energy sources and climate resilience opens new avenues for jobs, the representation of women, especially women of color, in these emerging fields remains notably low. A 2020 report from the Smart Prosperity Institute discusses a risk that women will not enjoy the fruits of the renewable energy transition, an often overlooked topic in academia and in just transition spaces. This gender gap in energy sector employment exists at all levels (national, state/provincial, local, necessitating an approach to counteract it at all levels.

The energy sector's employment practices reflect broader societal inequalities, with women of color facing significant barriers to entry and advancement. This report calls for an intentional dismantling of these barriers, advocating for policies that not only increase representation but also ensure meaningful participation and leadership of women of color in shaping the future of energy.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, given the long historic injustice, addressing the gender and racial gap in new jobs must be part of a long-term agenda towards just climate jobs investments.

The energy space must prioritize creating environments where women can thrive in order to meet energy goals. This involves addressing workplace culture issues, ensuring equal pay and opportunities for advancement, and providing care infrastructure for care work burdens that disproportionately impact women's ability to take on jobs in the energy sector.

***Companies and organizations within the energy sector are encouraged to adopt gender-responsive policies and practices, including conducting gender audits, offering strong care measures and social protections, setting diversity targets, and implementing anti-discrimination measures.***

Policies that promote education and training in renewable energy fields for women, incentives for companies that demonstrate gender equity, and public awareness campaigns about the importance of diversity in the energy transition are vital. The mass creation of well-paid, unionized renewable energy jobs are a transformative opportunity for so many individuals, families and communities; we must ensure the benefits of these jobs are accessible to those who have been historically excluded by them.

The importance of equitable investments in the renewable energy transition is highlighted by the fact that while renewable energy jobs are critical—workforce development is a huge challenge—there’s no guarantee of an equitable distribution of economic opportunities that come with them. Racial and gender diversity in the energy sector is notably lacking.<sup>41</sup> This underrepresentation underscores the need for targeted efforts to ensure that women and people of color are not only employed in the energy sector but that barriers are removed so they have a key role to play in the transformation and creation of the grid of the 21st century.

***A just and equitable energy transition should encompass support for workers, especially those displaced from fossil fuel industries, healthy environments accessible to all communities, shared opportunities in new renewable energy technologies, and social dialogue ensuring that all groups have a voice in the transition process.***

## Global Justice

To address these intertwined issues of global exploitation and gender inequality, it is imperative to develop comprehensive frameworks that promote both global justice and gender equity in energy transitions. If energy advocacy and work in the US does not integrate strong global justice considerations, any energy transition in the US will only further exploitation and extraction from communities in the Global South. Vast amounts of minerals and materials currently used in the development of renewable energy infrastructure, such as solar, currently rely on extraction and exploited labor in Latin America, Africa and Asia. This mining is frequently controlled by private transnational corporations in rural communities where violations of Free, Prior and Informed Consent occur, labor violations occur, environmental defenders are targeted, and the benefits are not shared with the community most impacted. Global energy justice transcends borders, and there can be no isolated energy justice in the US that relies on extraction and violence elsewhere to enable its transition.

These systemic issues of exploitation and extraction in the Global South are not only economic but also deeply gendered. Women in these communities often bear the brunt of environmental degradation and labor exploitation, further exacerbating existing gender inequalities. Thus,

any effort to address global energy justice must inherently incorporate gender justice to ensure that women, who are disproportionately affected, are not left behind. The critical considerations around global economic systems, trade, tax, debt and corporate power that are part of global energy justice are the focus of a plethora of robust research, testimony and lived experience, particularly from researchers and organizations from communities most impacted. **To do justice to the richness of this research, this short brief cannot cover these aspects in depth; the reading list below aims to point readers to the many resources critical to deepening a global energy justice analysis. We are developing additional work that builds out the analysis at the level of global energy justice.**

## Resource list:

- [Business and Human Rights Resource Centre: Human Rights in the Mineral Supply Chains of Solar Panels](#)
- [Grist: “Mining is necessary for a clean energy future. It also destroys forests.”](#)
- [Grist: “Chile’s national lithium strategy raises questions about the environmental and social costs of EVs”](#)
- [Inside Climate News: “Mining Critical to Renewable Energy Tied to Hundreds of Alleged Human Rights Abuses](#)
- [Transition Minerals Tracker: 2024 Global Analysis](#)
- [Mapping justice in national climate action: a global overview of just transition policies](#)
- [Civil Society Recommendations for the United Nations Secretary-General’s Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals](#)
- Webinar: [Power to the People: A Gender Just Energy Transition and Why It Matters](#)

# Policy Recommendations

## 1 Centralize strong gender, race, class and disability justice considerations into Energy Transition Policy Frameworks

- In order to challenge an energy system that replicates gendered, racialized, class-based and many other forms of oppression, any energy transition must begin with comprehensive integration of justice considerations across policy levels.
- This integration involves inclusive policy development, thorough impact assessments, targeted policy measures, robust monitoring and accountability, and the removal of systemic barriers.
- Government and energy sector stakeholders should integrate gender, race and class considerations at all levels of energy policy development, from planning to implementation and monitoring.
- This involves conducting impact assessments for new energy projects, ensuring that policies address the specific needs and challenges faced by women, gender expansive peoples and other communities made vulnerable by the climate crisis.
- Policies should also aim to remove systemic barriers that limit women's participation in the energy sector, by prioritizing access to care infrastructure, education, training, and financial resources.

## 2 Promote Gender Inclusive Participation in Energy Decision-Making

- Encourage and facilitate greater participation of women, gender-diverse people, and the full spectrum of the LGBTQIA+ community in energy decision-making processes at all levels, including in community energy projects, regulatory bodies, and corporate boards.
- This can be achieved through quotas, targeted recruitment, and capacity-building programs designed to empower women as leaders and decision-makers in the energy sector, but at its core must uphold a genuine redistribution of decision-making power.

## 3 Support Workforce Development and Employment Opportunities for Women in the Energy Sector

- Implement proactive workforce development programs and policies in renewable energy and sustainability roles.
- This includes scholarships, internships, mentorship programs, and career development initiatives aimed at women.
- Additionally, companies and organizations within the energy sector should be incentivized to adopt gender-inclusive recruitment, retention, and promotion practices.

## 4 Ensure Equitable Access to Renewable and Sustainable Energy

- Develop and implement targeted subsidies and financial assistance programs to ensure that low-income households, particularly those headed by women, have access to renewable and sustainable energy sources.
- Policies should also focus on improving energy efficiency in housing, promoting renewable energy installations, and providing training for women to engage in the renewable energy market, either as consumers or entrepreneurs. This also includes taking holistic steps to address and alleviate energy cost burdens, as outlined more in depth in the Affordability section.

## 5 Pursue a Global Framework for Gender-Just Energy Transitions

- Advocate for and establish a global framework that promotes gender-just energy transitions, recognizing the interconnectedness of energy policy, climate change mitigation, and social equity. Economic models and processes that transition the U.S. towards renewable energy through exploitation and unjust extraction of critical minerals from the Global South *must* be resisted at every turn. Global energy justice transcends borders, and there can be no isolated energy policy in the US that relies on extraction and violence elsewhere to enable its transition.
- This framework should facilitate international cooperation, knowledge sharing, and financial support for gender-responsive energy policies and projects, with a particular focus on the outsized role the US plays.
- The framework should also include mechanisms for tracking progress and holding stakeholders accountable for achieving gender equity in energy access and employment.



# Conclusion

This brief reaffirms the critical intersectionality of gender, energy and climate justice—fields inherently intertwined and pivotal for a feminist just transition. Systems of oppression around gender, race, class, ability, and beyond significantly shape disparities within energy access and climate impacts. These disparities not only reflect existing inequalities but also highlight the systemic barriers that hinder the achievement of true equity within our energy systems and environmental policies.

The urgency for equitable action in the face of the escalating climate crisis cannot be overstated. It is imperative that our efforts to combat climate change are rooted in policies, investments, and initiatives that are thoroughly inclusive and consciously responsive to the nuanced disparities across gender, racial, and economic lines. The pursuit of energy and climate justice demands more than mere acknowledgment of these disparities; it requires a dedicated commitment to addressing them through intentional and impactful measures.

Therein lies the transformative potential of energy and climate initiatives. When underpinned by a

framework of intersectional gender justice, these initiatives are not just solutions to the climate crisis but also vehicles for broader societal transformation. They offer a pathway to dismantle existing inequalities, foster empowerment, and pave the way for more inclusive participation in the transition towards renewable and sustainable energy systems. This transformation is contingent upon recognizing and leveraging the role of such initiatives in advancing intersectional gender justice, ensuring that all voices are heard, and all communities benefit equitably.

Envisioning a future where energy and climate justice serve as catalysts for a more equitable and sustainable world, we underscore the critical need for intentional and equitable measures. Achieving this vision requires a collective effort to reimagine and reconstruct our energy systems and environmental policies in ways that prioritize inclusivity, equity, and sustainability. By embracing intersectional approaches and fostering an environment where diverse perspectives are valued and integrated, we can navigate towards a future where energy and climate justice illuminate the path to a world that honors and upholds the rights and dignity of all its inhabitants.



## Case Studies

### Mothers Out Front: Organizing Moms for Energy Justice

Mothers Out Front is a national organization that empowers mothers and caregivers to advocate for a livable climate for all children. The organization focuses on community organizing to tackle climate issues, including those related to energy and energy justice.<sup>42</sup>

One of the key campaigns of Mothers Out Front is their work against the expansion of natural gas infrastructure. In Chesterfield, Virginia, the organization is fighting against the siting of a new natural gas plant near an elementary school in a predominantly Black community.<sup>43</sup> This campaign highlights the intersection of environmental and racial justice, as the plant poses significant health risks to children and the broader community. Additionally, Mothers Out Front is advocating for the electrification of school buses in states like Virginia, New York, Massachusetts, Colorado, and California.<sup>44</sup> Diesel exhaust is particularly harmful to children who spend extended periods on school buses, with rural students often exposed for up to two hours a day.

Mothers Out Front envisions a future where communities are deeply involved in shaping the energy transition. This involves not only addressing the immediate health and environmental impacts but also fostering a society where children can thrive in a sustainable and just environment. The organization believes that organizing powerful communities of women and caregivers is both a means and an end, creating a society that prioritizes collective well-being over individual distractions. By focusing on community organizing and addressing both environmental and social injustices, Mothers Out Front aims to create a livable climate for all children, ensuring that the energy transition is equitable and just for all communities.



“Moms are already involved in everything we ever had in all parts of society, and are very motivated actors. And so I think we’re often written off when in fact, I think we’re like the secret superheroes, and a lot of change in society...Organizing really powerful communities of women and caregivers who are fighting for the future that we want for our kids, is not just part of the process, but it’s also the destination. For me, the reason why I do this is to believe that there’s a brighter future for my kids.”

**JENNIFER ZIMMER**

*Senior Director of Campaigns and Organizing at Mothers Out Front*

## United Women in Faith: Mobilizing for Just Energy Transitions

United Women in Faith, an organization with approximately 500,000 members in the United States, has a long-standing commitment to economic and environmental justice. With a history of climate activism dating back to the 1970s, the organization launched the “Just Energy 4 All” campaign in 2017 to address the urgent need for equitable energy transitions. The “Just Energy 4 All” campaign emphasizes the need for energy transitions that are made with and for communities, rather than at their expense.<sup>45</sup> This approach ensures that low-income and marginalized communities are not left behind in the shift to renewable energy. The campaign focuses on mobilizing communities, particularly those that are poor and low-income, for just energy transitions. The organization engages women, children, and youth, seeing them not only as disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis but also as actors of change.

United Women in Faith runs various educational initiatives, including summer curriculum programs like “Mission U,” which focus on social justice issues and engage women, children, and youth in climate justice education.<sup>46</sup> United Women in Faith creates resources to help communities access federal funding for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Additionally, the organization actively encourages its members to participate in Earth Day events, legislative action alerts, and local community actions. This grassroots mobilization is essential for promoting policies that prioritize investments in low-income and marginalized communities. By empowering grassroots movements and advocating for policy changes, United Women in Faith aims to create a sustainable and just energy future that benefits all communities, especially those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

“The [Just Energy 4 All] campaign has had a focus on mobilizing just energy. And what we mean by that is not continuing the business as usual, and really asking for a transition that is not at the expense of communities, but made with communities and for communities, especially poor and low-income communities.

As a women’s organization, the gender aspect is very important for us. We engage both women, children, and youth as our primary audiences and see them not only as disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis but also as actors of change...Part of the energy transition is also just making it accessible for people to take action. Anyone can take action at different levels, from their households to their communities, to the institutions they are engaged with.”

**ILKA VEGA**

*Executive for Economic and Environmental Justice at United Women in Faith*



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